

## MEDIA DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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**Olha Susska, ScD in Sociological Sciences**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9620-1859>

National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy", Ukraine

**Halyna Pashchenko**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3951-1070>

"Reputation Capital Group", Ukraine

### SOCIO-COMMUNICATIVE AND CULTURAL PRACTICES DURING THE PANDEMIC PERIOD

The article considers socio-communicative and cultural practices in social networks during the pandemic. The aim of the article is to identify and specify the possibilities of using social media in the formation of communicative interaction, cultural practices in modern conditions. In the context of digitalization of communicative and cultural practices, there is a need for effective use of social networks as modern media platforms and communication channels. Modern media culture is a special new form of media communication, which covers all spheres of human life: business, education, politics, culture. Social networks create a culture where reality and virtuality will acquire the same status. New online communities, new journalism, blurring of reality through virtuality, interactivity, convergence – these are the modern realities of media culture.

Thanks to social networks, the role of the audience in interaction with culture has changed, its perception has been supplemented by the active participation of users in the creation of content. Now everyone has a chance to demonstrate their talent and interact directly with the audience. To stand out in the endless flow of information and win the affection of users on social networks, you need to understand their specifics and make full use of their potential. Social networks allow you to be creative, create different types of content, promote it, develop your own brands and become famous opinion leaders. A variety of cultural areas, including quite traditional ones, are now actively seeking to engage users in cultural practices.

This article discusses the features of the requests and preferences of the expert circle of social network users. It also demonstrates the importance of communication and cultural practices for PR professionals, as well as journalists and media workers.

**Keywords:** social networks, culture, mass communication, pandemic, mass media, public relations, cultural practices.

In today's world the dispersion of the communicative interaction functions and the divergence of communicators involved in these practices are typical for socio-communicative practices in the system of mass communication (including the Internet), which during the COVID-19 pandemic has become particularly massive. Scattering (dispersion) of communicative contacts, when different people involved in the processes of generation / reproduction of messages, as a result forms a certain divergence or "dissolution" of social features of the total communicator. When one or more "actors" (according to J. Gabermas) act "on behalf" or "in the role" of a communicator, this leads to the appearance of "speaker's features" scattered in time and space, previously assigned to various media communicators (in particular, television or radio broadcasting). There is a situation when the collection of information is carried out by one person, its analysis – by the second one, the third one reproduces it, and so on. This is how the "dispersed and divergent system of mass communication"<sup>1</sup> worked. As might be expected, there is neither collective nor individual

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<sup>1</sup> Сусська, О. О. (2003). *Інформаційне поле особистості. Формування інформаційного вибору аудиторії в умовах сучасного соціокультурного середовища*: монографія. Київ: ДАКККіМ, 91-97.

responsibility. And with high dispersion there is a “scattering” threat of the content and form of speech (certain media discourse ) and of the whole process organization.

The concept of mass media metadiscourse in the social sciences acquires a pronounced integrative interpretation, which focuses on the choice of cultural principles of socio-communicative practices. Obviously, there is the influence of communicative studies, which – with the advent of an extensive system of mass communications – was forced to explain the expansion of normative and symbolic “meta-meanings” produced by the system of both traditional and “new” media. This relationship between the norm and the symbolism of the mass media metadiscourse allows us to compare it with the balance of “standard” and “norm”; in this case “the standard is the implementation of some semiotic and / or technological model at the social and socio-psychological levels, and the norm is the implementation of such a model at the linguistic and psychological levels”<sup>1</sup>.

From the standpoint of communication theory (I.V. Annenkova, G.P. Bakulev, E.V. Barkova, Y. Habermas, Y. Lotman, N. Luhmann, G. Pocheptsov, R. Jacobson, etc.) and psycholinguistic investigations, conceptual ideas become elements of the system of values in linguistics and culturology; in the communication processes – elements of the social system of values. In the mental system, meaning is related to consciousness, and in the social system – to communication (N. Luhmann).

Systemic differentiation is among the globally important features of modern society, which includes segmentation and stratification, in particular, in the systems of subject-subject information exchange. “Replication” within the system (especially in Internet networks) depends on the difference between the system and the external environment. After all, it affects the communicative interaction and relationships in the “social field”<sup>2</sup> as well as the threat or potential of “cognitive dissonance”<sup>3</sup> affect the communicative relationship.

Discursive media practices are analyzed in the same way, as the “objective world” remains the only existing source of approaching the truth. The selectivity of the perception of mass media messages is becoming more and more determined, and each new information becomes the result of communication, in turn proving (as justified by J. Baudrillard) that modern mass media are “a circular scheme in which what the hall desires is played out on the stage, an antitheater of communication, which is known to always be only a reuse... Enormous energy found to hold this simulacrum at the outstretched hand to avoid sudden desimulation, which would put us in front of the obvious reality of a radical loss of meaning”<sup>4</sup>. Thus, in the conditions of Baudrillard’s “hyperreality” and the serious challenges facing the individual today (especially during the pandemic crisis, which increased the risks of social transformation), the preservation of the value potential of subjectivity comes to the fore through cultural practices, as in interpersonal communication space and in the discourse of the media. However, there may be natural and artificial collisions that will create obstacles to the “subjectivation of reality”.

For the motivational picture of media behavior and activity in social networks on the part of the individual it is important that we can declare the advantage of “self-reference over foreign reference” (N. Luhmann)<sup>5</sup> in the process of choosing information that is key to the individual information field forming. This feature has recently become dominant in Internet networks, where the establishment of authorship, especially information materials, is practically leveled. However, the personal will and interest of personalized actors who make their own communicative contacts and use a variety of cultural practices creates new clusters of communicative behavior that involve multiple contacts and selective personalization.

For almost two decades of research on media discourse, we have gone from content-analytics (coding / decoding of media text) to determining the role of the social environment in the perception of media discourse. In particular, D. Morley<sup>6</sup> researched family television which has its roots in J. Gerbner’s concept of the “cultivation approach” and the social use of television in the global dimension by J. Lull<sup>7</sup>. Shaun Moores<sup>8</sup> analyzed the media in the areas of routine and everyday life based on E. Giddens’ theory

<sup>1</sup> Сорокин, Ю. А. (1985). *Психолингвистические аспекты изучения текста*. Москва: Наука, 56.

<sup>2</sup> Бурдые, П. (2005). *Социальное пространство: поля и практики*. Санкт-Петербург: Алетейя; Москва: Институт экспериментальной социологии.

<sup>3</sup> Фестингер, Л. (2000). *Теория когнитивного диссонанса*. Санкт-Петербург: Речь.

<sup>4</sup> Бодріяр, Ж. (2004). *Симулякри і симуляція*. Київ: Основи, 119.

<sup>5</sup> Луман, Н. (2004). *Общество как социальная система*. Москва: Логос.

<sup>6</sup> Morley, D. (1986). *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*. London: Comedia.

<sup>7</sup> Lull, J. (2019). *Media, Communication, Culture. A Global Approach*. John Wiley&Sons Ltd.

<sup>8</sup> Moores, Sh. (2000). *Media and Everyday Life in Modern Society*. Edinburgh University Press.

of structuring, which are also perceived in unison with the approaches of Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, who interpreted the media influence as “an open set of everyday practices”<sup>1</sup>. Ecoanthropocentric approach of T.M. Dridze continued in the ideas of media anthropologist Liz Bird, who emphasizes (in “Audience in Everyday Life”) that it is impossible “to study the role of media in culture in isolation”<sup>2</sup>. From the systems analysis it is necessary to pass to the analysis of practices, however, without separating the individual from culture.

Thus, a discursive direction of studying the role of the subject of modern mass media in society is gradually formed, which combines multiculturalist approaches with linguistic and ecoanthropological ones. At one time, similarly, R. Barth in his works explained the emergence of “the subject through which all historically possible changing meanings are produced”<sup>3</sup>.

In the “Sociology Beyond Society”, J. Urry argues that the study of static society is not relevant now, but it is better to study its dynamic components, such as “networks”, “flows”, “movement”<sup>4</sup>. Communicative practices in social networks increase the volume of movements, transforming the communicative space of society as a whole. “After all, the communicative practices of social networks in themselves do not just affect the identity of the agent, but demonstrate the possibility of restructuring the entire communication space”<sup>5</sup>.

Social networks are designed to ensure horizontal communication of interested subscribers (for example, Facebook); the blogosphere as a set of blogs; microblogging as a means of online communication, a hybrid form of media that combines the properties of instant messaging, blogs, e-mail and social networks; video hosting, users of which can add, view and comment on videos and other network services.

As N. Zrazhevskaya writes, “thanks to modern media technologies, people have gained absolute freedom of expression, the way it is represented, including the declaration of their real identity”<sup>6</sup>. Modern man resolutely goes beyond personal and trusting contact on the “public stage”. The style of human thought becomes more open, informal, pragmatic, expressive and emotional. Numerous online communities in the Internet space are structured based on the value orientations of their members, providing interactive communication for all users. At the same time, during its existence, the Internet has formed values due to its own nature as an object of communication. As a confrontation of institutionality in the journalistic (and in general in the mass media) environment, the following trend is expressed: multimedia and multi-image cause internal metamorphoses of established figures of communication. At the same time, institutionality as a status characteristic is inferior in success to individual-subject media-discursive practices<sup>7</sup>.

Interpersonal communication is considered an integral element in any communicative acts that take place through computer means of information transmission and communicative interaction<sup>8</sup>. A qualitatively new aspect of informatization makes it possible to obtain virtual data, but as close as possible to real data about the object. The multimedia computer provides the user with images, graphic and written information, sound, color, volume. Social networks imperceptibly transform routine practices, creating new regimes of social interactions. Modern everyday life is a hybrid of physical and virtual space, which allows and forces to coexist in both ordinary and digital reality. Social media is increasingly focused not on creating intra-network projects that embody the values and patterns of network culture, but on effective integration with the processes of “real life”. Such “routinization” of the virtual has made, due to the proliferation of mobile devices, the constant stay online almost the norm.

During the pandemic, the presence of audiences in the networks significantly increased. This was especially true of cultural and socio-communicative practices, which have become a substitute for ordinary

<sup>1</sup> Couldry, N., Hepp, A. (2017). *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Bird, E. S. (2003). *The Audience in Everyday Life: Living in a Media World*. London: Routledge.

<sup>3</sup> Барт, Р. (1994). *Избранные работы. Семиотика. Поэтика*. Москва: Прогресс, Универс, 259.

<sup>4</sup> Urry, J. (2000). *Sociology beyond Societies. Mobilities for the twenty-first century*. London, New York: Routledge.

<sup>5</sup> Настояща, К. В. (2018). Комунікативні практики соціальних мереж: фактори та вектори трансформації. *Соціальні технології: актуальні проблеми теорії та практики*, 77, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Зражевська, Н. (2013). Нові медіа і нові форми комунікації в медіа культурі. *Актуальні питання масової комунікації*, 14, 71.

<sup>7</sup> Судакова, В. М., Наумова, М. Ю. (ред.) (2017). *Нові медіа в сучасному суспільстві: культурологічний вимір*. Київ: Інститут культурології НАМ України.

<sup>8</sup> Суська, О. О. (2017). Сучасні підходи до еволюції комунікаційних процесів в контексті трансформації медіасистем. *European Political and Law Discourse*, 4 (2), 195-201.

face2face communication. This was confirmed by the results of a study conducted by the authors, which took place during the first phase of quarantine (from May 8 to June 2, 2020). The survey was conducted using a random online survey. Age of respondents is from 18 years. The array of questionnaires selected for analysis numbered 205 questionnaires. Users of social networks from different regions of Ukraine (in particular, from Kyiv, Dnipro, Odessa, Kharkiv) took part in the survey. At the stage of the analysis, groups were aggregated on a professional basis: journalists and public relations specialists, including students studying in this specialty. The most popular surveys among respondents are Facebook and YouTube (see Table 1). Instagram is the third social network most popular among respondents, where 46.3% of respondents are during the week. Given that this network is dominated by visual elements, it is necessary to pay attention to its impact on the development of image technologies, both in the corporate segment and in the personal (building personal images).

Table 1

**Frequency of stay during pandemic quarantine on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tik Tok (% , N = 205)**

	Instagram	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	TikTok
Every day	35,6	39,0	3,4	40,0	1,0
Several times a week	10,7	15,6	9,3	22,4	6,3
Several times a month	6,3	6,8	6,3	4,4	3,9
I only have an account	3,9	3,4	7,3	0,5	2,4
I do not use	12,2	4,4	42,9	1,5	54,1
I plan to start using	0	0	0	0,5	0
Did not answer	29,7	30,7	30,7	30,7	32,2

*Source: developed by the authors based on the digital platform <https://anketa.in.ua/>*

It is worth mentioning that the Facebook audience is primarily interested in useful content (news, politics, development, work). The content ideal for Facebook is this that encourages discussion and distribution. On Instagram, users are more active in sharing their personal lives, photos and videos. Instagram content is bright, creative, emphasizing the atmosphere created for fun, entertainment, self-development, inspiration and motivation.

To the open question “*For what purpose do you use social networks?*” respondents answered as follows: personal blog/work page, acquiring new skills, creative realization, the opportunity to express themselves, a working tool for disseminating information in my professional activities, sales, advertising their products and services, professional communications, business development, review goods in showrooms with the prospect of further purchase, a tool for charity, to be aware of world events, participation in art and educational projects (online concerts, online lectures, etc.); a source of information about current news, monitoring the information field, viewing suggestions from colleagues, entertainment and creative suggestions, new acquaintances, communication, useful tips, maintain social ties with colleagues, friends, etc.

In the general ranking of answers to the question “*What topics in social networks are interesting for you?*” (see Table 2) the first place goes to the culture (40%), in the second place there is travel (33.1%), in the third one – the health (25.9%). The latter is also due to the situation with the coronavirus pandemic, as health issues have become very relevant in recent months for people of all ages and professions.

The function of broadening the horizons is focused, based on the answers of the survey participants, on the placement of true historical and modern information about the state development, the opportunity “to learn details about events”, etc. Respondents especially noted such a feature of networks as efficiency: “showing the scene”, streaming; communication with colleagues from other cities and countries; checking different points of view about events, event announcements, etc.

In response to the questionnaire “*What creative proposals that appeared on social networks during the quarantine, you are interested in?*” theaters, museums, concerts dominate, which became available online, they attract 43.8% of respondents who answered this question (relative to the array of respondents this percentage is 27.8%). In ranking all cultural and educational practices that were included in the answer scale, the most interesting and attractive were: the emergence of new hashtags, challenges and star flash

mobs – 26.1%, distance learning – 14.6%, new ideas for live broadcasts and entertainment content among bloggers and celebrities – 11.5%. However, online marathons, Skype photo shoots, FaceTime photo shoots and online parties gained significantly fewer fans: 2.6% and 0.8%, respectively.

It is worth noting that quarantine has increased the need for various ways to maintain trust and emotional connection within the organization as a condition of effectiveness. Whereas previously employees could partially replace the need for trust with friendly communication over coffee, staying in the same workspace, team building, and so on, during quarantine, internal online communications and their means of implementation became a priority. The results of the answers to the clarifying question “*How did social networks help to optimize your professional activity or learning process during quarantine?*” also confirmed the important role of the use of social networks in professional activities and training. Among the answers of the respondents were frequent: much more correspondence, chats and video conferencing, online workload increased through Skype conferences, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, online lessons, live broadcasts on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, free online courses and trainings, distance learning, the opportunity to participate in online conferences in the specialty. It was noted that all communication with colleagues goes online, as well as lectures, trainings, rehearsals, tests, consultations, individual lessons were quite effective in this mode.

Table 2

**The results of the attitude towards the diversity of cultural information  
in social networks of different age groups (%)**

	<b>18-34 years</b>	<b>35-49 years</b>	<b>50 years and older</b>
	%	%	%
I like to follow Instagram accounts maintained by world famous museums, contemporary artists, photographers, choreographers and other famous people from the cultural sphere	31,3	6,2	3,8
I am happy to subscribe to musicians and watch their live broadcasts and videos on social media. networks	11,5	1,5	2,3
I am glad that I have the opportunity to join different types of art and learn something new for myself through social. network	8,4	6,2	3,8
What I find on social media inspires me to create my own, so I subscribe primarily to creative, interesting and similar to my field of activity accounts.	6,9	3,1	0,7
I often take part in marathons on social networks if they are focused on development and creative self-expression.	0,7	–	0,7
Without social networks, it would be difficult to navigate in today’s cultural situation	3,8	0,7	0,7

*Source: developed by the authors based on the digital platform <https://anketa.in.ua/>*

Table 2 shows the results of respondents’ answers in terms of age groups regarding the attitude to the diversity of cultural information on social networks. The category “I like to follow Instagram accounts run by famous museums of the world, contemporary artists, photographers, choreographers and other famous people from the cultural sphere” attracts special attention. It can be stated that the most interested in this information are the groups 18-34 years and 35-49 years (31.3% and 6.2%, respectively). However, the difference between the indicators also illustrates the degree of interest and the time it takes younger users to read the celebrity pages. Regarding the preferences of the middle age group, it is possible to note the opportunity to join different types of art and learn something new for yourself through social networks (6.2%). The least active users of social networks (and this is a generally accepted fact) is the older group, aggregated in the study as from 50 years. Although the preferences of this age group resemble the middle age group in terms of the proportion of answers, they also prefer to follow Instagram accounts maintained by world-famous museums, contemporary artists, photographers, choreographers and other famous people from the cultural

sphere (3.8% ) and opportunities to join different types of art and learn something new for themselves through social networks (3.8%). The difference in the proportion of responses is also due to the small representation of the older group in the array of respondents.

**Conclusions.** It can be concluded that the most popular cultural practices during quarantine showed greater activity of respondents than the cultural information that is present in the networks as a permanent content. Cultural and established habits of using the audience of social networks are also evident. Professional affiliation is also important. Social networks are especially valuable in this sense for PR professionals, as well as journalists and media workers. In social networks, due to the uniqueness, diversity and focus of content to meet the needs of users, there are processes of development, self-expression, involvement in creative and artistic practices.

Through social networks, culture spreads social meanings, which are necessary goods for society and the demand for them is growing. Thus, culture partially ensures its development. The development of creative industries, which is primarily facilitated by social media, forms a creative class, whose representatives are characterized by a wide differentiation of interests and creative activities.

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