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Features of internet consumption in Russian rural settlements

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Abstract

Russian media infrastructure is known to be more developed in big cities compared with smaller settlements. Thus, the rural audience is not a popular object of research. It is believed that the development of new media, including the internet, occurs with a certain delay there, and also the commercial potential of these types of customers is quite low.

The authors of this paper aim at answering the question: What are the features of internet development and consumption in rural Russia? The research is based on the results of several quantitative surveys, covering all the Russian population including rural residents, as well as two ethnographic research expeditions to the Kostroma and Rostov regions.

Keywords: internet consumption, rural audiences, Runet, social networks

1. Introduction and background

The internet has been gaining popularity in Russia over the last two decades. The research made by various research institutes shows that more than a half of Russian adults are using online services. According to the data of the Public Opinion Foundation (Fond »Obshestvennoe Mnenie«, 2013), the monthly reach of the internet among Russians at the age of 18 + in autumn 2013 was 57 %, the daily reach being 46 %. Russia is the sixth country in the world by the number of WWW users, and one third of these users are mobile internet consumers.

From the very moment the internet became widespread in Russia, it was under the scrutiny of social research-

ers. For instance, several research institutes (Public Opinion Foundation, WCIOM, TNS Russia, GfK-Rus, etc.) are regularly providing quantitative internet audience data. A quite detailed overview of such sources is contained in an article by Frolov (2013). Galitskiy (2008), Skanavi and Kolmogortseva (2007) propose segmentations of Russian internet users based on Public Opinion Foundation and MASMI surveys. Delitsyn (2008, 2010, 2012; Yurina and Delitsyn, 2008) is forecasting parameters of internet development in the country. Doktorov (1999a, 1999b) has been analysing the interaction between the internet and society since 1999, taking into consideration the prospects of the internet from its very inception.

How the Russian internet will develop in terms of economics is also under active consideration. Among recent research results there is a report named »Russia online: the impact of the internet on the Russian economy«, published by the Boston Consulting Group (Banke, Butenko and Kotsur, 2011). An assessment of online markets and an analysis of their trends is presented in the survey "The Economy of the Runet", conducted by the Russian Association of Electronic Communications and the National Research University Higher School of Economics (Davydov and Kiriya, 2012). A publication by Belyaev (2010) is focused on the development of the Russian online advertising market.

In the published scientific and - even more so - industrial research context, the rural part of the Russian internet audience remains practically unexplored. Historically we can see inhabitants of big cities at the forefront of internet consumption. However, recently we are facing a trend of involving rural inhabitants in internet usage. It is the fastest growing segment of the audience. Taking into account that rural residents make up about one fifth of the total population of Russia and that, according to the above cited Public Opinion Foundation survey, penetration of internet in rural areas is about 44%, this group of users should be considered as quite important.

Academic studies in this area started outside Russia much earlier. There is a term 'rural internet' meaning 'the access to the internet from rural areas' (also referred to as "the country" or "countryside") which are settled places outside towns and cities. Inhabitants live in villages, hamlets, on farms and in other isolated houses. Mountains and other terrain can impede rural internet access. The studies of internet consumption in rural areas can boast a long history, particularly in the USA where they date back to the early 1990's. As a rule, a city and a village differ mostly in terms of lifestyle but communications are basically the same - the villages are not so much behind. As a matter of fact, the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service has provided numerous studies and data on the internet in rural America.

One such article from the Agricultural Outlook magazine, "Communications & the Internet in Rural America", summarizes internet uses in rural areas of the United States in 2002. It indicates, that "internet use by rural and urban households has also increased significantly during the 1990's, so significantly that it has one of the fastest rates of adoption for any household service" (Anon., 2002).

Another area for inclusion in the internet is American farming. One study reviewed data from 2003 and found that "56 percent of farm operators used the Internet while 31 percent of rural workers used it at their place of work" (Stenberg and Morehart, 2006). In later years, challenges to economical rural telecommunications remain. People in inner city areas are closer together, so the access network to connect them is shorter and cheaper to build and maintain, while rural areas require more equipment per customer. However, even with this challenge, the demand for services continues to grow.

Some contemporary research in this field has been presented in Stern, Collins and Wellman, eds. (2010). The papers contained in this issue of American Behavioral Scientist address substantive and methodological issues regarding the place of the internet in daily life, in general, with a specific focus on rural places and their unique qualities. Much attention is paid to such topics as geographic isolation, community cohesion, social networks, technological diffusion, and challenges for survey research.

The present article is based on the results of a qualitative survey of rural internet audiences performed by the Media Studies Laboratory of the National Research University Higher School of Economics in the Kostroma and Rostov regions in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

In the Rostov region, the research was conducted in cooperation with the Don State Technical University. The basic method of research was based on detailed interviews with internet users at the age of 14+. In the following section, the regions and the methodology of the survey are discussed in more detail.

2. Methods and regions of the study

The survey is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodology. The main method is in-depth interviewing of new media users. Also, such methods as observation and questionnaire surveys were used.

During the first expedition to the Kostroma region, usage of the internet was one of the topics in the interview guide. However, in that case only a few of the respondents were online users. In the Rostov region, internet usage was the subject of a separate guide.

Sample size at the first expedition was 43 interviews, with 30 interviews in the second one. The dates of the field work were: 25-28 June 2012 (Kostroma region) and 25-30 June 2013 (Rostov region).

The following topics concerning internet usage were included in the guide:
- Equipment for internet access;
- E-mail and messaging services;
- Search systems, use of internet for educational purposes, online news;

- Blogs and social networks;
- Piracy;
- E-commerce and advertising;
- Online games.

In the Kostroma region, in the north of Russia, the field work was organised in the Manturovskiy area. Five villages were selected (Ugory, Leontievo, Davydovo, Afanasievo and Medvedevo), all of them situated rather far from urban settlements. The nearest city is Manturovo - 16 699 people - and the rural population of the district is 4 586 people in total. The income level of the majority of the respondents is comparatively low. The main occupation is private farming.

Figure 1: House in Ugory village, Kostroma region (2012)

During the second expedition to the southern part of the country, interviews were collected in the rural settlement Koksovskoe (with an urban settlement status until 2004), its population is 8 050 people. The nearest town, Belaya Kalitva, is 15 kilometers away and Rostov-on-Don, the regional centre, is 160 kilometers away. Many of the villagers are employed in industrial production and do not consider private farming as their main source of income.

The two rural areas mentioned above are very different, but they do not represent all the variety of rural settlements in the surveyed country.

However, as we shall see, internet consumers at both sampling points have much in common. Thus, some features of online usage found can be treated as typical at least for a substantial part of the Russian rural audience.

Figure 2: Process of interviewing. Koksovskoe, Rostov region (2013)

3. Results

3.1 Mode of internet access

The characteristics of the technical means used for getting access to online resources are crucial for understanding the internet audience behaviour. Indeed, such factors as speed of internet connection, type of device or devices (desktop or mobile? and for desktop - where is it located?), screen size, availability of a keyboard,

etc., are essentially determining the ways that people communicate and access information online.

A resident of a large Russian city has many alternative ways available for getting internet access, and the costs of the services are comparatively low. It is normal for such people to use various online connections in different life situations. However, such opportunities are usually limited in small settlements. Costs of services are higher there and incomes are lower, consequently rural consumers have to be more attentive to the choice of connection method.

For instance, users in the villages of the Kostroma region have only one way of connecting to the internet. This is mobile internet that can be used via mobile telephones and smartphones. Furthermore, this type of connection can be used on other devices with the help of a USB modem. People in Koksovskoe have the opportunity to connect to the internet via telephone line. In this case the price is higher but speed of access is higher. Landlines are not widespread in the rural settlements, and in the context of mobile telephony development people tend to reject the older technology. However, several cases in the study show that people have ordered a landline connection especially to get wired internet access.

Delytsin (2008) argues that "for quite a long time in regions and rural areas mobile connection will be of higher convenience for using the internet". This statement is fully endorsed by our survey. In the vast majority of households there is at least one mobile phone which means that a user does not need any extra devices. The obvious benefits are saving money, mobility and ease of use. At the same time, such a connection is not very fast, the screen of the device is small, and text input is inconvenient.

The age of respondents using mobile phones for internet access is commonly under 35 years old. First, mobile phones are good devices for communications via social networks and many young rural residents are active users of these. Secondly, representatives of the senior age groups of the audience are less apt at mastering work with a small screen. Some people use mobile gadgets as an additional device for internet connection at those times where their main hardware is unavailable. One of the respondents remarked in the interview taken in his garage: *"Now I don't have a computer with me, so I go out on the internet via mobile. At home though (I use) a computer"* (Rostov region, male, 25 years, electrician). This example shows that for some rural users it is valuable to stay online regardless of their location.

A USB modem connected to a desktop computer or a laptop is a more expensive option. Other drawbacks include low quality and connection instability; this problem persists for all operators and tariff plans. It can

also impose some restrictions on the content the users access, as they have to take into account the fixed traffic limits and they therefore avoid videos and some games.

Setting up a wired internet connection using a telephone landline is one of the most expensive and unaffordable solutions. However, subscribers to this service note that they have the best available connection speed, and an opportunity to save on their monthly subscription payments. Those "advanced" users sometimes enjoy up-to-date modems with a built-in WiFi router. Despite the fact that mobility is not a core value for this audience group, respondents do find it comfortable to use a laptop or tablet with wireless connection at home.

Thus, the means of internet access used are diverse, but limited to the existing market offers. And people do move to new access technologies when these become available. However, the device used to access the internet and the quality of the connection are practically not connected with the informational interests of consumers. The latter are discussed in the subsequent parts of our article.

3.2 Search of information. News. Use of e-mail

Russian internet audience researchers agree that the interests and preferences of urban and rural users are different. As is noted in a report by Yandex (2013), "while internet search and social networks are used in all settlements by 90% of the population, news websites in small towns and villages are of interest for only 50% of internet users compared to 80% in Moscow".

Information search is one of the basic features for internet users. This topic came up in all the interviews with the internet users. The following features of information search by the respondents were revealed.

- Search settings are defined spontaneously. Respondents do not realise while connecting to the internet how long the session will last, what topics and resources will become objects of attention, etc.

- Search of information is usually not a regular task for the majority of users.

- Respondents tend to use the internet as an additional source of information, while getting data from some other sources.

While searching the internet, respondents demonstrate a lack of critical attitude and frequently even attention to sources of information. They do not try to verify obtained data and do not recognize different sorts of manipulation. As we'll show later, the same behavior is observed in cases of online advertising and e-commerce

services. For Russian rural residents, the level of trust in the internet is still high. More deep analysis shows, however, that people do understand their weakness as online users and are afraid of the internet as a source of potential threats and dangers.

A typical starting point for all sorts of information requests is a web search engine. Yandex is the leading search engine among Russian "villagers", followed by Google, Mail.ru and Rambler.

One of the obvious and unique advantages of the internet as a medium is that it is capable of providing news in real time, benefiting the audience with an opportunity to be among the first to know. However, this feature is not in use by the villagers who participated in the survey. They do not enjoy the variety of views available either and do not often use the web for making their own judgments or for their personal analysis. The majority of respondents do not suffer from "informational hunger". They are fine with quite similar news reports on traditional media (mainly the top three Russian TV channels - First Channel, Rossia-1 and NTV).

Approximately half of the respondents have their own e-mail address. The main reason for opening an e-mail account is its necessity for registration in different electronic devices (e.g., tablets), and online games. The initial function of e-mail, i.e., interpersonal exchange of letters, files, etc., is used quite rarely. Indeed, in small settlements face-to-face contacts are still of high importance. And for contacting relatives and friends in other regions of the country rural residents prefer to use the phone. A narrow layer of e-mail users consists of specialists exchanging messages on professional topics with colleagues from other locations.

Mail.ru is the most popular free e-mail service in the rural settlements. According to various surveys, it has many more registered users than Yandex, but in the cities the situation is the reverse (Yandex, 2011). This is largely due to the fact that Mail.ru offers a social network, "Moi Mir", that is actively used by rural audiences and is not popular among Russian urban users.

3.3 Social media and online games

In general, social media are popular among Russian users in rural as well as in urban settlements, and their popularity is growing steadily. According to WCIOM (2013), 82 % of internet users had at least one social network account in 2012 compared with 53 % in 2010. Interest in social media is not going down, and their influence is growing in Russian regions. This trend in confirmed by our study. The observed activity in social networks of the respondents is quite high. About 70 % of the survey participants are registered users and visit social media web sites regularly. However, some of the

survey participants never even opened their social media account, and some stopped using it for some reason. The basic argument not to use social networks is that such activity is associated with idleness, indulgence and vain pastimes. Some informants said that they deleted their social media profile because they had *"played with that for a long time"*. Most often, people are registered in one social network, and that is enough for them. Only one third of the sample are registered in two social networks or more.

The difference in social network consumption between urban and rural populations is quite noticeable. In settlements of 100 000 and more people the Russian services "VKontakte", "Odnoklassiniki" and "Moi Mir" are rather popular. These sites are used by 43 % of internet users in small cities and villages, compared to 23 % in Moscow. They are in the Top 5 among the most used sites (Yandex, 2013). The survey affirms that the most popular online resource is "Odnoklassniki", which is an undoubted leader. The next positions belong to "VKontakte", "Facebook" and "Moi Mir".

The reasons for selecting a particular social network are diverse. "Odnoklassiniki" is popular because its interface is user-friendly and easy. Also, many villagers and relatives use it as well. Great importance is given to the stylistic design of the website, colour solutions, various additional and available functions, such as gift sending, online music listening, forming communities, and the presence of a "black list". As for the "VKontakte" interface, some respondents do not like it, whereas others are attracted by it. It is mostly popular among the younger users. "Facebook" is used mainly by older people whose work is not connected with the country. They are rooted professionally in an urban way of life, and this social network provides them with an opportunity to communicate with their regular circle of people. They represent urban professional groups: doctors, photographers, businessmen, etc.

The average number of "friends" is around 50-70. However, there is a group of active users who have managed to collect 500-600 "friends". The structures of the "friends" groups are very diverse. Basically, they are villagers, relatives, classmates, fellow students from colleges and universities, work colleagues, and sometimes online game friends. Interviewees often pointed out that they are connected with people that they know both in person and offline.

The main purpose of social network use is communication. One of the respondents, a 14-year old schoolgirl, formulated this quite well: *"…yeah, to sit, talk, chat, discuss with somebody"*. The most popular pastime on the net is to exchange messages among a selected group of friends, relatives and new acquaintances. The older generation uses social networks for communication with

their children and other relatives, sometimes very numerous, that are studying in the city, serving in the army or have moved to other regions of the country. Social networks are frequently used to find lost childhood friends and countrymen, classmates, former co-workers and colleagues. All new users pass this stage of forming his or her circle of online acquaintances, including new and/or regenerated contacts.

Other popular types of social network use are playing online games and communication in groups on hobbies and interests. The respondents use the latter feature rather effectively. In this case users are able to discuss problems connected with fishing, crafts, farming, gardening, sewing, etc.

It seems quite obvious that internet consumption by rural audiences is changing from season to season. The main factor is the pressure of work in the fields. In summer, social networks are more actively consumed during the religious holidays and during days of bad weather when it is not possible to work outdoors. Consumption time is growing in the late autumn and winter. We can conclude that, in general, there is a high level of social network use in the areas covered by the survey. Social networks are a part of the everyday practices of the villagers, they are gaining popularity among people of different age, professional and educational groups.

3.4 Use of e-commerce services.
     Attitude towards advertising

The online economy is developing rapidly in modern Russia and online advertising is an important part of the advertising market. The internet advertising market in 2012 was estimated by the Association of Russian Communication Agencies at 56.3 billion RUR (about 1.8 billion USD), or 18.9 % of the Russian total ATL advertising segment (AKAR, 2013).

According to the survey, rural users are suspicious of the internet as an environment for commercial activeties. The respondents recognize well the opportunities that the internet provides as a source of information, however, few of them are able to understand its commercial potential. This is caused by the lack of knowledge and experience in using web content in villages as well as by personal fears and stereotypes. It is a matter of habit for villagers to treat life as full of threats, dangerous adventures and mysticism. So for many respondents, the World Wide Web is a high-risk environment with unclear algorithms. At the same time, for some of the survey participants taking part in some of the online activities, it is of high importance. These users consider the internet as an advanced tool and to ignore it means to miss something significant and to fall out of the mainstream.

There are basically several core ways for rural residents to use e-commerce: online shopping, financial transactions (paying bills, mobile phone top-ups, paying for goods online, etc.) and using the web for professional purposes. While searching for commercial information, the respondents act quite erratically, focusing on the search results inconsistently. This is combined with a lack of expertise in distinguishing manipulative advertisements from ordinary information.

According to the Yandex (2013) report, "online shops attract up to 50 % of the audience in small settlements and more than 70 % in Moscow". A basic incentive for using unconventional online shopping is ordering something one cannot readily buy offline. The respondents say they order an item which seems to be unusual in their environment and this goes together with the unusual way of ordering it. A low price as a number one incentive to buy online was rarely mentioned throughout the survey. The convenience of online shopping was not mentioned at all. On the one hand, there are very few special trade proposals and a poorly developed infrastructure for working with this target group of online consumers. On the other hand, these people are not experienced web users, therefore the task of involving them in the processes of e-commerce is associated with the development of media literacy.

The interviews demonstrate that rural inhabitants rely on the opinion of those around them to a high extent. They do not like to stand out from the crowd and to make unconventional choices. This feature affects their e-commerce and online advertisement consumption. The respondents using online shopping on a consistent basis say they have web shoppers among their acquaintances. Quite often the survey participants refer to the online shopping experience of their family members (brother, father, husband, wife, etc.). Those who avoid buying goods on the web say they do not use the facilities which are unpopular in their social environment and about which they lack enough information. They are more likely to mention the negative experiences they have heard about, but not the positive references. The people surveyed see a lack of trust in e-commerce as the main reason for their limited usage of the facilities mentioned.

"It's like buying a cat in a bag. You won't get what you have seen in a picture anyway", says a housewife, aged 38. At the same time, the respondents are willing to use the internet to choose an item to buy. They mostly refer to a search engine first. They find some information about a product, read the users' feedback and perform price comparisons for the later offline purchase.

For the majority of respondents it is unacceptable to entrust their finances to the net. For many of the survey participants the web is mostly a source of entertain-

ment. That is why they can hardly imagine that it can also be a place for financial transactions. However, proper understanding of the significant commercial potential of the web and its importance was demonstrated by the entrepreneurs among the respondents. They mentioned the convenience of looking for new business partners online, quite often they revealed their plans for making money using online resources. But there are few entrepreneurs who have gained any real experience in doing that. They say the web made their accounting much easier and helped with their business partner search.

In general, it can be concluded that e-commerce and online advertisement services consumption is at the very early stage of its development in rural parts of Russia. There is no variety in this sphere in terms of the services used at the moment. Here we can also witness the impact of scepticism towards innovations. Some small particular groups of villagers (entrepreneurs, qualified specialists) demonstrate a high degree of interest in business-oriented services and facilities. Rural residents are mostly involved in e-commerce and online advertisement consumption by chance or by being influenced by an opinion leader (who usually happens to be a family member).

To some extent this can be the explanation for how the villagers use e-commerce and online advertisement tools: the content is not analyzed, there are no skills in recognizing its basic types, the resources are chosen randomly, strong reliance on others' opinions can dominate, and the risks of the online environment are highly exaggerated. Herein we should emphasize a significant potential growth rate of e-commerce and web advertisement. The positive scenario mentioned can be promoted by better network infrastructure in rural areas as well as through some features of the rural social environment, if they are considered and interpreted properly in practice.

3.5 Attitude towards piracy

One more aspect considered within the study in the Rostov region is linked with intellectual piracy. A theoretical framework and a detailed analysis of this, including its manifestations in Russia, are presented by Bahi, et al. (2011). We have concentrated on the attitude of the Russian rural new media audience toward this phenomenon. It is important to mention that the fieldwork was conducted in the conditions of the adoption of a new "anti-piracy" law, No. 187-FZ from July 2, 2013, which came into force on August 1, 2013. The results help to reveal some features of the rural comprehension of piracy and anti-piracy issues formed spontaneously in recent years. In general, the awareness of piracy among the settlement inhabitants is quite high, there were only few who had never dealt with it before.

The villagers mostly associate intellectual piracy with bootlegging and the production of counterfeit goods. For this group it is a matter of the quality of content in the first place, the intellectual property issues being set aside. Within this group there are two sub-groups according to their awareness in consuming the pirated goods. The first sub-group representatives are generally negative toward piracy but they refer to anti-piracy issues when they experience some technical and other difficulties in using illegal content they had access to before. Using pirated intellectual property is consistently implemented in their everyday experience.

Those from the second sub-group demonstrate a better awareness of piracy: the survey participants realize that they use unlicensed products and are more likely to understand their responsibility for doing that to some extent - they know something about the scale of piracy in Russia. They can also assess the concept of piracy negatively but confess that there are no ways for them to avoid using pirated discs due to high prices and low availability of legal content. "I know it's bad to listen to pirated music and to watch unlicensed films. But unfortunately legal discs are quite hard to find and even if I manage to do that I can hardly afford them" (a psychologist, aged 27).

This unity in understanding and assessing piracy is probably a product of a long-term anti-piracy propaganda. Among its efficient tools were TV programmes and news reports covering illegal content production and distribution problems. As a result, piracy is strongly associated with counterfeit goods production and its generally negative evaluation, despite a high degree of illegal content usage by the society.

It is evident that full comprehension of online piracy is possessed by those who have a targeted interest in this issue. Once a user faces legal restrictions on using online content (illegal audio and video files being removed from a website) he becomes curious as to why it has happened. The majority of respondents has a very unclear understanding of internet piracy, they connect it with other illegal activities such as hacker attacks and fraud. It can be easily supposed that it is also caused by the mass media providing us with the coverage of crime and fraud in cyberspace. Consequently, immature internet users become afraid of cyberspace, and online piracy is a part of it.

It should be mentioned that almost none of the users is familiar with file sharing. As a result, they have no idea about their responsibilities when using torrent trackers and illegal online content.

Some of the surveyed say that the intellectual property rights protection issues are connected with the mentality we have and they are quite sceptical about the

fight against piracy in the ex-USSR space. They actively refer to the stereotypes of the Soviet past, the Perestroika era and the 90's in particular. According to these beliefs, there are no private property institutes and no rule of law. These respondents think that their compatriots suffer from a low level of culture and do not expect legislative measures in fighting piracy to be very productive.

Internet users have become used to treating the web as a free content zone. Some of them are willing to pay for something when there are no free alternatives. After many years of free access to online content we now face value deflation on this market. The users do not treat online content as something valuable. They are likely to stop using many services if they have to pay for them someday. Thus, they treat this market as a consumer's market.

As for internet consumption, the respondents do not have any strong preferences for using a single source for films. This applies both to downloading and to watching online. Some of the surveyed show awareness and experience in using torrent trackers for downloading movies, and they also use the VKontakte social network for watching films online. However, we can hardly say that there are clear priorities in choosing a service for video content consumption. A search bar of a web browser is most commonly used to find any content that a user is interested in. Music internet piracy is a competitor for legal music, in terms of logistics in the first place. As opposed to films, songs are mostly downloaded, not played online. Firstly, audio is meant to be played many times (as opposed to video). Audio files are uploaded to portable media for playing when one is on the go, in a car or on a PC. Secondly, with a low internet connection speed, downloading an mp3 file is more economical than playing it online, which will actually require downloading it again and again. It is typical for audio content online users (in contrast to video consumers) to be loyal to certain online resources, to social networks in particular. In many cases, the pirated mp3 files are what attracts a person to using a social network.

The users are inclined to replace listening to music on CDs by playing the music they download. This is largely attributed to the growing availability of flash memory and mp3 players. However, there are other reasons why licensed CDs cannot compete with online listening and downloading. Firstly, the limited selection of music production available as well as the low content capacity of a single CD must be taken into consideration. Secondly, when a user does not have any particular preferences in music, the internet provides him with inexpensive and convenient search tools. One does not need to buy a CD with a variety of unknown singers on it. Finally, the convenience of storage and utilization of digital goods is also crucial.

All the facts mentioned emphasize that the competition between legal and pirated digital goods is all about the features of online consumption. Thus, we can suppose that services such as iTunes could compete with unlicensed mp3s for a part of the target audience considering the high content quality they provide.

4. Conclusions

Taking into account the insufficient development of the internet access infrastructure, we conclude, based on two case studies, that the Russian rural population is actively assimilating internet, especially in the younger age groups. At the same time, the level of media literacy and the ability to critically perceive information is very low among this part of the audience. The last claim is supported, in particular, by a weak understanding of the problem of audio-visual piracy, which is actively discussed by the Russian media.

The internet is perceived primarily as a source of entertainment, the main directions of its use are social networking and search of information for different casual purposes. The attitude towards e-commerce and online advertising is cautious, and the experience of using the internet for financial operations is very limited.

"Rural internet users reported using books and other printed materials at a higher level than their urban and suburban counterparts. At the same time, they reported using the internet at a lower rate than their urban and suburban counterparts" (Hennington, 2011). This conclusion is based on the survey of US audiences by Pew Research Center's American Life Project in conjunction with the California Healthcare Foundation. In his article "Community Cohesion and Canadian Rural E-Mail Behavior" (in Stern, Collins and Wellman, eds., 2010) Derek Wilkinson argues that in rural Canada e-mail use could be increased by developing greater computer skills. Both statements can be totally applied to Russia. The results of our survey corroborate that rural internet consumption in Russia is developed within the framework of global trends, having some features that are observed above.

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