



## Conference Paper

# The Values of Multimedia Culture

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## Abstract

The author focuses on the definition of the concept of multimedia culture and its fundamental properties. He notes the emergence of the direction of applied cultural studies – culturology of information and explores the multiplicity of modern communications and their multimedia character that provides a ‘knowledge surplus’. The article focuses on the value attitudes of the information society regarding the emergence of the new types of social media – the virtual way of transforming the ‘world-picture’, the authenticity and falsification of the Web, ‘original works’ and ‘fragmentary reactions’ to them. The author explores the dynamics of the Internet development within the context of sociocultural transformations, as well as new values and communicative meanings born out of this new reality.

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## 1. Introduction

Multimedia culture is a new type of the culture of transformation, a culture of ‘metamorphosis’, conditioned by the development of modern electronic communications. The scarcity of studies exploring the initial level and state of culture under the conditions of today’s Internetization and mediatization of society proves that the complex synthetic nature of these topic is impossible to sufficiently comprehensively describe within the scope of any single science, theory or concept. Therefore, this research requires the development of an integrated interdisciplinary approach [3, 4, 6, 7, 9]. A holistic theory of this level does not yet exist – although today we see an emergence of an area of applied cultural studies that may be described as the information cultural studies. It explores the strategic priorities of the global culture, the issues in digitalization of cultural heritage, creating and broadcasting electronic versions of memory institutions, as well as the genesis of the new multimedia forms of artistic expression and creativity.

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## 2. Internet and modern culture

Sociocultural role and mission of the Internet become increasingly important in our electronic age of culture. We are witnessing the coming 'digital Renaissance', where people receive information and knowledge in fundamentally different formats than before. However, the Internet becomes not only –and no so much – the process by which people master information and communication technologies or implement them; it also plays an important role in changing systemic characteristics of the culture itself, its structure, its subject-object relations and modes of being. To understand the scale of the impact the Internet has on modern culture, it is important to envision it as a global cultural and transforming phenomenon. It is equally important to acknowledge a new status of culture, including institutional culture.

The modern multimedia environment, with its entire scope of resources and technologies, exhibits new values, thus indicating a paradigmatic shift in social communications. What is being created is a distinctive space that forms an ultra-saturated information field that surrounds a modern individual practically everywhere. In the era of electronic transformation, people receive various types of cultural information that serve as tools for activating interests and a level of competence based on a wide variety of means, including electronic ones.

An indispensable commitment to progress and innovation, embedded in the very logic of the development of Internet technologies, has a positive and stimulating effect on culture and on everyone who actively uses their services. What is important in the context of globalization and culture of digital society, is the multifaceted nature of communications: the *mobility*, accessibility and democratic nature of the Web, which embody the value of cultural self-expression and online identification of individuals and society; *convergence* – that is, an integration of electronic services; *hypertext* that makes it possible to travel from one resource to another and, therefore, generate a multifunctional dialogue between the actors of the Web; *interactivity* and *multimedia* providing 'cognitive surplus'; the collective nature of knowledge construction and production on the Web that leads to a geometric increase in its quantity, etc.

## 3. Characteristics of Multimedia Culture

A vital quality of the multimedia culture is that it not only leads to an emergence of a new rich field of communication and transmission of information, but also of a field for generating new meanings, an 'surplus content' dictated by the form. In this respect,

multimedia culture becomes a system of meanings embodied in symbolic form through which people enter into relationships with each other, store and transmit their mental and spiritual experiences, and develop a common vision of the world. Virtual archives, museums, 'universities without walls' expand the boundaries of knowledge.

Multimedia technologies create a universal cultural exchange, the peculiarity of which is that this phenomenon not only records a phenomenon broadcasted by the audience *as it is*, but also predicts its development, both by appealing to the imagination of the recipient and 'really', through the system of sound, visual, and now even tactile and olfactory series. Multimedia, as a characteristic of network communication as a type of intercultural interaction, facilitates the connection of entire worlds and continents possessing unique perception of various types of information. It also facilitates creative aspect of online communication and provides unlimited set of audio-visual, interactive, hypertext and hypermedia tools and resources.

The symbols born out of the age of electronic culture transform, one way or another, the consciousness of an individual. 'Cultural crossbreeding' is developing faster than ever, often creating a new diversity. It's hard to surprise anyone today with a robot-nanny or a smart vacuum cleaner cleaning the apartment. Electronic objects surround us everywhere and make us completely dependent on them. Mornings begin with the checking of e-mail; an accidentally forgotten phone or tablet puts us into an embarrassing situation, 'poisoning' the day not only of a business person, but also of an ordinary student. As one journalist expressed this, coming to a conference without a laptop made him 'feel naked' – a clear testament to the current *Zeitgeist*, since today we live not so much in space as in Time, carrying out business 'at the speed of thought' (Bill Gates) and studying in step with a mouse click.

Universal digitalization has a unique effect on human nature and our inner life. Thus, the Japanese experts came to the conclusion that the generation that has been using TV screen and computer since childhood, loses emotional side becoming purely rational. Commercialization and a focus on mass demand is a dangerous trend of marginalization and McDonaldization of professional artistic sphere, as well as cultural and creative activities in a broad sense. Therefore, guiding people – especially the young – towards education and creativity becomes a strategically important core of the cultural policy in the information society.

It is impossible not to agree with the conclusion of K. Zavershinsky that people are united not so much by their capacity for goal-oriented material action, but, first of all, by a semantic unity, a desire to establish some kind of semantic cultural dominant.

These semantic dominants are 'born' within the the depths of culture, morality, and art, and therefore these spheres appear as more 'culturally saturated' [11].

It is important to remember that today multimedia culture serves as a kind of 'symbolic intermediary', a 'symbolic slice' of the 'culture of virtual reality' (according to M. Castells), where the criterion of culture is the **degree of the semantic and symbolic** 'saturation' of human creative activity. This 'cultural' paradigm of multimedia culture as a symbolic system penetrates all spheres of human activity, especially creative ones, and turns all phenomena into the distinctive signs and symbols.

#### 4. Media Culture and the Issue of Values

Values depend on the interpretations of the value attitude to the world of ideas, things and people. In contemporary culture based on the market laws, the difference between value, price and market value is blurred. Value, ultimately, is measured by price (note that this is not necessarily so regarding cultural heritage and memory resources). The modern media market is trying to adapt not only to the material, but also to the mental and spiritual needs of people, aestheticizing the act of buying and selling. Viral marketing videos can be not only a way to promote goods, but also a well-designed project involving first-class actors and a nuanced acting, thus presenting such video primarily as a cultural service. Different versions of the interpretation of values are important for the study of values and value attitudes to the emergence of new social media existing in the information society: a virtual way of transforming the 'world-picture'. The culture of virtual reality (according to Manuel Castells) infinitely expands human communicative space making us slaves of information civilization. At the same time, the more the web services are perfected, the more challenges and threats the 'culture of new opportunities' produces.

It is vitally important to analyze the crisis of responsibility faced by the development of culture of the information society, because of the 'boundless irresponsibility' widespread on the Web, and the limited responsibility of the structures managing the Internet, which supposedly determine the quality of management of resource access, their digitization and preservation, and the responsibility of the content creators and users.

In this case, the functioning of the traditional culture (let us refer to it as 'print' culture) in a digitized form can proceed in two ways. First, it can take a form of a pretty faithful copy of reality (for example, an electronic library mentioned earlier, which contains scanned books). Second, it can happen as a result of such a copy being

received and interpreted by the Internet community (for example, e-book quotations, a blog describing an experience of visiting a virtual museum, etc.).

This duality can be explained by using an idea proposed by V.A. Emelin and A.Sh. Tkhostov, who divide the Internet into the two 'quite autonomous regions': 'information space and communication space' [10].

A hypothetical electronic library as a whole pursues a purely informational cultural function and, therefore, belongs to the information space. However, this same electronic library, when it is discussed, for example, in an online chat or forum, is transferred to the communication space and functions differently. The greatest number of falsifications (incorrect citations, mistaken attribution of authorship, etc.) is generated and distributed in the field of communication.

In this regard, we can certainly agree with Manuel Castells that "in a world of endless information, credibility is an essential ingredient for information-seekers" [2]. As for the infinite space of the World Wide Web, credibility is not just a valuable quality of any information – it is essential; otherwise, the existence of any particular piece of content becomes problematic.

In this regard, one cannot but agree with S.A. Khrapov, who notes that "structurally and functionally, there are four processes: the devaluation of constructive traditional values; the locking of destructive value orientations because they become rooted within the unconscious strata; the strong assimilation of constructive new values and the rapid incorporation of destructive new values" [5].

J. Lanier offers a curious classification of culture artifacts: first-order products are original, and second-order products are 'fragmentary reactions' to the original. "I don't claim I can build a meter to detect precisely where the boundary between first-and second-order expression lies. I am claiming, however, that the web 2.0 designs spin out gobs of the latter and choke off the former." [8]

Fake information appears on the Web for various reasons, the main of which is the sheer volume of content circulating on the Internet, as well as the imperfect tools we use in search of required information.

In a situation of cultural exchange and interaction, spatial, temporal, social and other barriers are eroding, and a unified information space is being formed. There is a new area in the field of electronic communication, related to the digitization of cultural heritage, the creation of electronic versions of memory institutions, as well as the birth of new syncretic forms of artistic expression and creativity.

## 5. The Role of Educational Institutions

We believe that cultural and educational institutions have a special mission. These institutions use the modern technologies to create unique resources thus helping to guide the users in an avalanche-like stream of diverse information, to challenge market values by countering them with the true values of humanism, progress and freedom, and also to meet the modern cultural needs and whims of young people leading them away from the 'garbage bin' existing on the Web.

Education system becomes a reliable tool and a bridge that leads to the new structure of our cultural world, "since only by transferring everyone along this bridge, we can change something inside a person" [1].

Immersing young people into a multimedia web environment, using it as a powerful cognitive tool for mastering the cultural heritage, a tool for implementing creative practices and self-educational attitudes becomes a part of everyday life.

As a result, the priorities in higher cultural education are changing, and we see an emerging transition to a new training for a new generation of professionals, who, along with a comprehensive set of professional knowledge and skills, proceed to master new multimedia competencies. In this regard, the clarification of the place of multimedia in the system of cultural education becomes a highly relevant task – including the expansion of the range of teaching and academic specializations in the field of electronic culture. Multimedia culture becomes a large-scale socio-cultural phenomenon, stimulating not only its own development, but also significantly affecting all spheres of public life.

## 6. Conclusions

Thus, today we witness a formation of a distinctive multimedia informational sphere with its unique status, attractive opportunities, normative attitudes and future promises. An area of multimedia culture is rapidly developing as a new structural component of modern culture formed based on the methods and tools of information and communication technologies related to the development of key multimedia systems, as well as belief and moral universals of the information society.

The future development of the multimedia culture will help to expand our notions on the specific tools required to preserve our cultural heritage and socio-cultural experience in digital form, to update our cultural institutions (including institutions that

advance knowledge and innovatively influence the cultural 'code'), and also to transmit our cultural experience through multimedia channels that affect the 'genes' of the cultural and historical forms, creatively rebuilding their 'code'. It is important to understand the overall consequences of these very real historical developments for the 'anthropomorphization' of the world.

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