

Travels as Life Style in View of Russian Travel-Bloggers

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Abstract

Appearance of Internet has given people never seen before access to information about events happening all over the globe. Person's need in self-expression and speaking his opinion due to Internet has received the powerful channel for realization. One of key results of said tools evolution nowadays are blogs and blogosphere uniting them into a single system.

Space of Russian blogosphere offers quite number of interesting resources dedicated to travels. Among authors of such travel-blogs – people of different age, education, professional activities, and other social-demographic characteristics. Special segment is taken by authors for whom travelling is not a temporary event in life, business trip, or vacation, but daily routine, life style.

Article shows results of content-analysis of travel-blogs of authors for whom travelling is daily practice and life style.

Key words: travelling, life style, blogging

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1. Introduction

Appearance of Internet has given people never seen before access to information about events happening all over the globe. But most important advantage of Web according to users is a possibility to freely spread own information making it available for significant part of world population. Person's need in self-expression and speaking his opinion due to Internet has received the powerful channel for realization in form of numerous forums, chats, guest books, and other means of network communication. One of key results of said tools evolution nowadays are blogs and blogosphere uniting them into a single system.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Blogging as a self-introduction

Wikipedia, free online encyclopedia being created by collective work of voluntary authors, the creature of Web 2.0 (same as the blogs) gives this event the following determination: “ Blog (a truncation of the expression "weblog") is a discussion or informational website published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete, often informal diary-style text entries ("posts")” (Wikipedia.org, 2017). Blog is a website, major content of which is regularly added records, images or multimedia. Typical for blogs are not long records of temporary significance.

The Russian Magazine “Computerra” gives blog the following definition: “Blog is a network diary, — website where in reverse chronological order (last records are first) posted are diary notes on different topics. Most spread in Russian sector of the Web are personal blogs belonging to a certain author, where records are made on topics determined by owner (blogger)” (Protasov, 2006).

Under the BLOG we will mean personal web-page where a person (hereinafter the BLOGGER) posts information with purpose to express himself, his ideas, find like-minded people and communicate. As different from communication platforms such as forums, blog is a personal territory of author where he establishes his rules giving him additional possibilities for self-

expression and creativity. Other significant feature of blog differentiating it from typical mass media is initially personal nature of the one. Blog is on behalf of author and mostly contains information related personally to author including most interesting events of his life as well as opinion about different events in life of society. Thus, blog by essence is a product of blogger personality and bears information about his personal experience, mindset, likes, etc. However, final or resulting focus of blog, its function may be different from initial focus, more correctly, may be wider than the initial one. For example, with time personal blog may turn into a tool for promotion of political ideas, however, not losing its initial personal nature.

One of key factors conditioning blogs popularity is demand for self-expression (Zasurskyi, 2007, p.14). In a nutshell, free self-expression on one side having no, natural restrictions typical for communication in real life, and on another side – artificial restrictions set by administration of public internet-forums. However, only one this factor would be not enough to popularize blogs as any creative work should have not only the author but also the consumer. Presence of mass of consumers of bloggers' work is a consequence of another important need typical for many people, so called need in authority, i.e. a person to trust to. In real life, usually such people are parents, elder brothers, teachers, writers, political and spiritual leaders. If due to some reasons a person cannot find an authority for him-/herself in real life, Internet is to help with its vast range of well-known web stars, experts in different areas of life. Bloggers are just one type of such experts. Blogger having become an authority automatically becomes for his/her readers a source for information, that is, if not absolutely, trusted, but at least, deserving serious attention.

2.2. Russian blogosphere

Study of Russian blogosphere has identified number of basic features typical for bloggers and differentiating them from "common" people. Below is the list thereof.

- 1) Psychological extraversion and tendency to graphomania.
- 2) So called, active living position.
- 3) Extensive reading, erudition, ability to fast digesting of information.
- 4) Expert mindset, i.e. well-developed critical thinking to the detriment of creative thinking.
- 5) Need in acknowledgement, continuous support of their opinion.

According to Yandex (the most popular Russian search engine) Russian blogosphere accounts for over 1 million of blogs, half of which is regularly update. For leading hosting platforms for blogs are LiveJournal.com (228 thousand of active blogs), Liveinternet.ru (over 160 thousand), Blogs.mail.ru (72 thousand) and Diary.ru (over 44 thousand.). One other important parameter is a share of new posts a day demonstrating 'intensity' of blogosphere life on different segments. Unconditional leader on this parameter is Livejournal (44.78% posts in Russian blogosphere), and its closest competitor – Liveinternet (19.98%). Based on results of calculation by Yandex system, number of certain blogs is 4.5 thousand, and over 60% thereof operate on WordPress engine. Typical blogger is 21-year old female student living in Moscow, and circle of her readers is about 24 people (Krutova, 2017, p.46).

After having allocated general structure of discussion core of Russian blogosphere based on analysis of content and descriptions of 1200 blogs (10% of discussion core) there were identified and determined structures inside cloud. Researchers have determined four key network clusters making discussion core:

- political and public relationships (discussion of news, business and finances, social and political activity, etc.);
- culture (literature, cinema, elite and popular culture, etc.);
- regional bloggers (bloggers identifying themselves as residents of certain regions of Russia or cities);
- instrumental bloggers (bloggers in such group with large degree of probability actively use blog as a mean of income).

Travel-blogs – are instrumental blogs aimed at spreading information on tourist destinations, regions, countries, features of travels, lifehacks, recommendations for purchase on buying tickets, car rental, visa requirements, etc.

Space of Russian blogosphere offers quite number of interesting resources dedicated to travels. Among authors of such travel-blogs – people of different age, education, professional activities, and other social-demographic characteristics.

Special segment is taken by authors for whom travelling is not a temporary event in life, business trip, or vacation, but daily routine, life style.

Life style — (In Latin, *modus vivendi*) long-standing, typical for historically-exact social relationships forms of individual, group life and activity of people characterizing features of their communication, behavior and mindset in different areas. Life style — is long-standing form of being of human in the world, expressed in his activity, interests, commitments. Life style — is a method, forms and conditions of individual and collective living of person typical for certain-historical social and economic relationships. Key parameters of life style are labor (study for younger generation), life, public-political and cultural activities of people as well as different behavioral customs and expressions.

3. Research methodology and findings

Let us show results of content-analysis of travel-blogs of authors for whom travelling is daily practice and life style. Study was conducted in a period of 2015-2017. Analyzed were 96 author blogs with more than 2,800 units of information (thematical posts) published in segment of Russian Internet-space (Runet), authors, identifying themselves as Russian (Russian bloggers) and whose notes were dedicated to subject of travels. Important note is – that each of bloggers included into pool of study states that travel is his life style, thus general totality of respondents was determined based on their self-assessment. Study has covered authors of blogs having at least 10,000 subscribers (followers).

In process of content-analysis the following objectives were set as follows:

- social-demographic portrait of traveler – blogger;
- life style;
- motivation of travels;
- motivation for blogging;
- circumstances at which author has begun travelling;
- features of life style;
- sources of income;
- advantages of travels as life style;
- disadvantages of travels as life style.

Study gave following results.

It is impossible to form average portrait of travel-blogger. Study has shown that in space of Russian travel-blogging the following groups of authors can be allocated:

Group № 1. "Travelling youth" - about 15% of studied bloggers. Young single men and women travelling alone. In general, age of such bloggers does not go beyond 19-25 years. These, as a rule, are students (extramural studies), or recent university graduates.

In average, travelling youth travels 6-8 months per year choosing for travels certain regions (South-East Asia, Europe), or certain countries large in territory (China, India). Main reason for travels is a thrill of adventures, mustering something new, collection of impressions. To start travels named are short travels during study (on-job practice, students exchange, summer school, etc.).

Limitations of financial capabilities (typical expenses are – USD 300-500 per month) condition choice of accommodation, transportation, food and accessibility of learning objects during travel. During travels, young people choose not expensive accommodation (hostels, guest houses), actively practice couch-surfing. At traveling they often use hitch-hiking or resources where it is possible to find fellow travelers. Main source of income is remote work (freelance), that can be practiced during travels (translation, copyrighting, and etc.), savings accumulated between travels, as well as parents sponsorship. Blogs of such travelers usually do not give significant income, as they are not considered by authors as possibility for monetization.

Key motive of blogging is self-presentation, boast. Ratio of men and women in this category of bloggers is about equal. However, young men in this category more often restrict themselves by blog itself where they post text and visual information of limited volume. In their turn, young women actively use in addition to blog capabilities of Instagram as well, where they post large number of photos and videos of their travels.

As a main advantage of travelling life style respondents of this group note possibility to see other territories, meet new people, test themselves under extreme conditions. As disadvantages, they note financial limits that not allow for trying one or another amenities and touristic attractions at places of stay, as well as for simplifying travel process (travelling by more comfortable transport, for example). Moreover, risks associated with single travels (more related to young woman), are such as, sexual harassment by local men.

Group № 2. "Rioters" – approximately 55%. This group included men and women aged 35-45 years. Larger part of this group is formed by men. More often, representatives of this category have experience of family life, but at moment of travel life is divorced.

As a rule, "rioters" are former paid employees, middle ranking managers with high intensity and responsibility at work. During certain life stage, family difficulties occur, carrier gives lesser satisfaction (at first, moral, and not financial), and a person begins to wish "to quit and to go for good). In general, they travel for a long time, not coming back home for more than 10 months.

Such travelers have more financial capabilities than "travelling youth"; many of them have "safety net" in form of leased apartment or some other funds, so they can allow themselves more comfortable conditions of life. Rioters prefer to stay in one or another place for a longer time (1-4 months) as a mean for accommodation renting a flat, house or bungalow. For transportation, they use a rented car.

Major source of income during travel are capital resources formed in "former life" or constant remote work (not freelance). Average living budget during travel is USD 1500-2500 per month.

Remote work is a main source of finance for traveling; giving footprint on a travelling style. In particular, this conditions choice of life with comfortable workplace and high-speed Internet connection. So, many budgetary options are not looked at, initially.

Blogging for such travelers is possibility to share skills, life-hacks. Self-presenting function of such authors is presented is rather weakly than, of young travelers. Moreover, maintaining blog rioters consider as a tool (one of) to earn money adjusting affiliated payments from external sites on basis of partnership agreements or by placement of direct ad.

As a main advantage of life style in travelling representatives of said group name social freedom, lack of restrictions associated with working mode, duties, deadlines, etc.; and as consequence – lack of stress. Second important advantage is possibility to "liberate mind" re-think certain issues, review their principles, behavior, etc. Moreover, there is named is possibility to try exotic and extreme types of activity, i.e. diving with sharks, bungee jumps over waterfall, night safari, etc.

Of disadvantages – they name gradual reduction of self-discipline, free day regime does not promote for time planning, regularity of some exercises (morning jogging, exercise, self-education, etc.).

Group № 3. "Family travelers" - 20% of studied travel-bloggers. This group includes bloggers traveling with family. Their age boundaries, in general, do not fall lower than 30 years. Among studied by us bloggers only 4 were younger by age. Often these are married couples with children.

Travelers of this group choose "long" routes stopping for 6-12 months at a certain place and traveling "short distances" to places nearby. Many of them travel "by wheels" in own trailer; although, this option is often chosen by pre- and retirement age travelers (over 50 years old). For such travelers, main motive is a wish to diversify their life, to try something new, to learn about culture, customs, cuisines of other countries. Rather rarely they try extreme types of activity.

Budget of "family travelers" is significantly higher than the youth one, but often is lesser than budget of rioters. In average for a family consisting of 2 adults and 1-2 children aged before 15 years spends USD 1000-2000 per month during travels. Income part is accumulated from capital resources (apartment lease, savings in bank, etc.), permanent remote job, temporary jobs at location (seasonal works on harvesting, tutoring local population, being a guide tour for countrymen, etc.).

Blog is used as a mean of communication with countrymen (as such travelers aimed at living abroad for many years abroad), possibility to share experience, discoveries, practical advice. As a source of income this is the group of authors where blogs are used more often. Authors knowingly promote their resources, adjust CEO-optimization, work on growth of blog popularity. This group has a largest percent of use of direct ad and partner payments. Often, on pages of blog paid consultancy services are being provided. However, as a main source of income blog is looked at rather rarely.

Among advantages of traveling life style named by family travelers – are freedom of travel, feeling of being “man of world”, lack of restrictive circumstances (work schedule, obligations, and etc.), stress, possibility to turn children to world values by practice, and not by notes in school books. However, as disadvantage they name lack of systematic education for children, restrictions for their socialization. Young married couples (including with small children) also name lack of support from elder generation, misunderstanding on part of their parents and other relatives of chosen life style.

Group № 4. “Travelling workers” - 8%. These are bloggers for whom life in travel is more work than a life style. They may include journalists writing on subject of tourism, flora, fauna, expeditions, studies, etc.; professional tour guides and travel-trainers who arrange tours or travels by order; esoteric coaches organizing retreats, vipassanas and other special tours.

In practice, it is impossible highlight reasons promoting for their start of life in travels. The same refers to sources of income of such authors. At this sense, this is the closest category of travelers.

Speaking about blogging of such “travelling workers”, it acts as a tool for promotion of professional skills, service ensuring on- and off-line traffic of potential customers.

Group № 5. Others – 2%. This category includes bloggers who knowingly restrict media-activity by narrow specialized subjects, i.e. gastronomy and culinary aspects, architecture, air-flights, and etc. So, it is not possible to give objective characteristic of such travelers’ life style.

4. Conclusion

It should be noted, that mass travels of Russians have begun due to political events that caused break of the Union of Soviet Socialistic Republic and formation of independent state – the Russian Federation. For Soviet people travels (especially abroad) were almost inaccessible in practice. New social-economic and political conditions as well as globalization processes, transformation of international relationships, technology innovations and many other factors nowadays allow Russians to travel abroad, to learn about the world, to get acquainted with other cultures. However, until now long travels are perceived as something unusual, a headliner. People able to travel for more than a month and even a year, cause surprise, curiosity, partly even envy; thus, making their life style interesting and perceptive subject for study.

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