Research article / Научная статья

Studying the Political Values in the Digital: The Review of Russian and Foreign Cases

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Abstract. The article discusses the best practices for studying the political values of respondents in the context of a high degree of digitalization. In the process of increasing the role of the Internet, there is a need to study the patterns of user behavior in the network space. The purpose of this article is to develop an optimal design of a scientific work for the study of the cognitive-value structure of worldview models of a modern Russian. The article is based on the analysis of regulatory legal acts. The author suggests that a hybrid research strategy and triangulation of methods is a key factor in the development of a scientific work program in the context of the digital transition in society. The reviewed materials contain important for understanding the approaches and methods of studying the political values of the respondents.

Keywords: political values, cybermetrics, social and media analysis, information society, worldview models, cognitive-value structure

Values are the foundation of any society. Each social system creates, preserves and transforms values to maintain its integrity [1]. Values play the role of peculiar

rules that are transmitted from person to person and unite society, culture and personality [2]. If society did not have a value system, it would not be able to effectively achieve group goals [3].

To study values, scientists traditionally conduct so–called field research — they come to the places of residence of the interested social group and collect the necessary information on the spot. For example, the American researcher E. Banfield went to a village in Southern Italy for 11 months, where he observed the life of an unfamiliar community [4].

Today, Russian researchers are also scouring the expanses of the country in search of answers to various topical questions. For example, A. Tokarev together with the team visited 18 settlements in 14 Russian regions [5]. To study the Russian image of the future, the authors conducted focus groups and used a psychographic method — the respondents not only talked about Russia in 2030, but also drew it. In turn, S. Pavlenko and P. Pavlenko conducted a series of informal interviews with police officers. The researchers studied the role models of police interaction with local residents, authorities and the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs [6]. Based on the concept of "cultural analysis of classes", the authors of the study E. Polukhina, A. Strelnikova and A. Vanke temporarily settled in the Uralmash district of Yekaterinburg and conducted 15 interviews with Uralmashzavod workers, 8 expert interviews and field observations to find out the transformation of the identity of the working class in three different time periods of socio-economic development of Russia [7]. Another empirical study was conducted by Yu. Karpich: She conducted in-depth interviews with believers in the Lipetsk region in 2019–2020 to study the relationship between religiosity and the political choice of Orthodox believers in Russia [8]. E. Berdysheva analyzed the value of health care through a series of in-depth interviews with Russians [9]. In addition to qualitative research methods for studying the values of social groups, quantitative ones are used — for example, a mass survey in the format of an online questionnaire. So, E. Brodovskaya and A. Dombrovskaya conducted 1,500 questionnaires during an online survey to study the relationship between the value and competence choices of Russian youth [10].

The widespread digitalization and networking of public life have provided new opportunities to explore the values of society. Research areas start from evaluating the digital competencies of a particular social group to finding the relationship between political views and the "digital footprints" of a particular user group. Today, there are several large "schools" that offer their research designs to explore values: The Institute of Humanitarian Technologies in the field of social Computing uses the methodology of intelligent data search and analysis, the Center for the Digital Future of the University of Los Angeles uses the methodology of research of national Internet audiences.

However, the study of values in the digital space also involves collecting information in an offline or online format. For example, E. Brodovskaya, together with A. Sinyakova and M. Davydova, conducted offline research. They conducted a mass survey (13 thousand respondents) in the Stavropol Territory to study digital

competencies of different generations [11]. As an example of an online study of values, one can cite the work of P. Gong, L. Wang, I. Wei and Yu Yu, who, based on a large array of data (450 thousand posts on the Chinese microblogging service Sina Weibo) collected information about the public perception of nuclear energy in China [12]. The objects of their study were keywords, topics and tone of messages. Studying the civic activity of Russian youth in the digital space, A. Dobmrovskaya conducted a massive online survey [13].

Studying the impact of modern technologies on political activism, E. Brodovskaya and A. Akhremenko used modeling methods (both mathematical and thematic) and logistic regressions, as well as network analysis [14].

Of great research interest are digital platforms where users leave digital footprints (for example, likes, reposts, comments), which become the object of studying people's worldview. According to Mediascope, in April 2022, 80 % of the population over the age of 12 or 97.5 million people used the Internet in Russia [15]. For example, researchers have proved that digital communications influence the development of civic values and provide new opportunities for political participation of citizens [14. P. 15]. As S. writes Buliann, today social networks are more often used for political expression than for information coverage of events [16]. Social networks convey emotional or motivational messages that emphasize moral outrage, social justice issues, or ideological issues [17]. At the same time, scientists are closely studying the behavioral patterns and values of generation Z (born from 1997 to 2012), whose socialization was influenced by the digital environment [18].

Scientists use various methods and techniques to study values in the digital space. The most common methods have become content and discourse analysis in social networks. Thus, D. Antonov assessed how political values are manifested in the content on the official pages of the heads of subjects of Russia [19]. The author analyzed user messages under the publications of the heads of Russian subjects on the most popular digital platforms in Russia. O. Shmeleva and D. Kaminchenko conducted a content analysis of 185 messages with the hashtag "state" in the digital space to study the image of the state among Russian users [20]. It is noteworthy that the authors supplemented their work by conducting a field psychosemantic study — projective drawings and associative tests.

However, the above–mentioned works can most likely be attributed to qualitative ones — the authors do not seek representation, but focus on the study of specific research cases.

Another cohort of scientists seeks to collect large amounts of data. For example, scientists collected almost 65 million messages in the digital space during the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-2019), analyzed their tone and concluded that the pandemic had an extremely negative impact on public sentiment. Chinese scientists S. Shan, C. Peng and I. Wei set themselves the task of creating a multi-level system for assessing the attitude of residents to pollution of urban rivers [21]. To study the emotional reactions of people in the Chinese microblogging service Weibo, the authors proposed studying messages in different optics: trends, seasons, space and dynamics.

However, the chaotic array of data forces the use of an integrated approach and methodology for searching for digital markers in social media for automated information extraction. It is worth noting that the analysis of user behavior in social media has several advantages: users voluntarily leave messages and do not expect them to be investigated, which increases the objectivity and reliability of the conclusions. This approach to the study of values in the digital space forces the use of services to monitor the media space. The uploaded data array is used by scientists to build social graphs to study the interaction within and between online communities [22].

Here we should digress and highlight the current market for media monitoring systems and other tools that help researchers collect data. The leaders among monitoring systems in the domestic market are Medialogy (positioned as a more suitable system for socio-political topics) and Brandanalytics (positioning focuses on monitoring for commercial organizations), however, if we compare the possibilities in uploading messages, the conditions are almost identical: the maximum allowed time interval is a year, and the number of mentions for a one–time upload is up to a million messages. But these systems do not provide detailed information about users that can be used to build a graph. To do this, parsers are used, whose work is based on open social media APIs. Such opportunities are provided only by Vkontakte and Telegram. Researchers appreciate the method of constructing and analyzing a social graph, which allows us to study the mechanism and power of influence of opinion leaders on users, as well as to determine the pattern of interaction within and between online communities.

One of the innovative and important works in the field of quantitative digital research is the work of G. Magno and V. Almeida, in which the authors developed a methodology for measuring data from online text sources using word embedding models to measure international human values in an online environment. The aim of the study was to create an online index of human values by country, which reflects cultural characteristics and values around the world. G. Magno and V. Almeida used 1.7 billion "tweets" on the social network X, grouping them by location from 59 countries, and then created a list of 22 online queries, each of which contains a specific question from the sociological project of The World Values Survey, related to such controversial topics as "religion", "science", and "abortion". According to the results of the study, it can be found out that this methodology is really able to capture universal values online for different countries and on different topics [23].

Researchers S. Kakar, D. Dhaka and M. Mehrotra also use an analysis based on the "tweets" of users of the social network X in their work. The aim of the work was to study the well-known value systems that most people in the analyzed regions possess (Delhi/Washington). So, using the lexicological method (value-based lexicon method) based on values, the authors created a dictionary to determine user behavior in terms of their value systems [24].

It is impossible not to mention the problem in the application of quantitative metrics that simplify the understanding of digital citizenship due to their construction on the opposition of digital and non-digital [14. P. 14]. That is why

there are studies in sociological science in which they try to use both qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, A. Dombrovskaya and A. Sinyakov, during the study of youth civic engagement, conducted an All-Russian mass youth survey processed using cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling methods. As a result, the relationship between the type of civic engagement and the respondent's value profile was revealed [25].

The study of information flows of opponents of vaccination in the digital environment of Russia by I. Batanina, E. Bordovskaya, V. Lukshin and M. Davydova was also based on the use of a hybrid strategy involving the combination of methods of cognitive mapping and socio-media analysis of thematic information flows, as well as the construction of graphs of digital communities [26].

Based on the above, for the stated research on the topic "The cognitive and value structure of the worldview models of a modern Russian: generational and regional differences", the optimal are neoinstitutional and network approaches. Since the medium is the network, it is recommended to start the study with "switching nodes" — in our case, these are social media accounts that articulate discourse and form stereotypes. The cognitive mapping method will collect messages, formalize them according to key parameters both standard for social media (reach, type of social network, etc.) and special ones inherent in the subject: stereotypes as social institutions. Next, it is necessary to identify speech patterns, as well as classify their belonging to different types of authors and stereotypes. At this stage, the basic platforms are Telegram, X and YouTube. Next, using the SMA method and "big data" technology, the central nodes of the network that spread stereotypes will be identified, thereby institutionalizing them. And the social graph method will help to assess the development of infrastructure (proximity of nodes and intensity of connections within the network). In our case, the central nodes are large communities and social media channels Vkontakte and Telegram. The data obtained will demonstrate how stereotypes are formed and spread in the social media space. Next, it is necessary to assess how ordinary users assimilate and reproduce stereotypes on social networks. Since the socio-demographic characteristics of users are important factors for this study, the logical step would be to study their behavior, where there is data on their age and region of residence, i.e. the only option is the Vkontakte social network. It is proposed to study user messages on your page and in the comments, as well as classify them according to parameters based on those that were set at the start of the study, so we can assess how much supporters of certain values are ready to reproduce. In addition, it is proposed to check the intersections of the audience of large communities relaying various categories of stereotypes in order to test the hypothesis of the presence of an "echo chamber effect" among supporters of mutually exclusive stereotypes.

As the review of modern research shows, the study of values in the digital space is possible using a different set of methods and techniques. Researchers can use quantitative or qualitative methods. The final choice depends on the task set in the study: to fix value trends, it will be enough to use qualitative methods

and a small amount of empirical material, to determine the scale of certain values in the digital environment, quantitative methods should be used with mandatory observance of a representative sample. However, the hybrid design of the study — a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques — allows for a multidimensional analysis of values in the digital space, which will bring the conclusions closer to objective ones.

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Изучение политических ценностей в цифровом пространстве: обзор российских и зарубежных исследований

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Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются лучшие практики изучения политических ценностей респондентов в контексте высокой степени цифровизации. В процессе возрастания роли Интернета возникает потребность изучения паттернов поведения пользователей в сетевом пространстве. Целью же данной статьи является выработка оптимального дизайна научной работы для исследования когнитивно-ценностной структуры мировоззренческих моделей современного россиянина. В основе статьи лежит анализ нормативно-правовых актов. Автор предполагает, что гибридная стратегия исследования и триангуляция методов является ключевым фактором в разработке программы научной работы в условиях цифрового перехода в обществе. Рассмотренные материалы содержат важные для понимания подходов и методик изучения политических ценностей респондентов.

CURRENT PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Ключевые слова: политические ценности, киберметрия, социально-медийный анализ, информационное общество, мировозренческие модели, когнитивно-ценностная структура