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SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERACTIVITY FROM USERS' PERSPECTIVE[34]

Abstract: *In view of the change in communication circumstances caused by the explosive development of technology, new spheres of expression of attitudes, ideas, opinions and emotions have been opened. In a new communication reality, the dominant place belongs to social media, which is also related to interactive media and digital media that depend on user participation. The degree and ways of participation differ between various social media, but what they have in common is that they offer users the opportunity to create content, react to the existing ones, as well as further distribute and comment. The aim of the paper is to examine the frequency of different types of interactivity on social media, the motives for interactivity, as well as the perception of its importance from the user's viewpoint. The research was conducted on a sample of 350 students at the University of Niš. A questionnaire was used as a method of data collection. Also, the research showed that in spite of the intensive checking of social media, the respondents do not often resort to interactivity, neither with their friends' posts nor with media content and they do not find the possibility of interactivity particularly important. Along with checking and reading, the most common type of interactivity is liking, while leaving a comment is minimally applied. The respondents mostly resort to liking media content on social media only if they are related to the social issues they consider important (23.14%) or to support somebody's position (21.71%).*

Key words: *new media, social media, participation, interactivity, commenting*

1. Introduction

The beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century was marked by significant changes in communication and information ecology. Instead of the hierarchical structure of

the media sphere, in which the central place belonged to the mass media as the distributors of a programmed consciousness, the Internet has created a world of network-based communication. In such a network type of communication everyone can participate: traditional media, social media and the audience. There is neither a clear distance between producers and consumers of content, nor a clear division of roles, which can also be said for the established principles of action of media and non-media actors aiming at creating a freer, better and more equitable society. New channels of communication have emerged, different relationships with the media audience have been established, and from a platform where individuals and groups connect with others, social media have expanded into a primary communication channel and a powerful political instrument. Despite the proclaimed democracy of social media, the audience left the position of a passive recipient of media messages, but did not transition towards the position of an active content creator. In addition, it remained blocked in the interspace as an "active recipient" (Hermida, 2011).

The "active recipient" position is a consequence of a large number of factors, including the motivation of users to interact, but also the perception of its importance. The topics of the research paper are various forms of interactivity on social media, the motives for interactivity and the perception of its importance from the users' perspective. The research was carried out using a sample of 350 male and female students from the University of Niš.

2. New media, new communication reality

Mark Poster belongs to a group of people who have significantly contributed to noticing the difference in communication circumstances before and after the emergence of the Internet. Also, Poster stated that traditional, electronic media and the modern age are closely related, while connecting the new Internet-based media with the postmodern age and postmodern culture. In the modern era, electronic media served as the conveyors of one-way communication and an important tool for disseminating the ruling ideology. The hierarchical model of communication signifies that the privileged position in the media sector belongs to the ruling elite, which governs and controls the flow of information. Voices from the margins of society could not be heard, and the collective consciousness was shaped largely by the officially accepted rules of the political establishment. While in the modern age power was in the hands of the ruling political, social group, it became dispersed with the advent of the Internet in the postmodern age. Power relations are changing, and the difference between producers and consumers of information is becoming more and more indistinct. Moreover, changes can be seen in the relationships between the sender and the recipient, the producer and the consumer, and the manager and the one who manages. According to Poster, the Internet has transformed the role of an individual, providing numerous opportunities for an individual to develop as an independent, critical and autonomous person. Additionally, a culture of simulation ensues, which encourages an individual to re-examine their identity, experiment with

themselves in cyberspace and gain richer experiences. This enables interactivity, which is a major feature of the Internet (Poster, 2006).

From a similar perspective, Karol Jakubowicz (2009) interprets the transformation of media and communication experiences. In explaining the evolutionary pattern of electronic media and media communication, Jakubowicz points out that the boundaries of the previous experience are relativized and more difficult to observe: the boundary between mass and public communication in contrast to personal and interpersonal communication, between media organizations and individuals, and between professional and amateur communicators. The new notion of media established by Jakubowicz is based on three main characteristics. The first feature indicates the possible transformation of all traditional media into new media, while accepting the trend of content personalization. Another feature of the new concept of media refers to new content creators and their roles in generating new forms of content, such as blogs, podcasts, social media websites, sites where they can communicate with others, etc. Apart from individuals, the importance of the role of various political, economic, sport and civil organizations in general, as well as intermediaries (search engines, Internet providers and content aggregators) is acknowledged here. In addition, they significantly transform the flow of information, providing citizens with different content. Furthermore, intermediaries in the communication space denote the third element of the new concept of media. They are important because the delivery of official media information to citizens depends on them, although their role is outside the zone of objective, impartial mediation of content. Thus, the intermediaries are occupying the central place in the new media ecology. They affect the selection and filtering, as well as the way media and non-media content is displayed. In such a way, the intermediaries become the new information gatekeepers, as well as the editors of rules, standards and restrictions in order to protect users (Jakubowicz, 2009: 19-26).

By connecting with social media, influential channels of political and economic propaganda and increasingly important means of information, traditional media have embraced new business trends in order to keep the audience which is more and more frequently online. As a result, low-quality journalism has emerged, providing light, sensationalist and trivial content which can capture the attention and reactions of social media users but cannot ensure the development of critical awareness and a democratic climate (Giansiracusa, 2021; Cetina Presuel & Martínez Sierra, 2019).

3. Patterns of behavior on social media

Modern society is marked by significant changes, which is manifested in the way the audience accesses, creates and uses content in the digital space. Changes, driven by technological development, are visible in the relationship between the media and the audience, while distancing from the communication reality in which privileged groups produce media content and many tend to use it, specifically to a world where many have the opportunity to create content and react to existing

information, represents a new phase in communication (Jenkins et al., 2009: 12). In the contemporary social, media and communication environment, there are numerous contradictions: the audience is both global and local, with a tendency to create the so-called communication niche; its growing heterogeneity is opposed by the attempts of homogenization, which primarily come from advertisers, while, concurrently, with the increased use of media products, content production among media users has increased. Nonetheless, the media are focused on the global market, but they have not entirely liberated themselves from the influence of national policy, especially in the field of broadcasting and the press. In this way, the diversity of media content is accompanied by the homogeneity and fragmentation of the audience, but the possibility of participation does not mean it will be used appropriately (Livingstone, 2012: 21).

It is an indisputable fact that society today cannot function without the media, so it can be stated that "participation in the media means participation in society" (Livingstone, 2009: 9). Technology enables a new dimension of communication, but it is not a crucial factor of cultural changes and the practice of audience participation in the digital sphere. It is important to review the "connection between different communication technologies and the cultural communities growing up around them and the activities they support" (Jenkins et al., 2009: 7). Culture and technology form a special relationship in which interactivity is enabled by the technology, while participation is enabled by the culture. Also, the culture that emerged in the era of the rapid development of new communication technologies is called participatory culture, and it opens a communication space to the user who can archive, comment, download and resend information. However, the quality use of a new technology requires the previous acquisition of certain skills and knowledge that can facilitate a more successful accomplishment of users' goals (Jenkins et al., 2009: 8). In addition, the level of activity among users may vary and it represents a variable category of behavior – a productive response to some content represents a contextual activity which can sometimes occur, and sometimes not, depending on the digital text (Jenkins et al., 2013: 155). The newfound reality, characterized by the frequent production of user content, has produced an interest in two new concepts: interactivity and participation (Kleut & Drašković, 2014: 336). Interactivity can be defined in different ways. For example, Jens Jensen interprets interactivity as "a measure of the media's potential ability to let the user exert an influence on the content and/or form of the mediated communication" (Jensen, 2001: 201) and defines four different types of interactivity: transmissional, conversational, consultational and registrational interactivity. These types of interactivity vary depending on the degree of influence on media content, so registrational interactivity is explained as a media's ability to adjust the response to more or less clearly expressed user needs. Sally McMillan pointed out the emergence of interactivity at three levels of communication: between people, media users; between an individual and a text; and between a man and a machine (McMillan, 2002). Furthermore, the second type of textual interactivity is manifested today by expressing likes (liking), commenting or in the domain of blogs (Kleut & Drašković, 2014: 337). Mark Deuze emphasized

the three main concepts obtained by the analysis of the role of media users in digital culture, such as: participation, remediation and bricolage. The website infrastructure anticipates and influences the degree of participation of media users, so a distinction can be made between moderated, closed and unmoderated sites that are open to user content, comments and posts (Deuze, 2003: 207). Interactivity and the degree of control over media content are interrelated and depend on software applications, information architecture and interface design (Kleut, 2011: 156), which affect the user's role, so that each of their activities is calculated and predictable in advance.

Closely related to the concept of interactivity is the concept of participation, which is differently defined and specified in relation to interactivity. One viewpoint is held by authors who consider that any activity in the digital space is an act of participation (Jenkins et al., 2006), despite the differences in communicative power between large corporations and individuals. The second viewpoint questions the potential power of ordinary people to participate in the online sphere. Pointing out the unequal role of the privileged and unprivileged in the field of communication and their power to influence the flow of information, Nico Carpentier stated that the precondition for participation is at least approximate equality and power in the decision-making process regarding technology, content, people and organizations. "Participation becomes defined as a political – in broader sense of the political – process, where the actors involved in the decision-making process are positioned opposite each other through power relations that are somewhat equal" (Carpentier, 2011: 31). Such a viewpoint leads to a reconsideration of the position of media users in the new digital environment and the observation of their real power in creating not only content, but also social reality. Social media are taking the lead in delivering information to media users and they represent a popular platform on which both media organizations and users can produce and distribute content. In a report on digital news, published by the Reuters Institute, according to the degree of interaction with the news content, three user profiles are emphasized. These are: proactive participants – who give a public or original contribution to the news by creating certain content; reactive participants – who contribute to the news either by sharing or responding to the existing content in some way (sharing news on social media or by email, liking, ranking or voting on a journalistic site or on social media); passive consumers – who do not participate in reporting in any way (Newman et al., 2016: 100). However, it is interesting that passive consumers, although they do not participate publicly in the spread of media content, can still share the news with friends, either in direct communication or on social media.

For the most part, watching, liking, commenting, posting and sharing are recognized as the patterns of the participation of users on social media (Aldous, An & Jansen 2019; Kim & Jung, 2017; Chang, Patel SB, Patel, N. & Ruhi, 2019). Interactivity with media content on the sites of social media depends on the topic, as well as the platform on which it is published. Concerning the interactivity with the news, there are four types of user behavior, and the differences refer to the level of user engagement and public expression. The first level belongs to the activity of viewing and reading, which represents a private form of interactivity with the

content; the second level of interactivity refers to expressing likes (liking) of the published material, which is a type of public expression of preferences; the third level includes commenting on the content, as a higher act of expressing opinion and public engagement and it also includes sharing posts on social media platforms; the fourth level of interactivity is reached when the content from one social media is transferred to another through users' posts, and it is a way of increasing the reach and impact of the original content.

This is the highest level of users' public participation in the digital space of social media (Aldous, An & Jansen, 2019: 47-57). News organizations have adapted publishing strategies to different social media platforms and databases, so that the content is delivered in different ways. Content with low or high user engagement varies across platforms and the differences are reflected in the degree of engagement. In addition, the topic influences user participation which can be expressed by different patterns of behavior on different platforms. Therefore, the public expression of opinion and taking some forms of action, such as liking, commenting and sharing depends mostly on the topic. Also, while on certain platforms there is a clear distinction between the degrees of participation, on the sites of other social media this difference is unnoticeable (Aldous, An & Jensen, 2019: 55).

Among the patterns of behavior on social media, watching/reading, posting, liking, commenting and sharing, there are differences in the degree of cognitive engagement. Sharing can be understood as an act that requires the greatest cognitive effort, because the post that is being shared becomes a part of the self-representative image of the user. Although a comment appears on the news page and can be suppressed by other comments, shared content is more valuable because, in addition to the news page, it appears on the user's profile and is associated with an individual's public presentation. Moreover, different features of organizational messages can cause one of the previously mentioned patterns of behavior. While the sensory and visual features of the message had liking as its affective reaction, commenting was caused by the rational and interactive features of the message, and represents a cognitive response. Sharing can be regarded as the affective, cognitive behavior or as a combination of both types (Kim & Jung, 2017: 441-442). Also, commenting is related to the expression of personal identity, the expression of strong emotions, while obtaining information, social interaction and entertainment are secondary motives for commenting (Diakopoulos & Namaan, 2011: 139). Ike Picone believes that sharing, commenting and liking depend on three types of factors: the dimensions of content, individual and social dimensions. For instance, the content dimensions include the attitude towards the topic, in terms of interest and knowledge of the topic, as well as the assessment of existing reactions of users. Individual dimensions refer to a personal assessment of the ability of self-expression, competence and knowledge on the topic, the assessment of the usefulness of this information for others, mood and self-confidence. Here, the reaction of others is considered an important parameter in deciding whether to write comments or share content. Social dimensions refer to altruism, influence and the potential public. Here, the value and usefulness of a comment are assessed, as well as the contribution to the information that the potential public has (Picone, 2011: 389).

Research on the usage of interactive digital services in Serbia from the user's perspective is very rarely carried out. The research "Information in the Digital Environment in Serbia", conducted at the Media Center, at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade, showed that every fifth user of news finds relevant information on the Internet. Respondents under the age of 44 most often follow and get informed on the Internet. The leading sources of news for the average online user are traditional media websites (35% of citizens), social media (32% of citizens) and television (30%). The largest percentage of respondents comment on or share information about news in direct communication with friends, colleagues and family, while in the online environment they most often rate, like or mark a piece of news as their favorite. Therefore, the activities that require the minimum level of engagement are dominant in the online space.

Having compared the practices in which online news audiences participate, Danka Ninković Slavnić reached the conclusion that the audiences' practice is based on the so-called pyramid of participation, "in other words, the prevalence is inversely proportional to the demands; the easier it is to participate in practice, the more widespread it becomes. Thus, the practice of consuming other people's content is the most common, with a considerably lower number of those participating in the distribution, even fewer in commenting, and the least in the production of content" (Ninković Slavnić, 2016: 230). Every rejection of the media-established information and interpretative frameworks requires the development of critical awareness, creative autonomy and citizens' self-awareness. A society that encourages a conformist philosophy of life will result in the creation of passive, receptive and submissive individuals.

4. Methodology

Various forms of interactivity are the subject of the research. Also, the aim of research is to analyze the frequency of different types of interactivity, motives for interactivity and the perception of its importance from the user's perspective. For the purpose of the research, a survey containing 18 closed questions was used as an instrument of data collection. In addition, the survey was distributed online and intended for the students of the University of Niš. For the data analysis, *Microsoft Excel* and a pivot table function were used, while the statistical procedures included frequency, cross-tabulation and the Chi-square test. The sample consisted of 350 male and female students, out of which 77.1% were female respondents and 22.28% were male respondents (Table 1).

Table 1 The gender structure of the sample

Gender	N	%
Male	78	22.28
Female	272	77.71
Total	350	100

Most respondents are undergraduate students (96%), followed by master's degree students (2.57%) and a very small percentage of PhD students (1.42%) (Table 2). In

the surveyed sample, the highest percentage of respondents often use social media (85.42%), while 10.28% of the respondents sometimes use them. More than 4% of the respondents mostly do not use them or not use them at all. As many as half respondents have active profiles on more than three social media platforms, while 41.71% of the respondents have profiles on two or three social media. In addition, there are 4% of them with a profile on only one social media; 2.85% of users are uncertain and 1.42% of the respondents do not have a profile on any social media platforms.

5. Results and Discussion

As a result of technology developments, social media platforms have become dominant in the information and communication lifestyle of most people. However, their availability and a rich variety of interactive tools do not imply the increased user engagement in relation to personal and media content which is presented. The results of the research are presented according to the degree of interactivity of the respondents in relation to personal, non-media and media content.

Table 2 The level of frequency of checking social media

The frequency of checking	*N*	*%*
Several times per hour	164	46.85
Once every hour	93	26.57
About 3 times a day	69	19.71
Once a day	9	2.57
Once every 2-3 days	3	0.85
Once a week	2	0.57
I don't check, almost never	10	2.85
Total	350	100

The first level of interactivity is the most prevalent in the analyzed sample. There is the highest percentage of respondents who check social media by watching, reading, or scrolling several times per hour (46.85%), while 26.57% do so once every hour. In addition, 19.71% of them check social media about three times a day. Among the respondents, we notice a small percentage of those checking social media once a week (0.57%).

Table 3 The level of frequency of posting on social media

The frequency of posting	*N*	*%*
Several times per hour	4	1.14
Once every hour	3	0.85
About 3 times a day	12	3.42
Once a day	15	4.28
Once every 2-3 days	62	17.71
Once a week	123	35.14
Almost never	131	37.42
Total	350	100

Contrary to the checking of social media, the frequency of posting is somewhat reduced. Only 1.14% of the respondents post on social media several times per hour and 0.85% tend to post once per hour. It can be noticed that most respondents (37.42%) almost never post on social media and 35.14% do post on a weekly basis (Table 3)[5].

Table 4 The level of frequency of the interactivity with friends' posts on social media

The frequency	Liking		Sharing		Commenting	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Several times per hour	82	23.42	11	3.14	1	0.28
Once every hour	44	12.57	2	0.57	2	0.57
About 3 times a day	81	23.14	11	3.14	6	1.71
Once a day	60	17.14	7	2	10	2.85
Once every 2-3 days	26	7.42	23	6.57	54	15.42
Once a week	26	7.42	43	12.28	98	28
Almost never	31	8.85	253	72.28	179	51.14
Total	350	100	350	100	350	100

The results indicate that social media users behave nearly similar to voyeurs: on the one hand, the majority of respondents intensively scroll through social media, checking other people's posts, but at the same time, they do not intend to post, and do so very rarely or never. Regarding the interactivity with friends' posts on social media, the most prevalent is the second level of interactivity, particularly the activity of liking, which is done several times per hour by 23.42% of the respondents. Sharing and commenting, which imply the third level of interactivity, are significantly reduced. Sharing is the interactivity that the respondents select to a minor degree, as far as their friends' posts are concerned. Namely, 72.28% of the respondents almost never share their friends' posts. Additionally, 28% of the respondents comment once a week, 15.42% once every 2-3 days and 51.14% almost never comment (Table 4). When asked about the importance of interactivity with friends' posts on social media, the majority of respondents (29.14%) answered that it was mostly irrelevant to them, while 23.14% pointed out it was not important to them at all. Furthermore, 22.28% of the respondents indicated that their interactivity with friends' posts was mostly important to them. Only 3.71% of the respondents pointed out this type of interactivity as very important, while 21.71% were uncertain. The Chi-square test compared whether there was a statistically significant difference in the perception of the importance of interactivity with friends' posts on social media between men and women. Using this technique, no significant difference was found (X^2 (4. N = 350) = 0.8167. p = .936193). It can be inferred that men and women do not differ in their understanding of the importance of interactivity with friends' posts on

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[5] This data is in accordance with the previous research on the forms of interactivity on the Internet among Serbian citizens. The greatest number of respondents consume the content created by others, so the most common activity is the one that requires the minimum degree of engagement, such as liking, rating and ranking (Ninković Slavnić, 2016; Milivojević, Ninković Slavnić & Bajčeta, 2020).

social media. These results indicate that the matter of social media affability can be properly discussed, as they suggest that users rarely interact with friends' posts, while interactions are not considered very important.

Table 5 The level of frequency of the interactivity with media content on social media

The frequency	Liking		Sharing		Commenting	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Several times per hour	18	5.14	4	1.14	1	0.28
Once every hour	21	6	2	0.57	2	0.57
About 3 times a day	41	11.71	4	1.14	7	2
Once a day	41	11.71	8	2.28	11	3.14
Once every 2-3 days	40	11.42	23	6.57	9	2.57
Once a week	46	13.14	58	16.57	26	7.42
Almost never	143	40.85	251	71.71	294	84
Total	350	100	350	100	350	100

In addition to interactivity with friends' posts, the research also included interactivity with media content on social media. For instance, 59.71% of the respondents use social media for obtaining information and slightly more than a third (34%) sometimes use them for this purpose. Moreover, 2% of the respondents never use them for this purpose, 3.42% mostly not and 0.85% of them are uncertain. Also, respondents rarely interact with media content on social media. Therefore, the most represented activity is liking, which refers to the second level of interactivity. In addition, 11.71% of the respondents like some media content on social media once a day and there is an equal percentage of the respondents who do so three times a day, while 5.14% do the same several times per hour. However, the third level of interactivity is not common – 71.17% of the respondents almost never share media content, and 84% of them almost never comment on it (Table 5).

As in the case with the interactivity with friends' posts, the question of interactivity with media content on social media platforms is not important to a higher percentage of respondents (27.42%), while 25.42% pointed out that it was mostly irrelevant to them. Only 6.85% of them indicated that this type of interactivity was very important, 19.71% indicated it was mostly important, while 20.57% expressed uncertainty. Having applied the Chi-square test, it was confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference in the perception of the importance of interactivity with media content on social media between men and women (X^2 (4. N = 350) = 1.4641. p = .832988).

Table 6 Motives for liking media content on social media

The motive	Liking	
	N	%
When someone asks me to like a certain post	5	1.42
When I want to support someone's attitude	76	21.71
If it concerns social issues that I consider important	81	23.14
If it concerns me personally or the group I belong to	17	4.85
If I find them entertaining, interesting, humorous	70	20
Almost random	1	0.28
I almost never like media content	100	28.57
Total	350	100

As far as the motives for liking media content on social media are concerned, the largest number of respondents point out that they like a post related to social issues they consider important (23.14%) or when they want to support someone's attitude (21.71%). For 20% of the respondents, the motives for liking are entertainment, humor and witty posts (Table 6).

Table 7 Motives for sharing media content on social media

The motive	Sharing	
	N	%
If I need to express my opinion on the topic or encourage discussion	25	7.14
If I am the author of the text or I find the text interesting/relevant	1	0.28
If it concerns social issues that I consider important	58	16.57
If it concerns me personally or the group I belong to	17	4.85
If I think it will be useful to my friends/followers	26	7.42
If I find them entertaining, interesting, humorous	27	7.71
If I want to provoke someone	2	0.57
If I want to play a joke on someone	4	1.14
I almost never share media content	190	54.28
Total	350	100

As was the case with liking, the motives for sharing media content are social issues that are considered important by 16.57% of the respondents. Altruism, entertainment, the need to improve the relationship with others and improve their lives, the need for belonging, the need for self-affirmation and self-promotion belong to the spectrum of motives for sharing content. In addition, emotional aspects are very important in the process of making decisions about transmitting content to others and they can affect the emotions of the audience, as well as feelings, identity and social demands that an individual fulfills by sharing content (Dafonte – Gomez, 2018).

Table 8 Motives for commenting on media content on social media

The motive	*Commenting*	
	N	*%*
If I need to express my opinion on the topic or encourage discussion	34	9.71
When I am annoyed by the person who posts them	1	0.28
If it is a post that I can use to help someone	1	0.28
If I am provoked by a comment	4	1.14
If it concerns social issues that I find important	35	10
If it concerns me personally or the group I belong to	15	4.28
If I find them entertaining, interesting, humorous	8	2.28
If I want to provoke someone	3	0.85
If I want to play a joke on someone	7	2
I almost never comment on media content	242	69.14
Total	350	100

In a world mediated by different means of communication, every activity on social media can be perceived as an act of participation in shaping the image of oneself or others. The selection of content that is liked, commented on or shared, depends on what we want to tell others about ourselves, our personality, ideas, attitudes and feelings, as well as on the participant for whom the content is intended. The intended recipient participates in the user's decision to share certain content; in other words, the assessment of the informative and entertaining value of the content for recipients plays an important role in this process[6]. Content that is liked, shared, and commented upon reveals certain aspects of the sender's personality and sends a message about who they are, while the very intention of indicating specific content is in the second place (Wong & Burkell, 2017). There is also the need to identify with the group that one belongs to, to uphold group views and to express solidarity in activities and attitudes.

6. Conclusion

The research has suggested that despite the intensive checking of social media and the consumption of content, the respondents do not often resort to interactivity, neither with friends' posts nor with media content. In general, the most common type of interactivity refers to the first level – watching and reading social media, then liking – the second level, while commenting and sharing are minimally applied and refer to the third level. These results confirm the previously observed inverted pyramid in user activities (Ninković Slavnić, 2016).

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[6] Several important factors have emerged from the research on the motives for sharing news on social media. Among the primary factors are informing and entertaining recipients, while the fundamental factors influencing this level of motivation are maintaining relationships with others, changing the consciousness of recipients, distinguishing and separating oneself, and belonging to the crowd (Wong & Burkell, 2017).

In addition, the research has confirmed the thesis that the audience is no longer a passive recipient of media messages, however, it has not yet progressed to the position of an active content producer and remained in the interspace as an "active recipient" (Hermida, 2011) or a reactive participant (Newman et al., 2016). The possibility of interactivity is not considered particularly important by the respondents. The greatest number of respondents (29.14%) consider that their interactivity with friends' posts on social media is mostly unimportant, while 23.14% point out it has no importance for them at all. Moreover, they perceive the interactivity with media content on social media in a similar way – for the majority of the respondents (27.42%) it is not important at all, while 25.42% stated that it was mostly irrelevant to them. Out of the total number of respondents, only 6.85% stated that the interactivity with media content on social media was very important. The difference in the perception of the importance related to interactivity, both with friends' posts and media content, does not differ between men and women. Such results indicate that although social media platforms enable overcoming different communication barriers, provide a wide range of possibilities for expressing alternative opinions and viewpoints, provide space for different voices to be heard and start discussions on important topics, users predominantly remain passive, and tend to please themselves with voyeuristic scrolling and low intensity engagement. Such user attitudes on different interactive options reflect the influence of individual, situational and social circumstances. On the individual level, an individual who minimally reveals their personality by liking certain content, hides insecurity in their own abilities and the reaction of the potential public, doubts about their skills of expression and the value of knowledge and information they possess. At the societal level, an individual may be convinced that their contribution to the discussion is marginal and insignificant, if not useless. For that reason, and other external factors affecting an individual, understanding the motives and degree of user participation online, although global, must be observed in a specific social context.

The development of civic culture and a democratic atmosphere is dependent on critical and creative individuals who, in addition to respecting the needs and rights of others, participate in creating authentic content, share their opinions and viewpoints, and publicly express and defend their position supported by arguments. In this process, social media can be positioned as the key tool, if their further development is directed towards opening and democratization, rather than towards commercialization and serving hegemonic social groups. Otherwise, in the future, their social role will be transformed from social and political into polarizing and more passive.

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DRUŠTVENE MREŽE I INTERAKTIVNOST IZ PERSPEKTIVE KORISNIKA

Abstract. *Promenom komunikacijskih okolnosti. usled eksplozivnog razvoja tehnologije. došlo je do otvaranja novih sfera izražavanja stavova. mišljenja. ideja i afekata. Dominantno mesto u novoj komunikacijskoj realnost ipripada društvenim mrežama. koje spadaju u interaktivne medije. odnosno digitalne medije koji zavise od učešća korisnika. Stepen i način učešća razlikuju se između različitih društvenih mreža. ali ono što im je zajedničko jeste da nude korisnicima mogućnosti da kreiraju sadržaj. da na postojeći reaguju. kao i da ga dalje distribuiraju i komentarišu. Cilj rada je ispitati učestalost različitih vrsta interakcija na društvenim mrežama. motive za interakciju. kao i percepciju njene važnosti iz ugla korisnika. Istraživanje je sprovedeno na uzorku od 350 studenata i studentkinja Univerziteta u Nišu. Kao metod prikupljanja podataka korišćen je upitnik. Istraživanje je pokazalo da uprkos*

intenzivnom proveravanju društvenih mreža. ispitanici ne pribegavaju često interakciji. ni sa objavama prijatelja. ni sa medijskim objavama, niti mogućnost interakcije smatraju posebno važnom. Kao najčešći vid interakcije, uz gledanje i čitanje, izdvaja se lajkovanje. a najmanje se praktikuje komentarisanje. U najvećoj meri ispitanici pribegavaju lajkovanju medijskih objava na društvenim mrežama ukoliko se one tiču društvenih pitanja koja smatraju važnim (23.14%). ili kako bi pružili podršku nečijem stavu (21.71%).

Key words: *novi mediji. društvene mreže. participacija. interakcija. komentarisanje*