Youth Involvement in Digital Civic Activism: From Online Encounter to Participation

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Abstract. The involvement of the younger generation in civic participation practices is a relevant task for youth policy actors and public activists. The digital environment not only expands the forms and directions of civic activism, but also designs new mobilization mechanisms. Network communities have a high involvement potential, but they exist in a saturated information flow. Therefore, it is important to understand how users encounter messages on socially significant issues and initiatives to address them, and how they react to them ("input level": coming across an offer to participate in a civic project); and whether this experience affects the intensity of involvement in real practices of digital civic activism ("output level": reacting in the form of participation/non-participation in the project). The article is based on the results of an online survey of young residents of the Sverdlovsk Oblast (n = 1150). The sample population includes students and working youth. According to the results of cluster analysis, we propose a typology of

models showing how young people encounter the content about civic initiatives; we identify and describe three types: involved, superficial and scrolling readers. We provide a classification of resources that young citizens are subscribed to, in terms of their connection with issues of civic activism; we also reveal that subscriptions to specialized resources are closely connected with the typology of encountering this type of content. We reveal how young people react when they come across civic messages, and find out that they mostly show denying and interested reactions, while the amount of supportive and active responses is negligible. We build a typology of digital participation based on assessing the intensity of involvement. The share of those highly involved in the information field and real practices is 5%; the majority of respondents belong to the medium-active and low-active participants in civic activism.

Key words: civic activism, youth, digital activism, engagement, mobilization of participation, factors promoting attractiveness of the content.

Introduction

In recent years, the problem of digital civic activism of the younger generation have been raising an interest both among members of the scientific community and practitioner managers forming and implementing youth policy principles at all levels. Readiness to innovations and immersion in new high-tech communication means are becoming the basis of susceptibility to virtual services and the use of the internet technologies in different spheres (Istyagina-Yeliseeva et al., 2020). Digital tools allow young people to create/join communities, organize events, implement projects, express their civic position, and generally determine their place in social fabric while involving in digital civic activism practices.

Russia's national development goals include achievement of public well-being, for self-actualization, safe environment, as well as the digital transformation. The federal project "The Youth of Russia"[1] provides for creating conditions for effective youth self-realization, and also for covering youth projects, educational forums, outreach campaigning for young people from all regions. The digital development of the regions is ensured by spreading Internet access and achieving "digital maturity" in key sectors of the economy and social sphere. Active involvement of young people in the development of initiatives in the framework of the national projects has already been carried out at the start of their implementation[2].

One more support for developing the youth digital activism includes the main activity directions of the United Nations (UN): sustainable development goals[3], development of e-government, maintenance of democracy, etc. Countries around the world are engaging in the development of the digital citizenship by creating programs (for instance, UAE[4] or Scotland[5]). Projects in the

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[1] Federal project "The Youth of Russia". Available at: https://edu.gov.ru/national-project/projects/young/

[2] "Culture", "Education" and "Ecology" – in the top 3 national projects for young people. NAFI, August 12, 2021. Available at: https://nafi.ru/analytics/kultura-obrazovanie-i-ekologiya-v-top-3-natsproektov-dlya-molodezhi/ (accessed: April 1, 2023).

[3] UN. Sustainable Development Goals. Available at: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ru/sustainable-development-goals/ (accessed: March 29, 2023).

[4] Ministry of Interior of the UAE. Digital participation. Available at: https://www.moi.gov.ae/en/E.Participation.aspx (accessed: April 2, 2023).

[5] Scottish Government. Digital. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/policies/digital/ (accessed: April 2, 2023).

field of youth digital activism are based on the European Union Youth Strategy[6], which states the revolution in youth life due to the digital transformation and necessity to consider positive opportunities in policy and challenges of this transformation. To mobilize young generation, whose activities can contribute to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda into action, the National Youth Council of Russia has established an annual program for young representatives of civic society "SDG Youth Ambassadors in Russia"[7].

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation[8] note the significant development of the conditions for civic activism including through interaction between the authorities and communities of citizenson the Internet. The report mentions that the Internet space in Russia is a territory where institutions of a new type of civil society are being formed. It acts as a forum for discussions creating a system of interactions between participants with both common and opposite views and ideas, initiating new forms of civic engagement; as a result, there is "relatively high interest of the significant part of youth in establishing a broad public online dialogue about social, legal and other aspects of Russian society (Dombrovskaya, 2020).

The digital environment has a number of benefits for civic expressions removing barriers and obstacles. For instance, Madison and Klang note that on the individual level, involvement in digital activism increases participants' chances of becoming visible to a larger audience, raises awareness of areas of concern, and creates channels for promoting ideas and beliefs (Madison, Klang,

2020). Among various aspects of digital activism – forms and features of digital participation, pseudo-activism, borders with offline forms, etc. – mechanisms of involvement seem, in our opinion, to be the least studied. At the same time, the effective realization of the mobilization potential of digital communities can become a source and a driving force of real social transformation.

The Sverdlovsk Oblast is a fairly typical Russian region, with settlements of various types in terms of size, leading economic sector, and the development of digital infrastructure. At the same time, the Sverdlovsk Oblast's indicators by various criteria (level of Internet usage[9], average monthly salary[10], etc.) are close to the Russian average, which suggests that the conclusions drawn from the research in this region are typical. The Sverdlovsk Oblast is also the region which has managed to move from the category of most "anxious" to the group of well-balanced according to the CROS[11] index. The index primarily takes into account fears that have a regional context, provoke an active response in the form of discussion in social media, civic response, and lead to civic participation, which is a key way of overcoming anxiety. We believe that studying the involvement of the young generation living in the territory with a positive experience of solving socially significant problems through civic activism in the digital civic engagement practices will make it possible to characterize the modern image of young people as initiators and co-participants in the development of the region and civil society.

[6] The European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL (accessed: March 28, 2023).

[7] National Youth Council of Russia. Program "SDG Youth Ambassadors in Russia". Available at: http://youthrussia.ru/sustainabledevelopment (accessed: March 31, 2023).

[8] Report on the state of civil society in the Russian Federation for 2021. Available at: http://131fz.ranepa.ru/uploads/files/2022/01/oprf2021.pdf (accessed: March 14, 2023).

[9] Selected federal statistical observation on the use of information technology and information and telecommunication networks by the population. Observation results. 2021. Rosstat. Available at: https://gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/business/it/ikt21/index.html (accessed: March 30, 2023).

[10] Information for monitoring the socio-economic situation of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. 2022. Rosstat. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/11109/document/13259 (accessed: March 29, 2023).

[11] National Anxiety Index. Rating of Russian regions. CROS. Available at: https://www.cros.ru/ru/exploration/research/ (accessed: March 19, 2023).

Literature review

Digitalization of all spheres of social life becomes a factor and a condition for the manifestation of youth civic position, marking its position and status in the social structure as a subject of social activity. R. Adler and J. Goggin define civic activism through the prism of citizen participation in community life in order to improve conditions and shape the future (Adler, Goggin, 2005). These are collective actions based on cooperation (Ekman, Amnå, 2012), and efforts are aimed at solving problematic tasks, pursuing interests, achieving the common good for communities, and influencing decision-making (Barrett, Pachi, 2019). According to E. Giddens a person as a supporter or activist of a social movement feels that they can influence the vector of further social development (Giddens, Sutton, 2018).

Civic participation can take many forms: individual and collective, passive, reactive and active, as well as political and non-political (Hashagen, 2002). P. Brandtzaeg has concluded that women are more likely to participate in humanitarian aid and social movements, while men are more active in political life (Brandtzaeg, 2017). J. Diehl and I. Chan have found that the main barriers to civic activism are a lack of influence on political decision-making and a perceived lack of topical issues (Diehl, Chan, 2021). According to P. Sztompka, citizens' involvement in social movements and their activism are associated with profound social transformations "affecting the sphere of traditions and customs that technological and industrial progress brings, as well as with abrupt economic crises and political upheavals of the social system" (Sztompka, 2005, p. 172). At the same time in social systems there are individuals and groups that become passive passengers, taking no action and hoping to benefit without cost. In this case, outside observers are formed assessing real civic activity as a type of behavior associated with certain risks.

Digital activism is becoming a relatively new type of civic activism. Social media act as a new "playground" for young people to express opinions, share experiences, leave feedback, and find like-minded people. The young generation is no longer focused on traditional social institutions and practices, and is turning to social media to affirm its identity as a new model of solidarity (Moran et al., 2018). A.N. Gureeva and her colleagues emphasize that young people are characterized by a focus on social change, which is evident in their everyday practices including media activity (Gureeva et al., 2020). The use of the Internet, according to the English sociologist Ch. Hine, has become perceived as a way of being present in the world rather than as a means of accessing a separate virtual domain (Hine, 2015).

Some researchers (Vissers, Stolle, 2014) believe that there is no clear verifiable evidence of the impact of online communication on civic activism. S. Boulianne (Boulianne, 2015) notes that current metadata conclusively demonstrates the formation of a link between social media and civic activism, but the question of causal relationships and transformative efficacy is still unresolved. L.N. Saburova's collective project (Saburova et al., 2021) proves that the information richness of communication in online groups works more to disseminate information than to mobilize to action. In addition, A. Afouxenidis estimates that people's ability to fully participate depends on previous offline experiences and degrees of technical competence (Afouxenidis, 2014), where the digital divide (Schradie, 2018) and weak digital skills limit engagement in civic activism for some groups[12].

Nevertheless, researchers agree that social media have a powerful resource for mobilization

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[12] Cho A., Byrne J., Pelter Z. (2020). *Digital Civic Engagement by Young People*. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/media/72436/file/Digital-civic-engagement-by-young-people-2020_4.pdf

(Dahlgren, 2009). For example, A.A. Azarov and his colleagues have identified basic types of civic activism and found that the scale and conventionality of actors' activities under conditions of digital mobilization depend on the ability of agents to change roles and environments (Azarov et al., 2021). New forms of social connections act as the basis for the transformation of social life, bringing fundamental changes in the practices of civic participation. At the same time, the younger generation is able not only to reproduce routinized online actions, but also to create new ones using the tools available (Soldatova et al., 2020).

In this article, we will define digital civic activism as active participation in social activities through the use of modern information and communication technologies, including online media, in order to raise awareness of socially significant problems, to exert pressure or create initiatives to solve them. In our research, we focus on the aspect of involvement in online activism, attracting new participants in civic online projects. The main theoretical underpinnings are two theories: neo-behavioral theory, which allows viewing citizen engagement and activism as actions provoked by informational stimuli (Parma, 2021), and communication power, which points to the impact of some social actors on others and the pressure from the active core of the online community on the remaining citizens to engage (Castells, 2009).

Research design

The purpose of the research is to examine the impact of users' strategies of encountering the content about socially significant problems and civic initiatives to solve them on the intensity of engagement in digital civic activism. The research objectives are to construct a typology of young people according to their frequency of encountering and reacting to thematic content, to identify the structure of young people's subscriptions to social networks, the most appealing/mobilizing

characteristics of engaging messages, and the intensity of youth involvement in actual digital activism practices.

The empirical basis is the results of the author's sociological survey of young residents of the Sverdlovsk Oblast in September 2022 (1,150 people aged 14–25). The research method is a combination of an online survey and a handout questionnaire (for students). The instrumentation for the two survey varieties is identical (with minor differences in the comments on the completion of the questionnaire and the design of tabular questions, taking into account the possibilities of the electronic form), as the questionnaire did not contain the types of questions that cause the greatest differences when using online and offline surveys (open-ended questions, knowledge questions whose answers can be "spied" online, etc.) (Shkurin, 2015).

To construct the sampling frame, we carried out a quota selection taking into account the following characteristics: type of settlement, gender, age, occupation. The territorial positioning of the sample assumed the inclusion of residents of the regional center (Yekaterinburg, 61% of respondents), large and medium-sized cities (10%), and small towns of the Sverdlovsk Oblast (29%). We defined the object age range according to the digital generation, the conventional boundary of which is 1995, and cultural and social identity is largely associated with Internet activity and the use of social media (Shaigerova et al., 2022). Among the respondents, 57% were female and 43% — male.

According to the occupation, the respondents' structure took into account the main activity type — students and working youth. The category of student youth is as follows: school students in grades 8–11 (14%), students in elementary vocational education (4%), students in secondary vocational education (34%), and students in higher education (38%). Among student youth, 57% of respondents are full-time students and do not work, and 20% combine study and employment. The proportion

of working youth alone is 10%; in this category 32% are professionals, 20% are freelancers, 15% are clerks, 15% are workers, 4% are managers, 4% have their own businesses, and 10% are temporarily unemployed.

We processed the data obtained in the survey using SPSS software. To achieve the purpose, we used both general scientific research methods (comparison, generalization, induction, classification, etc.) and special methods of working with quantitative data: construction of univariate and bivariate frequency distributions, correlation analysis, cluster analysis.

The task of considering the situation of young generation involvement in participation in digital projects of civic activism implied distinguishing two key levels: "input", which represents the situation of encounter in the information flow with the offer to participate in the project/action, and "output", which characterizes the reaction in the form of participation/nonparticipation in the project. Admitting a certain simplicity in this model of youth mobilization into digital activism, we consider it as a methodological framework that allows building a system of indicators and data analysis sequence.

On this basis, we have selected the most important indicators determining the highlighted levels of youth involvement in civic activism taking into account the need to capture the factors and motives for choosing a potential project to participate in the context of digital information flows. The indicators of the "input" level of involvement included the frequency of online encounters with certain content (about social problems of residents, civic projects, inaccurate and provocative information, etc.), subscription activity, reaction to appealing messages, attractive characteristics of involving messages; indicators of the "output" level of involvement included the activity of participation in online projects. As a basis for constructing the question about digital activism, we used the typology of D. George and D. Leidner, according to which the questionnaire provided a list of 22 actions covering as widely as possible all potential forms of digital participation.

The study puts forward two key hypotheses. The first one establishes the connection between the frequency of encountering information about socially significant problems of a city, level of interest in posts about civic activism, and intensity of involvement in digital civic activism. At the same time, it is impossible to establish the actual frequency of encountering such information on the Internet in the survey research, so the self-assessment of intensity is recorded. On the one hand, since the population under study seems to be quite homogeneous in terms of socio-demographic indicators, we can expect close parameters of lifestyle, value orientations, behavioral patterns, including on the Internet; in this context we can assume that the respondents have approximately the same level of digital competence, similarity of digital technologies used, social networks visited, etc. (Salganova, Osipova, 2023). On the other hand, the issue imposes certain filters on distribution channels (websites of organizations and social movements, bloggers' pages, communities in social networks, etc.), which creates individual trajectories of users' encounter with the disseminated content. The second hypothesis concerns the characteristics of the post/message itself, which allows highlighting the parameters that increase the likelihood of attention to the information itself and its mobilizing impact on the young audience.

Research results

In order to identify the categories of young people with similar characteristics depending on the frequency of exposure to content messages, we conducted a cluster analysis using the k-means method of respondents' answers to questions about the frequency of 1) reading messages on social networks and information portals concerning social problems of the residents of their city,

2) exposure to messages inviting them to participate in civil initiatives and projects (we used variables with ordinal scales according to the essence of the method, which allowed identifying the frequency of their exposure to content messages). As a result, we have identified three models of encounters with content *(Tab. 1)*.

Involved readers (16.4% of respondents) – constantly or regularly read news about social problems and their solutions, at least 3–4 times a week see messages about civic projects. This subgroup has a slightly higher proportion of young people aged 18–22 (48%, in the other two clusters 40–42%), fewer students in the humanities.

Superficial readers (47.7%) – are regularly or sometimes involved in reading media reports on social problems of residents, meet (notice) information about civic initiatives 1–2 times a month. There are slightly more women in this subgroup (63% compared to 55% in the other clusters).

Scrolling readers (35.9%) – very rarely or not at all interested in news about social life of a city, practically do not meet (do not notice) information about civic projects. The core of this subgroup is made up of young people aged 14–17 (51.5%, 39–40% in other clusters), with a slightly higher percentage of secondary vocational education students (36%, 29% in other clusters).

The predominant pattern is medium-intensity reading of content that creates an informational environment for potential audience involvement in civic activism practices. Between active and absent interest there is a shift to medium-intensity practices: 68% of survey participants sometimes or very rarely read about city's social problems. Let us also note that these patterns are fairly evenly distributed in different categories of social community of young people: their percentage ratio is maintained in territorial subgroups (depending on the type of settlement by size), in gender, educational (by the level of education received in the subcategory of working youth) and groups by education received (both by level – EVE, SVE, higher education, and by specialization).

Let us analyze the content characteristics of the identified patterns of encountering information about socially significant problems and projects in the order of their share of representation.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of representatives of different models of exposure to content about socially significant problems and civic projects, % by column

	Model of encountering content about socially relevant issues and projects		
	Involved readers	Superficial readers	Scrolling readers
Age, years			
14–17	38.6	40.4	51.5
18–22	47.6	42.5	40.2
23–25	13.9	17.1	8.3
Gender			
Male	45.8	37.1	44.6
Female	54.2	62.9	55.4
Occupation			
School pupils	16.3	13.0	15.4
Elementary vocational education (EVE)	5.4	3.5	3.3
Secondary vocational education (SVE)	29.3	29.4	35.9
Higher education	39.8	41.2	38.0
Working youth	9.0	12.6	7.7
Source: own compilation based on the sociological survey results.			

Superficial readers. Representatives of this type believe that they quite often encounter inaccurate information on the Internet (49.9%), do not often see provocation to risky actions (the average indicator is 1.99[13]), rarely encounter calls to participate in unsanctioned activities (1.68). One in five (18.4%) often sees the Internet environment as a threat to their personal safety. Their average level of involvement in reading news on issues of civic participation is combined with their assessment of the Internet as a medium-hazardous environment. Half (51.5%) assess themselves as rather socially active, and 47.3% describe the role of citizen initiative in the life of contemporary Russia as significant. On the one hand, self-assessment of activism has subjective criteria and does not always correspond to objective indicators of engagement (for example, those who give themselves high engagement scores have the lowest indicator for the time they need to spend on civic participation in order to consider themselves an active person). On the other hand, offline models of involvement can be used (through friendships, educational institutions, corporate volunteering, etc.).

Scrolling readers. The type of users who rarely browse content on socially relevant topics and, at the same time, consider the Internet to be the least threatening environment for their safety. They are characterized by mentioning rare encounters with unreliable information (37.5%), the lowest frequency of provocation to risky (1.80) or unauthorized (1.53) actions. Half of them practically do not face the violation of personal boundaries and safety. At the same time 28.4% consider themselves active participants in public life. Representatives of

this type have a more pronounced position (62.1%), associated with an indication of the insignificance (up to the absence) of the influence of public initiative on life in the country.

Involved readers. High inclusion in studying socially oriented content is combined with the perception of Internet information as carrying high risks; 67.5% of representatives of this model believe that they constantly or frequently encounter inaccurate messages. They are characterized by the highest frequency of encounters with calls to action containing risks (2.50) or law violations (2.34); 40.4% often (25.9% of them constantly) feel that they are trying to violate their personal safety. Half of the representatives of this cluster highly evaluate the opportunities for civil initiatives to influence the processes in the country; 61.2% refer themselves to the socially active part of society.

Above, we have raised the issue about the difficulty of measuring the actual amount of content that each survey participant encounters. Indirectly, it was done through recording the type of communities to which there are subscriptions on social networks. Overall, among youth aged 14—25, bloggers are the most common subscribers: 61.7% choose them according to their interests, and 44.8% subscribe to popular and well-known bloggers. Almost every second respondent subscribes to the pages of celebrities (singers, musicians, artists) and famous people in educational/outreach resources. The top five also include communities devoted to problems and events in the region — 35.9% of respondents subscribe to them.

If we consider the results obtained more purposefully in the context of the research topic, then we can divide the presented resources into specialized (uniquely specialized for the topic of civic activism), potentially specialized (where civic activism is not the main content focus, but can be included in the discussion under certain

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[13] The average collision frequency here and below can vary from 1 to 4, where 1 is very rare, 4 is almost every day, all the time. The higher the value of the average, the higher the collision frequency.

circumstances) and generally popular (recognizing the possibility of media personalities to influence public opinion and to form the interest of young people in projects – next we will turn to this idea, – here we rather take into account the motives for signing up for a blog, which are highly likely not related to civic activism).

Distribution of subscriptions among cluster representatives by the frequency of encounters with posts on socially significant issues clearly demonstrates that the involved readers create a rich specialized information environment in which their chances of encountering messages about social problems and civic initiatives that interest us are significantly increased *(Tab. 2)*. On average, involved readers subscribed to 2.13 specialized and 1.57 nonspecialized resources, superficial readers – to 1.47 and 1.48, respectively, scrolling readers – to 0.53 (4 times less than the involved) and 1.09. At the same time, the category of superficial readers is practically comparable to those involved in relation to subscriptions to potentially specialized

resources and overtakes in interest to generally popular resources.

In order to reveal the closeness of the relationship between the selected clusters by intensity of encounter and subscriptions to certain types of resources, we conduct a correlation analysis with the calculation of linear correlation coefficients (reliable relationships between characteristics were described by Pearson's linear correlation coefficient r at the significance level $p < 0.05$, *Tab. 3*). The strongest correlation is expectedly observed with subscriptions to specialized resources: public organizations, pages of civic activists, thematic urban communities.

The analysis of the attractive characteristics of engaging online messages allowed identifying the top 10 parameters that can interest young citizens and encourage them to participate in a civic project *(Tab. 4)*, which confirms the hypothesis that the characteristics of the post/message itself and the mobilizing effect on different young audiences are related. The leading position (with a large margin

Table 2. Structure of subscriptions in social networks for representatives of various models of collision with content about socially significant problems and civil projects, % by column*

Resources	Model of encountering content about socially relevant issues and projects		
	Involved readers	Superficial readers	Scrolling readers
Specialized, of which are:	213.2	147.2	53.2
Nongovernmental organizations, social movements	50.6	30.6	8.3
Communities that discuss problems of a city, region	48.2	49.3	18.2
Public and civic activists	33.7	19.3	5.2
Specific political figures	33.7	19.0	8.3
Voluntary, charitable organizations	31.9	22.8	10.7
Political parties, movements	15.1	6.2	2.5
Potentially specialized, of which are:	156.6	147.5	109.1
Bloggers on interesting topics	68.1	69.8	57.0
Educational, outreach and scientific resources	60.2	54.9	42.4
Authorities (mayor, government, city administration)	19.3	13.7	4.7
House community	9.0	9.1	5.0
Popular, of which are:	100.6	109.9	84.9
Famous singers, musicians, artists	52.4	57.3	45.2
Well-known, popular bloggers	48.2	52.6	39.7
None of the above	3.6	8.1	20.9
* The amount exceeds 100%, as the respondent could specify more than one answer choice. Source: own compilation based on the sociological survey results.			

Table 3. Correlation of encounter patterns with subscriptions to certain types of resources on social networks

Subscription to online resources	Significance of communication
Nongovernmental organizations, social movements	-.340**
Public and civic activists	-.266**
Communities that discuss problems of a city, region	-.260**
Specific political figures	-.226**
Bloggers on interesting topics	-.101**
Voluntary, charitable organizations	-.189**
Authorities (mayor, government, city administration)	-.167**
Political parties, movements	-.166**
Educational, outreach and scientific resources	-.134**
Well-known, popular bloggers	-.083**
Famous singers, musicians, artists, etc.	-.073*
House community	-.064*
None of the above	.203**
* The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral). ** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral). Source: own compilation based on the sociological survey results.	

Table 4. Characteristics of engaging messages which may encourage youth to participate, % by column*

Characteristic	On the data set	Model of encountering content about socially relevant issues and projects		
		Involved readers	Superficial readers	Scrolling readers
Personal interest in a topic	73.7	70.5	79.7	75.2
Participation of acquaintance, friends	44.3	47.0	44.7	44.4
High probability that this project will lead to real change	42.7	40.4	44.7	44.1
Anonymity of participation, impossibility to trace participants	34.1	30.7	35.2	38.3
High level of trust in a project organizer	32.4	38.6	37.5	27.5
Availability of information about the results of previous actions	29.3	39.2	33.7	20.7
Ability to vote quickly, no need to say/write a lot	25.7	31.3	27.5	25.3
Opportunity to express your opinion in detail, offer an idea, advice	24.3	36.7	30.0	13.5
Active discussion of a project, "noise" around a project	23.9	28.3	28.6	18.7
Participation of significant people, celebrities, and community leaders	18.0	27.1	19.9	13.8
Average number of responses**	4.06	4.66	4.39	3.70
* The amount exceeds 100%, as the respondent could specify more than one answer choice. ** The average number includes all responses, including those not in the top 10 listed in this table. Source: own compilation based on the sociological survey results.				

of choice from the next position in the ranking) is personal interest in the topic − 73.7% (recall that 61.7% of respondents also subscribe to bloggers on topics of interest to them, which confirms the high priority of personal interest). At the same time, the higher the level of involvement in reading posts on city problems and activism, the higher the importance of the level of trust in the project organizer, the opportunity to express their opinion in detail, the availability of information

about the results of previous projects, but also the active discussion of the project, the participation of significant people and community leaders. It means that virtually all characteristics of engaging messages are more intensively demanded and taken into account by active audiences. For the low-involved in the information agenda activism, the indication of anonymity of participation is more significant (in comparison with other clusters), here is a lower indicator of the average number of selected responses (3.7), 10% indicated only personal interest as a motivating factor.

Next, we should consider the situation of the transition from the position of the reader of the content about the socially significant initiatives of citizens to participation in these projects. Let us present the classification of the ways of responding to the received messages with appeals to participate in civic initiatives in the logic of consideration from the negative to the active *(Tab. 5)*.

1. Negative responses. Almost half of those surveyed (47.3%) practically do not read the content of messages about civic initiatives, or simply skip them (for 39%, this is the only practice meaning they have never carefully read such appeals). Another 9.8% tend to block messages from a given community, blogger or organization, thereby permanently depriving them of the opportunity to reapply/reach. Mostly ignoring practices are

characteristic of representatives of the scrolling type, among whom 65.3% skip and 12.1% block such messages (the included type shows 18.7% and 7.8%, respectively, which indicates the possibility of these reactions in any category of youth audience, as well as a possible preference for targeted efforts to select a project rather than responding to the posts of strangers).

2. Interested responses. They are related to manifestation of interest in a project: 35.8% of respondents in most cases carefully read the messages (21.9% always limit themselves to this action). Representatives of the involved type (56.6%) are more inclined to read attentively, but this action is also quite common in the superficial type (42.4%), and in the scrolling type (24.8%); 8.2% (almost all answers here belong to involved readers) may even ask the organizers clarifying questions.

3. Supportive responses. At this level, there is a transition to actions related to the dissemination of information about civic projects: 11.7% of respondents usually forward/repost them, and 15.6% tell their friends about the projects they are interested in. Such practices are not a monoreaction and are always combined with other types of responses to such messages. The trend of more active use of these reactions by representatives of the involved and superficial types persists.

Table 5. Structure of reactions to engaging messages, % by column*

Type of response	Way to express the response	On the data set	Content collision model		
			Involved readers	Superficial readers	Scrolling readers
Negative	Block posts from a community, blogger	9.8	7.8	7.2	12.1
	Ignore it, do no read it	47.3	18.7	41.4	65.3
Interested	Read carefully, but usually do not participate	35.8	56.6	42.4	24.8
	Ask organizers qualifying questions	8.2	21.7	7.7	3.6
Supportive	Forward, share	11.7	25.3	13.3	5.0
	Tell friends about promotions, interested them	15.6	27.7	20.1	6.9
Action	Read carefully and often participate	7.1	20.5	5.2	2.5
* The amount exceeds 100%, as the respondent could specify more than one answer choice. Source: own compilation based on the sociological survey results.					

4. Action responses. This is a direct transition from reading to participating in a project. It is typical of 7.1% of respondents, of which 2.8% chose only this option. It is worth noting that among the scrolling readers 2.5% are ready to switch to participation in a project, among superficial ones – 5.2%, among involved ones – 20.5%.

Finally, let us consider the actual involvement of young people in digital activism practices. Respondents chose the actions they had taken in the previous year. Based on the content characteristics of the selected actions, as well as the number of actions used, we have constructed a typology of digital activism. Among the five most common forms of digital activism include, there are indicating their support of ideas, projects through "likes" (66.4%), posting reviews of products, services and organizations (38%), voting at news sites (32%), discussion of important issues on forums and in communities (28%), and analysis of open data on socially significant issues (27%). At the same time, 68.5% of respondents also choose the position of an observer, defining their interest in civic projects mainly as a side, informational, rather than active one.

We classify the research participants according to the activity rate of real digital activism practices into four subgroups: highly involved note more than half (12–22) participation forms in the proposed list, the medium involved use 5–11 types of actions, the low involved practice 1–4 forms of activism, the nonparticipants use nothing. We should emphasize that there is a definite trend in our study related to the fact that the transition to more complex and "qualitative" forms of activism includes the use of simpler ones: if a person discusses problems with like-minded people or creates content on socially relevant issues, they are highly likely to also like and repost. Consequently, the total number of types of actions they commit will be greater, as confirmed through the calculation of averages. For example,

among those who post likes, the average number of actions made is 7, and the mode is 5; among those who create content themselves, the average number of action types is 13, and the mode is 22. Therefore, in this case, the number characterizes both the diversity and the quality of the actions of civic activism.

Among the surveyed young people there are more representatives of the low- (40.1%) and medium- (37.0%) involved in digital civic activism. Highly engaged are 12.4% of those surveyed, of whom 4.0% have used all possible options for civic engagement. Finally, 10.5% of young people are not involved in digital activism (but can still use offline options for civic engagement).

This typology has a significant correlation with youth clusters in terms of frequency of encounters with posts on socially relevant issues: the significance of the relationship is 0.444; the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-way). As the superficial readers make up nearly half of the youth surveyed, they naturally form the core of the three groups involved in activism: among the high- and middle-aged, 53–56% of superficial readers, and among the low-aged, 44%. Therefore, specificity is determined by which model representatives complement the superficial readers: among the highly engaged these are involved readers (38.3%), among the mid-involved a combination in equal proportions of involved and scrolling (22% each), among the low-involved 50% are scrolling (Fig. 1). Among nonparticipants in civic activism, young people with low numbers of encounters with posts about social aspects of urban life and civic actions predominate, but involved readers are also present (4.5%).

According to the youth survey results, the actual structure of involvement in digital civic engagement is as follows (Fig. 2). About 60% of young people fall into three roughly equal groups (shares): medium-active and low-active participants, regularly or
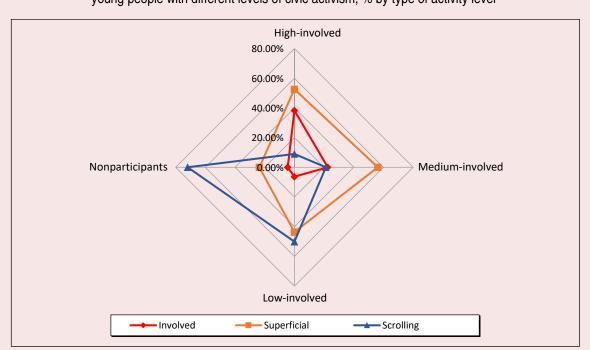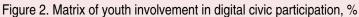
Figure 1. Share of representatives of different models of encountering content among young people with different levels of civic activism, % by type of activity level

Source: own compilation based on the sociological survey results.

Figure 2. Matrix of youth involvement in digital civic participation, %

Source: own compilation based on the sociological survey results.

occasionally involved in reading media reports about social problems of residents (38.7%), and low-active participants, rarely interested in news from the social life of a city and practically ignoring posts about civic projects (20.5%). Those highly involved in real projects and information field of civic engagement make up 5% of respondents, about the same number are on the opposite side of the engagement scale (6.3% of scrolling nonparticipants). The presented model confirms the hypothesis that there is a connection between the frequency of encountering information about socially significant problems of a city, the level of interest in posts about civic activism and the intensity of involvement in digital civic activity.

Discussion

By creating conditions for civic activism, the digital environment becomes a mediator in the system of youth interaction. It is a kind of stage, which is set by activists, bloggers, opinion leaders, and institutional agents. It becomes important, according to P. Gerbaudo, to create a common identity matrix and emotional impulses for communication of Internet users (Gerbaudo, 2012), which allows not only attracting new and retain old participants, but also influencing the intensity of connections, increasing the willingness to get involved in real civic projects. Even the use of WhatsApp, according to S. Milan and S. Barbosa, solidarizes users as repetitive interaction on the app leads to a universal, identity-like sense of connectedness that unites social actors (Milan, Barbosa, 2020).

Research in recent years demonstrates that the youth involvement in civic activism is less influenced by gender or age indicators compared to content characteristics (Surkova et al., 2020). We have shown that interest in socially significant issues in general leads to a higher "noticeability" in the information flow of posts/blogs/sites about civic initiatives and actions, which in turn determines a more intensive involvement in real practices of digital activism.

We pay particular attention to the characteristics of informational posts that arouse interest and willingness to connect to a project. Since the key motivator is personal interest in the topic of a project, and external stimuli (participation of famous people, requests to participate, high probability of project results, etc.) to a small extent determine the support of young people, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive system of measures to expand the zone of youth's interest on socially important regional issues. Let us pay attention to the rather low position of educational/ outreach resources in this rating, as well as the lowest position of house communities (with the growing importance of local activism and neighborhood communities) (Odintsov, 2020), which means less significant influence of these communities on the information environment of young people in terms of providing content on socially important topics.

Today young people are internally convinced that conditions for self-realization exist in Russia: 85% of citizens aged 18−24 believe that young people have the opportunity to fulfill themselves[14] and 34% want to do good to the country through active participation in public life[15]. The results of our study have documented the prevalence of an average level of exposure to mobilizing content, combined with an average or low level of participation. This does not correspond to the potential readiness of young people to be more involved in public life and requires further development of engagement mechanisms, taking into account the motivation of young people and the effectiveness of the characteristics of mobilizing messages.

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[14] Opportunities for youth. VCIOM, December 8, 2022. Available at: https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/ analiticheskii-obzor/vozmozhnosti-dlja-molodezhi-monitoring (accessed: March 17, 2023).

[15] Youth values. VCIOM, December 14, 2022. Available at: https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/ cennosti-molodezhi (accessed: March 18, 2023).

Conclusion

Public demand for youth activism remains one of the most stable trends of recent years. According to researchers of activism, phenomenon includes both social movements themselves, collective and individual actions aimed at strengthening the involvement of young citizens in public policy and solving current social problems, and policies of youth involvement in civic engagement implemented by various actors (Zemnukhova, 2021).

Our study highlights the understudied in sociology aspect of Internet users' "encounter" with information posts initiated by organizers and supporters of civic projects in order to engage new participants. This aspect is not given due attention in sociological studies. The novelty of the work lies in the expansion of empirical knowledge about the involvement of young people in the region in online forms of civic participation. It allows confirming the research hypotheses and build the author's typology of young citizens according to the level (frequency) of encounter with information posts on socially significant issues and activism, as well as the level (intensity of use of various forms) of digital participation. The conclusions drawn are common for young people in Russia, as the population studied presents different socio-demographic strata of young people, while digital literacy and patterns of digital technology use within the youth community have a high degree of similarity.

The formed model of involvement in digital civic participation can serve as a tool to describe the youth community structure, be used to identify the dynamics of the process, define the share and characteristics of the most active groups. The research proves the importance of a comprehensive approach to describing the mechanism of involvement in digital activism including both behavioral (both at the stage of recruiting for projects and their implementation) and motivational characteristics in the model. Civic activism, including in the online format, can be one of the effective mechanisms for applying young people's abilities to develop various spheres of regional public life if there is a system of support from local governments, public youth organizations, cultural and educational institutions, etc., as well as the development of effective promotion channels in the Internet space.

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