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INTERNET TROLLING: ITS CONCEPT, CONTENT AND FORMS

SUMMARY. This article reviews concept, content and forms of Internet-trolling. Author constructs concept of Internet-trolling, analyzes origin and development of the phenomena, determines peculiarities of trolling on the Internet.

KEY WORDS. Trolling, Internet trolling, Internet, astrotyrfing.

Formation and development of an information society, rapid spread of the Internet promoted occurrence of the new phenomena, that demand a scientific study and forecast. Trolling on the Internet is among actively developing and not enough studied phenomena. Development of the Internet technologies leads to formation of a specific Internet subculture which includes various components and performs certain social functions. «Trolling as a social phenomenon was paid attention to in the West in the late nineties» [1; 1], though it is necessary to notice that theoretically the given problem remains insufficiently studied.

The freedom of speech, for which people always sought and which in real social space is always limited by the law, culture and morals, protecting freedom of each person, receives a different display in the information society, becomes unlimited in quantity. Expression of the freedom of speech is carried out both in positive and negative perspectives. A lot of interesting, valuable information of scientific and practical concern, intellectual comments and advice, assessments and opinions are found freely on the Internet. However, as well as in the real social domain, the negative social practices, connected with inadequately understood freedom of speech, found a wider circulation in the virtual reality, in particular in the form of trolling.

In an information society a dialogue on the Internet, including Internet forums becomes an actively realized requirement of many people, allowing to share problems, receive advice, express their opinion, etc. Total anonymity, inherent in the Internet communications, accompanied by such a dialogue, is not always carried out positively. Sides admissible in a dialogue are erased, language and dialogue forms become more and more distant from culture and law, and it frequently leads to a negative

mood of the dialogue. In real life norms of the law, culture and morals demand from people to constrain emotions and not to show character and mood, to react to events in a socially approved way, otherwise it is possible to receive punishment, either legally regulated or not regulated. In a virtual dialogue display of aggression, rudeness, bad character etc. is not practically regulated by law or culture and morals. Let us put it this way: morals are inside everyone and if it is that regulation, than it will be regulating both in reality and network. Absence of morals generates many different deviations including trolling, promotes occurrence of trolls and trolling development on the Internet.

Originally a troll is a mythological being, terrible and spiteful. "In germano-slavic mythology and folklore trolls were nasty and spiteful beings of an ugly exterior. Now the word «troll» has acquired a new value. It is used to name an Internet bully, a being which is completely non-fantastic, but is sometimes no less disgusting and spiteful" [2; 1]. On the Internet there are many images of these mythical beings. Trolling, as translated from English, means "lining, fishing with a sparkling bate" [3; 1]. Gradually the term trolling began to be used as a term for some form of a dialogue which has specific features and has received enough wide circulation on the Internet. And the troll, as well as the mythical being, began to name those who are engaged in trolling. The troll in social networks is "the saboteur who places many provocative comments on your account... In real life it can be an ordinary person, with a stable routine job, a full family. But something in his life is wrong. Or, on the contrary, all is well" [3; 1]. In the given definition the provocative aspect of actions of the troll, on the one hand, is underlined, on the other, we suspect presence of some problems in life of the troll.

In modern Internet communities trolling has a wide circulation. We will list definitions of trolling typical for the Internet: "placing provocative messages on various resources (forums, social networks, etc.) with a purpose to tease participants of discussion to cause conflicts between them, to provoke mutual insults, etc." [4; 2]. Trolling "is similar to black PR. The user tries to raise the rating and quantity of friends, declining others with a help of senseless demagoguery and skirmish. Trolls draw attention to themselves in the most refined way", they do not adhere to morals, show internal aggression. "Saboteurs adore it" [3; 1].

In the sociological view it is important to understand that the troll can be «not only a separate person, but also a certain group of people, even an organization. It can be a firm holding patents and tracing their realization» [5; 1]. Such subjects and objects of trolling on the Internet are separate persons and social groups, dialogue between which occurs without a straight contact. On the Internet the subject and object of trolling react against each other verbally, thereby the one who reacts to trolling, can make the troll even more active and emotional, as well. In this situation it is even unimportant, whether the object of trolling will remain within the limits of cultural behavior or will apply "thick" trolling. The troll takes pleasure when he/she sees that they managed to make a person (group of people) mad, therefore it can be really effective not to react or use methods of the troll and to influence their weaknesses, complexes, emotions — show "thin" trolling, so to say.

Analysis of trolling as a social phenomenon allows to assert that on the Internet trolling is carried out to pursue economic, political, social-cultural, psychological

needs and interests. Each of these variants of trolling gives a chance to troll to realize specific and quite defined goals.

Presently there is no scientific classification of Internet trolling; only separate names for trolling and their corresponding descriptions are offered. Without an aim to construct a full classification, we will mention here some types of Internet trolling.

Internet trolling on purpose (economic and non-economic) can be subdivided into business trolling and amateurish (amateur) trolling. On the modern Internet achievement of economic targets by means of trolling is not a rarity any more. Moreover, it is possible to tell that there is business trolling formation. Though we did not find an explanation for "business trolling" in the Internet resources, its sense is to some extent explicated by users of the Internet concept "professional trolling". Professional trolling is understood by them as information given in such a manner that it influences feelings, desires, requirements, interests, purposes of a person, connected with professional activity of the subject or object of trolling, and influence on emotions and feelings of people causes a reaction necessary to a troll. The analysis of the given definition of professional trolling shows that the discussion goes not about trolling as a profession, and that trolling can be connected with professional work of those to whom it is directed. Professional trolling is not found nowadays, first of all because there are no and there can not be educational institutions which would prepare trolls. And people who are engaged in trolling, can have any profession, both of humanitarian and technical nature.

In real communication on the Internet business trolling is developing. "Trolling has been a kind of business on the Internet for a long time already and it helps much to develop sites", and successful trolls receive 100 dollars a day and it is not a limit [6; 1]. From the quote it is visible that discussion goes about business trolling. Moreover, in the Internet resources it is possible to meet many tips how to become a professional troll, to say more correctly - a business troll.

Patent trolling is a version of business trolling which nowadays has a wide development. There is even a case when one of the world's famous companies tried to receive a patent for this kind of trolling [7; 1]. Patent trolling is pressure upon the object of trolling by means of claiming patent rights on the action carried out by the object. A typical patent troll is "a small, but very artful firm which has no sense of morals, does not let out its own products, but has a number of patents. It is engaged in suing of larger companies presumably breaking its patents". By some estimations, in twenty years (1990-2010) by means of patent trolling the damage in the amount of 500 billion dollars was caused to companies of the USA [5; 1]. Patent trolling is probably what most obviously needs a legal regulation. It is connected with the fact that at present in our country there is an extremely imperfect legislation concerning intellectual property protection that essentially complicates identification of patent trolling. Though, it is necessary to notice that in European countries because of a higher trust to judicial system and its high independence and incorruptibility this problem is even more challenging.

Astroturfing is a new level in business trolling development when the Internet users are attacked with an artificially created "public opinion". "Today this phenomenon is on rise and, unfortunately, we cannot be assured of it any more, that what we read on the Internet, is written by real people" [8; 1]. Concerns about

development of astroturfing were presented in the blog of J. Monbiot who spoke "about a whole army of astroturfers, and simply trolls" which takes root on various Internet forums, realizing interests of certain companies and earning their living by astroturfing [8; 1].

In some sense it is possible to say that now trolling becomes work, business which brings income and profit. Under conditions of market relations probability, that business trolling will develop rather quickly, is high enough.

However, not any kind of trolling pursues economic targets, and thereupon we can talk about the amateur trolling, bringing non-economic dividends, needed by a troll. Amateurish (amateur trolling) is an influence on emotions, feelings, desires, moods of the object of trolling, causing a negative reaction of its object, and to the subject of trolling it brings a feeling of pleasure, self-esteem and elevated mood, etc. Amateurish trolling pursues basically personal aims and interests connected with one's own ego and more often it is connected with psychological and socialization problems and complexes. Amateurish trolling can be called trolling-hooliganism. "In this case some people are engaged into trolling for the purpose of their own entertainment, taking pleasure in their own actions... Trolls who are engaged in a similar kind of trolling rather enjoy the process, than the result, and never reveal personal data" [9; 2]. Amateurish trolling does not pursue economic or political aims, and allows the troll to receive that inner state which is needed by him/her at present.

According to the political purposes we will single out political trolling. It is a phenomenon which takes place on the Internet and allows politicians to achieve certain political capital and fulfill political interests. In terms of terminology of "thick" and "thin" trolling it is possible to say that in a political dialogue which is carried out in real and virtual space, "thin" trolling is used more often. A political troll, who attacks personal and professional qualities of the opponent, influences him/her, discomposes and causes a response expected by the troll.

A requirement to realize such psychological purposes is often difficult or unattainable in real life and it promotes formation of psychological trolling. In the Internet resources often there is a concept of psychological trolling as a purposeful or casual influence on somebody's mind, causing negative emotions. "A psychological manipulation based on public ridicule or humiliation of beliefs... of opponents often leading to emotional instability of the latter is called trolling and usually trolling is the ultimate goal" [9; 1]. Another feature of psychological trolling is that it is found not only by itself, but it also accompanies other kinds of trolling, practically in all of its forms. Thus, on the Internet a purposeful psychological trolling is carried out, on the one hand, and on the other any trolling, in our opinion, bears psychological load along with rational purposes and plans of the troll. G. Lebon wrote: "Only penetrating more deeply into psychology of masses, it is possible to understand to what degree the power of the inspired ideas is strong over them" [10; 9]. G. Lebon spoke about ideas, though with the same success a person can be sold any values or "labels" etc.

According to the sphere where trolling is realized it is possible to differentiate between Internet, household and office trolling.

Internet trolling is a trolling carried out on the Internet and forming a negative social Internet practice. It is realized in the course of a dialogue via Internet on various the Internet platforms. Internet trolling is trolling in a virtual reality.

Household and office trolling are realized in an objective social reality. Household trolling is a trolling which is carried out in the course of everyday life of people, not-at-work dialogue and interaction.

Office trolling is a social trolling which is carried out at office, in formal conditions. "However, trolls exist not only on the Internet; in many groups, if you get accustomed to them, it is possible to notice a troll" [1; 1]. In one of the Internet resources there are found results of an enquiry conducted by the HeadHunter Research Center on November, 15-22th, 2011 among 9251 visitors of a site, acquainted with what trolling is. During the enquiry the opinion of respondents concerning trolling and trolls at work was studied. We will consider the data obtained during this research: 50% negatively evaluate trolling, 7% are supporters of it, 43% are neutral in their attitude to office trolling. Among supporters of trolling 53% are sure that it adds positive emotions, reduces routine, 47% — that it helps to take mind off things, to have a little rest from work, 45% — that it sharpens skills of dispute and reasoning. According to this research "almost every third was engaged in trolling at work" [11; 1].

In many respects Internet trolling, having specific features and means of realization, nevertheless, is based on traditional practices of household and office trolling, observed in various cultures and civilizations.

Internet trolling is carried out in various forms, remaining in its essence and form, a message and a comment aimed to achieve purposes and fulfill interests of a troll.

"Thick trolling" and "thin trolling" are forms of trolling singled out not only by Internet-users, but also by trolls themselves. "Thick trolling is always visible at the first sight, it shows in aggressive behavior, direct insults and obvious infringement of rules" [9; 2]; "it contains sub-standard lexicon, personal insults, straightforward curses..." [5; 1]. "Thin" trolling is difficult to find, it demands from the troll to understand people well, to be able to make an object of trolling break established rules, to abuse power, to make inadequate decisions, to wrongly estimate and react to occurring events. "Thin" trolling "formally looks pretty well, provocations are presented in a veiled form" [2; 1]. Thus, it is possible to tell that "thick" and "thin" trolling are connected with the form of influence on the object and degrees of cultural compliance shown by the troll.

Trolling on the Internet can appear in the form of provocation or imitation. Provocative trolling is an influence on a person or a group of people with a purpose to provoke a conflict, to cause participants to insult each other and show other reciprocal negative reactions. Such trolling allows to reach not only individual, but also socially significant purposes. Provocative trolling sometimes gets a form of attack. Trolling-attack "is added to the arsenal by fighters of information wars. In this case the purpose of trolling application is in particular to draw attention from main topic and transform a constructive discussion into a skirmish. One of attack methods is an aggressive injection of slander, compromising evidence, rumors, etc." [9; 2].

Imitative trolling is a situation when a troll has a good time, plays around, has fun, simulating a conflict. Thus, it proposes trolling as a way of pleasant pastime. It can be trolls who have several virtuals (accounts at one forum) and simulate a squabble between them, which is banal littering of a forum.

The attitude to trolling and trolls on the Internet is ambiguous. So, in an Internet resource it is possible to meet somebody who complains that “he is depressed by the quality of trolling in the resource” and the one who states an idea of struggle against trolling: “it is possible to add a user in the black list, thereby depriving this user of the possibility to make comments (it is even possible to forbid reading) at the personal blog of this or that person subjected to direct trolling” [12; 1]. We will quote from one more statement of an Internet user: “...I really respect trolls... for their abilities to distant psychoanalysis... It is not excluded that there will come time when trolling becomes an honorable and well-paid profession... because a true troll is a master... Trolling differs from trolling ... a house painter and Picasso can basically use the same set of paints” [13; 2-3]. “The troll is a mirror” in which the essence of the one who was subjected to trolling becomes visible, their “real face”, their direct reactions to this or that stimulus” — one Internet user notices, forgetting about “real face” of the troll [14; 1]. Authors of the given statements need to remember both morals and culture which in an informational civilization do not lose their purpose-giving value in life of people in the world and demand a respectful and benevolent attitude to others.

Internet-users give numerous tips to those who “were caught into a net of the troll”. At the same time all these tips can be subdivided into the following groups: first, not to pay attention and not to react; second, to react easily, with respect and benevolently; third, to sneer; fourth, to troll in response. We will quote some of these tips: “cease to feed the troll with answers... if you cannot resist commenting, answer politely and easily, ... do not delete comments, ... the main thing to be self-controlled and also to control emotions” [3; 2]; “The best tactics of behavior with the troll is ignoring” or Elfing, essence of which is that “in the answer to attacks of the Internet-bully you praise him/her and admire their wit, of course, with an ironical implication” [2; 2], or is it better to react sincerely? Another Internet-user informs that he answers troll in the following manner: “that troll did not interfere with polite and confident discussion of articles on the site and did not bring disharmony in relations of my dear readers” [15; 2]. One more user suggests to sympathize with the troll that he/she is limited in the ability “to charge himself/herself with positive things” [1; 7]. Another Internet-user offers to take pleasure in being trolled. “So, to cheer yourself up when you are trolled, observe the following rules: 1. Use only intellectual humor; 2. At the slightest possibility hint at illiteracy of the troll; 3. End arguments, saying that his life is senseless... Do not offend the troll directly, do not take the troll seriously, do not begin trolling” [14; 1]. At first sight it seems that the author of quoted words suggests to react to trolling with humor. At the same time, the analysis of these tips allows to see that in this case the author offers the one who was caught in “nets of the troll” to apply “thin trolling”. And such opinion is often found in the Internet resources: “Now, when on the majority of forums comments pass through a moderation, trolling has turned into a true art: like a person has not written anything bad yet, but nevertheless, has directed the discussion in the way necessary to him/her... Sometimes by character a person starts trolling, without realizing it at all. Therefore, adding the comment at the favorite forum, think well, whether you are a troll” [1; 3]. In this case we will notice that trolling is a form of manipulation, and remains that, however well-educated and prepared the troll is and what great psychoanalytic abilities he/she possesses.

G. Tard wrote, investigating objective social reality: "And it is strange, that those people who are so fond of thus mutually raising each other, or, sooner, transferring one another's infusions going from above, these people do not join together, do not see and do not hear each other; they are disseminated on a vast territory, sitting at their houses, reading the same newspaper. What communication exists between them? This communication consists in a simultaneity of their beliefs or hobbies, in realizing that this idea or this desire is shared at present by a large quantity of other people. It is enough for a person to know it, without seeing these other people at all, and it is influenced by all their cumulative mass, not just one journalist, the general inspirer, invisible and unknown, and more irresistible in this case" [16; 3]. This G. Tard's statement allows to understand much from what occurs in the virtual reality, including the aspect of trolling. At the same time G. Tard warned: "Whatever high value the public opinion has, it is not necessary to exaggerate its roles in spite of the fact that presently it is a flooding stream. We will try to establish a limit in the sphere of its domination. It does not need to be mixed with two other fractions of the public spirit, which simultaneously feed and limit it, which are in a continuous struggle against it, because of these limits. One of them is a tradition... Another — ... reason" [16; 28]. Possibly, the reason is also that saving force which should stop influence of the troll onto a victim. And one more thought by G. Tard that is undoubtedly useful to understanding of trolling: "public is something constant" [16; 23], "public... is a dissimilated crowd in which influence of minds on each other has become an action from a distance, with distances escalating".

Analyzing psychology of the crowd, G. Tard made a distinction between the unconscious crowd moved by both force of dark destructive impulses, and the conscious public creating public opinion. Trolls and their objects are representatives of a crowd or public, or both in different relations. If you think dialectically, then the latter.

In the conclusion, we will notice that on the Internet trolling exists and develops, and there is a necessity to study this phenomenon from perspectives of different sciences and scientific approaches.

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