

SOCIAL NETWORKS AS A MEANS OF MODERN COMMUNICATION

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Everyone has different personal needs. There are needs for safety, money, accommodation, education, socialization, communication, self-realization. One of the most important groups of needs is communication, especially nowadays when you work with other people, make friends, communicate with different people in order to pay bills, buy some food, go out, travel, etc. Even if people have enough knowledge and experience to work in a certain sphere and make a career, but don't have enough communication, there can arise some obstacles on their way to success.

The communication between people can be in different forms: real communication, virtual communication.

Our work is devoted to virtual or online communication. The aim of our research is to analyze and compare different social networks as means of communication.

Main tasks are:

- to single out the most popular social networks;
- to reveal the advantages of the most popular social networks.

First of all let us start with the definition of "communication". "Communication" is the word of Latin origin which means "sharing". Communication means sharing or exchanging information, news, ideas, etc. with someone. The most common medium of communication is language. Besides, there are some other means of communication available to us. We use non-linguistic symbols such as traffic lights, road signs, railway signals to convey information relating to the movements of vehicles and trains. We also use telegraphic code for quick transmission of messages and secret codes for defense communication and other highly confidential procedures. But it should be noted that the most popular means of online communication nowadays are social networks.

Cambridge Dictionary gives the following definitions of "Social Network":

1. a website or computer program that allows people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone;
2. the different groups of people that you know [1].

Oxford dictionary defines "Social Network as":

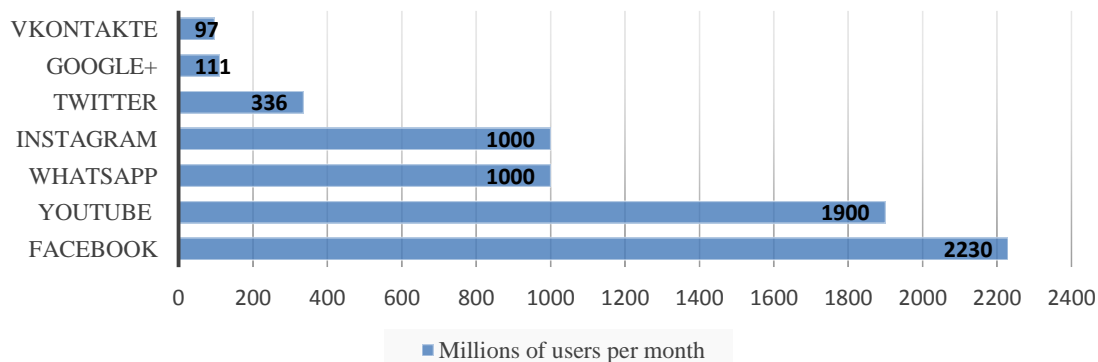
1. a network of social interactions and personal relationships;
2. a dedicated website or other application which enables users to communicate with each other by posting information, comments, messages, images, etc.[2].

As we see from the definitions social networks offer new opportunities for communication and exchange of information.

As a new kind of online communication social networks such as Instagram and Telegram have been developing rapidly in recent years. The online social network provides people with a public network platform, meets needs of computer-mediated communications and rebuilds social connections.

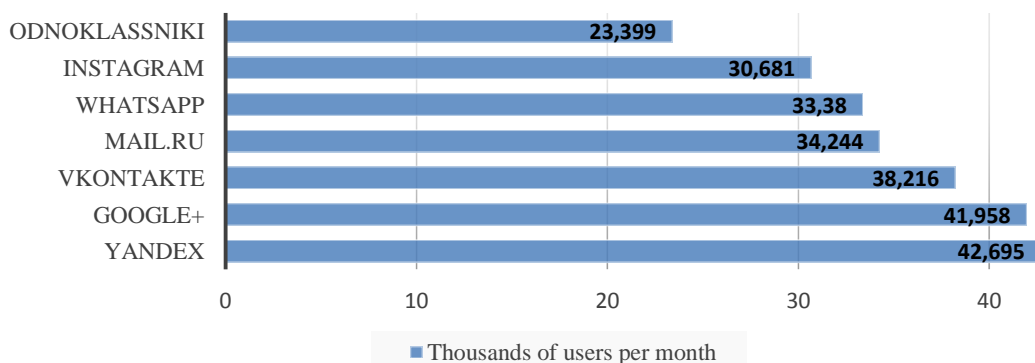
We have conducted a small research in which we analyzed and compared the most popular social networks used by people abroad, in our country and at our university.

If you look at the chart you will see the most popular social networks abroad [3,4]:



Pic. 1 – The list of popular social networks abroad

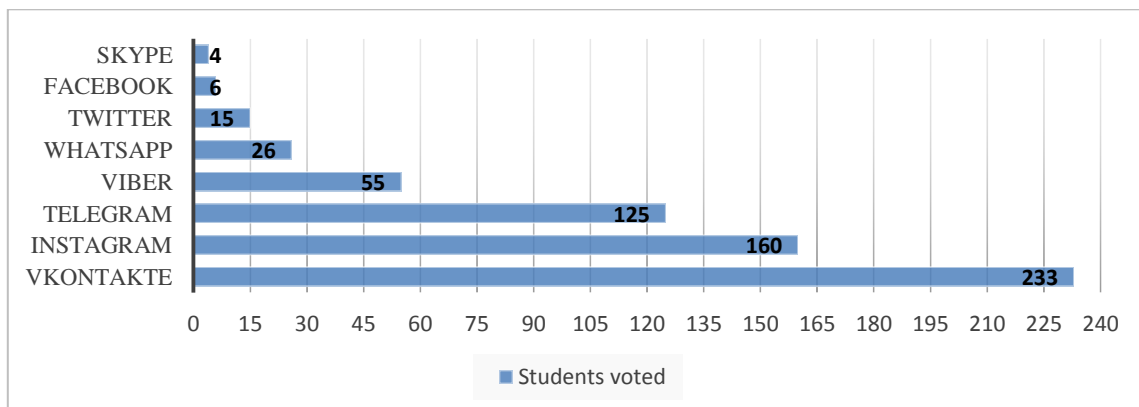
The next chart shows the statistics in our country [5]:



Pic. 2 – The list of popular social networks in Belarus

We can notice that the same social network may have different popularity in our region and abroad. For example, the most popular social networks abroad are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. In our country Top 4 of the most popular social networks comprise Google+, VKontakte, Mail.ru and WhatsApp.

Within the framework of our research we have made a questionnaire to find the most popular social network among students of our university. The results are on the following chart:



Pic. 3 – The list of popular social networks at PolesSU

As we can see, the most popular social networks among our students are VKontakte, Instagram and Telegram. The administrators' of VKontakte app purpose is to simplify communication between users using stories and both personal and group chats one of the most convenient features of which is voice messages.

Instagram app is photo app of Facebook but it has become much more popular than Facebook. This photo app allows users to share their photos and short videos with other users. There is also such useful feature as stories which first appeared exactly in the Instagram app.

Next popular social network is Telegram app. This app was created by ex-owner of Vkontake. His name is Pavel Durov. One of the most valuable features of Telegram app is secure messages. And one of the most interesting opportunities of this app is video messages (you can send short videos directly to chats without using the Camera app).

In conclusion we can say that online communication is very important in modern person's life. A lot of people can't imagine their lives without their gadgets which are used almost in each sphere of life. That's why plenty of IT companies spend a lot of time and money to develop the most popular applications. Users need only to choose which one suits them best.

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