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Information Chaos on the Internet - Perception in Relation to the Age of Users[1]

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Abstract

The rapid development of the Internet as a dominant medium in the field of information brought with it several novelties, caused by the nature of digital networked media. First and foremost is the hyperproduction of information as a result of each user's free creation of content, but also the major problem of orientation in a narratively disconnected hyperspace and the proliferation of a large number of fake news. All of these changes resulted in the phenomenon of information chaos, or users' disorientation in the Internet environment. In order to adapt to the new environment, users must learn a variety of new skills, which is much easier for younger generations than for older generations.
The aim of the study is to determine to what extent users use the Internet for the purpose of information and in which ways they perceive information chaos. The goal is also to determine if there are any differences in the subjective feeling of disorientation on the Internet between younger and older users. The basic working hypothesis is that Internet users use the Internet as their primary source of information every day and are aware of information chaos on this medium, and that older users experience information chaos to a greater extent than younger users. The sample consists of 120 people divided into two groups: those aged 15 to 35 and those aged 45 and up. The data was collected using a specially designed questionnaire distributed via the Google Forms application, and the results were analyzed using descriptive and comparative statistics in the SPSS 24.0 program. The findings show that the respondents use the Internet for information on a daily basis, but certain differences in perception of the Internet chaos were noticed between age groups. Besides, younger respondents use the Internet as primary source of information, whereas older respondents use the Internet as a secondary source of information, that is as a supplement to other media.

Keywords: information chaos, Internet, disorientation, hypersphere, age differences, perception

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Introduction

The development of new media forms of communication and informing the public has changed many habits and ways in which people function in society. The Internet and all the media tools and means of communication it has spawned have ushered global human society into the information age. It is characterized by an immediate, fast and large flow of information through new technologies, which become available to all users of new media. One gets the impression of a highly informed public and a world that, according to the parameters of information exchange, fully corresponds to Marshall McLuhan's global village (McLuhan, 2012). Such information exchange is fast, unlimited by space and very accessible. The fact that there are almost 400 registered information portals in Serbia, according to the Media Center from Belgrade, and that new ones are launched almost every week, speaks of the popularity and the need of public opinion for quick information (Media Center).

However, very soon after the mass popularization of information via the Internet, it was noticed that, due to the possibility that anyone can create content on it and that it is very difficult to control and regulate it, it is extremely difficult to find one's way in the Internet chaos. That is why Internet search engines appear as one of the main tools that facilitate navigation in endless databases. However, they do not eliminate the chaos of information on the Internet, but, as Neville Holmes (2005) claims, only hide it. They process the user's requests with tremendous speed and offer him the best Internet search results. But even with these tools, the amount of information that is placed on the Internet every day, both on portals and on social networks, forums and other forms of Internet communication, leads to the impossibility of regulation and organization of data and requires considerable skills in navigating such a space.

While the younger generations that grew up alongside the development of the Internet have become somewhat accustomed to the changes in the Internet environment and are actively adapting, the generations that grew up with traditional media may have greater problems in navigating the Internet environment.

The phenomenon of information chaos on the Internet - causes and consequences

The phenomenon of information chaos does not refer only to the Internet, but to a general state in which information is produced in much greater numbers than it can be processed by the audience. An equally adequate term that can be used to explain the state in which consumers of content arising from informational chaos find themselves is informational disorientation. Yu Chen Shih (Yu-Cheng et. al., 2012) with associates indicates that the problem of information chaos on the Internet can be observed particularly when analyzing the learning methods through the Internet. This

disorientation stems from the hypertextual, i.e., non-linear structure of the Internet, which enables users to move freely along different information channels. The problem arises when there are so many channels that one cannot orientate through which to get the necessary data (Yu-Cheng et. al. 2012). The non-narrative nature of hypertext is connected with this problem. More precisely, in a world where the presentation of information in all spheres of society is increasingly based on storytelling forms, the hypertextuality of the Internet and its fragmentation have a negative effect on user orientation. The Internet actually requires the user to develop a different reading of texts compared to the linear reading of texts in traditional media. Peter Aflenbach and Byeong-Young Cho point out that this change is not simple, and that it requires the development of a different cognitive strategy for hypertext reading on the Internet, which involves independently giving meaning and following the information that "readers" encounter on the Internet. Otherwise, it results in a cognitive block that manifests itself as disorientation (Aflenbach, Cho, 2009). Smith calls this problem "lost in hyperspace" and explains it as the cognitive problems users feel for being unable to navigate the information environment (Smith, 1996: 365).

It is important to emphasize that disorientation on the Internet can be subjective and objective (Akçapinar, Cosgun, Altun, 2011). Objective disorientation is most often defined as "being lost" in the Internet space, while subjective disorientation is the experience or awareness of one's own random wandering through the Internet highways. These two dimensions of disorientation need not be identical. Users may think they are in a considerably less lost situation than they actually are. The best examples of this are social networks, which, thanks to the chaotic content they display, lead users to multiple different information channels. Users themselves most often do not have a clear goal when they access social networks, but instead indulge in this kind of chaos and do not perceive it as such.

The problem of the nature of the Internet, i.e., its hypertextual form and the absence of a narrative structure, is not the only one that contributes to information chaos. A much bigger problem is the fact that the Internet space is getting bigger and that there is an increasing amount of information on it. The increasing availability of the Internet has also contributed to it, which again led to the phenomenon of forums and blogs, and later social networks. With the inclusion of all users as content creators, the information richness of the Internet has increased considerably, creating a new phenomenon of journalism, citizen journalism (Krstić, 2011). Related to this phenomenon is the growing phenomenon of fake news on the Internet, which incites chaos to an even greater extent. Therefore, content and form contribute equally to the information chaos on the Internet, i.e., the fact that it contains an immeasurable and constantly growing amount of information and the fact that it is not structured and classified but connected by hypertext without a narrative form. There are ideas about solving this problem through the creation of an information-centric Internet (Trossen, Parisis, 2012), but with the growth of the Internet space, this is an increasingly difficult undertaking.

According to research, the consequences of accessing the chaotic Internet space are the feeling of being lost in space, the feeling of distance and loss of directional

navigation. Also, a growing gap is created between those who have developed special cognitive skills and techniques for navigating the Internet and those who have not (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, 2015), which leads to a kind of monopoly on access to information by the former. There may also be a reluctance to use the Internet among low-skilled users, or their narrow movement area within it.

Causes of differences in the orientation of Internet users

Orientation on the Internet, that is, disorientation, directly depends on the navigation skills in the digital space that users possess. They can be divided into several types:

1. Operational – A set of basic computer and Internet skills. They refer to the use of search engines, search programs and Internet forms;
2. Formal – Skills of movement through hypermedia space versus the linear one. They refer to navigation on the Internet and the skill of maintaining a sense of location in this space;
3. Information – Information literacy, that is, the ability to detect, locate and evaluate the desired information on the Internet. Related to this skill is the skill of determining the truth of the information found;
4. Strategic – They are defined as the skills to use the Internet for informational and educational purposes, i.e., productively, versus static use for entertainment purposes (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, 2009).

A person can possess these skills at different levels, and the way and ease with which one moves in the information chaos will depend on them. As skills are much easier to master at an earlier age, and as the Internet only became more widely available at the beginning of this century, it can rightly be assumed that the generations that grew up alongside it are the most successful in avoiding digital chaos. Marc Pransky calls these generations "digital natives". This generation is characterized by rapid reception and response to larger amounts of information, random access to information (like hypertext), entertainment and enjoyment versus work (Prensky, 2001). Conversely, according to him, there are older generations that he calls "digital immigrants" who gradually "move in" to the digital world and learn and understand its concepts more slowly. They understand the concepts of the digital age and the need to master new skills, but they do not attach as much importance to them as "digital natives" do (Ibid). Therefore, it is logical to conclude that "digital immigrants" experience disorientation and information chaos to a much greater extent when navigating the Internet space due to possessing much weaker skills than needed in the new media environment.

This claim is confirmed by the research of Van Deursen, Van Dijk and Oscar Peters conducted in 2011, which determined that older Internet users are significantly worse at maneuvering the Internet space and have more difficulties in finding the necessary information. Conversely, it is interesting that older users interpret and understand content on the Internet better than younger users (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, Peters, 2011). This indicates that neither side is completely immune to the informational

chaos of the Internet because it is multi-layered and affects different generations in different ways. However, even age may not be an indicator of differences in users' perception of Internet chaos. This is indicated by a study conducted by Michael Crabb and Viki Hanson three years later. In this research, it was determined that the difference in the users` age has a very low impact on the ability to navigate the Internet, while experience, confidence and perceptual speed have a much greater impact on reducing the feeling of disorientation on the Internet (Crabb, Hanson, 2014).

Both studies had a small number of respondents and were concerned with the research of *objective* factors of orientation on the Internet, i.e., experiencing disorientation, i.e., information chaos. However, as the perception of this phenomenon can be subjective and as such it is significantly different from the objective one, it would be important to determine if there are differences in the subjective perception of Internet chaos between "digital natives" and "digital immigrants".

Subject, goal and research hypotheses

The subject of the research is the attitude of Internet users about the information chaos on the Internet. The goal is to determine the extent to which users experience information chaos and how attitudes differ between younger and older populations. In relation to the goal, the basic hypothesis of the research was defined, which reads: Internet users use the Internet as a primary form of information every day and are aware of the information chaos that exists in it, and information chaos is experienced to a greater extent by older users. Due to the complexity of the main hypothesis, the auxiliary ones are defined as follows:

1. Internet users use the Internet daily primarily for information
2. Internet users use the Internet as a primary form of information
3. Internet users notice and experience all aspects of information chaos on the Internet
4. Older Internet users use the Internet to a lesser extent for information

Older Internet users experience information chaos to a greater extent in comparison to younger ones

Method

In accordance with the set goal and hypotheses, descriptive and comparative statistical methods were used in the research. The instrument for data collection is a specially created questionnaire of a combined type that contains 19 questions, 8 of which are defined as questions with specific answers offered, while 11 were created according to the attitude method with Likert-type answers with 5 levels of agreement, whereby number 1 represents complete disagreement with the stated assertion, number 3 is the absence of an attitude, while number 5 represents complete agreement.

The sample consists of 126 respondents; 80 of them are between 15 and 35 years of age, while 46 respondents are older than 45. The age of the first group was defined based on the year 1996, which was taken as the year when the Internet in Serbia became available to the public. As it has been pointed out that those who grew up with the Internet do best, the upper limit of digital natives consists of people who are now under 35, and who were younger than 10 at the time of the popularization of the Internet. A gap of 10 years between the two groups was determined in order not to overlap the results, but to obtain a clearer age difference. The research was conducted from November 15 to December 15, 2022.

For the sake of more precise data processing, the SPSS 24.0 statistical data processing program was used for descriptive and comparative analysis.

Interpretation of results and discussion

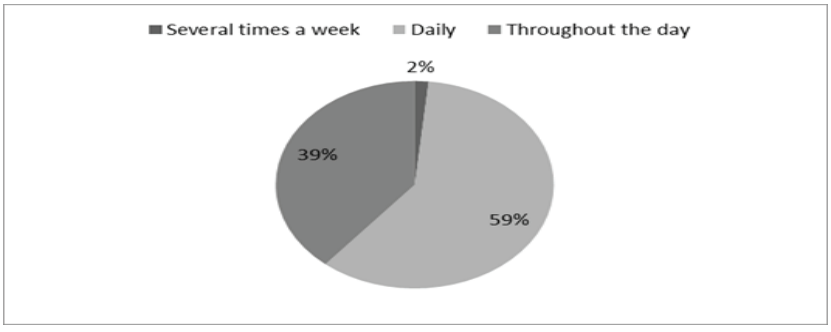
Out of 126 respondents, 80 belong to the age category of 15 to 35, and 46 belong to the category of 45 and over. The percentage of female respondents was significantly higher, 71.4%, i.e., 90 respondents, while the percentage of men was 28.6%, i.e., 96 of them. Almost the same percentage of respondents had a college degree (39.7%) and completed master's or doctoral studies (38.1%). Additionally, 21.4% of respondents completed high school, while only one respondent completed elementary school. For the sake of transparency and verification of the set hypotheses, the answers of the entire group of respondents are first presented, while in the second part of the interpretation of the results, the answers are compared in relation to age.

Internet use and perception of Internet chaos

When it comes to the frequency of Internet use (Graph 1), as many as 59.5% of respondents answered that they use it daily, 38.9% throughout the day. Only two respondents (1.6%) use the Internet several times a week, but not every day. Thus, 98.2% of respondents access Internet content daily. The most common reason for accessing the Internet is information in 54% of cases, while the second place is entertainment (22.2%), and the third is education (14.3%). Furthermore, 9.5% of respondents declare that they use the Internet for other purposes.

Graph 1

Percentage display of respondents' frequency of Internet use Figure title



The smallest percentage of respondents (4.8%) visit 1 to 2 sites on the Internet on average, while almost 80% of them visit 10 or less than 10 sites per day. Only 20.6% of respondents visit more than 10 sites.

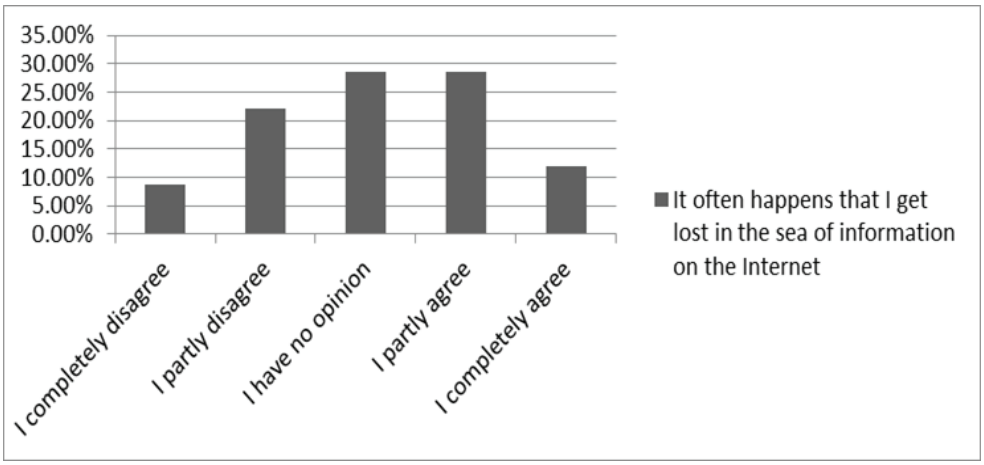
When it comes to information, the largest number of respondents use the Internet as a primary means of information (62.7), while almost half as much (35.7%) use the Internet as a supplement to other media, and only 1.6% of respondents do not use the Internet for getting informed. Respondents singled out social networks as the most common platforms for information (used for this purpose by 65.1% of respondents), followed by Internet portals (56.3%) whereas forums and blogs are in the last place (18.3%).

Therefore, from the overall presented results, it can be concluded that the first auxiliary hypothesis, which claims that *Internet users use the Internet daily primarily for information*, has been largely confirmed. Respondents use the Internet, almost without exception, every day, and more than a third of them are not constantly on this platform. At the same time, more than half of them primarily use the Internet to get information, most often through social networks or Internet portals, while less often the main reason for going online is entertainment or education. However, the second auxiliary hypothesis, which assumes that I*nternet users use the Internet as a primary form of information*, is only partially confirmed. Although a higher percentage of respondents do so, a large number still uses this platform as a supplement to traditional media.

When it comes to the feeling of disorientation on the Internet, 40.5% of respondents partially or fully agree with the statement that sometimes *they get lost in a sea of information looking for something on the Internet*. Moreover, 28.6% of surveyed users have no opinion on this statement, while 30.9% partially or completely disagree with it (Graph 2). The largest percentage responds positively to a greater or lesser extent to the statement *I do not encounter difficulties when I want to find what I am interested in on the Internet*, while only 8% do not think so to a certain extent. It is important to note that almost a third of respondents do not have an opinion on this. Therefore, a large percentage of respondents believe that it is easy to get lost in the sea of information on the Internet, but a significant number of them still feel confident when searching for what interests them. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the hyperproduction of information and its disorganization, which creates informational chaos on the Internet, leads to the feeling of disorientation of almost half of the surveyed Internet users. However, when they purposefully search for information, they do not encounter difficulties. In this regard, 84.9% indicated that they do not need help when searching for information on the Internet.

Graph 2

Percentage of respondents' agreement with the statement that they get lost on the Internet



This is supported by the results, which show that exactly half of the respondents are of the opinion that the Internet could be better organized and defined when it comes to information. Conversely, only 15% of respondents believe that the Internet itself is well organized when it comes to information. Therefore, users perceive chaos and experience it, but they have developed cognitive skills in order to be able to find what they need.

However, it is important to note that the survey showed that the largest number of users (66.6%) completely or partially disagree with the statement that it is easier to get information through traditional media compared to 9.5% of respondents who consider traditional media to be a simpler way of information. This indicates that, although there is a feeling of confusion due to information hyperproduction, the largest percentage of respondents believe that it is easier to get information through the Internet than through television, newspapers and radio. The fact that 69.8% of respondents believe that the Internet has expanded their sphere of interest also indicates that the respondents see the advantage of the Internet. Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypertext nature of the Internet and the need to navigate in it, in addition to confusion, also lead to greater informational curiosity of the users, and this phenomenon should not be considered entirely negative.

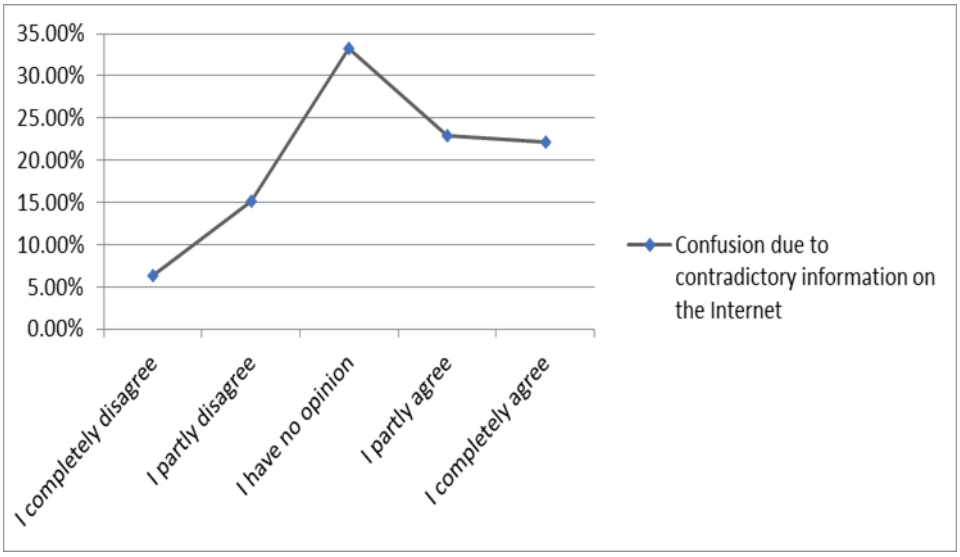
The problem of misinformation on the Internet arising from an increasing number of fake news and a form of uncontrolled citizen journalism is perceived by the respondents as twofold. Thus, 21.4% of respondents rarely come across contradictory information on the Internet that creates a feeling of confusion, while 45.2% of them experience a feeling of confusion due to contradictory information. However, almost a third of respondents do not have an opinion on this issue.

In contrast, more than half of the respondents (57.1%) do not have a clear position when it comes to the reliability of information through the Internet. Internet

information is considered reliable by 26.2% of respondents, while 16.7% have the opposite opinion. Almost half of the respondents experience a feeling of confusion due to contradictory and false information, but only slightly more than 10 believe that the Internet is not reliable. It should be noted that half of them are not sure if it is a reliable source of information, which contributes to the feeling of disorientation and confusion.

Graph 3

Percentage representation of respondents on the claim that they feel confused due to contradictory information on the Internet



From the presented results, it can be concluded that the respondents, as a whole, feel the consequences of information chaos on the Internet in the form of disorientation and confusion, to the greatest extent due to the large amount of information and its disorganization. Also, the respondents have to a certain extent the problem of moving in hypertext, but also the problem of noticing true information online. However, among Internet users there are also those (in a smaller percentage) who do not have a problem with certain aspects of information chaos, and it can be determined that the third auxiliary hypothesis that reads *Internet users notice and experience all aspects of information chaos on the Internet* is partially confirmed. The largest percentage notices the specifics of information chaos and perceives them as a problem, but there are also those who do not think that these problems exist, nor do they perceive information chaos on the Internet. These differences in attitudes may be due to the age of the respondents.

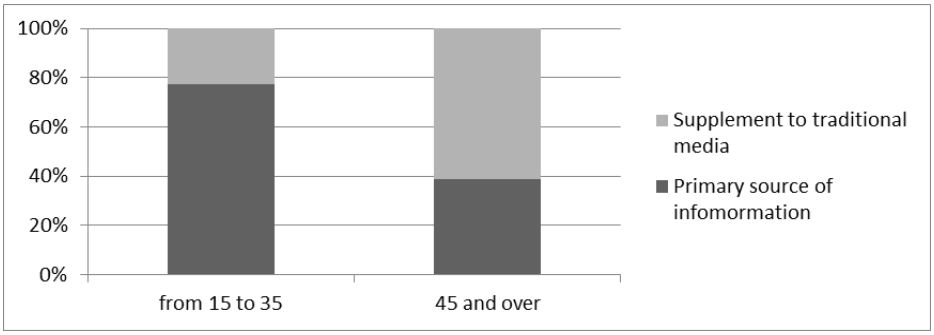
Differences in the perception of information chaos in relation to the age of the respondents

In relation to the age of the respondents, there are certain differences in the way the respondents use the Internet. Only 19.6% of respondents over 45 use the Internet throughout the day, while 50% of younger people do so. Also, among the younger respondents, there is not a single one who does not use the Internet daily, while 4.3% of the elderly do not access the Internet every day, but do so several times a week. When it comes to the purpose of using the Internet, both groups of respondents use the Internet primarily for information purposes - 67.4% of the older and 46.3% of the younger ones. Nevertheless, this difference of 20% in the answers may indicate that older respondents have a smaller radius of movement on the Internet, that is, their Internet use is somewhat limited in relation to purpose. This is supported by the data on the differences in the number of sites that both groups visit on average in one day on the Internet. The results also show a difference in the number of the Internet sites that respondents visit on average per day. Thus, respondents under 35 mostly visit 5 to 10 websites (45%), while older respondents visit fewer websites per day - from 3 to 5 (41.3%).

There is a significant difference in the way respondents use the Internet for information. When it comes to older users, 58.7% of them use the Internet as a secondary source of information, that is, as a supplement to other media, while only 22.5% of younger users do so. On the contrary, younger users mostly use the Internet as a primary source of information, in the percentage of 77.5% compared to older respondents, which is 37%. When they do so, both groups use social networks in a similar percentage (about 65%), while the percentage of young people who primarily get information on portals is slightly higher compared to older respondents, 62.5% versus 45.7%. In this sense, it is important to note that as many as 63.1% of older respondents believe that it is impossible to follow all important topics via the Internet, in contrast to younger respondents, where only 30.1% of them have such an opinion. In a certain sense, this justifies the fact that older respondents use the Internet as a secondary source of information, given that they believe they cannot follow all important topics through the Internet. Therefore, there are clearly noticeable differences in the frequency of Internet use, the purpose and the channels through which respondents older than 45 get information, compared to those under 35. The elderly access the Internet less often, and even when they do, they see information on the Internet as a supplement to information in traditional media. Also, to a lesser extent, they use official portals for information, but they get information on social networks, forums and other entertainment sites. Therefore, it can be determined that the fourth auxiliary hypothesis has been confirmed, that is, that o*lder Internet users use the Internet to a lesser extent as a primary form of information.*

Graph 4

Percentage display of respondents' views on the use of the Internet for information

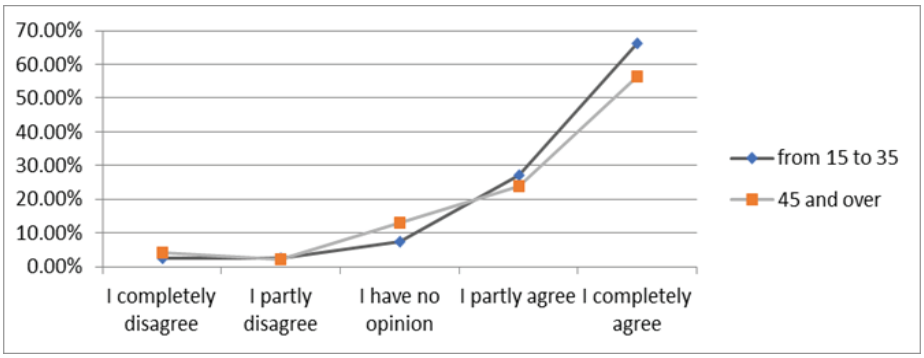


Differences in attitudes towards the experience of certain aspects of online disorientation are not found in all statements, but they are identified in some of them. Thus, to the statement that they sometimes get lost in the sea of information on the Internet, as many as 48.8% of the younger respondents answered that they partially or completely agree, compared to 26% of the older ones. When it comes to help when searching the Internet, there were no significant statistical deviations. Thus, 87.6% of respondents under the age of 35 claim that they do not need help when searching, as well as 80.4% of respondents over 45.

In this sense, 84.8% of older people agree with the statement *I know exactly what I'm looking for when I search the Internet*, compared to 72.6% of younger people. Therefore, older respondents have greater self-confidence when using the Internet and have the impression that they do not get lost in information chaos, that is, they feel the consequences of hyperproduction of information and disorientation in hypertext to a lesser extent. The reason for this may be the already mentioned fact that older Internet users visit fewer sites on a daily basis, which can cause a feeling of less disorientation. In a similar percentage (about 70%), both groups of respondents do not encounter difficulties when searching for what interests them.

Graph 4

Comparative percentage of respondents' views on the statement I don't need help when searching the Internet



The largest number of respondents of both age groups do not have a clear attitude when it comes to the reliability of information through the Internet (about 60%), with younger people expressing greater confidence in the reliability of Internet information. However, only 13% of older respondents stated that it does not happen to them to find completely different information on the same topic on the Internet, and are not sure which is correct, while this happens to almost a third of younger respondents. This is supported by the fact that almost half of the older respondents do not have an opinion on this issue (45.7%).

There are 62% of younger respondents who do not agree with the statement that it is easier to get information through traditional media, compared to 56.6% of older respondents, while twice as many older respondents do not have a clear position on this issue compared to younger respondents (17.5%). In the comparative statistical analysis, there are no significant indications in any case that older respondents experience greater disorientation in the Internet space, according to any of its indicators, compared to younger users. Therefore, it can be argued that the fifth auxiliary hypothesis, which assumes that *older Internet users experience information chaos to a greater extent than younger ones*, is completely unconfirmed.

The disconfirmation of the last auxiliary hypothesis is unexpected, first of all, because earlier research (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, Peters, 2011) that dealt with the difference in the orientation of Internet users in relation to age indicates that older users exhibit all the characteristics of disorientation.

They see the Internet as reliable; they think that they do not need help to navigate it, they do not get lost in the sea of information, they know what they are looking for in a hypertext environment and they can almost always find it. However, we should not forget that respondents who are 45 or older access the Internet less often and use it as a supplement to information from traditional media. Therefore, as one of the possible explanations for the more comfortable use of the Internet by the elderly compared to the young, it can be offered that older users have a lower sense of disorientation because they have not fully familiarized themselves with the size and possibilities of the Internet space, and therefore with the chaotic nature of hypertext, fake news and hyperproduction of media texts. An opposite explanation could be that older respondents on the Internet are only looking for additional information that is already known to them through traditional media. In this sense, the number of sites they visit is smaller because it is not their primary source of information.

As the first two auxiliary hypotheses were confirmed to the greatest extent, the third was confirmed partially, the fourth completely, and the fifth hypothesis was refuted, it can be concluded that the main research hypothesis, which assumes that Internet users use the Internet as a primary form of information every day and are aware of the information chaos on this medium, and information chaos is experienced to a greater extent by older than younger users, was partially confirmed. Respondents use the Internet daily, mostly for information, and they see problems that lead to information chaos. Older users, contrary to the majority of prior research that dealt with objective disorientation on the Internet, possess a higher level of self-confidence and trust in the Internet space and do not perceive movement through it as a problem.

Concluding considerations

The appearance of the Internet as a dominant form of informing the public has brought many changes in the way media content is used and coordinated with the new media space. The changes were caused by the general availability of the Internet, the hyperproduction of information and the constant growth of the number of websites, a large number of social networks, the appearance of a large amount of false information, but also the hypertextual nature of the media. In order for users to adapt to them, they must develop a whole series of new skills, and this learning process is much easier for a group of young "digital natives" than for older "digital immigrants". The research has established that users use the Internet daily for information purposes and that they face all aspects of information chaos on it. However, contrary to the objective state of affairs, although they use the Internet considerably less and as an auxiliary rather than the main means of information, older users perceive the chaos and problems it brings to a lesser subjective extent. Their more limited use of hypertext gives them the impression of a much more harmonious and reliable medium, and this is proven by the fact that they visit fewer sites per day compared to younger users. Simply, "digital immigrants" have a subjective view that they are much more prepared for the Internet than is objectively the case.

The importance of the research is that it determines the basic habits of Internet users, and the general perception of disorientation on the Internet, but also that it determines that the subjective attitude about Internet chaos among older users is similar in intensity to that of younger users. In this way, it points out that there are two dimensions of Internet chaos, objective and subjective, and that they are inversely proportional in certain segments.

The main drawback of the research is the small sample size, as well as the fact that the objective skills of the respondents were not measured, which would have given an even more complete understanding of this phenomenon. The research can be used as a basis for a more complex investigation of the phenomenon of experiencing information chaos on the Internet, or as part of a longitudinal study on this phenomenon. It should be expected that in the future the Internet will become an increasingly dominant source of information, as generations become even more accustomed to it, but thanks to this habituation, they will become even more aware of the problems of disorientation in the Internet sphere and the confusion of the growing hyperspace.

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Informacioni haos na internetu – percepcija u odnosu na uzrast korisnika

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Sažetak

Nagli prodor interneta kao dominantne platforme u sferu informisanja doneo je sa sobom nekoliko novinina uzrokovanih prirodom digitalnih umreženih medija. Na prvom mestu je reč o hiperprodukciji informacija usled slobodnog kreiranja sadržaja svakog korisnika, ali i o velikom problemu orijentacije u narativno nepovezanom hiperprostoru i bujanje velikog broja lažnih vesti. Sve te promene stvorile su fenomen informacionog haosa, odnosno dezorijentacije korisnika u internet okruženju. Kako bi se navikli na novi prostor, korisnici moraju razviti niz novih veština, a njih mnogo lakše usvajaju pripadnici mlađih generacija, dok je to znatno teže starijim.
Cilj rada je da ustanovi u kojoj meri korisnici upotrebljavaju internet u svrhu informisanja i na koje načine opažaju informacioni haos. Takođe, cilj je i utvrditi razlike u subjektivnom osećaju dezorijentisanosti na internetu kod mlađe i starije populacije korisnika. Osnovna pretpostavka rada je da internet korisnici koriste internet kao primarni vid informisanja svakodnevno i svesni su informacionog haosa koji na njemu postoji, a informacioni haos u većoj meri doživljavaju stariji nego mlađi korisnici. Uzorak čini 120 ispitanika koji su svrstani u dve kategorije: od 15 do 35 godina starosti i od 45 ili više. Instrument za prikupljanje je posebno dizajniran upitnik distribuiran putem aplikacije Google Forms, a metod korišćen za ispitivanje rezultata je deskriptivna i komparativna statistika u programu SPSS 24.0. Rezultati pokazuju da ispitanici koriste internet svakodnevno za informisanje, ali su u okviru starosnih grupa primećene izvesne razlike u percepciji haosa na internetu. Osim toga, mlađi ispitanici internet koriste kao primarni vid informisanja, dok stariji ispitanici internet koriste kao sekundarni izvor informisanja, odnosno kao dopunu drugim medijima.

Ključne reči: informacioni haos, internet, dezorijentacija, hipersfera, razlike u uzrastu, percepcija

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