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# REVISTA INCLUSIONES

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**ATTITUDE AS A NEW MEDIA DISCOURSE INSTRUMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON YOUNG  
PEOPLE’S CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to analyze the phenomenon of psychological attitude and its effect on the development of young people’s consciousness and their worldview. The correlation, cluster and factor analyses allowed identifying multiple positive correlations between young people’s interaction with the new media discourse and various attitudes perceived on different events, people and news and explaining inner reasons why the youth may respond to a certain piece of information in the media discourse and completely ignore another one.

**Keywords**

University students – Psychological attitude – Media discourse space – Human consciousness



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## Introduction

Psychological attitude is a mechanism of human consciousness which defines a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours toward a particular object, person, thing, or event.<sup>1</sup> Attitudes are often the result of experience or upbringing, and they can have a powerful influence over behaviour. While attitudes are enduring, they can also change. A new digital media world, the man is living today, may have a powerful social and physical impact on his psychological attitude towards the present-day reality. The attitude towards modern fashion and the latest beauty trends, finance, education, career-building, political and religious views, ecological awareness and interpersonal relationships are mostly being shaped under the influence of the new media discourse environment. Moreover, the younger the individual is, the more exposed he is to the new media discourse space. Thus, this research aims to perceive and analyze the functioning of the psychological attitude as a mechanism of the young individual's consciousness and its transformation under the effect of the digital media discourse space. In this study we will observe the following questions: the significant role of the new media discourse in the modern digital society and its holistic presence in people's lives. We will focus on the analysis of the phenomenon of the psychological attitude and how young individuals' attitude may change under the influence of their interaction with the new media discourse environment. Finally, we will present the results of our experiment where the correlation between the youth's activity in the digital media discourse space and a set of various psychological attitudes will be demonstrated. The new media discourse of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century plays an important role in the creation and distribution of various attitudes. That is why the reason and factors that stand behind the media role in the evolution of the human consciousness (the youth's consciousness in our case) today must be explained and will be presented in this research as well.

## New media discourse as a social instrument of influence

William Shakespeare's famous protagonist Hamlet once exclaimed: "To be or not to be – that is the question"<sup>2</sup>. This eternal phrase becomes particularly relevant in the present world of the digital media and top technologies. Some people believe that a person is either in the new media discourse space or he or she doesn't exist. The new media world is human oxygen that helps individuals to survive in society. New media discourse contributes to the overall cultural production of knowledge<sup>3</sup>; it provides resources (symbols) through which we organize a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into that culture<sup>4</sup>. The culture of digitalization of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century is revolutionizing human lifestyle as well as modus operandi on different social levels, including our physical perception of time and space. Nowadays medialization is linked together with digitalization or in analogy they are mutually dependent because their contents and forms are interdependent<sup>5</sup>. Human consciousness has been affected by the conversion of information. Besides, the ubiquitous flow of information which people

<sup>1</sup> A. V. Petrovsky, *General Psychology* (Moscow: Rech, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016)

<sup>3</sup> A. Saifuddin y M. Jorg, "Media representation of Muslim and Islam from 2000 to 2015: A meta-analysis", *The International Communication Gazette* (2016): 1-26.

<sup>4</sup> M. R. Gathmyr; H. Suryanto y T. Rezasyah, "Investigating media discourse of radicalization among Indonesian youth: preliminary research", *International Journal of Law, Government and Communication* Vol: 3 num (1)2 (2018): 24-34.

<sup>5</sup> A. Koskensalo, "The Influence of Medialization to Legal Discourse Concerning Context, Media and Social Power", *Sino-US English Teaching* Vol: 15 num 6 (2018): 302-311.

encounter on their daily basis affect their worldview and introduce different psychological evaluations of other people, objects, events and issues.

In communication studies or media studies, medialization is a theory which argues that the media shape and frame the processes and discourse (conversation) of human communication as well as the society in which that communication takes place<sup>6</sup>. This concept captures how processes of digital communication transform society and it has also evolved to focus not only on media effects but also on the interrelation between the change of media communication, on the one hand, and socio-cultural changes on the other, as part of our everyday communication practices and our communicative construction of reality. Medialization is extended into everyday life, at work, at home and in between<sup>7</sup>. New media discourse communities become “architects” of human life affecting people’s utterances, norms, habits, rules, behaviour and physiological activity in the present-day society. They are capable of generating new space and rhythms and enable or facilitate user-to-user interactivity and interactivity between user and information<sup>8</sup>. According to Vin Crosbie<sup>9</sup>, today’s new media discourse possesses such an important feature as *individuation* which means how a thing is identified as distinguished from other things. From our viewpoint, the principle of individuation in the actual digital media world has revolutionized its inner mechanism of functioning and hence its impact on human beings, their consciousness and activity. Following Jungian psychology that defines individuation as the development of the psychological individual as a being distinct from the general, collective psychology<sup>10</sup>, we may assume that the new media discourse of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century is principally aimed at reaching every person’s unique nature. Due to a specific media language as a projection apparatus of the modern world, as an instrument of individual and collective action and as a model of concept modelling of the present-day digital reality, the new media discourse has become an influential mediator in an interpersonal communication and a powerful virtual expert in a person’s self-cognition and perception of the world. The new media discourse environment generates multiple psychological attitudes towards different events, actions, news which directly or indirectly affect individuals on cognitive and physiological levels.

The latest beauty trends of changing the appearance and gender; protests against climate change or various ‘anti-politics’ campaigns across the world are bright examples of how specific psychological attitudes (carefully and deliberately chosen by some media actors) influence people and especially young individuals of “Youtubers” generation.

Before focusing our attention on the analysis of young people’s psychological attitude (as the most exposed social group to the digital media world) towards the new media discourse space, it is important to introduce a brief literature review on the phenomenon of psychological attitude as a mechanism of human consciousness.

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<sup>6</sup> D. G. Lilleker, *Key concepts in political communications* (London: Sage, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> N. O. Finnemann, “Mediatization theory and digital media”, *Communications* Vol: 36 num 1 (2011): 67-89.

<sup>8</sup> A. Schorr; M. Schenk y W. Campbell, *Communication Research and Media Science in Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2003)

<sup>9</sup> V. Crosbie, *What is New Media?* *Sociology*. 2019. Available at: <http://www.sociology.org.uk/as4mm3a.doc>

<sup>10</sup> C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types*. *Collected Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

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## Attitudes and human consciousness

Psychological attitude towards human behaviour as well as towards a variety of issues is an important factor determining human behaviour in a certain life situation. The concept of attitude has long been central to psychology research. However, the definition of attitude has changed over the years resulting in no single universally accepted definition<sup>11</sup>.

An attitude is an evaluation of an attitude object, ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive. Most contemporary perspectives on attitudes permit that people can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object by simultaneously holding both positive and negative attitudes toward the same object. This has led to some discussion of whether an individual can hold multiple attitudes toward the same object<sup>12</sup>. K. Jung defines attitude as a "readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way"<sup>13</sup>. Attitudes very often come in pairs, one conscious and the other unconscious; rational and irrational, extraverted vs introverted, individual vs social.

Attitude is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour<sup>14</sup>. A Russian psychologist S.K. Bondyрева describes attitude as enhanced readiness for action. In certain life circumstances, a person will carry out precisely this action, preferred over others from among the possible ones<sup>15</sup>. Studying the attitude as a special mechanism of anticipatory reflection of reality, the researcher notes that the attitude begins with an assessment put to something and directing its behaviour in a certain way. The attitudes people express help communicate who they are and may make them feel good because they have asserted their identity<sup>16</sup>.

Soviet psychologist Alexey Nikolaevich Leontyev linked the idea of a personal meaning with the concept of a social attitude. According to the scientist's theory, in human activity, two different forms of reflection of reality manifest themselves in different ways and degrees – the concept and personal meaning. Owing to personal meaning, the objective concept is associated with the real life of the individual, with the motives of his activity. Bias and subjectivity of human consciousness are created. At the same time, a Russian psychologist A.G. Asmolov distinguishes four levels of the regulation of attitude of human activity: the level of semantic attitudes, the level of target attitudes, the level of operational attitudes, and the level of psychophysiological mechanisms - regulators of attitudes in activities<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> N. Schwarz, "Attitude Construction: Evaluation in Context", *Social Cognition* Vol: 25 num 5 (2007): 638–56.

<sup>12</sup> W. Wood, "Attitude Change: Persuasion and Social Influence", *Annual Review of Psychology* Vol: 51 (2000): 539–570.

<sup>13</sup> R. Main, *The rupture of time: Synchronicity and Jung's critique of modern western culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> A. H. Eagly y S. Chaiken, *The Psychology of Attitudes* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> N. I. Guslyakova, *Psychological mechanisms of formation and development of pedagogical university students' professional consciousness: Monograph* (Chelyabinsk: 2006).

<sup>16</sup> S. A. McLeod, *Attitudes and behaviour*, *Simply Psychology*. 2018. Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/attitudes.html>

<sup>17</sup> N. I. Guslyakova, *Psychological mechanisms of formation and development of pedagogical university students' professional consciousness: Monograph* (Chelyabinsk: 2006).

To sum up, psychological attitude is a vector of human activity determining the man's motives and needs. In other words, attitude is "the motor of human activity" (ibid).

Building the relationship between the psychological attitude, the levels of its implementation in the human mind and its embodiment in the media discourse space, we note that all four levels of attitude are realized in the modern media discourse. In general, the mechanism of psychological attitude is a given representation of information in a media discourse; highlighting a specific audience to which some knowledge or information will be addressed. It should be noted that the readership also has a certain psychological attitude to particular media content or its recipients. Accordingly, this is reflected in the selection of linguistic and extralinguistic means of embodying the installation and its perception in media discursive space.

The mechanism of psychological attitude is very well implemented in the political media discourse, especially when it comes to a variety of election campaigns, for example, the presidential election. In his election media discourse, the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, created a powerful psychological attitude, which was later transformed into the presidential slogan "Make America great again!" For his audience of voters the slogan, which was extremely simple in its sound, had a rather strong psychological impact on the consciousness of the American electorate, which resulted in the victory of Donald Trump in the next presidential election, despite a lot of criticism from his political opponents. In this example, one can observe all four levels of implementation of the psychological attitude: semantic, target, operational and psychophysiological.

Another example of the development of the corresponding psychological attitude (attitude towards more freedom and democracy) is young people's anti-government mass protests in Hong Kong in 2019 that still keep going at the moment. "The older generation didn't take their responsibility so we are forced to," says Daniel, a Hong Kong-born British national and protester. "It's only people between 15 and 30 doing this. What we are doing is protecting ourselves and protecting the next generation. ...If we are not going to do it, no-one is going to do it"<sup>18</sup>. The utterance of a young protester is another good example of the psychological attitude towards responsibility for the future of the next generations. In general, as we have mentioned above, young people are more sensitive to different psychological attitudes introduced by a modern society which is built on the principles of information and communication technology use.

And empirical studies that have examined psychological aspects of the use of computer-mediated technologies have indicated that certain psychological attitudes of young individuals towards the digital media environment are of paramount importance<sup>19</sup> when evaluating the new media discourse as an instrument of the formation and development of psychological attitude in the younger generation's consciousness.

### **Young people's psychological attitude towards the new media discourse space**

The digital media revolution is closely associated with global changes in society, which are expressed in the revision of social goals and values, the change of group and

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<sup>18</sup> D. Vincent, Hong Kong protests: What do young people want? BBC News. 2019. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-49371809>

<sup>19</sup> Y. J. Katz, "Attitudes affecting college students' preferences for distance learning", *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* Vol: 18 (2002): 2-9.

interpersonal communication models, the transformation of political, economic, environmental, cultural concepts that have developed in the world community. These trends could not but be reflected in the youth environment, which is the most mobile and susceptible to all kinds of innovations. The appeal to the youth, its internal potential, has recently become more and more relevant. The role and place of the youth in society is rethought at different levels: state, group and individual<sup>20</sup>. Certainly, the media culture of a young man, which is formed as a result of media education, is extremely important in this process. The popularity of the new media discourse space has brought about new communicative opportunities and environments. Therefore, young actors in these new media environments often operate in a multidimensional discursive universe and their engagements with the new media raise their attempts to make a dialogue with society and the state, to introduce their civic consciousness and to share the youth's social, political, economic and cultural views. The new media discourse space has become a vital resource through which youth communities, subcultures, and generations have defined themselves, their desires, and hopes and dreams for decades<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, the new media discourse environment sets different psychological attitudes to young people about the information perceived in the news. This makes young individuals respond and show their attitudes to multiple everyday events in society they live. Such interaction between young individuals and the new media reflects the dynamic ways that the youth are using and creating the digital media discourse to shape their lives and address matters of common concern in societies around the world.

We take up these developments in more detail in the paragraph below in this article.

## Results

The new media discourse is the phenomenon which may change people's opinions, values, degree of awareness, skills, tastes and behaviour. It introduces different psychological attitudes affecting human consciousness and changing people's worldview. Taking into account young people's engagement with the new media resources, we assume that their consciousness is more open to perceiving attitudes to numerous life events introduced by the new media discourse space. Therefore, special research questionnaires were designed and compiled to examine the functioning of the psychological attitude in a young person's consciousness under the influence of the new media discourse environment. We interviewed 48 junior and senior bachelor students aged 18-24 who are currently studying at Russian universities (Moscow Pedagogical State University, RUDN University and South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University). We were interested in understanding their attitude towards the present-day new media discourse environment; how they perceive and process the information in the media, how far the digital media world can affect young people's consciousness today and transform their various psychological attitudes to themselves as well as the exterior world.

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<sup>20</sup> N. Vladimirova y I. V. Zhilavskaya, Youth and media. Goals and values (Moscow: Proceedings of the Russian scientific and practical conference "Youth and Media. Goals and Values", 2011).

<sup>21</sup> S. R. Poyntz y J. Pedri, Youth and Media Culture. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education. 2018. Available at: <https://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-75?rskey=Nx1HL9&result=2>

We conducted correlation, cluster and factor analyses which helped us analyze the complex relationships between the younger generation and the new media discourse space. It also confirmed our hypothesis about young individuals' exposure to the digital media world and young people's psychological attitude which is being shaped and developed under the influence of the new media discourse communities.

Table 1 below demonstrates the correlation between young people's vision of their own life through the prism of their interaction in the new media discourse space.

Variable	Correlations (Marked correlations are significant at $p < ,05000$ )											
	Means	Std.Dev.	Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5	Var6	Var7	Var8	Var9	Var10
Var1	3,56	0,96	1,00	0,66	0,36	0,21	0,14	0,18	0,13	0,17	0,30	0,32
Var2	3,88	0,96	0,66	1,00	0,22	0,17	0,33	0,29	0,43	0,17	0,64	0,37
Var3	3,56	1,31	0,36	0,22	1,00	0,22	0,05	0,40	-0,03	0,25	-0,21	-0,09
Var4	2,81	1,52	0,21	0,17	0,22	1,00	-0,58	-0,33	0,30	-0,11	-0,29	-0,12
Var5	3,44	1,03	0,14	0,33	0,05	-0,58	1,00	0,50	0,12	0,32	0,53	0,33
Var6	2,44	1,15	0,18	0,29	0,40	-0,33	0,50	1,00	0,04	0,57	0,54	0,20
Var7	3,50	0,82	0,13	0,43	-0,03	0,30	0,12	0,04	1,00	-0,10	0,09	0,53
Var8	3,00	0,82	0,17	0,17	0,25	-0,11	0,32	0,57	-0,10	1,00	0,26	0,26
Var9	3,88	0,96	0,30	0,64	-0,21	-0,29	0,53	0,54	0,09	0,26	1,00	0,37
Var10	4,13	0,62	0,32	0,37	-0,09	-0,12	0,33	0,20	0,53	0,26	0,37	1,00

Table 1

The correlation matrix of the functioning of young people's psychological attitude under the effect of the new media discourse space

Var 1 – social media as lifestyle; var 2 – the new media as a fundamental source of knowledge; var 3 - Youtube channel as a source of world news for me; var 4 – no Instagram – no life; var 5 – reading people's comments; var 6 – commenting events in the new media discourse space; var 7 – the new media discourse space as an environmental problem-solver; var 8 – interaction with other people in the virtual space; var 9 – the new media discourse space as a source of answers to my life questions; var 10 – modern education is impossible without the media world.

There is a strong link between var 1 and 2 (0,66) as well as var 2 and var 9 (0,64). These numbers reflect a young person's psychological attitude towards the present-day media discourse space. They agree that the social media and the virtual reality are their modus vivendi, their actual state of life, a primary source of knowledge and information; an advisor, a guide and a mentor. The correlation between variables 5, 6 and 9 (0,5 and 0,53 correspondingly) as well as between variables 6 and 8 (0,57) prove that it is vital for young individuals to communicate with different people in the digital media discourse communities and exchange their views and opinions about social events and news. The youth are interactively engaged in the media communication with others and they can't imagine their life without such a media app as Instagram (var 4). The negative correlation which can be seen between variables 4 and 5 (-0,58) confirms the significant role of social media in a young person's everyday life. They must communicate with their peers and other people in the new media discourse space daily, comment on multiple events and read the comments produced by other media actors. Regarding young individuals' academic education, their psychological attitude towards the media as a "tutor" which may

help with the solution of multiple academic tasks, including even environmental problems is stable. Table 1 also demonstrates a strong correlation level between variables 7 and 10 (0,53) that explain the dependence of modern education on the new media discourse environment in students' eyes. In general, the correlation analysis conducted in this research presents a strong and stable psychological attitude towards the digital media discourse space which has been formed and is being developed in young people's consciousness today. This psychological attitude can be described as "extremely positive", "communicative", "permanent", "irreplaceable", "vital". The results of the correlation matrix of the functioning of young people's psychological attitude under the effect of the new media discourse space are also confirmed graphically in our cluster analysis below (picture 1).

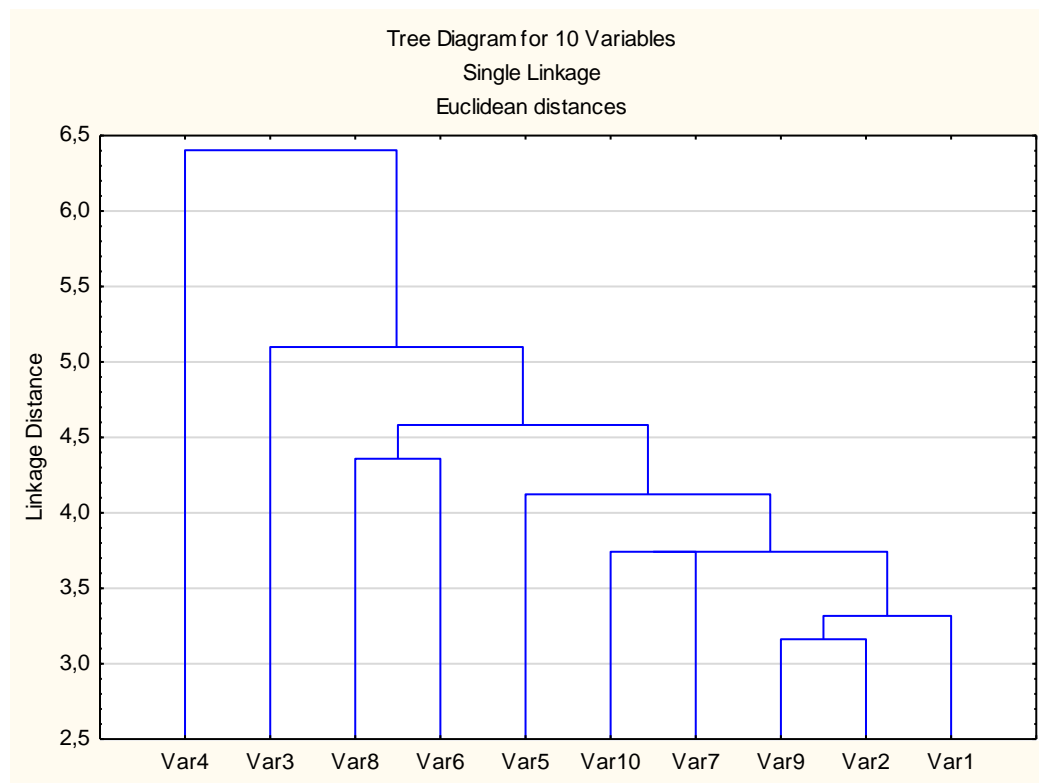


Figure 1

Cluster dendrogram of the functioning of young people's psychological attitude under the effect of the new media discourse space

Var 1 – social media as lifestyle; var 2 – the new media as a fundamental source of knowledge; var 3 - Youtube channel as a source of world news for me; var 4 – no Instagram – no life; var 5 – reading people's comments; var 6 – commenting events in the new media discourse space; var 7 – the new media discourse space as an environmental problem-solver; var 8 – interaction with other people in the virtual space; var 9 – the new media discourse space as a source of answers to my life questions; var 10 – modern education is impossible without the media world.

Young people's psychological attitude shaped in their consciousness under the new media discourse effects has also some inner reasons which we managed to explain due to the factor analysis in our research (table 2). The results of the factor analysis are presented in table 2.



Variable	Factor Loadings (Varimax normalized) (Marked loadings are >,700000)	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
Var1	0,16	0,75
Var2	0,35	0,81
Var3	0,03	0,37
Var4	-0,69	0,55
Var5	0,83	0,03
Var6	0,77	0,15
Var7	-0,05	0,64
Var8	0,56	0,12
Var9	0,74	0,28
Var10	0,40	0,49
Expl.Var	2,93	2,42
Prp.Totl	0,29	0,24

Table 2

Factor analysis of the functioning of young people's psychological attitude under the effect of the new media discourse space

Var 1 – social media as lifestyle; var 2 – the new media as a fundamental source of knowledge; var 3 - Youtube channel as a source of world news for me; var 4 – no Instagram – no life; var 5 – reading people's comments; var 6 – commenting events in the new media discourse space; var 7 – the new media discourse space as an environmental problem-solver; var 8 – interaction with other people in the virtual space; var 9 – the new media discourse space as a source of answers to my life questions; var 10 – modern education is impossible without the media world. The data factorization revealed two factors in our study: *the communicative factor* (variables 5, 6 and 9 – 0,83, 0,77 and 0,74) and *the cognitive factor* (variables 1 and 2 – 0,75 and 0,81).

The *communicative factor* may explain why the present-day new media discourse has become such a powerful social instrument in young people's lives. The reason is that it provides an effective communicative platform where the youth can spend their quality time, work, interact, air their views and form their psychological attitudes towards everything. This media platform helps a young person sort out information and build relationships on a personal and professional level.

*The cognitive factor* stands for young people's education as well as intellectual and spiritual development. The youth recognize the new media discourse space as an important source of knowledge and enlightenment in the XXI<sup>st</sup> century with so many free MOOCs courses, open universities and billions of various academic communities.

In summary, our theoretical analysis and empirical findings allow us to confirm that psychological attitude as a mechanism of a young person's consciousness is mostly defined by the present-day new media discourse environment. Technological progress introduced revolutionary changes in the digital media world. Advanced communicative and cognitive features of the new media discourse environment are making a powerful impact

on a young individual's worldview and psychological attitudes towards his inner self and the society he lives. The digital media discourse space has become a phenomenon that can introduce dynamic changes in young people's consciousness in the process of their interaction with other people in the media environment and with the digital media reality itself. Therefore, the question of studying young people's consciousness development in its correlation with the new media discourse communities remains open for a further holistic scientific analysis.

## Conclusions

This research is still far from being complete as many things are in progress. However, one important but tentative conclusion can be reported as follows. Psychological attitude is a process of individual consciousness which determines the real or possible activity of the individual in the social world<sup>22</sup>. Young individuals' real and possible activities often correlate with their media activity in the digital discourse space. One can observe how each new generation of the third millennium changes and becomes more media-focused, virtual and interactive. Thus, the human consciousness of each new generation is getting more "digitalized" and, perhaps, more radical. Therefore, whether the effect of digitalization and medialization on the XXI<sup>st</sup>-century man's consciousness is more constructive rather than destructive should become the purpose of multidisciplinary research in the world science of the next decades.

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