

**DIGITALIZED BRANDED SPEAKING SUBJECT
OR NEW MEDIA CONSUMPTION CULTURE POLITICS
TO CHANGE COMMUNICATION**

Статтю присвячено суб'єктові-мовцю, що є продуктом владних політик нових медіа в межах зміни постмодерної комунікації у її електронної та брендової складових. Цей суб'єкт водночас виступає споживачем та співстворювачем електронного продукту, тобто просюмером.

Ключові слова: суб'єкт-мовець, дигіталізований та брендизований суб'єкт, владні політики, нові медіа, просюмер, е-комунікація.

The postmodern subject lives in the new epoch of communication — digitalized one. New media have entered the speaking subject entity to change communication forever. So the topicality of the paper is of no doubt. The object of the paper is the digitalized branded speaking subject. The tasks of the paper are the following: 1) to show that the postmodern speaking subject has gained a new status in the postmodern communication space — digitalized branded; 2) to prove that this status is acquired with the help of new media; 3) to analyze the digitalized branded speaking subject as whether the new status is an advancement of his/her identity or submission to new media powerful politics. The novelty of the paper is the digitalized branded speaking subject as the product of new media powerful politics towards postmodern communication change.

There are various *cyber* and *brand*-topics studied by researchers in different areas and on different levels. Some of the latest studies of interest are given below.

Deirdre Breakenridge [3] discusses the power of cyberbranding/online branding/e-branding over offline one/brick-and-mortar one. The author states: «the power of the brand coupled with Internet technology gives the marketer the tools for brand success' [3, p. 5]. It means brand is power itself and the instrument that enforces its powerfulness is completely new technologies that have evolved from the first printing press to the ones known

nowadays as a tablet, an i-watch, a google glass, etc. The statement is continued by D. Breakenridge who stresses that the evolution of technology from the first printing press to the wireless Internet on cell handsets has still preserved the attribute of the brand entity: «through this evolution of technology [...], one concept has remained constant — the power of the brand and its effect on consumer behavior» [3, p. 6]. So the consuming subject has been influenced by the brand powerful politics, the ones that have not changed by preserving the power/subordination dichotomy through technological progress.

S. Umit Kucuk [5] analyzes consumer-generated antibranding semiotics. The author determines semiotic rules that help digital antibranders in their antibranding politics towards valuable corporate brands. S. Umit Kucuk does two types of research to prove that consumers can be influenced by antibranding images in the following two factors: 1) drama and humour used by antibranders for «Hitlerizing» targeted brands with their dehumanization, demonization, criminalization and 2) antibranding semiotic representation decoded by consumers as clear messages with hostility as opposed to an entertainment value. So corporate brands are digitally deconstructed to show their powerful intentions towards the consuming subject.

Eduardo Oliveira and Emese Panyik [9] use content analysis of information in social media given by travel journalists, professional travel bloggers, tourists and travelers to understand their perceiving of the country, Portugal in the research, as a tourist destination so that to show their integration into the destination branding strategy as co-creators of brands. In other words these social media subjects perform the function of user-generated-content on the Internet, i.e. they become the prosumers, in Alvin Toffler's terms [15], of the digitalized brands.

There are various new media topics studied by researchers in different areas and on different levels. Some of the latest studies of interest are given below.

Jo Pierson and Joke Bauwens [11] argue that traditional broadcasting is reinterpreted because of digitization and convergence. They say: «... digitization is producing some fundamental changes in the way broadcasting is organized, produced, distributed, received and consumed, but that technological change is always interacting with wider political, economic, social

and cultural contexts, that help us put into perspective the dawn of a new age» [11, p. 1]. The authors stress the digital broadcasting contradiction: «with the World Wide Web and social media in particular one-to-many is converted into many-to-many; with the various new delivery platforms flows are interrupted and simultaneously is turning into on-demand; with the increase in the number of services «broad» is becoming «narrower» [11, p. 2]. It means that the digitalized subject has become the prosumer of digital information.

Adrian Athique [1] considers the connection between digital media and society from different perspectives that helps to understand this bond entity: history and the ways digital society appeared, digital micro-relations with the stressing of symbolic interaction, digital economies with the stressing of a new consumer status — prosumer, and digital authorities, i.e. how new media influences political process.

Anabel Quan-Haase and Alyson Young [12] try to understand the reason for using multiple forms of online communication. The answer is in different social media need meeting, i.e. instant massaging is aimed more at digital subject's relationship entity and development, whereas Facebook functions as an entertainment mechanism.

The studies given above consider the subject as consuming/prosuming one mainly, but they do not treat the speaking subject within his/her communication entity as their main element, moreover the (speaking) subject has not been considered as the digitalized branded product of new media powerful politics towards postmodern communication change, what is to be analyzed in the given paper.

To carry out the main research of the paper first of all it is necessary to give definitions to the following terms: 1) new media and 2) the digitalized branded speaking subject as they are the core terms of the research.

There are a lot of definitions of the «new media» term. To talk about its digital entity it seems evident to give its first definitions in the list from the digital sources.

So, the following digital sources are of interest:

1) PC Magazine [10]: «1. The forms of communicating in the digital world, which includes publishing on CDs, DVDs and, most significantly, over the Internet. It implies that the user obtains the material via desktop

and laptop computers, smartphones and tablets. Every company in the developed world is involved with new media. Contrast with old media. See digital convergence. // 2. The concept that new methods of communicating in the digital world allow smaller groups of people to congregate online and share, sell and swap goods and information. It also allows more people to have a voice in their community and in the world in general. See social media.»;

2) Wikipedia is the most popular and widespread e-source in the post-modern digital communication. Nevertheless Webopedia is more appropriate and specific in this context [8]: «A generic term for the many different forms of electronic communication that are made possible through the use of computer technology. The term is in relation to «old» media forms, such as print newspapers and magazines, that are static representations of text and graphics. New media includes: Web sites, streaming audio and video, chat rooms, e-mail, online communities, Web advertising, DVD and CD-ROM media, virtual reality environments, integration of digital data with the telephone, such as Internet telephony, digital cameras, mobile computing. // Use of the term *new media* implies that the data communication is happening between desktop and laptop computers and handhelds, such as PDAs, and the media they take data from, such as compact discs and floppy disks.» (by Vangie Beal);

3) New Media Institute [14] gives the definition that is more scientific and stresses constant evolving of the new digital phenomenon: «*New Media* is a 21st Century catchall term used to define all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound. In fact, the definition of new media changes daily, and will continue to do so. New media evolves and morphs continuously. What it will be tomorrow is virtually unpredictable for most of us, but we do know that it will continue to evolve in fast and furious ways.».

It is possible to mark out the general information in every definition of «new media» given above that the new phenomenon is connected with digital technology and aimed at e-communication.

So the «new media» definition considered in the given paper is the following: a new type of communication for the speaking subject in the digital era incorporated within new technologies.

The next term used in the paper is the digitalized branded speaking subject — the e-communication subject under brand power politics influence.

New media has changed the consumption politics so that the new media subject has undergone some transformations stated above in different researchers. John Carey and Martin Elton [4] argue the emergence of a new type of the consuming subject in connection with new technology changes: «New media are changing the composition, location, size, and placement in time of audiences as well as their relationship with content. Old mass media models of communication treated audiences as large, passive groups that received content from a relatively few sources at predetermined points in time. The models needed to be revised when large cable television systems began to develop niche audiences for specialized content, and these models need to be revised again now that very large digital cable and satellite systems have begun to destroy the concept of a mass audience while technologies such as DVRs, VOD, and Web video sites free audiences from fixed schedules and allow them to consume content at any time». [4, P. 9]. The scholars understand the new media subject activeness as freedom to join the media content with no temporality tie, i.e. whenever-content-availability, i.e. being out of the power/subordination dichotomy, in which scheduled media performed the function of powerful order. When coming back to the beginning of the paper where the latest research has been considered, it is possible to acknowledge that the new media subject freedom is more than that, i.e. his/her opportunity to be the content-generated subject that means his/her becoming the prosumer as it was stated above by Adrian Athique, Jo Pierson and Joke Bauwens, Eduardo Oliveira and Emese Panyik, though it is Adrian Athique, who calls this subject a prosumer directly.

The idea of a new type of the consuming/prosuming subject in the digital era is also connected with branding politics towards this subject. The research made by Andrea Bookhagen seemed interesting in this case and is taken in the given paper as the basis for digitality, brand and consuming subject interconnection. Andrea Bookhagen [2] is interested in the interconnection between luxury and the Internet as luxury goods/services is exclusivity being not available for every consuming subject, but desirable for many of them whereas the Internet with its environment digitalization gives

the feeling of entire availability as to place, time and subject. She states that «even a few years ago, it was hardly thinkable for any luxury brand manager to consider Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. as genuine opportunities to get into touch with customers and to establish additional digital touch points — in addition to online advertising and website. The sheer thought of selling online and thus offering absolute availability seemed unimaginable. That has changed. Today, various brands have found their special way into the web and show impressively that digital excellence is becoming a matter of course» [2]. According to the author the company website can be called a digital business card being the core digital presence alongside with blogging, online shopping, personalized newsletter sending, microsite adding, online community engaging, that is to become «an effective sales and marketing instrument» [2]. From the other hand «communicated contents in consumer-driven social networks or content-sharing sites, third-party blogs, platforms etc. are no longer subject to the brand's immediate influence.» [2]. That is the speaking subject participating in the e-communication with the particular luxury brand can turn into the luxury brand prosumer. The perceived digitality of a luxury brand means the same knowledge getting as the perceived offline luxury brand experience: «The digital experience contributes as much to a brand's universal perception — which is formed in the users' minds — as any traditional print ad or visit to a store.» [2]. Andrea Bookhagen comes to conclusion that digital media cannot be a threat to luxury brands because of the latter's high potential, but it is an interesting challenge for luxury brand management with new distribution channels of available communication.

So the postmodern speaking subject has gained a new status in the postmodern communication space — digitalized branded. Now let's analyze this statement.

The postmodern speaking subject is digitalized because of the usage of digital age advantages of information technologies. The speaking subject is actively using social networking for his/her everyday communication. Even several years ago there were predictions (e.g. David Moth [7], Silverman [13], Tom McKay [6]) that argued the end of social networking as a postmodern phenomenon that would be outdated because of its forever-already-*unfashionability*, i.e. its forever-already-*unpopularity*, so its for-

ever-already-unnecessity, i.e. forever-already-nothingness/*un*entity. Nevertheless, social networking is still used by speaking subjects, moreover it has gained a new level of digital usability in comparison with the previous one which can be called static with desk top usage — mobile/cell phoning, when Viber, What's up, Skype and other messengers installed in cell phones are always at hand as they offer the speaking subject the feeling of communication freedom as it is of no charge and communication everywhere as it is of no boundaries. Though this feeling is false because the speaking subject communicates within the frameworks of digitality, s/he is limited to *un*-reality, virtuality, where desire to communicate becomes digital seduction, i.e. unfulfillness of the speaking subject's true communication practices. It means social networking has become one of the most significant elements of new media. So the postmodern speaking subject is digitalized while submitting to the new media powerful politics as to social networking to give false feeling of free, true and everywhere-presence communication.

The digitalized speaking subject has gained one more status in the postmodern communication — branded because s/he also lives in the brand age. Nowadays the brands are also digitalized as it was stated in e.g. the research of Andrea Bookhagen that brands can preserve their power over the consuming subject when becoming digitalized with their own web-site and social network account.

Let us take Nike Company as an example of the digitalized branded subject of new media consumption politics. The company has its own web-site «<http://www.nike.com>». Here the e-communication between the company and its customer is evident: it is possible:

1. to sign up for the email company alerts on the web-site to be aware of new Nike goods, special offers, etc.;
2. to find the company in the following social networks Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram that are the most popular nowadays;
3. to look for something one needs or is interested in via the Nike search engine;
4. to buy Nike goods online, so one may find the cart to the top right corner;
5. to become a company member by creating a free Nike+ account, where «The Plus Means More. More Gear. Events. Coaching. Just For You»

(http://www.nike.com/gb/en_gb/s/register) account that gives belonging to the brand and this brand loyalty;

6. to comment the company good with its five-star-evaluation as an experienced user, i.e. the company web-site gives an opportunity for its consuming subjects to share the experience of the company goods by joining online communication and as a result to feel his/her belonging to the company.

Nike has required fields for the subject to fill out in the company member registration form: a) date of birth, b) gender, c) country and d) hear about the latest styles and special offers. This information is necessary because: the company differentiates its goods by a) age as the website has divisions for adults and kids; b) gender as the web-site has two goods divisions for men and women; c) country as the Nike web-site within various country contexts is different e.g. Japanese and British; d) devotion, i.e. what advantages can be offered to the customer according to his/her brand awareness.

It possible to have a live chat with «Nike Running Experts for tips, advice and recommendations» (http://store.nike.com/gb/en_gb/pd/air-zoom-pegasus-32-running-shoe/pid-10266842/pgid-10334632). The Nike company excludes speaking subjects who do not speak English from this live chat while notifying about it on the web-site: «Please note: Nike Expert service is available in English only». It means the company marks these non-English-speaking subjects as the Others, though they are not excluded from purchasing the company goods. So the speaking subjects are 1) from one hand symbolically excluded from the digital linguistic space by forever-already-non-English-speaking-subject mark and 2) from the other hand they are commercialized objects of the brand powerful politics.

There is also «site feedback», where the company asks to rate the speaking subject nike experience first with five star system and only after that the subject is to answer the following questions: 1) what was the purpose of your visit today? (the subject is to choose the already-given replies: a) shopping, b) research products, c) give feedback, d) other; 2) did you accomplish your primary purpose on nike.com today? 3) what would you like to share with us? From one hand the company is interested in its consumer's experience with the company good, from the other hand Nike imposes its interests with its powerful politics of the power/subordination dichotomy in e-com-

munication. At the web-site pop-up bottom there is the following: «we are unable to respond to requests submitted here. // If you need assistance with your Nike Product or Services please click here to contact us. When clicking «here», the subject is directed to the «Contact us. Online shopping help.» division (<http://help-en-gb.nike.com/app/landing/contact>), where s/he is offered to contact the company via: 1) phone («fast and friendly»); 2) email («us a question»); 3) chat live with nike. From one hand the speaking subject has communication alternatives with the company, from the other hand s/he is again framed within powerful limitation of his/her actions.

At the bottom of every product web-page the speaking subject may find: «HAVE YOUR SAY. Be the first to review this product. Five stars for evaluation. «Add your review» button (http://store.nike.com/gb/en_gb/product/air-force-1-high-id-kids-shoe/?piid=40254&pbid=201470575#?p-bid=201470575). The company offers the subject to feel e-communication satisfaction from being the first to share his/her experience with the product, i.e. e-communication seduction. Nevertheless, the speaking subject is the co-creator of the company good, i.e. the prosumer, though h/she is still under new media powerful politics as it is the company that offers the very e-communication to the speaking subject.

So, let us come to conclusion. The speaking subject is acquired the digitalized branded status while participating in the postmodern communication space. New media is the source for his/her digitalization and brandedness. This new type of the speaking subject is the product of powerful new media politics towards postmodern communication change by performing the function of a prosumer in digital brand building. This problem needs to be studied more thoroughly to comprehend the digitalized branded speaking subject from different perspectives to create the digitalized branded speaking subject communication model.

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The paper is dedicated to the digitalized branded speaking subject who is the product of powerful new media politics within the frameworks of postmod-

ern communication change in its digital and brand constituents. This subject is simultaneously a consumer and a co-creator of a digital product, i.e. a prosumer. The following tasks are realized in the paper: 1) to show that the postmodern speaking subject has gained a new status in the postmodern communication space — digitalized branded; 2) to prove that this status is acquired with the help of new media; 3) to analyze the digitalized branded speaking subject as whether the new status is an advancement of his/her identity or submission to new media powerful politics, so it is the latter to give false feeling of free, true and everywhere-presence communication via social networking for the postmodern digitalized speaking subject. The research core terms «new media» and «the digitalized branded speaking subject» are defined by the author as «a new type of communication for the speaking subject in the digital era incorporated within new technologies» and «the e-communication subject under brand power politics influence» respectively. Nike Company is taken as an example of the digitalized-branded-subject-of-new-media-consumption-politics emergence by analyzing Nike Company website through e-communication between the company and its customer from registration, finding the company in social networks, buying Nike goods online with the possible comment giving and evaluation to becoming a company member by creating a free Nike+ account that gives belonging to the brand and this brand loyalty and also Nike tips-advice-and-recommendation expert live chat with non-English-speaking subject exclusion politics. Nevertheless, the speaking subject is the company product prosumer, though he/she is still under new media powerful politics as it is the company that offers the very e-communication to the speaking subject.

Keywords: digitalized branded speaking subject, powerful politics, new media, prosumer, e-communication.

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