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ONLINE COMMUNITIES: CAN WE TRUST DIGITAL METHODS?

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Annotation

The report analyzes the results of the study of the community "Под корень" of the Russian social network Vkontakte using qualitative (digital ethnography, discourse analysis) and digital (network analysis, thematic modeling, sentiment analysis) methods. The results of the application of qualitative and digital methods in the study of virtual communities were compared. We summarized the weaknesses and strengths of the methods, and made conclusions about the further application of specific methods in the field of digital community research.

Introduction. Social networks today are subject to research both by technical specialists who want to work out modern digital methods, and by humanitarian scientists who use traditional or hybrid methods of community research (for example, digital ethnography). However, with the existing interest in various methodologies, there is not enough work in the scientific community devoted to summarizing the assessment of methods that can be used to study social networks.

The main part. In this report, we will look at several cases of analysis of the digital network community and compare which methods were more effective. The essence of our research is to demonstrate the main steps of working within the framework of qualitative and digital methodologies, to point out the applicability and inapplicability of specific tools in specific research cases of working with Vkontakte digital communities.

Conclusions. In consequence of a comparative analysis of the results obtained by different methods, we got a comprehensive view of the Vkontakte thematic community, concluded how convergent the data obtained using quantitative and digital methods turned out to be, formulated recommendations for their use, and presented a visualization of the results.