

Digitalization as a Sociocultural Characteristic of the Globalization Era

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Abstract

The research is dedicated to investigating the sociocultural characteristics of digitalization. The Digital Age has a great impact on the formation of individuals' moral consciousness, and the main trends of digitalization and modern social development are examined in this work. The peculiarities of the influence of information and communication technologies on the formation of the value system of individuals are analyzed. The authors consider digitalization in the context of the formation of the world's digital image and a digital individual. The problem of comprehension of digitalization processes in science and philosophy is presented. An examination of concepts such as "digitalization", "information society", and "social network" is carried out. The relevance of the topic is due to the fact that digitization and, by extension, informatization, are developing and significantly expanding the horizons of global scientific, technical, and socio-economic progress. Together, these lead to serious interactions between the ultramodern and traditional, the latter being formed over centuries' of events in institutions and structures, but rapidly transformed in the the world of social communications. With traditional societies increasingly replaced by those which are virtually augmented, additional grounds are created for vast changes in various spheres of public life, in increasingly numerous locations, and sometimes also creating bases for the growth of instability and conflicts. The work aims to show the effect of digitalization on the value system of individuals, especially young people, based on theoretical analysis. The research methodology focuses upon a conceptualization of the phase model of digitalization, the problem of social Internet networks, the theory of the Information Age.

Keywords: digitalization, information age, information society, culture, value system, social internet network, virtual community.

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INTRODUCTION

An inseparable characteristic of the constantly changing world is globalization which is aimed at changing processes meanwhile digital technologies are actively introduced into all spheres of social life.

Digitalization is not only an engine of global social development but it is a process which also fundamentally changes patterns of thinking and the means of perceiving the surrounding reality, while introducing new rules of behavior. This was especially evident in the case of the Y generation: it is the Millennial's "next" or "network" generation which consists of people who were born during 1981 and 1996, and welcomed the new millennium at a young age (Radaev, 2018). This generation is characterized

primarily by a deep involvement in digital technologies, and its emergence coincides with the global development and universal implementation of digital technologies and processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no universal and unequivocally acceptable definition of the concept of "digitalization". More often, digitalization is viewed as a new era which is based on and creates "big data" and other appropriate technologies. Therein, artificial intelligence and machine learning methods generate new tools for productivity increases and for comprehending the existing data deluge (Anderson, 2008).

There are several philosophical definitions of digitalization. Some authors assume digitalization to be

“the development and application of the technologies that use the ideas of discreteness, computability, programmability, and algorithmicity”. Accordingly, such scholarship further suggests digitalization has entered all manifestations of modern technical achievements: in computers and communications, education and biotechnology, nanotechnology and astrophysics, specialty software, the Internet of Things (IoT), drones, and smart cities. Consequently, a common basis for the wide use of based on special automating algorithms (Lectorskiy, 2019; Molchan, 2019).

Still other authors, shifting digitalization into an anthropological discourse, define it as “the transfer of a person to a virtual reality. This results in dangers forming related to the dehumanization of a person, dependence on gadgets and computer systems - the disease of humanity of the Digital Age” (Lektorskiy, 2019).

Digitalization as a social phenomenon spread in the 60s-70s of the 20th century, and is defined by three main characteristics. Firstly, personal characteristics are being transformed into digital artifacts, data, and tools, thus becoming mobile, individualized, and abstracted. In this context, communication acquires a network structure on the Internet. However, as people come into increasing contact with and consciousness of the data they create, they gain greater control over that data and the information they communicate. They are granted opportunities to work with organizations that have requirements and goals which demand information. Through collective needs, people collectively build individual and group paths for the generation of information and data that will promote more global communication between people, organizations, and countries. This task is aided, secondly, by the fact that communication technologies are getting more common and more manageable. Finally, there is a transition to a networked communication form.

Consequently, researchers distinguish five stages of digitalization (Schuman & Scott, 1989):

1. The launch of computer and information sciences from the Second World War until the beginning of the 70s of XX century;
2. The creation and proliferation of the first personal computers (early 80s - mid 90s of XX century);
3. The emergence of the Internet (mid-90s - early 2000s);
4. The expansion of digitization practices using the Web 2.0 methodology since 2013;
5. The exploitation of digital architectures to create and spread of digital models of production and economy.

It is in this context that Alvin Toffler (1980) perceived the information society as the final level of civilizational development; in his opinion, the formation

of a digital society is a certain outcome of technological innovations and changes in social relations. Manuel Castells (2010) underlines the “networked” nature of the information society. Anthony Giddens (1990) presents the modern era as the product of an individual’s separation from natural factors, technological modernization, and, consequently, the emergence of computer technologies as sources of information storage, assigning a dominant role in such a society to the nation-state, endowed with strong administrative and military power and with a unique culture; culture in this instance is a sphere that reflects social innovations.

According to the classification scheme presented above, we can presume that the active creation of social media networks initiated the third stage of digitalization thereby accelerating globalization processes worldwide.

For the first time the term “social network” was put into circulation by John Arundel Barnes in the work “Class and Committees in a Norwegian Island Parish” (1954). Barnes connected this concept with the forms of communication found in small social groups. Today, scholars define a social network as a social structure composed of a group of units and factors connected by friendship, parental ties, and economic exchange, or other social relations where each occupies a specific position in the society. Social interactions in such structures are studied by network theory.

However, network theory (Castells, 2010) describes and identifies not all processes occurring in modern social networks. Network theory emphasizes a group of units (social actors) and the connections among them (social interaction) regarding resource sharing. Revealing the structure of the interaction of the system components, the theory of networks does not touch on the issues of the influence of the community of actors on the individual participant. In other words, according to this theory, it is quite difficult to explain the impact of virtual communities, par excellence, on the formation of people’s value orientations.

As described by Boyd and Ellison (2007), a social network site is an Internet-based service that enables individual users to establish open or semi-open profiles, encompassing a range of attributes such as gender, age, educational background, and geographic location, which collectively define their personality. Additionally, users on such platforms can compile and view a list of their connections, referred to as “friends”, thereby constructing and accessing their personal social networks. Moreover, they have the capability to access the contact lists of their “friends”, granting them insight into the social networks of other users within the system.

In online social networks, one’s geographical location no longer matters. People who live in the same

city or even neighborhood may not meet but belong to the same Internet community. Real communities depend on an individual's location, affiliation with a particular religion or tradition, and so on. But in the case of online social communities, geography is rendered of negligible importance, and secondly, as a result of low barriers to communication, interactions are formed between users belonging to completely different cultural, religious, national, and other communities, and therefore endowed with different value systems.

DISCUSSION

Social Internet networks prominently depict the processes of globalization taking place in the world. Information boundaries are being erased, and a unified cultural space is formed based on online social networks, and the concomitant removal of cultural boundaries. Some predominant cultures get a chance to spread to other countries, and others less so, while new cultural connection, interactions, and conflicts occur without control in the center and at the margins.

On the one hand, each of us can get acquainted with this or that culture, values, traditions, and norms, where there are no other barriers besides language. On the other hand, the diversity of values in social Internet networks allows us to parse online etiquette and values from those found in daily life. In the digital environment, one can encounter different sets of value systems that do not coincide with the value system of the user's social environment.

Social media developers create tools for advertising this or that community and provide access to analytical data of the platforms which relate to users' gender, age, number of channel followers, average daily audience coverage, and "feedback" indicators, and other characteristics. These tools allow administrators to structure information and adapt to their audience, but these metadata are also tools for shaping public opinion. Therefore, the source of the presented content - the administrator, the user, or the advertiser - can influence users' value orientations in the virtual community.

Since the formation of social networks, we have observed that users seek to form virtual communities and participants in Internet networks strive to communicate with as many users as possible. Currently, this leads to the formation of virtual communities of participants who are users representing different cultures and therefore different value systems. In this environment, a person can get lost, unable to distinguish values. This can lead to the disorganization of the individual's value system and the orientation of vital goals which in turn causes various social problems.

As a result of virtual contacts, young people's values can change because they are actively choosing and assimilating priorities and values (Kravchenko,

2019). Therefore, young people are more susceptible to the influence of social media networks because their value systems remain under development and are sometimes unstable,

Many problems are revealed when we look at virtual social networks from the standpoint of different social theories. The nagging persistence of a digital divide, as well as inequality among users on social networks underscores wider disparities whose existence belies a potential for some serious conflicts in which users, community stakeholders, and the state may be involved.

Other serious problems are related to user security, the manipulation of user activity through virtual social networks, and the existence of control mechanisms. The public sphere can be transformed through manipulations of both the official mass media and virtual communities themselves, resulting in a "blurring" of the fundamental values of society (Habermas, 1984).

CONCLUSION

Digitalization is a process of formation and transformation of value orientations of people. In young people especially, value orientations acquire a contradictory character under the influence of digitalization. In becoming a member of a virtual community, the user is impacted by the presented values and their altered value orientations to a greater or lesser extent. Young people are specifically susceptible to such influence because their value systems are still in formation which determines its instability and the possibility of transformation by external effect.

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