

PAPER

METHODS OF ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL CULTURE AND CYBERETHNOLOGY RESEARCH

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Abstract

This article examines the specific features of studying digital culture within the framework of cyber-ethnological research. It analyzes existing scholarly works on the potential of virtual ethnography and discusses methodological approaches to studying online subcultures that emerge within the Internet space.

Key words: Cyberethnological research, online subculture, ethnic representation on the Internet, hashtags.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the role of digital technologies in promoting the traditions and cultural elements of nations and ethnic groups is undeniable. The rapid advancement of digital tools has transformed not only business, production, and management, but has also facilitated the emergence of digital cultures. Within this process, the significance of cyber-ethnological research has grown, particularly in examining the development of diverse national and ethnic groups on social networks and the formation of ethnic online communities.

In the process of collecting research data, both online and offline interviews, as well as online surveys, were conducted among Internet users within virtual communities and through personal pages on social networks such as Facebook,

Instagram, VKontakte, and Odnoklassniki, as well as on personal accounts in messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. The findings revealed that increasing attention is being paid to acquiring knowledge and engaging in learning through these digital platforms.

Some scholars argue that research on digital technologies should also take into account their impact on the environment. Among the issues emphasized are the carbon footprint of Internet infrastructure, the problem of electronic waste generated by digital devices, and the potential of digital platforms to promote sustainable lifestyles and practices.

At the same time, viewing digital cultures as spaces of cultural production and creativity necessitates the study of such practices as digital art, meme-making, fanfiction, and remix culture.

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Cyber-ethnographic research also involves elucidating governance structures and regulatory frameworks in digital spaces. This includes the examination of public moderation practices, content moderation algorithms, platform policies, as well as the implications of government control and censorship for online participation.

With the growing popularity of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, scholars are increasingly required to investigate the socio-cultural implications of immersive digital experiences. Such research encompasses the study of virtual communities, participation within VR environments, and the redefinition of boundaries between physical and digital realities. Furthermore, as technologies continue to advance, cyber-ethnological research must engage with phenomena arising from the interactions of online users with computer interfaces and artificial intelligence.

METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE ANALYSIS

In her 2023 research, anthropologist A. Belorusova examined the Nagaybaks' efforts to protect and preserve their identity through ethnic representation on social networks, particularly by analyzing Nagaybak groups on *Vkontakte*. She also highlighted that the Besermian people, whose traditions and cultural practices are at risk of disappearing in real life, have been actively promoting their heritage through online groups, communities, blogs, campaigns, and flash mobs created on the Internet over the past five to six years.

Studies on ethnic self-awareness in digital spaces identify such practices as distinctive genres of online activity. Within these, the theme "I am proud of our culture" has emerged as especially prominent. For instance, researchers John G. Galaty and Philip Carl Salzman [1] describe how the Samburu traditional attire—widely referred to as the "butterfly costume"—due to its bright colors and rich ornamentation—has spread globally, serving as a striking example of cultural expression mediated through networked platforms.

Ethical issues in cyber-ethnography remain a central subject of discussion and debate, as researchers increasingly turn their attention to studying the most pressing challenges and the

most vulnerable populations in digital spaces. Some scholars argue that involving participants directly in the research process and co-creating knowledge about digital cultures can foster greater trust, reflexivity, and ethical responsibility in the study of online communities and their practices.

At the same time, researchers are exploring the intersections of digital cultures with labor practices and economic systems. This includes the analysis of online economies, the growth of virtual economies within gaming and social platforms, and the influence of automation and platform capitalism on digital labor. Such studies highlight how digital spaces are not only cultural but also deeply embedded in global economic transformations.

Exploring the spatial dimensions of digital cultures requires analyzing how geographic locations and physical environments intersect with online interactions and identities. This includes research on geographically constrained online communities, augmented reality experiences, and the influence of place in shaping digital practices. Such studies demonstrate that even in virtual environments, spatiality and locality continue to play a crucial role in the construction of digital identities and cultural expression.

At the same time, growing attention is being paid to the relationship between digital cultures and human health, well-being, and psychology. Current research topics include the role of online support communities, the use of digital platforms for therapy, and the impact of social media on self-image and self-esteem. In addition, numerous scientific studies are devoted to examining the effects of online harassment and cyberbullying on mental health, highlighting the complex consequences of digital interactions for individual and collective well-being [2].

There is another direction in cyberethnological studies, in which scholars studying this direction focus on the development of networked mobility in the formation of online practices, social interactions and the increasing mobility of daily life with the help of digital technologies. This includes studying phenomena such as location-based services, mobile communication and the impact of digital mobility on urban environments and travel behaviour.

Cyberethnographic research emphasizes the

mediation of digital technologies in the processes of cultural heritage preservation, memory-making, and storytelling., Researchers are interested in digital archives, virtual museums, online memorialization, and the role of social networks in the formation of collective online memories. Given concerns about digital surveillance and data privacy, there is a growing body of research focused on understanding the sociocultural dimensions of surveillance practices and technologies. This includes the study of phenomena such as online surveillance, algorithmic surveillance, biometric identification, and the impact of online surveillance on individual autonomy and social control.

Exploring how digital surveillance, censorship, and oppression of individuals and communities is allowed and resisted is an important area of cyber-ethnological research. This is done on the basis of the study of the role of the online community in the fight against dominant power structures.

Drawing on posthumanist theory and cyber anthropology, researchers have begun to explore the ethical implications of cybersociety by examining the increasingly blurred boundaries between humans and technology in digital environments. Scholars are increasingly interested in how data and algorithmic systems shape digital cultures, influence user behavior, and reproduce or challenge social inequalities and prejudices.

Researchers also have a need to study the virtual economy and the issue of digital labor in their cyberethnological studies, the growth of the virtual economy formed in online games, social platforms and virtual worlds, digital labor, virtual currency systems, and the commodification of digital goods and services. They are studying the influence of their unique complexities on ethnography. This includes issues such as online jobs, virtual stores, and the impact of platform-based digital markets on labor rights and economic inequality [3].

Due to the inherent digital nomadism and remote working that has occurred in the virtual world, there is a growing interest in understanding the lifestyles, identities, and communities of individuals who live and work in digital spaces while traveling or residing online in different locations. Researchers are studying the motivations, challenges, and socio-cultural dynamics of digital nomad communities, as well as their impact on local economies and

environments.

With the proliferation of online dating, social networking, and virtual reality technologies, scholars point to the emergence of digital forms of virtual intimacy, online relationships, love, and romance, including digital flirting, cybersexuality, and discussions of online intimacy and trust. 'includes learning.

The analysis of research conducted within our topic shows us that there are methods of conducting research with the participation of society. In online community participatory research, researchers engage with online community members as collaborators or participants, engaging community members in study design, data collection, and interpretation. and it is seen that it can strengthen the possibilities.

In community-based cyberethnological research, it appears that participants are trying to ensure that the results are relevant and meaningful to the communities being studied. Raqamli usullar va vositalardagi yutuqlar kiberetnografik tadqiqotlar imkoniyatlarini kengaytirdi. Researchers are using data mining, social network analysis, technology studies, and other computational methods to study large-scale online phenomena and patterns of digital behavior.

DISCUSSION

The main role of hashtags from the point of view of anthropology is to create communities and support their activities. Therefore, hashtags perform a communicative function between community members and allow maintaining internal communication in communities [6].

So, hashtags not only bring people together to discuss various topics, but are also a virtual communication organizer that has the ability to unite users with common goals, interests, habits or preferences. Another reason why the hashtag is attractive to Internet users is based on its openness and freedom, that is, any user can enter and leave it easily.

Today, various groups, including ethnic groups, are active in the use of hashtags to define the boundaries of "own" and "strangers" for members of the virtual community, as well as to preserve their ethnic identity.

If we summarize the specific aspects and

achievements of the analyzed cyberethnological studies, we can see the following general aspects in them:

- the analyzed studies are characterized by the concept of multi-sited ethnography, which includes the results of ethnographic research aimed at analyzing interconnected online communities and platforms based on the reference to multiple sites in the context of online cultures. We can see that researchers have tracked connections and interactions across different digital spaces, examining the fluidity of online identities and the ways people navigate multiple online environments. Such studies have been particularly applied to the study of dispersed or transnational online communities;

- as virtual reality technologies develop, we see researchers using the concept of virtual reality (virtual reality) ethnography for in-depth ethnographic research in virtual reality. We see that virtual reality ethnography allowed researchers to live in an almost online environment, to experience the processes from the participant's point of view, and also allowed a deeper and broader understanding of digital cultures. This in turn has allowed researchers to study emotional experiences and non-verbal interactions in virtual spaces;

- just as traditional ethnobotany studies the relationship between cultures and plants, it is understandable that researchers are now studying a similar relationship between digital cultures and "digital plants". This is the basis for the application of the concept of digital field ethnobotany, which includes the analysis of the software, platforms and algorithms that shape online interactions, the cultural significance, usage patterns and evolution of digital technologies in online communities;

- some researchers have conducted mixed methods research, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of online cultures.

A mixed method approach has helped researchers to draw conclusions based on findings from different data sources and methods, providing a deeper understanding of the complexities of online communities. For example, researchers have used qualitative interviews to understand individuals' experiences in online communities and then supplemented this with quantitative analysis

of social network data to draw conclusions;

- As online communities transcend geographic boundaries, we see researchers conducting cross-cultural analyzes to compare online cultures across regions, languages, and socio-cultural contexts. Applying cross-cultural analysis has shed light on the global diversity of digital cultures, helping to identify similarities and differences in online behaviors and norms;

- to understand how online communities develop and adapt over time in response to internal and external factors, based on repeated visits to online communities by researchers documenting changes in membership, interactions, and cultural practices who have provided valuable insights into the dynamics of online cultures and the factors influencing their stability or change;

- in cyberethnological studies, transdisciplinary cooperation is often established involving researchers from various fields such as anthropology, sociology, communication studies, informatics and information sciences. shows the need to develop innovative methodologies, theoretical foundations and analytical tools for learning. This means bringing ideas of transdisciplinary collaboration into cyberethnology.

RESULTS

It is required to study the ethical, social, cultural consequences of future technologies and their potential impact on human societies and personalities. This reflects the interdisciplinary and forward-looking nature of cyberethnological research, which seeks to understand and critically engage with the complex interplay between digital technologies, human behavior, and sociocultural contexts.

Scholars are explaining issues such as racial profiling, gender bias, and the ethical implications of algorithmic decision-making in the digital environment.

As digital cultures evolve, so does the need to preserve and archive digital artifacts, communities, and experiences for future generations. Researchers are also exploring digital preservation methods and best practices, as well as the challenges of archiving temporary and dynamic digital content.

The above-listed areas of cyberethnological research reflect the ongoing evolution and

expansion of the field, as it allows scholars to understand the complex and multifaceted dynamics of digital cultures in the 21st century, and highlights the diverse and evolving nature of cyberethnological research that continues to explore the intersections of technology, culture, and society in an increasingly digital world.

The problem of cyber-ethnological research in Uzbek ethnography is a relatively new direction, and we can see that there are not many scientific works in this direction yet.

Today, there is a need in Uzbek digital ethnography to study digital literacy and online practices, to analyze and scientifically study how people communicate, cooperate and discuss processes in the digital environment, including social media platforms and online forums. Based on the analysis of linguistic features, discursive norms and rhetorical strategies used in online communication, it requires an analysis of the variety of actions against digital subcultures that appear in digital subcultures in the Uzbek diaspora and online communities.

Dissemination of the formation of specific communities, online subcultures, subcultural identities, which are distinguished by common interests, peculiarities and alternative lifestyles. , provides an opportunity to understand and prevent negative effects on the worldview of the younger generation.

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