

Comprehensive analysis of the mass media visual component in the aspect of media aesthetics

Irina Topchii
Chelyabinsk State University
Chelyabinsk, Russia
mm-is@mail.ru

ABSTRACT

Today, under the conditions of visual culture domination, the issues of particular text emotional perception by the audience, as well as questions of media aesthetics turn increasingly important. The article uses one of the leading social and political Internet media, in the Russian language, as an empirical basis. This is web-site Meduza, which is also presented in the most popular social network VKontakte, by RuNet. Thematic fields of media content of the public page are identified within the article. There is a classification of visual content, as well as the analysis of comments to the posts. When performing the research, the results of which are presented in this article, the author uses a set of different methods. These are method of continuous sampling; content analysis and discourse analysis; description and generalization. Complex nature of the methodology used here is aimed at deep and complex comprehension of the empirical material.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → **Visualization**; Empirical studies in visualization

KEYWORDS

Aesthetics, mass media, social networks, methods, Meduza, public page.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The urgency of the research is determined by the need to consider the specific features of organizing the visual media content studies through media aesthetics.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the visual media content generated by journalists and users in the context of the phenomenon of visual turn and media aesthetics on the example of the public page of Meduza, which is one of the leading Russian-language social and political Internet media. The public page under analysis is on VKontakte.com (VK), which is a popular social net by RuNet network.

General and special scientific methods of research are used. They are the method of continuous sampling, content analysis and discourse analysis; description, generalization, etc. Thus, the methodology of work is of a complex nature, because it is aimed at deep and complex comprehension of empirical material.

The empirical base is represented by more than 240 content items from April 30 to May 6, 2018 of the official public page of website Meduza.

The online project Meduza can be called one of the most interesting media of the Russian-speaking segment of the Internet. Its headquarters are in Riga (Latvia), but it is oriented to the Russian public, that's why the media is often compared with the newspaper Bell by Alexander Herzen. Meduza is of the most cited media among Russian mass media projects (on the Internet in general, and in social networks in particular). Meduza entered the media market at the moment of its saturation. Due to an extremely high competition, the media could not help using the potential of social networks and their multimillion audience. And today social networks are the most important media distribution channel. Meduza got the major representation in the social network VKontakte.

The majority of smm-specialists in the media sphere work with the VKontakte audience. And Meduza is not an exception. The media has a leading public page as well as a news account and a side project account Shapito. All these are found in VKontakte.

The object of our analysis was the main public page of Meduza in the social network VKontakte (which links to the website, including its News and Shapito).

2 MEDIA AESTHETICS IN THE ERA OF VISUAL TURN

The term visual turn has long been included in scientific usage. The authors of the collective monograph *The Visual Turn in Mass Communications* systematize the key theses of the publications on the visual images domination in modern culture and thinking by the leading philosophers, culturologists, semiologists and sociologists of the 20th century. The authors also depict the visual turn concept and the related ones. They identify the identification signs of a visual turn and consider its influence upon the media sphere [1]. Along with the visual turn there is the aesthetic turn, understood in the mainstream of John Dewey's ideas, where it is a constant, everyday life saturation with art, an inseparable link between art and life [2]. Following the ideas of Marina Zagidullina, we believe that the transition of a word into an object, emotions reification, the formation of communication flows according to segmented rules should determine the research tactics of studying these multidirectional flows within the framework of national communication. Where each of them needs a specific examination and consideration [3]. At the same time, we understand that both concepts visual turn and media aesthetics are inseparable from each other. New technologies provide adjustments to visualization. Technical innovations provide tools available for a consumer, who is also a creator of content at the same time. Technical innovations facilitate the visualization of any statement and meaning. The author of the present article adheres to the opinion of Zagidullina who believes that media aesthetics is formed with the help of emotions reification, gaining a certain visual image [3]. In the same article, the author relies on the analysis of Vitali Kostomarov's book *Language taste of the epoch: from observations on the speech practice of the mass media* [4], based on press content items of the early 1990s. Zagidullina writes at present, mediatization processes provide the channels of mass communication to a native speaker. They significantly change the very idea of the means and ways of forming a taste. And a professional communication becomes a follower of colloquial speech, but not its actor and configurator [3]. Zagidullina develops the idea that in this case, the media aesthetics is also the result of mediatization processes. The main development trends, associated with mental transformations and immediately reflected in the language, are formed in the core of the general public, which is enabled to take part in the language chronicle of the era. It is not so much about the "fashion" or "taste", as about the native speakers' advertency to mental transformations. We can observe here the present moment phenomena, which defines the features of media aesthetics [3].

In another article of the scientist, also devoted to the media aesthetics, the researcher attempts to formulate a definition for the term. Being focused on the composition of the word, the author denotes that there is a superposition of the concepts media and aesthetics. However, none of the concepts is settled

yet. Therefore, the author of the present article proposes, "for the ease of reasoning", to understand aesthetic and aesthetics itself as "the doctrine of form and the experience of form as an expression of the intrinsic meaning (according to Aristotle, the form as the embodiment of the *eidōs*)" [5]. The situation with the notion of media is much more complicated. The author compares approaches to the term in the Russian-language scientific studies and in the Western scientific tradition. According to the author, there is always a threat "in whatever aspect we would not interpret the term "media" [5]. Unfortunately, in the study, the scholar has not formulated any final definition of media aesthetics. Some authors understand media aesthetics as the analysis of the production of the audiovisual media as a five-dimensional model, which includes shape and color, screen space, depth of field, movement, sound [6, 7]. We state media aesthetics as a cross-link of the notions of "media" and "aesthetics" which makes up "media aesthetics". Let us note that "media aesthetics, as a special sphere of scientific reflection, opens the possibility not only to describe individual "artifacts of communication", but also to predict the general course of mediatizing society development" [5], "any innovative technologies, opening up prospects for data exchange, theory and – most importantly – the visualization practice, emotional syntax of short text messages and the pursuit of a fashionable image, popular phenomena of the Internet and new trends in music, modern poetry and the state of the art of obscene communication" [8]. From the author's of the present article perspective, media aesthetics can also serve as an implementation of the formulated challenge.

Scientists denote that giving meaning to the notion of media aesthetics increasingly tends to concentrate on concepts close to visual arts, but "this *visuality* < ... > is closely related to the semiotics of a word (and not of an image), which tends to code meanings verbally. However, still, instead of words, iconic signs or emblematic pictures serve the means of expression. The value of the image itself cannot be "separated" from the context in which the image appears" [3]. The visual turn allows to consider an image on the text level.

3 ORGANISING VISUAL MEDIA CONTENT STUDIES

3.1 Analysis of scientific literature

At the stage of preparation for the study, the author of the present article has analyzed the scientific literature devoted to the topic. It is necessary for a clearer presentation of the research methodology and determination of general theoretical positions.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is presented by the works of diverse scientists. There are five thematic groups.

1. Studies, connected with the origins, history, essentials and various manifestations of modern visual culture, are under consideration in the section. According to Natalya Mazur, "the

concept of visual culture has been introduced by the English art historian Michael Baksandall in the book "The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany" (1980). For the first time he described the phenomenon in the study "Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy" (1972), where he had a research upon a set of images and visual experience, associated with various social practices in a particular culture within a certain period. The studies of Baksandall and his associates are connected with the tradition of the school of A. Warburg. The corresponding scientific paradigm has been developed already in the first third of the 20th century. It is a cross-link of the art history, cultural history and materials and methods of the related humanities such as anthropology, philology, scientific history, etc." [9]. Svetlana Ovodova denotes that "meaning in modern culture is generated not in textual, but in visual terms. < ... > And even though the text has changed its form, it has turned to be performative in nature, despite of deconstructivist and interactive literature emergence, which is important in its implementation, despite the fact that the text begins to acquire the characteristics of a processuality, although the fixed form of the text is its basic characteristic, which allows to preserve identity and respond to the attribution assigned to it. Despite all that, the visual image is more in line with modern culture" [10]. Ludmila Zubanova emphasizes: "If at the beginning of the 20th century such visual arts as painting, poster, cinema, photography used to be based mainly on a printed word and used to serve as a performance of a word visually, now even verbal manifestations (postmodern poetry, musical compositions) are constructed according to the laws of the spectacle, using the methods of television editing" [11].

2. Researches upon representatives of various scientific schools and disciplines attempting to perform the historic thinking of visuality, visual text, visual communications phenomena. Among them are the works of Alexander Yakunin, who discusses the trends in the transformation of the linear regressive reading strategy [12]; Natalya Simbirtseva, who denotes that the verbal gives way to the visual [13]. And Sergej Pirogov, who states that the term visual turn has long become trivial [14].

3. Studies of the researchers of the processes of interaction of visual and media and communication, media aesthetics, the transformation of the media sphere in the era of total visualization. The section examines the typology of visual journalistic content. Also, it highlights the main types. Those are an illustration, which, following Svetlana Simakova's idea, we understand as "graphic forms of content that have not so much an informational as an aesthetic purpose" [15]; photography which is a conventional system, "expressing space in terms of the laws of perspective" [16]; infographics, which means a "creolized text (combination of verbal and non-verbal components)" [17]; various types of multimedia content (video, animation, etc.) [18].

4. Works devoted to the scientific understanding of social networks as a phenomenon of the present, in particular, strategies for promoting the media in the social networks. This section is quite important for the present study, since,

according to Damir Khalilov, the activity that users show on social networks is incredible, as a person can view up to hundreds of web pages of the most popular projects a day. And that is exactly what all websites authorities used to seek for, however only social networks could have performed [19]. Natalia Loseva assigns that there is a new idea of media arises. It is indicated as the media themselves approach the user [20].

5. Works devoted to the analysis of a news web-sites users' participation in a media content through commenting process, their influence on users' desire to comment, the influence of the discussions created within a chatter, on a further desire to participate in commenting, etc. [21]. In addition, the issue of the consequences of participation in commenting on posts is equally important [22].

The all-permeating visuality is one of the fundamental premises of the visual culture. The second is the prevalence of imaginative thinking over the abstract logic one, the desire of the individual to operate with ready visual images, diagrams, and so on. There is a great paradigm shift from the world perception with a help of text to the perception of the world with an image. The phenomenon is determined at the level of scientific research by representatives of various humanities such as philosophy, psychology, anthropology, sociology and linguistics. As a result, a separate modern scientific field is developing. It is called Visual Studies. It includes a variety of sciences, such as physiology of the visual process, philosophy and epistemology of a vision, phenomenology of photography, movie, television, digital media, research methodology of visual and so on, after all, as McLuhan argued, technology is the essence of communication ("the means of communication is itself a message") [23].

After studying the scientific literature, the author of the present article has conducted a research plan and has begun its implementation.

3.2 The method of continuous sampling is a general representation of the studied content

The method of continuous sampling is used during the factual material collection, when the units under study (in our case everything related to visual content: illustrations, photographs, infographics, etc.) are selected as soon as they occur in the text.

So, at the first stage of the work we use the method of continuous sampling. We looked through Meduza public page content in V Kontakte, within the period.

A simple calculation shows that about 30-40 content items are published daily in the Meduza public page. The least number of posts occurred on Monday, April 30, which is just before the holiday (in Russia it is a non-working day). The total number of items is 27 items. The major number is more than 40 content items, occurred on the 3rd and 5th of May.

At the stage, V Kontakte posts are singled out and grouped according to content. The major is represented by news, the main topics of which are:

- Domestic policy: rallies in Telegram support ("In Moscow, a rally was held against the Telegram locking" (https://vk.com/meduzaproject?z=video-76982440_456240077%2F90901a1a75f40997a9%2Fpl_wall_-76982440) and so on.), May Day demonstrations ("In St. Petersburg, on May Day demonstration activists who were carrying flags of Ukraine and Western countries were detained" (<https://meduza.io/news/2018.05.01.v-peterburge-na-pervomayskoy-demonstratsii-zaderzhali-aktivistov-kotorye-nesli-flagi-ukrainy-i-zapadnyh-stran>) and others);
- Foreign policy ("The RFSS has published new foundations of the border policy: what countries do Russia have conflicts over borders? (Apart from Ukraine and Japan)" (<https://meduza.io/slides/RFSS-opublikovala-nvye-osnovy-pogranichny-politiki-s-kakimi-stranami-u-rossii-est-konflikty-iz-za-granits>) and others);
- World news ("Supporters of the opposition have blocked the streets in the cities of Armenia, the public transport has almost completely ceased in Yerevan" (<https://meduza.io/news/2018.05.02.storonniki-opozitsii-perekryli-ulitsy-v-gorodah-armenii-v-erevane-pochti-polnystyu-prekraschen-dvizhenie>) and others);
- The economy ("A deal to sell to 14% of Rosneft to the Chinese is dissolved" (<https://meduza.io/news/2018.05.04.rastorgnuta-sdelka-o-prodazhe-kitaysam-14-rosnefti>), etc.);
- Sports ("Alexander Zhukov will step down as the president of the Russian Olympic Committee" (<https://meduza.io/news/2018.05.02.aleksandr-zhukov-uydet-s-posta-prezidenta-olimpiyskogo-komiteta-rossii>) and others);

In addition, the public page actively highlights news and problems of culture, science, and health. There are content items devoted to leisure, life style and other "bedtime reading". Including:

- Culture (literature, cinema, music): "He felt as if he was swiftly driven through all the poses of the clerical Kama Sutra." Fragment of Alexey Salnikov's novel "Department" (<https://meduza.io/feature/2018.04.30.on-chuvstvoval-sebya-tak-budto-ego-stremitelno-prognali-cherez-vse-pozy-kantselyarskoy-kamasutry>), etc.;
- New technologies ("One of the founders of WhatsApp, Jan Krum, announced his leave from the company, the decision is associated with his disputes with Facebook" (<https://meduza.io/news/2018.05.01.odin-iz-osnovateley-whatsapp-yan-krum-ob-yavil-ob-uhode-iz-kompanii-reshenie-svyazyvayut-s-ego-raznoglasiyami-s-facebook>), etc.);
- Health care ("Self-analysis is a false path, it only steals bits of time." Oncologist Andrey Pavlenko is interviewed as he fell ill with cancer and will blog about how to cure" (<https://meduza.io/feature/2018.04.24.samokopanie-lozhnyy-put-ono-tolko-kradet-krupitsy-vremeni>), etc.);

- Science ("How to bend a light ray, to make a nano-thermometer and to create an artificial intelligence of an agriculturist. Lectures of the winners of the Science Slam battle of different years" (<https://meduza.io/slides/kak-izognut-luch-sveta-sobrat-nanogradusnik-i-sozdat-iskusstvennyy-intellekt-agronoma>), etc.);
- Lifestyles ("IKEA has released a fashion line in the same spirit of linens, armchairs and sofas of different countries" (<https://meduza.io/shapito/2018.05.01.ikea-vypustila-lineyku-odezhdy-v-ton-postelnogo-belya-kresel-i-divanov>));
- Leisure ("What to do at a long weekend: 54 pieces of advice by Meduzy staff" (<https://meduza.io/slides/chem-zanyatsya-v-dlinnye-vyhodnye-54-soveta-sotrudnikov-meduzy>))

Meduza and its public page, accordingly, offers its public regular reviews of films and music videos releases (for example, "What to watch in the cinema: Smeshariki", "Face", "Mrs. Hyde", "Tanks"), ultra-short reviews (in 140 characters!) on the main movies of the week (<https://meduza.io/slides/chtosmotret-v-kino-smeshariki-znaesh-mama-gde-ya-by-litso-missis-hayd-tanki>), etc.). It also suggests audio podcasts: "What is the right way to travel – spontaneously or planned?" (<https://meduza.io/episodes/2018.04.30.kak-pravilno-puteshestvovat-planiruya-ili-spontanno>), "Get as many lovers as you can afford. The maximum tolerance issue" (<https://meduza.io/episodes/2018.05.05.imey-stolko-vozyublennyh-skolko-ty-gotov-potyanut-maksimalno-tolerantnyy-vypusk>), etc. It also contains life hacks such as "How to cook real Swedish (Turkish!) meatballs. The recipe of the New York Times reporter's grandmother" (<https://meduza.io/slides/kak-prigotovit-nastoyaschie-shvedskie-turetskie-frikadelki>). The content illustration is an active link to the Meduza website. The life hack "How to grow something edible on a window sill?" (<https://meduza.io/feature/2017.04.30.kak-vyrastit-napodokonnike-chnibud-s-edobnoe>) was created in spring 2017 and reactivated on May 2, 2018. There is also a similar life hack available for the meat pockets (Russian pelmeni). In addition one can find games tests (eg, "Grebe or nightingale?" Meduza spring test on the knowledge of the birds (<https://meduza.io/quiz/poganka-ili-solovey>), "Sex, Revolution and "Capital". A complex, but educational test about the ideas and life of Karl Marx. Today he is 200 years old!" (<https://meduza.io/quiz/seks-revolutsiya-i-kapital>)).

By the way, non-news content on Meduza can be published with some delay. For example, the podcast "To dig or to booze up. How the settlement lives in Transbaikalia, located on the abandoned gold mines" (<https://meduza.io/episodes/2018.04.26.kopat-ili-buhat-kak-zhivet-poselok-v-zabaykalie-stoyaschiy-na-zabroshennyh-zolotyh-shahtah>) (from the heading "Text of the Week") appeared on the web-site on April 26, and was announced in the social network on April 30. "Famous Swedish meatballs turned out to be Turkish. The Swedes are in shock" (<https://meduza.io/feature/2018.05.03.znamenitnye-shvedskie-frikadelki-okazalis-turetskimi-shvedy-v-shoke-the-new-york-times>) (heading Stories) is created and published on Meduza on

May 3, and received a link in social networks only on the 6th. The same can be said about a variety of other Meduza posts in the public page.

As the author of the present article has already noted, non-news information in the public page can be reactivated several times. In particular, references to the same material can be used more than once. For example, "Bipolar disorder. Is it when now it's fun, now it's sad? Why is it often diagnosed among talented people?" (<https://meduza.io/feature/2018.04.29.bipolyarnoe-rastroystvo-eto-kogda-to-veselo-to-grustno-pochemu-ono-chasto-vstrechaetsya-u-talantlivykh-lyudey>) is announced in the public page VKontakte twice during the daytime on April 30 (first at 00:44 and then at 12:12), and then again on May 3. Lead is the only difference. The account can give links to the content, created several years ago, if the news topic becomes relevant again (this includes seasonal topics, instructions, etc.).

In general, it can be noted that the official page of Meduza gives content of two types. The first type is linked to the website, the second is for VKontakte-based viewing, not requiring the website link (for example, video information "For one justified in Russian courts there are 445 convicts" (https://vk.com/meduzaproject?z=video-76982440_456240066%2F0491adb4c6264e034a%2Fpl_wall_-76982440), a video of "The Dance of Galaxies around the Milky Way" (https://vk.com/meduzaproject?z=video-76982440_456240084%2F9970f3c9742d50f81f%2Fpl_wall_-76982440), etc.).

Meduza supplies its posts with leads created specifically for social networks. The staff knows their thing. The accompanying texts are interesting, adapted to the audience of the VKontakte network. For example, for "The site of Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resource Usage was hacked. The icon of the dog in the hood was uploaded there as a symbol of "Digital Resistance" (<https://meduza.io/news/2018.05.01.sayt-rosprirrodnadzora-vzломali-tuda-zagruzili-risunok-sobaki-v-hudi-telegram-simvol-tsifrovogo-soprotivleniya>), the lead said "Maybe someone mixed up Federal Supervision Agency for Information Technologies and Communications with Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resource Usage. But there is still Federal Supervision Agency for Customer Protection and man Welfare!"

However, there is not much written language in the public page. Most of it is generated by users. The bet is made on the visual content, which prevails over the verbal one. The public page content illustrates things that are not illustrated on the web-site, and visualizes what is difficult to visualize.

3.3 Content analysis. Interpretation of visual media content

Content analysis is an analysis of the form and content of texts: their processing, evaluation and interpretation. The method can be useful in both quantitative and qualitative studies. And these two types of methods do not mutually exclude each other. They can be combined for more effective work.

Using this method, we compiled a classification of the visual content of the official Meduza public page in VKontakte:

- A photo, most often a report-photo (to be more exact, a photo link to the official web-site content). It is one of the most frequently used visual content in the public page. Basically, it looks like a photo with the text main idea (or simply demonstrates the title. Clicking on the photo, one gets to the web-site and can read the whole article;
- A visualized quote is also frequently used format. It often illustrates news from the web-site, which, as a rule, has no visual content. It looks like a contrasted word cloud.
- For example, "When a former FSIN officer becomes a director of a university" (https://vk.com/meduzaproject?z=video-76982440_456240078%2Fbce1969d5cebae2e69%2Fpl_wall_-76982440) has got 1285 likes and 125 reposts from the grateful audience. Another good example of the visual content in the video format is "Written in "chicken scratch": Putin could not make out his own notes" (https://vk.com/meduzaproject?z=video-76982440_456240070%2F9117de1b2f888061ae%2Fpl_wall_-76982440). Among the videos there are also professionally prepared videos, and author's video from the scene, as well as trailers, and even video of exotic character, such as mini-lectures in the video format ("How a writer comes to success" (https://vk.com/meduzaproject?z=video-76982440_456240099%2Fe5048568ae96ed0180%2Fpl_wall_-76982440));
- Video graphics and infographics. A good example can be "What older people know better than young people. Plenty!" (https://vk.com/meduzaproject?z=video-76982440_456240055%2F604b7a8bf2767a526b%2Fpl_wall_-76982440));
- Drawings mostly illustrate the above described life hacks;
- Cartoons. For instance, "Crocodile" at Meduza: May Day sloth" (<https://meduza.io/galleries/2015.05.01.krokodil-v-gostyah-u-meduzy-pervomayskoe-tuneyadstvo>) content depicts the format.
- Comics look like active links placed on an element of the comics, used as the background. "The most noble hero of Marvel "Silver Surfer. "Parable": a fragment of the comics on Meduza" (<https://meduza.io/shapito/2018.05.01.samyy-blagorodnyy-geroy-marve>) can serve as an example.
- Interesting "non-format" content can be designed as a photo with a quote. The quote serves an active link to the timelapse, exemplified by "The Saudi photographer took a time-out with a sandstorm over Riyadh. It looks like an apocalypse" (<https://meduza.io/shapito/2018.04.27.saudovskiy-fotograf-snyal-taymlaps-s-peschanoy-burey-nad-riyadom-pohozhe-na-apokalipsis>)).

Meduza visual content is multiple and diverse. It includes rare types of visual messages. Here it is important to discuss the proper planning of a marketing strategy aimed at an average VKontakte followers, who surf the public pages in

search of interesting, bright, memorable pictures (from motivating to informative) and consider the visual information presentation the most convenient and comfortable.

3.4 Discourse analysis. The audience reaction

In addition to the content created by the authors of Medusa, visual messages are actively generated by public-page visitors (subscribers and random visitors). In this context, the account, considered totally visual, acquires a new dimension of color. The posts often collect 300-500-700 likes (sometimes more than a thousand) and a few dozen reposts (for example, the post about "Ukrainian student, who had lied about his age to get adopted in the US, was put in after receiving the parents' report: GQ" (<https://meduza.io/feature/2018.05.03.ukrainiyskiy-student-navral-pro-svoy-voznrast-htoby-ego-usynovili-v-ssha>) scored 901 likes and 36 reposts). Under each post dozens, or even hundreds, of comments are generated, many of which include visual information.

This can be clearly observed in the table.

Table 1. Audience response

Date	Total Comments (items)	Comments with visual elements (%)	Pictures (%)	Memes (%)	Smiles (%)	GIF (%)	Video (%)	Audio (%)
30.04.18	1072	7,93	5,69	0,00	0,56	0,00	1,40	0,28
01.05.18	2123	7,58	4,99	0,24	0,52	0,05	1,32	0,33
02.05.18	2135	7,96	5,29	0,23	0,47	0,14	1,45	0,37
03.05.18	2144	8,21	5,60	0,28	0,89	0,19	1,12	0,19
04.05.18	2139	8,13	5,38	0,42	0,47	0,14	1,17	0,89
05.05.18	3784	11,92	7,35	0,82	0,53	0,08	2,83	0,42
06.05.18	2518	13,42	9,65	0,56	0,71	0,16	0,60	0,52

It can be observed from the table that with all the variety of types of generated visual content (images, memes, smiles, stickers, GIFs, video, audio), the use of images remains prevalent. We refer to this type of visualization: funny photos, serious photos (landscape, portrait, story in pictures), photos provided with text, still pictures from movies, fragments of anime, motifakes, drawings, photo collages, screenshots, screenshots with selected fragments, infographics and so on.

It should be noted that sometimes the type of content, used by journalists, when creating content, leads to a reciprocal generation of UGC content of the same type. This is especially noticeable in the use of audio and video elements. Also, materials that contain such type of content as "test" prompt subscribers and visitors to place screenshots with the results of passing the tests. Thus, we see that the media meet subscribers' expectations purposefully.

So, nowadays users, interacting with the editorial office and with each other, create content actively. That includes visual one, forming the media image in the social network. Although the preferred UGC content is still text (on average, the number

of text comments is about 90%), "text + visual element" comments are going up and up.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the analytical part of the study, the author has examined the visual component of the socio-political online media, from the point of view of media aesthetics. The informational and analytical resource Meduza has been chosen, because it provides objective and qualitatively-prepared information. The author of the present article has found out that Meduza is represented in almost all major social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, Odnoklassniki and Medium. Also it has four public pages in VKontakte. The author of the present article has analyzed the content of the Meduza official public page in VKontakte during the time period from April 30 to May 6, 2018. The total content amount of the period is 240 items. The author of the present article has found out that the thematic repertoire of public page media is very diverse and includes such areas of news information as home and foreign policy, world news, economics and sport. Culture, new technologies, healthcare, science, lifestyle, leisure, etc. are also under media observation. There are reviews on films, music videos, audio podcasts, life hacks and advice on different occasions in the public page. In the process of analysis, we identified the most common types of visual public page content, such as a photo-link, which allows getting to the main Meduza web-site. Also there are visualized quotes; videos (professionally prepared videos, author's video from the scene, trailers, lectures in video format, etc.); videography and infographics; drawings (usually illustrating life hacks); cartoons; comics; informal content types (for example, a photo with a quote which functions as an active link to a timeline), etc. The main task of the public page is to form the audience loyal and link the public to the web-site. The author of the present article can say that the main function of visual content components is an attractive function. The task is to "hook" users, to draw his attention to the news and make them comment. There are other functions such as focusing on a certain piece of news in order to distinguish it from the information flow, as an event illustrative visualization can speak for itself. Visual content is balanced with the verbal, while there is no hypertrophy of the aesthetic function of visualization (the design of the public page is rather minimalistic and strict), even the infographics applied is simple and sketchy. This corresponds to the editorial board principle of objective content submission. Although a certain editorial position can be depicted through the ironic subtext of the visual series. However, the emotional restraint of visual content is compensated by the user component thanks to comments. There is a significant diversity of emotionally loaded content: demotivators, stickers, emoji, smiles, etc.

Thus, we see that the visual content of the media public page is not self-sufficient; nevertheless, it serves as a necessary and effective means of attracting attention.

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