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COLTA.RU ONLINE PUBLICATION IN THE MODERN MEDIA SPACE: THE KULTURTRAGER FUNCTION

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Abstract

The kulturtrager function of mass media is analyzed in the article on the example of COLTA.RU online publication which is the first public media in the Russian information space that exists through crowdfunding. The emphasis is placed on the fact that true kulturtragerism should be selfless, aimed not at making money, but at attracting attention to art and engaging in creativity, which, in turn, causes greater trust and response from the audience. COLTA.RU online publication fully meets these criteria. Unlike many specialized media about culture, COLTA.RU does not just observe cultural events and publish facts, but talks about the role of culture in society, revealing the spirit of the times as a whole, and initiates their own educational projects (master classes, schools for young people, art festivals). The modern media space is open for everyone to interact with everyone, so the problem of socio-cultural competence of the individual is particularly acute today. The author analyzes the sections, genre specifics, and features of communication with the readership in the publication. The emphasis is also placed on the strategies and tactics that are used by the media resource to attract the audience's attention to problems in the cultural sphere and to actively involve the readers themselves in cultural-blogging activities.

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1. Introduction

The popularization of culture in the modern information environment proves to be a challenging task as culture in Russian society often happens to be on the sidelines: funded by the state on a residual basis and displaced from educational programs by more popular industries, it is also driven to the periphery of the agenda in the media space. Such a trend seems extremely dangerous. According to the ancient tradition, culture can be defined as the cultivation of the soul: "The cultivation of the soul is culture: it weeds out the vices in the soul, prepares the souls for the acceptance of sowing and entrusts it to it - sows, so to speak. Only those seeds that ripen, bring a plentiful harvest" (Cicero, 1975, p. 252). Therefore, the problem of cultural education in the media sphere is becoming particularly relevant and vitally important.

2. Problem Statement

It is necessary to take into account the interdisciplinary approaches to the definition of the term "culture" – this phenomenon is included in the categorical apparatus of many humanities: cultural studies, sociology, philosophy, ethnolinguistics, psychology, history, but each of them considers it from the side that is of interest to a particular science. The study of the interaction of media and culture is quite popular nowadays. This issue is explored within the framework of applied cultural studies and media ecology.

It is possible to distinguish a broad and narrow definition of the concept of "culture" in the cultural paradigm. In a broad sense, culture is everything that is created by a person for a specific purpose, i.e. it is any purposeful activity. In a narrow sense, culture is understood as a set of rules, norms, customs, traditions that are transmitted and assimilated through learning. Moreover, this set of rules is constantly changing, depending on external and internal conditions. This fundamental feature of culture was noted by the Russian culturologist, researcher of the functional theory of culture Flier (2000a):

culture is a self-correcting system, a constantly fluctuating field of norms, rules and other elements of social experience that change both under the influence of external natural and historical circumstances of society's existence (adaptation), and in connection with constant collective or individual contradictions and conflicts within society itself, social rivalry, demographic crises, influx of emigrants, the birth of brilliant personalities, bursts of criminal activity, etc. (p. 12)

Within the framework of our research, Flier's position that culture is a space of uneven distribution of experience, traditions, norms between different people is extremely important, so it is necessary to highlight group interests and personal socio-cultural experience, the presence of individual interpretations of standards set by a particular culture, "cultural texts", etc. This ability to comment, interpret, decipher the fruits of cultural creativity determines the socio-cultural competence of the individual. The modern media space is open for interaction of everyone with everyone. Therefore, the problem of socio-cultural competence of the individual is particularly significant: on the one hand, the media become a field for generating innovations, modernization trends, changes in value principles and other manifestations of

creative potentials, on the other hand, they form, and often impose cultural stereotypes, cliches, thereby keeping the participants of media communication in a static state.

From the point of view of social culturology, the basis of culture includes cultural forms - universals that are often reproduced at an unconscious level, automatically, stereotypes, patterns of behavior, norms, rituals that are strictly canonized, for example, a wedding ceremony, a literary or artistic work, etc. To preserve and multiply these cultural patterns is one of the priorities of state policy. Media technologies allow transforming cultural universals, making them more attractive and not losing relevance for a modern audience. Moreover, modern mass communication makes it possible not only to transform cultural universals, but also create new patterns.

The research conducted by the author and presented in this article is based on the culturological approach to media communication by Novikova (2011). The art critic analyzes television from aesthetic point of view and examines the specifics of the impact of electronic means of communication on culture – the mechanisms of transformation of traditional values in modern society through a "screen mosaic" and comes to the conclusion that the media, and TV, in particular, turn from art into a commodity: "neither radio nor television have become full-fledged arts, and artifacts created by means of cinema and photography are not always art. Their communicative potential, often effectively used for political and economic purposes, clearly dominates the artistic one" (Novikova, 2011, p. 45).

The communicative analysis of media texts presented in the research of Zharovskii (2020a, 2020b), is of particular interest as well. The author analyzes the media content from the point of view of reflecting the structure of the communicative process in them: source - message – addressee – feedback. Studies on the mediatization of culture, the culture of mediatization (Covacevic, 2018; Hepp, 2020; Khrul', 2019), the axiological role of color as a certain cultural code in modern media discourse are also indicative (Novikova & Novikov, 2017). The problem of mediatization of modern culture is actively studied by foreign scientists (Civila et al., 2021; Lunt & Livingstone, 2016;). Muscat analyzes in the education and enlightenment of the audience (Muscat, 2017) and the role of the media (television, for example).

The kulturtrager phenomenon in the humanities has been studied within the framework of history and philology. Historical science, for example, analyzes in sufficient detail the policy of sustainable "acculturation" and integration of the imperial borderlands with the imperial center on the Asian outskirts of Russia, and Milevskaya (2017) considers philological education as a tool of kulturtragers. The analysis of the cultural and managerial activities of the media and the media in general in the social sciences is extremely unpopular.

The etymology of the lexeme "kulturtrager" goes back to the German language and is translated as "carrier of culture". The phenomenon of cultural identity is primarily associated with the formation of cultural competence of the individual, it is the preservation, protection and promotion of cultural national identity. But in the course of the historical genesis analysis of this phenomenon, it turns out that the term "kulturtragerism" is not so unambiguous. Culture is a paradoxical phenomenon – it is not only a background for collaboration, but, as history shows, it is also one of the grounds for mass violence: the path from protecting the national identity of culture to the opening of Auschwitz and Dachau is very short. Joseph Goebbels also started with kulturtragerism (Flier, 2000b, p. 155). In the mass media, this

fine line is often erased and consolidation flows into confrontation, and exaggerated tolerance leads to countercultural consequences.

That is why kulturtragerism often takes on a negative connotation, for example, in the XIX century, the cultural and colonization mission of Catherine II to create a "German principality" in the Volga region, on which the Empress had pinned many hopes, did not bring positive results: the Volga colonists did not seek to assimilate with the Russian population, communicating mainly with fellow countrymen in German and often extremely hostile to the local population. According to the stories of the Russian statistician, with the peasants, many of whom, such as tenants, are enslaved to them and often earn rent in kind on German fields, they are extremely rude, as only a Prussian soldier can be rude, and sometimes they are cruel, like true Teutons (Ibraev, 2019).

In the USSR, the concept of kulturtragerism acquired a sarcastic connotation and is associated with the forcible imposition (inculturation) by the colonizing countries of their "culture" to the enslaved countries. In modern scientific thought, there is a division of kulturtragerism into true and false - the one that is initiated for the sake of earning money, is somehow engaged and the one that is disinterested, aimed at popularizing culture for the sake of culture.

3. Research Questions

The research is aimed at studying the modern media about culture from the point of view of their educational function.

1. What is kulturtragerism?
2. What is the phenomenon of kulturtragerism in the modern media space?
3. What place does an online publication COLTA.RU occupy in the modern information field?
4. What tools are used by the COLTA.RU project to perform a kulturtrager function?

4. Purpose of the Study

To identify the cultural and popularizing potential of the COLTA.RU online publication and the tools for its formation.

5. Research Methods

First of all, such general scientific methods as analysis and synthesis were used in the research. When studying the COLTA.RU online publication, the author took materials from different sections of the project for the period from January to May 2021 – when identifying the characteristic features of the language, the visual series, the specifics of the author's beginning in different genre texts, it was possible to identify common strategies and tactics for the interaction of the authors of COLTA.RU with the audience.

The content analysis of media texts made it possible to conduct a comparative analysis of various media about culture for the purpose of performing their kulturtrager function. The analysis showed that in

a number of similar specialized media about culture, COLTA.RU does not just observe cultural events and publish facts, but talks about the role of culture in society, revealing the spirit of the times as a whole.

6. Findings

COLTA.RU is a Russian online media about culture, which appeared in 2012 on the basis of OpenSpace.ru, a socio-political publication that closed in the same year. Colta.ru is one of the first Russian publications that does not have an owner, which enables us to call it an independent, unbiased media. There is a website functioning by means of crowdfunding, consequently, the agenda is formed by the users themselves. In addition, the project is financially supported by patrons – mostly cultural figures who popularize it among the general public. Unlike many specialized media about culture, Colta.ru does not just observe cultural events and publish facts, but talks about the role of culture in society, revealing the spirit of the times as a whole.

The project meets the criteria of "true kulturtragerism" - a sincere desire to do something in culture; not trying to make money on it (no personal, selfish motives). Members of the Colta.ru Board of Trustees when talking about the mission of the project, focus on the fact that it enlightens selflessly, earns without being sold. So, a member of the Higher School of Economics (HSE) professor Alexander Dolgin assures: "for ten years I have been thinking and experimenting on non-banal, non-material ways of using money. When will society mature enough to pay not forcibly, but proactively and charitably - at the behest of the soul?! COLTA.RU is following this path, which is close to me ideologically and institutionally" (COLTA.RU, n.d.a). The writer Demyan Kudryavtsev believes that "the citizens of Colta are its readers. Support is our contribution, our taxes, if you wish. They are just voluntary, and they will not be stolen" (COLTA.RU, n.d.a).

An interesting distinctive feature of kulturtragerism is highlighted by scientists who analyze this phenomenon: kulturtragerism is a long process, taking at least 5 years. Only in this way can authority and reputation be developed, which are subsequently transformed into the creation of a team of like-minded people on a free basis. Kulturtrager specifics of Colta.ru also lies in the fact that this media does not only cover the events of cultural life, but also itself is the organizer of various events: round tables, lectures, festivals ("Island of the 90s", "NOW", the School of Citizen Journalism, the discussion marathon "What hurts?").

As an expressive example of COLTA's kulturtrager activity, let's take the section She is an expert. It is a collaboration of the publication and the community of Russian women experts. The goal of the project is to popularize in the public space women who share their knowledge in a particular professional activity with everyone. If we analyze the communicative component of the project, there is a very clear focus on getting feedback from the audience: you can find an expert for your event or become one by filling out a questionnaire on the website and taking part in discussions, new projects, commenting on a particular problem.

In the COLTA.ru section She is an expert the emphasis is on the stories of women activists presented in the form of longreads: artists, directors, writers talking about their work, about their identity, about the worldview - these are comments-confessions of women feminists, they are both the main characters and the authors of the section: only one material devoted to a photo project about a burial

ground of radioactive and chemical waste, attracted the attention of the editors of the column because of its acute social orientation – the activist is trying to draw the attention of the public and the authorities to an environmental problem in one of the Moscow residential districts.

The fact that the section has a clearly feminist bias is also indicated by the headlines and leads of publications: "Alice Tazhnaya: Being a Feminist in Russian Film Criticism", "The Legend of St. Petersburg Feminism - about actionism, theater, political art and urban femme spaces", "Maria Rachmaninova: surviving in the Academy, thinking in philosophy and art: "It is indecent when there are so many men in the department, and a young woman wrote the work", "I saw the magazine as a support for women who perceive feminism warily".

It is significant that femme publications are the most popular among readers – they gain the most views, for example, an interview with Mari Davtyan about human rights feminism, in which she discusses the law against domestic violence, was viewed by a record number of readers for the project – 20,865, and Alice Tazhna's comment on feminist film criticism in Russia - scored 15,873 views. Comments on the VK social network also indicate an increased reader's interest in the topic of feminism on COLTA.RU: only femme publications cause discussion in the community. So, the post "Why it's time for us to assemble a democratic feminist forum", duplicated from the publication's website, was rather sharply commented by several subscribers: "unhappy people!", "Their floor is their ceiling..." (Khodyreva, 2021).

In general, the She is an expert section performs a cultural and educational function - through stories from the life and work of women activists, presentations of their projects, historical video conversations (video lyrics: "Philosophy: the feminine gender") about the key role of women in science and art, it becomes a platform for self-expression, for revealing and understanding their own socio-cultural identity. Talking about the painful (without advice), the heroines of the She is an expert section suggest readers a way out of a problematic situation, ways to adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

In addition, the problems of various "unpopular" subcultures in Russia are analyzed here: Nadia Plungian (one of the authors COLTA.RU) interviews representatives and activists of the LGBT community, photo projects of "informal people" are presented in the section. But the feminist pathos pushes the cultural and popularizing potential of the project into the background – the statements of women activists are extremely subjective, the judgments about men are not reasoned by anything: *"Something, and the disregard for the status of women and our work in the liberal democratic environment has remained almost unchanged"; "men absolutely do not perform their parental functions, they are not included in child care and household duties..."* (Plungian, 2020).

Particular cases are generalized and transferred to the entire socio-cultural situation in the country as a whole, which seems not entirely ethical and logical. The discussion platform (as the authors themselves call the project) turns out to be a biased monologue of "experts" who have written themselves down as such – by their own admission, the criteria of expertise are determined by the "authors" of the project themselves: *"...I feel like an impostor even now, when I write this text. I am literally struggling with the feeling that I am not competent enough..."* (Kaineanung, 2021).

7. Conclusion

Thus, against the background of currently available media resources devoted to cultural topics and issues, which are mainly limited to information support for various "cultural" events (creating only the appearance of kulturtragerism), the online media resource COLTA.RU not only informs, but rather popularizes culture, forms a discussion field around a particular problem with the help of various educational, historical (retrospective) projects.

According to experts, a distinctive feature of kulturtragerism is work on a gratuitous basis. Arousing interest in culture and attracting attention to it, COLTA.RU does not earn money, the project is implemented through the support of patrons and readers, existing on the verge of closure: the editorial board is not limited to publishing news and analytical content (like the vast majority of domestic media about culture), but also actively organizes lectures, master classes, festivals, forcing, according to readers, to think, argue, analyze: "I often disagree and argue with Colta, but, God, how important it is to have an interlocutor with whom you can argue and disagree" (COLTA.RU, n.d.b).

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