

SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PROMOTION OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE: CASES OF HUNGARY AND RUSSIA

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Abstract

The task of promotion of healthy lifestyle among youth has a crucial significance for social policy. Hedonistic values and absence of serious health problems often make young people careless about their health. But carelessness about health and healthy lifestyle increases vulnerability of young people to various diseases and reduces their expected lifetime. So, the reproduction of human resources of society requires a complex policy of promotion of healthy lifestyle among youth. The key idea of the article is that such promotion can be implemented by resources of social media. From the perspective of systematic approach to communication, the authors analyze specific areas of using of social media for promotion of healthy lifestyle among young people. The authors use the data of their own research to check, how social media can be used for attraction of attention of young people to one specific area of healthy lifestyle – the theme of healthy food. During the research authors compared cases of two countries: Hungary and Russia. Using the methods of content-analysis and correlation analysis, the authors identify specific effects of presentation of the topic of healthy food and evaluate possible effects of using of social media for promotion of healthy lifestyle in general.

Key words: social media, healthy lifestyle, youth, human resources, Russia, Hungary

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Introduction

The commitment of young people to a healthy lifestyle is an important condition for the reproduction of the human resources of society. The willingness of young people to maintain a healthy lifestyle and take care of their health affects both their ability to work and their expected lifetime. But at the same time, carelessness of young people in such matters increases their vulnerability to numerous diseases and provokes significant risks for their health and life. Meanwhile, the willingness to maintain a healthy lifestyle does not always appear without additional stimulation. The absence of serious health problems and hedonistic way of life often

make young people indifferent about such questions. So, the interest of young people to a healthy lifestyle and its practices needs additional stimulation. It is likely that social media can be used for such stimulation. Social media is convenient for working with a mass youth audience: the proportion of their users among young people in many countries is not much less than 100%. Besides, social media has many ready-made tools for communication of users on any topic. So, potentially social media provide opportunities for spreading of information about healthy lifestyle among youngsters. However, the assessment of the real opportunities of social media in this area requires a special empirical analysis

Literature review

The specific role of social media in promotion of a healthy lifestyle among youngsters is not clear for contemporary social science. According to our observations, the basic possibility of using of social media in this area is rarely questioned by scientists. Current researches show that social media is convenient for working with public opinion. So, the scientists often mention that social media can be used for promotion of some ideas and attitudes. That is why it looks clear, that potentially social media really can be used for promotion of healthy lifestyle among young people. But at the same time, it is rather difficult to find a certain clear description of specific features of using social media in this area.

The initial idea of the possibility of using of social media to influence the moods and attitudes of large social groups is mentioned in many theoretical papers. These questions are described not only in scientific papers devoted to the problem of social media (Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015). The similar problematic is analyzed in the papers devoted to related scientific issues: social networks (Arsenault & Castells, 2008) and virtual interaction of individuals (Rheingold, 2000). Besides, there are a lot of empirical researches, which demonstrate the particular effects of using of social media for influence on the mood and attitudes of certain social groups. Such effects are often mentioned in the researches devoted to the analysis of public opinion (Fletcher, 2017), fake news (Allcott et al, 2017) and political mobilization (Boulianne, 2019). So, the initial idea of the possibility of using social media to influence the moods and attitudes of large communities of people is familiar for social science.

Besides, the possibility of using of social media for influence on young people is also habitual for social science. Recent researches confirm, that young people are very sensitive to the information in social media. Practices of behavior of young people in social media are specific. They spend in social media a lot of time every day (Eek-Karlsson, 2018) and often

perceive it as the main tool of communication (Wood, Bukowski, & Lis, 2015). Therefore, social media has become an important tool for working with young people and can help to stimulate and direct their moods and behavioral practices. Current scientific literature describes various examples of using of social media to influence the various needs of young people in the field of educational activities (Calderón et al, 2016), sexual cultures (Ridder, 2017), political activities (Mohamad, Dauda, & Halim, 2018) and other areas.

The possibility of using social media to promote a healthy lifestyle is also already described in the scientific literature. Probably, this topic can hardly be described as one of the most popular in the social science, but important scientific researches in this area were certainly carried out. Researchers note the important role of social media in stimulation of society's interest to certain aspects of a healthy lifestyle: sports (Hanson, Cross, & Jones, 2016), prevention of serious diseases (Dizon et al, 2012) or giving up bad habits (Lee, 2012). So, the idea of using social media for promotion of healthy lifestyles is not completely new.

In general, it can be said that current research experience demonstrates that the assumption about the possibility of using of social media for promotion of healthy lifestyle among young people seems quite reasonable. Social media may well be used to influence the moods and demands of large social groups, and young people are sensitive to such influence. There are also precedents of using of social media for stimulation of society's interest in certain aspects of a healthy lifestyle. So, it looks clear that potentially social media can be used for promotion of healthy lifestyle among young people. The only thing we need to find out is the clear description of using of social media in this area.

Methodology

In this article we will follow the systematic approach to communication, which was described in papers of German sociologist N. Luhmann and his followers (Luhmann, & Bednarz, 2005). This approach helps us to describe social media as an integrated communicative system – self-sufficient and self-reproducing environment of communication of individuals, which determines both the purpose and the nature of their interaction. According to the theory of N. Luhmann, such communication systems are decentralized and do not have any kind of strict hierarchy. That is why information in such systems circulates unpredictably and it is transmitted from users to users. We suppose, that free and unpredictable circulation of information is an important reason of effectiveness of social media influence on moods and demands of large

social groups. So, this understanding of social media will help us to clarify its potential role in promotion of healthy lifestyle among young people.

The empirical basis of our research is the data of content analysis, which was conducted by us in order to identify specific opportunities of social media in the area of promotion of healthy lifestyle among young people. We took into account that the concept of a healthy lifestyle is extremely multifaceted and can include different practices. Therefore, in the course of the research, we abandoned attempts to analyze the use of social media to attract the interest of youngsters to all sides of healthy lifestyle. We have chosen only one side of a healthy lifestyle – adherence to healthy food. Our assumption was that the analysis of practices of presentation of healthy food would help us to identify the common patterns of using social media to draw attention of young people to healthy lifestyle in general.

We assumed that the features of using social media to promote a healthy lifestyle can have their specificity in different countries. So, we decided to compare cases of two countries: Hungary (where the interest in promotion of healthy lifestyle among young people appeared long ago) and Russia (where the interest in this area appeared only a few years ago).

During the research we analyzed the materials on the topic of healthy food from three certain social media resources: Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. These resources were included into research for two reasons. Firstly, each of these social media resources assumes its own way of presenting information: textual (Facebook), graphic (Instagram) or multimedia (YouTube). Secondly, these social media resources are popular both in Hungary and in Russia. So, focusing on these resources allowed us to compare cases from different countries.

At the beginning of the research we conducted a conceptual analysis of categories related to the use of the concept of healthy food. This analysis allowed us to clarify five basic words, describing the topic of healthy food in Hungary and Russia. We used these words as hashtags to find concrete social media accounts. Table 1 illustrates the hashtags, which were used for the selection of accounts in Hungary and Russia and their translation into English.

Tab. 1: Hashtags which were used for the selection of accounts in Hungary and Russia

Country	Hashtags on the topic of healthy food
Hungary	#Egészségstáplálkozás (Healthy Nutrition); #Tudatostáplálkozás (Conscious Nutrition), #Mutimiteszel_fit (ShowWhatYouEat - Fitt); #Mutimiteszel_vegán (ShowWhatYouEat-Vegan); #Szafireform (SzafiReform, balanced diet)
Russia	#ПП (CN, Conscious Nutrition), #Правильноепитание, (Conscious Nutrition) #Здороваяеда (Healthy food), #Здоровоепитание (Healthy Nutrition), #Препецпы (Recipes of Healthy food)

Source: author's own data

For each hashtag we selected 20 accounts in Hungary and 40 accounts in Russia¹. We selected only the newest and most popular accounts, describing the topic of healthy food. The number of accounts on healthy food in Facebook, YouTube and Instagram was not equal. The number of such pages in Instagram was bigger, than in the other resources. That is why for each hashtag firstly we selected accounts from YouTube and Facebook and only then selected accounts from Instagram. Totally 300 accounts were included in the sample for analysis: 100 Hungarian accounts (20 for each hashtag) and 200 Russian accounts (40 for each hashtag).

Content analysis was aimed at disclosing patterns of use of thematic categories related to the content of healthy food and identifying the frequency of their use. The analysis form consisted of 5 blocks: the characteristics of the account holder; central thematic of the account; content of posts; availability of advertising content; activity of followers.

Results

The analysis of gathered data provides an opportunity to see several important trends. We can summarize these conclusions according to the main blocks of analysis form.

1. Characteristics of the account holders. Unfortunately, the holders of the accounts mention information about themselves selectively. We can see information about the gender of the holder in 100.0% of analyzed accounts. But other social and demographical information about the owners of the accounts often remains unknown: only 58.0% of them indicate information about their age, only 53.0% mention their marital status, only 49.3% point the presence/absence of children and only 20.0% include information about their education. On the one hand, it makes difficult to identify the typical features of the owner of such account. But at the same time, this fact also shows something else: the owners of such accounts tend to shift the focus from their personality to the content that they publish. Regardless of this fact, we can use the available data to describe a typical portrait of an author who writes about healthy food in social media. We can say, that this is a woman (92.7% of account holders on this topic are created by women), aged 25-30 years (23.0%), lives with her own family (45.0%), has children (32.0%) and often does not belong to the profession, connected wit healthy lifestyle (only 19.0% of them indicate themselves as doctors or coaches). There are no statistical differences between the Hungarian and Russian account holders.

¹ The difference in the number of selected accounts appeared because of the fact that initially the analysis was based only on the study of Russian case. Gathering of information about Hungarian social media was carried out later, specifically to compare the data obtained in Russia with the case of another European country. And in order to avoid large gaps in the timing of the analysis of two cases, we were forced to limit ourselves to collecting fewer accounts for analysis in Hungary.

2. Central thematic of the account. The analysis has shown that social media accounts indicate quite different thematic specification and tend to specialize in various questions of healthy food. The most popular thematic in analyzed accounts is traditional food system and – 45.0% of analyzed accounts indicate it as a central idea for their content. But it is not the only popular side of healthy food, mentioned in social media. 26.0% of the accounts indicate the matter of counting of the nutritional value of food as a key subject for their content. Some of the accounts indicate specialization in specific matters of healthy food: alternative nutrition systems (8.0% of accounts), veganism (3.5%) or raw foods (3.0%). And there are also some accounts, which do not have clear specialization: 14.0% of them mention different matters and avoid indication of any question as a central subject for their content. So, the analysis has shown, that the accounts differ in presentation of information about healthy food. Probably, it is easier to find information about traditional food system in social media. But it is impossible to say, that traditional food system is the only side of healthy food popular in social media.

3. Content of posts. It is notable that even though the most of analyzed accounts have different thematic specialization, the most popular topic of certain posts in these accounts looks almost the same. The most popular content of messages in social media accounts is recipes of food. Table 2 indicates the average frequency of topics mentioned in analyzed accounts. And it looks clear, that recipes are the most popular topic for almost all of them. Of course, recipes it is not the only popular subject of posts. The analysis shows, that accounts also mention topics of theory of nutrition, reviews on restaurants and other questions. But it can be seen, that posts about recipes appear much more often than any other information. So, the accounts have various thematic specialization, but tend to have the same format of certain posts. It is also remarkable, that cases of Hungary and Russia look quite different in this way. It can be seen in Table 2, that publications of recipes appear in Hungarian social media accounts more often, than it happens in Russia (the analysis was carried out using the Mann-Whitney Test for two independent samples).

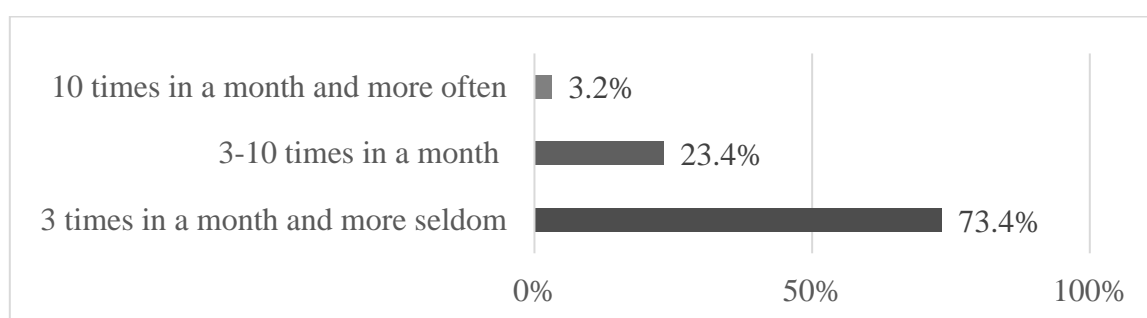
Tab. 2: Average frequency of publications on different topics (per month)

Content of posts	Average frequency			
	Russian social media		Hungarian social media	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Recipes	14.68	19.099	10.43	14.982
Theory of nutrition	2.55	6.750	2.61	6.426
Reviews on restaurants and shops	0.20	0.752	0.12	0.640
Dietary supplements, vitamins, sports nutrition	0.07	0.293	0.16	0.564
Reviews on literature, TV-show and films	0.06	0.312	0.06	0.320

Source: author's own data

4. Availability of advertising content. During the analysis, we considered as advertising only such content that was directly identified by the holder of social media account as a kind of publicity. That is why we did not include in the analysis the embedded publicity (like «in-video» advertisement on YouTube). Besides, we didn't identify as publicity the messages, which didn't contain hyperlinks to the advertised goods or services. So, during the research we used a quite narrow understanding of advertising content. But it was necessary decision, because it helped us to be definite in identification of advertising content and understanding the ways of its presentation. Our analysis has shown, that such content appears in social media accounts on the topic of healthy food. 42.0% of analyzed accounts contain advertising content and 33.0% of them include contacts for advertising into account's profile. These accounts are quite active in publication of such advertising content. Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of publication of advertising content in these social media accounts. It can be seen, that most of them place advertising content not often, but regularly.

Fig. 1: Frequency of appearing of advertising content (From total number of accounts, which publicate advertising content)



Source: author's own data

The most common advertising goods and services include different positions: advertising of food (represented in 17.8% of accounts), stores (10.0%), sports nutrition (5.6%), Supplements (4.5%), restaurants (3.0%). It is interesting, that there are only a few differences between Hungary and Russia in this area. The first difference is that in Russian social media it is easier to meet advertising content about different stores (4.0% of Hungarian accounts and 13.5% of Russian). And Russian social media also more often tend to advertise sports nutrition (2.0% of Hungarian and 7.6% of Russian). The research has shown, that there are no more differences between cases of Hungary and Russia. So, probably, we can say, that advertising content appears in Russian and Hungarian accounts almost in the same way.

5. Activity of followers. Finally, it is important to mention the specific of activity of people, who subscribe on the accounts about healthy food in social media. First, it should be noted that the analyzed social media accounts have a sufficiently large audience: 41.0% of them have from 10001 to 100000 subscribers; 10.3% – 100001 to 500000 and 2.3% – more than 500000. It is also notable, that subscribers of these accounts usually tend to be quite active: more than a half of analyzed accounts (55.3%) get from 1 to 500 likes per post, 26.7% - from 501 to 2000, and 13.3% - from 2001 to 10000. The same can be seen in the analysis of statistics on comments: 71.7% of the accounts get from 1 to 50 comments per post, 12.0% from 51 to 100, and 7.0% from 101 to 300. So, we can see not only a big number of subscribers, but also their remarkable activity. It is notable, that interests of subscribers tend to match with the most popular content of posts in social media accounts. The largest number of likes and comments is typical for posts about recipes and theory of nutrition. There were no statistical differences between Hungary and Russia.

Conclusions

An important feature of human capital is health. Our research was aimed at clarification of specific opportunities of promotion of healthy lifestyle among youngsters. The results of this research confirm, that social media has a large potential, which has not been fully engaged. A promising resource for the use of social media in this area is a big number of accounts that devoted to the topic of a healthy lifestyle. An impressive number of subscribers and followers among youngsters confirms that youth audience is interested in the subject of such accounts.

The behavior of Hungarian and Russian youth in social media, popularizing healthy food, is almost the same. This probably indicates the universality of social media as channels of communication within the framework of healthy lifestyle.

Of course, our research has some limitations. For now, we have analyzed using of social media for promotion only one side of healthy lifestyle – healthy food. But current result shows, that the basic possibility of using of social media in this area exists. And we are going to deepen the understanding of the role of social media in this area during our next researches.

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