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## CULTURAL MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST ON SOCIAL MEDIA INSTAGRAM AND TIKTOK

The growing popularity of social networks has led to their impact on society and the dynamics of modern culture. Apps have the ability to create trends, allowing every user to join in. Through media products, platforms are transforming the understanding of narrative events such as the Holocaust. It is the informative content of the applications that allows us to trace how the cultural memory about an event of the past.

The article singles out the social networks Instagram and TikTok because they have indicative visual material covering the Jewish tragedy. Our research aims to identify and track the impact of apps on the adaptation of cultural memory of the Holocaust among users. The methodology is based on the use of a culturological approach to determining the specifics of modern culture and social media; it is based on the method of content analysis, with the help of which the features of the representation of the Holocaust are considered through the prism of a visual product. Based on the review of illustrative examples of content, we recorded the moments of transformation in the audience's perception of the Jewish tragedy. With the help of the structural method, the ratio of individual and collective reflection on the event within these social networks was determined. The novelty of the obtained results lies in the fact that, for the first time, an analysis of Instagram and TikTok content about the Holocaust is presented. It allows us to expand our idea of how the cultural memory of an event is transformed. We have proved that, along with traditional commemorative practices, the Holocaust needs a modern understanding with the help of a digital tool. This makes it possible to adjust the tragedy to the needs of society: accessibility and informativeness.

**Key words:** Holocaust, social network, cultural memory, Instagram, TikTok, Jews.

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## КУЛЬТУРНА ПАМ'ЯТЬ ПРО ГОЛОКОСТ У СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕРЕЖАХ INSTAGRAM І ТІКТОК

Популярність соціальних мереж, що зростає, зумовила їх вплив на соціум і динаміку сучасної культури. Застосунки мають змогу створювати тенденції, даючи можливість кожному користувачеві до цього доєднатися. Завдяки медіапродукту платформи трансформують розуміння наративних подій, таких як Голокост. Саме інформативна наповненість застосунків дає змогу простежити, як саме відтворюється культурна пам'ять про подію минулого.

У статті виокремлюються соціальні мережі Instagram і TikTok, бо саме вони мають показовий візуальний матеріал, що висвітлює єврейську трагедію. Дослідження має на меті визначити й прослідкувати вплив застосунків на адаптацію культурної пам'яті про Голокост серед користувачів. Методологія ґрунтується на використанні культурологічного підходу до визначення специфіки сучасної культури та соціальних медіа; базується на методи контент-аналізу, за допомогою якого розглянуто особливості репрезентації Голокосту через призму візуального продукту. На основі перегляду показових прикладів контенту ми зафіксували моменти трансформації сприйняття єврейської трагедії аудиторією; за допомогою структурного методу визначили співвідношення індивідуальної та колективної рефлексії на подію в межах зазначених соціальних мереж. Наукова новизна отриманих результатів полягає в тому, що вперше подано аналіз контенту Instagram і TikTok про Голокост. Він дає змогу розширити уявлення про те, як трансформується культурна пам'ять про подію. Ми довели, що поряд із традиційними комеморативними практиками<sup>1</sup> Голокост потребує сучасного осмислення за допомогою цифрового інструменту. Це дає можливість підлаштувати трагедію під такі запити суспільства, як доступність та інформативність.

**Ключові слова:** Голокост, соціальна мережа, культурна пам'ять, Instagram, TikTok, євреї.

<sup>1</sup> Комеморативні практики – це процес пам'яті через актуалізацію подій, образів та особистостей минулого в контексті сучасних поглядів і потреб.

**Presentation of the main material of the research.** The basis of our research is the Instagram and TikTok applications, their author's content dedicated to the Holocaust. It should be noted that there are no fundamental works on the digital representation of the event in the national cultural thought. However, there are developments that draw attention to the peculiarities of media culture. In this context, it is worth highlighting K. Kyslyuk (2023), N. Semen (2021), O. Musienko (2022). The authors characterize social networks in terms of influencing public opinion.

Among the publications on commemorative space and cultural memory, the works of O. Dovgopolova (2020), A. Kyridon (2013), and H. Semerin (2020) should be noted. The researchers consider the transformation of the memorial concept, outlining the prospect of visualizing the image of the Holocaust with the help of places of commemoration.

Fundamentally our topic is studied in the vector of foreign language publications. In the context of fundamental studies of cultural memory, it is worth mentioning the research of historians Y. and A. Assmann (2011; 2012). Scholars have emphasized that memory can be an illustration of memorial practices. An addition to this thesis can be the creation of the researcher of "places of memory" P. Nora (2014). He argued that any manifestation of memory should be an illustration of the creation of the identity of the people. Summing up these theses, we can conclude that memory needs constant dynamics, using the achievements of society. Therefore, the use of social networks to adapt the past to modern society is effective and understandable.

Social media researchers K. Bereiter (2020) and G. Commane (2021). Researchers emphasize that Instagram and TikTok are new means of reading the past. Scientists unanimously agree that the involvement of young people in the active use of applications will make it possible to transmit and preserve the memory of the Holocaust and to work with it through communication.

Media expert P. Herbaudo noted that the dynamic growth of social networks gives rise to the emergence of new forms of understanding events. The scientist emphasizes that the digitalization of physical reality appropriates the past, forming groups of interpreters around itself. Herbaudo says that the Holocaust is at risk of becoming

fleeting in the field of media and losing its value as the experience of what has been lived (Herbaudo, 2012, p. 102). This thesis is complemented by the researcher of the tragedy, K. White, who argues that platform users react faster to the heritage of the past because they have unlimited access to it (Wight, 2020, p. 112).

Media researchers S. Volo and A. Irimias, in turn, emphasize that Instagram and TikTok use different cultural paradigms. With the help of visual effects, they can influence the popularization of information about a particular event (Volo, Irimias, 2021, p. 7).

Scholar M. Salvo argues that applications that touch on the topic of the Holocaust are an example of the rhetoric of mass trauma. Unlike commemoration, which uses a real representation of tragedy, online platforms can interact with users to create future emotional experiences (Salvo, 2017, p. 285).

The results of foreign studies indicate that the model of Holocaust memory is moving into the virtual plane. Perceiving the contents of the tragedy of Jewry becomes more accessible and easier than the theoretical constant that offers typical memorial constructs. A similar trajectory of understanding The Holocaust shapes a new language of the past, where social networks occupy a key place as a way of intercultural communication.

Today, Instagram and TikTok are one of the dominant elements in the context of information exchange. They have the ability to influence the vectors of modern culture. That is why the dynamic digitization of society requires adaptation and rethinking of the events of the past with the help of virtual content. Media scholar K. Bereiter emphasized that the forms of social media, as opposed to museum spaces, create a new experience of working with memory. Such practices build bridges between the memorial environment and virtual life (Bareither, 2020, p. 45).

Therefore, the Holocaust is the most universally recognized event in the history of World War II. Commemorative practices and memorial projects remind the public of the tragedy of millions. However, at the same time, the event remains local within the Jewish worldview. It is social networks that are able to openly broadcast the content of the Holocaust, focusing on creating an adaptive image of the event and involving not only Jews in the discourse. In the context of new media, the tragedy is getting rid of the silence that has long

been relevant among the countries of the post-Soviet space. Historian A. Kyrydon draws attention to this, arguing that society needs an alternative, understandable image of the Holocaust through the modernization of memorial structures (Kyrydon, 2013, p. 203).

That's why, applications are able to create a clear image of the Holocaust, depriving it of fragmentation. But along with this, there is a discussion about the consumption of content about the event. The problem is that within the framework of social platforms, the Holocaust turns into a product of the masses without any adjustment of moral and ethical norms. Media researcher G. Commane emphasized that Instagram and TikTok make it difficult to imagine the sites of the tragedy. The media do not regulate the perception of the event and may present false information about the victims. Networks govern how we understand the Holocaust (Commane, 2021, p. 25).

Based on the above, we analyzed the popular networks Instagram and TikTok and identified the key characteristics of these social platforms:

1. TikTok as part of the cultural discourse on the Holocaust. The application can be considered an example of how a new axiological image of an event is dynamically constructed with the ability to create a space for dialogue between users.

2. Instagram as a depiction on the Holocaust. The platform visualizes the tragedy while informatively engaging contributors.

### TikTok as part of the cultural discourse on the Holocaust

The social network TikTok is the most popular platform in the media space for creating videos. Using modern digital technologies, the application is able to cultivate any topic for the public. Short videos revealed the author's personal preferences. As the culturologist K. Kyslyuk notes, social media are able to cover representatives of different age groups. However, all platforms are inferior to TikTok in their impact on young people (Kyslyuk, 2023, p. 9). This network is built on the speed of product consumption. In this context, content is often created with elements of misinformation. It is worth agreeing that TikTok helps influence the opinions of a large audience about the Holocaust. But, analyzing the comments under the video content from users, we can say that there is a place for the spread of anti-Semitism in the application (as of 2023, in connection with the military act in

Israel, intolerance has intensified). Because, censorship on the platform cannot be controlled.

Having carried out a cultural analysis of illustrative examples of media content on TikTok, we propose to classify its leading directions in terms of adaptation of cultural memory of the Holocaust.

– The perspective of commemoration (fig. 1). It features videos that work with memory preservation. Users who witnessed the disaster create content in which they highlight their memories of the Holocaust, emphasizing the need to find mutual understanding between people.

– The perspective of destruction and revisionism<sup>2</sup> (fig. 2). In this context, the authors publish the product for the sake of resonance and controversial comments. Users are more often incompetent rabbis or dubious researchers of the history of the Holocaust. Note that with the help of the “live” function, the author is able to broadcast pseudo-narratives in real time.

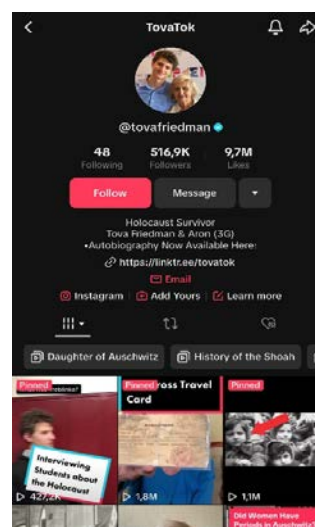


Fig. 1. The profile of a Holocaust witness

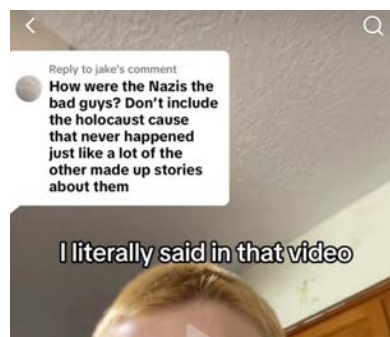


Fig. 2. Example of a destructive comment. Photo by TikTok Photo by TikTok

<sup>2</sup> Revisionism – the theory or practice of revising one's attitude to a previously accepted situation or point of view.

According to this analysis, firstly, we can state that TikTok has the potential to adapt the content of the Holocaust in an atypical media environment. We believe that the application is able to create a new form of commemoration with accessible educational content. Secondly, we see the problematic field of the social network, namely outright anti-Semitism in the comments, propaganda of stereotypes about Jews. Therefore, the problem of the appropriateness of using TikTok to represent the Holocaust through the prism of virtuality remains open.

Instagram as a depiction of the Holocaust

Instagram has created an imaginative content industry. The platform positions itself as a symbiosis of marketing with the possibility of implementation for users through visual material. As social media researcher S. Volo emphasizes, Instagram has turned from an ordinary photo editor into a guide to places and things (Volo, Irimias, 2021, p. 2).

Not unlike TikTok, Instagram focuses on informativeness. Users can create voluminous posts, share personal opinions, and provoke discussion in the comments. Online interaction between the audience opens up opportunities for informal discussion of pressing issues. Along with popular bloggers, there are pages of memorial centers and scholars who deal with the Holocaust. O. Dovgopolova, a researcher of the culture of memory, notes that we are dealing with collective maps memories every day. Our space is marked with markers of the past and visualizes what no longer exists (Dovgopolova, 2020). Guided by this thesis, we can argue that Instagram is a visual tool for preserving or recreating the past.

That is why profiles dedicated to the Holocaust turn the media space of the social network into a platform where the catastrophe of Jews exists alongside photos of everyday life. Such a contrast creates interest among the audience and allows everyone to learn more about the event. On Instagram, the Holocaust becomes more accessible to the user. This affects the formation of tolerance in society.

Therefore, the analysis of profiles and their content on the Holocaust allows us to talk about such a gradation of the media product on Instagram.

– Virtual stories. A striking example of the use of this format for presenting the Holocaust is the 2019 web series *Eva Stories* (fig. 3). This is the online diary of a Jewish girl, Eva Heymann, from occupied Hungary. A Jewish family survives all the difficulties of the occupation and dies at the hands of the Nazis. This interpretation of the tragedy is used by Instagram to construct an application that

is relevant to each image of the user of the application.

– “Tourism” to places of memory (fig. 4). Many contributors use the photo to publicly commemorate of the Holocaust, thereby transforming the meaning of cultural memory. However, there are cases of unethical behavior near memorials. Holocaust scholars have criticized this, arguing that it is an insult to memory. Instagram allows you to openly discuss the feasibility of such photos on its platform through comments.

– Official pages of memorial centers and museums (fig. 5). The application offers to get acquainted with the history of the Holocaust through direct communication with professional scientists. In addition, this practice on Instagram speeds up the receipt of information, unlike real visits to institutions. The format of presenting the Holocaust through official profiles encourages users to potentially delve into the details of the event.

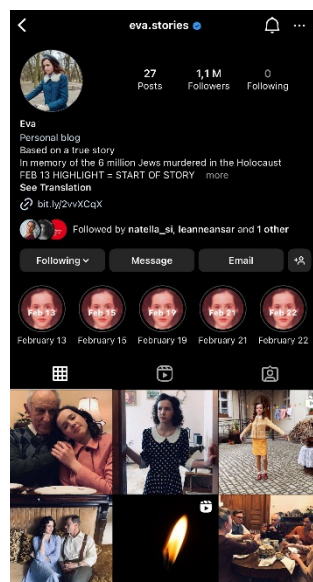


Fig. 3

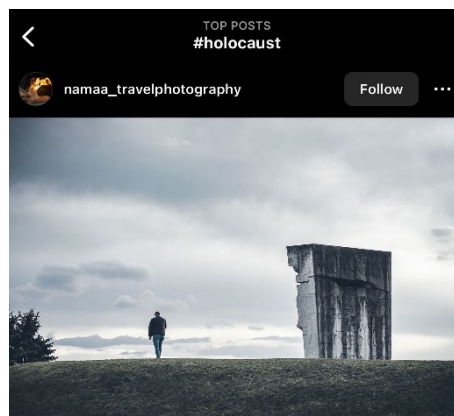
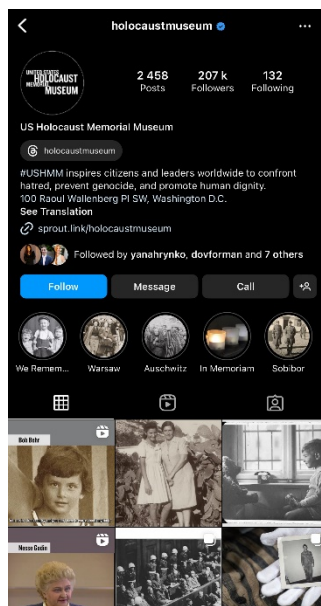


Fig. 4



**Fig. 5**  
**Photo by Instagram**

We argue that Instagram, with its functionality, allows audiences to understand the Holocaust through images. We can see that the platform is able to open an event from different vectors. The application is converted into a heap plane. However, the network has similar features to TikTok, namely the high presence of manifestations of intolerance.

**Conclusions.** Instagram and TikTok, due to their functionality, are among the most popular platforms in the world. The public uses them not only to create their own content, but also to

obtain information in an accessible format. In this regard, complex topics, such as the Holocaust, are modernized, transformed into a plane of interpretation and comprehension, and opened up to create a discussion. Our content analysis proved that cultural memory of the Holocaust is actively transformed and perceived, not only as a canonical part of the history of World War II. The number of videos and text messages regarding the content of the tragedy is growing. The impact of social media on the adaptation of the Holocaust can be outlined from a dual perspective. On the one hand, Instagram and TikTok allow you to quickly get information about the Holocaust, delve into the stories of witnesses, or follow the activities of memorial centers. Also, social networks allow you to communicate with interested users through comments and reactions. On the other hand, adaptation of cultural memory of the Holocaust through applications can have destructive components. The content often contains pseudo-facts and veiled calls for anti-Semitism. We have identified the problem of censorship of materials, which is not solved by moderators in any way. Instagram and TikTok offer a new perspective on the Holocaust, but they need improvement and more high-quality content that will allow for free intercultural communication. The prospect of research on this topic is associated with further scientific understanding of the place of social networks in the structure of Holocaust commemoration.

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