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## **SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SPACE OF KAZAKHSTAN**

This paper focuses on the problem of the social networks development in Kazakhstan. The raise of information and communication technologies has led to the emergence of a global Internet and the creation of online social networks. Today Kazakhstan actively grows its participation in this sphere through integration into the global information space. Currently, the most popular networks in the country are: VKontakte – 43%; Odnoklassniki – 34%; Instagram – 31%; Moi Mir – 21%; Facebook – 19%; Twitter – 5% and others – 3%. The population of the country constantly increases its activity on the Internet, currently online social networks are used by 70% of the population, which opens up new horizons in communication technologies advancement in Kazakhstan.

**Key words:** information society, information and communication technologies, Internet, social networks, audience.

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### **Қазақстанның ақпараттық-коммуникациялық кеңістігіндегі әлеуметтік желілер**

Мақала Қазақстанда әлеуметтік желілердің дамуы, өсуі, ақпараттық және коммуникациялық технологиялардың пайда болуына әкеп соғатын мәселелеріне арналған. Жаһандық интернет және онлайн әлеуметтік желілерді құруды бүгінде Қазақстан белсенді түрде дамытуда осы саладағы интеграция арқылы ғаламдық ақпараттық кеңістік қалыптасты. Қазіргі уақытта, ең танымал желілер елімізде: Вконтакте – 43%; Оdnokлассники – 34%; Instagram – 31%; Мой мир – 21%; Фейсбук – 19%; Твиттер – 5% және басқалар – 3%. Ғаламтор кеңістігінде ел тұрғындарының өз белсенділігін тұрақты түрде арттырып отыруы қазір халықтың 70%-ын құраған. Ол үшін Қазақстанда онлайн әлеуметтік желілерді дамытуда коммуникациялық технологиялар пайдаланады, сонымен қатар жаңа мүмкіндіктер ашылуда.

**Түйін сөздер:** ақпараттық қоғам, ақпараттық және коммуникациялық технологиялар, Интернет, әлеуметтік желілер, аудитория.

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### **Социальные сети в информационно-коммуникационном пространстве Казахстана**

Статья акцентирует внимание на проблеме развития социальных сетей в Казахстане. Рост информационных и коммуникационных технологий привел к появлению глобального Интернета и созданию онлайн социальных сетей. Сегодня Казахстан активно развивает участие в данной

сфере через интеграцию в глобальное информационное пространство. В настоящее время самые популярные сети в стране: Вконтакте – 43%; Одноклассники – 34%; Инстаграм – 31%; Мой мир – 21%; Фейсбук – 19%; Твиттер – 5% и другие – 3%. Население страны постоянно увеличивает свою активность на просторах Интернета, сейчас 70% населения, которое открывает новые горизонты в развитии коммуникационных технологий в Казахстане, пользуются онлайн социальными сетями.

**Ключевые слова:** информационное общество, информационные и коммуникационные технологии, Интернет, социальные сети, аудитория.

## Introduction

In the 60-ies of the twentieth century, for the first time, the concept of the development of the information society (IS) came up in a relation to a society in which there was a continuous circulation, storage, distribution and use of high-quality information. Meanwhile, in the early 1990s, the world entered the era of the global interconnectedness. The development of information technology has led to the emergence of computer networks, the largest of which is the Internet with an ever growing number of users. Today, it is information and communication technologies (ICT) that determine the level of social development, influencing all spheres of human life.

The formation of a global information society occurs ubiquitously, but in different countries of the world this process differs by the degree of intensity, breadth and depth of coverage. Today in Kazakhstan the telecommunications market has changed radically, new information technologies, liberalization policy in the field of QMS (Quality Management Systems as a collection of business processes to satisfy customer requirements) have opened new opportunities for the development of the Internet, the emergence of new network operators, Internet providers, new media, which leads to an increase in the audience of Internet users.

The 21st century was marked by a wide spread of social networks, the history of which started at the beginning of 1995, when the first portal of Classmates.com was created in the USA, which allowed finding and exchanging information with classmates, colleagues, acquaintances. Today social networks have covered the whole world, the number of its users is estimated at hundreds of millions. In Kazakhstan, social networks quickly became popular and are represented by different age and professional categories.

## Methodology and sources

The most common methods for assessing the development of ICT in different countries of the world is the Network Readiness Index and the ICT

Development Index. The state of ICT in Kazakhstan can be studied on the basis of analysis of media content, special studies and public opinion surveys.

In order to study the effectiveness of the state information policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan, a number of governmental documents were used: The Concept of the State Information Policy, The Concept of Information Society Formation, The Information Security Doctrine, The Target Program «Electronic State», the Program «Information Kazakhstan 2020». Moreover, the necessary information is available on the official Internet resource of the Ministry of Information and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Informational Kazakhstan-2020).

## Discussion

The level of ICT development today is one of the most important indicators of the economic and social well-being of the state. Access to ICT, use of ICT, practical knowledge of these technologies by the population of the country is extremely important in modern conditions, when the world has already entered the age of The New Technological Revolution. According to the ICT Development Index, which represents the combined indicator characterizing the achievements of the countries of the world in terms of the development of information and communication technologies, in 2017 Kazakhstan took 52nd place among 176 states. In the top five of the ranking are Iceland, South Korea, Switzerland, Denmark and the United Kingdom. Four of the top five leaders are countries in Europe, but other countries in South-East Asia region (Hong Kong, Japan) are now joining South Korea.

From the post-Soviet states our country is behind after Estonia (17th place), Belarus (32nd), Latvia (35th), Lithuania (41st) and Russia (45th place) (Ranking of countries over the world). However, Kazakhstan is a regional leader in ICT development in Central Asia.

Another important indicator that reflects the leading role of ICT in the development of innovations is the Network Readiness Index, published by the

World Economic Forum and the international business school INSEAD. The index measures the level of ICT development by 53 parameters, pooled into three groups that characterizes the existence of conditions for their development; readiness of the population, businesses and the state bodies for the use of ICT and the level of their use in all sectors.

In the 2017 Rating, Kazakhstan took the 40th place, ahead of Russia. Among leaders of network readiness are Singapore, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Norway. Outsiders, located at the end of the rating are countries in Africa- Burundi, Guinea and Chad (141, 142, 143 places).

The highest results among the post-Soviet countries are in Estonia – 22nd place, Lithuania – 31 and Latvia – 33rd place (Network readiness index).

The difference between the highest index for Singapore of 6.0 points and for the RK of 4.5 points, is sufficiently noticeable, but not critical. It is quite possible to overcome this distance, especially since such tasks are set in the program «Digital Kazakhstan-2020».

As of 2016, the mobile phone is the leader in terms of density of use by population. The coverage of this ICT type in Kazakhstan was 96.8%. At the same time, the level of SIM-cards usage has reached almost 200% – that is, for every citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan, including infants and the elderly, there are 2 SIM-cards. 58% of the population has a desktop PC, 44.7% – a mobile PC, and 32% – a tablet PC. Meanwhile, Almaty is behind Astana in terms of the density of mobile phones usage, but it is significantly ahead of the capital in terms of indicator «number of mobile PCs» – 71.4% against 29%.

The Internet is an actively growing media channel in Kazakhstan, its number of users is almost twice as large as the coverage of the press. In July 2015, the number of Internet users in Kazakhstan reached 3.47 million, 71% of the population aged 12 to 54 years enter the network at least once a month.

The density of Internet usage on average in the country is 84.4%. At the same time, this indicator includes not only connections via xDSL protocol, but also via the mobile phone -3G and 4G / LTE. The population coverage by the Internet in Astana in 2016 reached 99%, while in Almaty – 88%.

On average in the RK, 10.5% of the population still use the technologies of the last century – dial-up or ISDN. Wherein, Almaty with the index of 23% is the leader in this negative rating, while in Astana it is only 1.6%.

The percentage of using fixed broadband (xDSL) connection on average in Kazakhstan was

42% in 2016. Meanwhile in Almaty it is only 20.7%, while in Astana – 85%. Terrestrial fixed wireless broadband is used by 5.5% of the population, satellite broadband – 1.9%, mobile broadband (including 3G, 4G / LTE) – 69.2%. The latter is used in Almaty among 58.6% of population and in Astana – among 36%. The other types of mobile Internet connections (via analog mobile phone, GSM, GPRS and other obsolete technologies) on average account for 8.3%, including in Almaty – 21.7%, in Astana – only 2.2% (The level of ICT penetration).

In 2016 almost 79% of the population of Kazakhstan used the Internet at least once a day, 16% – at least once a week, less than once a week – 5%. The most internet-using audience lives in Astana – in the capital of those who enter the world wide web every day – 98.5%. In Almaty, it is lower – 87.4%.

The program «Digital Kazakhstan» put forward a target indicator to bring the penetration of the Internet in Kazakhstan to 81 % by 2021 (Informational Kazakhstan-2020). Given the speed and level of Internet penetration, this figure can be surpassed in the very near future.

The audience in KazNet is represented by the following categories:

- Women – 52.2%, wherein women between the ages of 25 and 34 make up 19.1%;
- Men – 47.8%. The largest segment of the male audience, which is at the age of 18 to 24 years – is only 13.5%.

Urban residents represent the largest segment of the Internet – 67.5% of users in Kazakhstan.

By its nature, the most numerous are groups of workers and employees, which together account for almost 50% of users, while the more «advanced» categories of managers and specialists make up 25 % (Internet-audience of Kazakhstan).

Today, Kaznet is the leader in Central Asia in terms of the number of domains. Since its launch in 1994 and until November 1, 2014, 117,917 domain names have been registered in the .KZ zone and 1,446 in the .KA3 zone. As of September 1, 2015, its domain capacity increased by approximately 3% to 123,870 domains (.KA3 + .KZ). As of August 2016, its capacity grew by another 2% to 125,411 domains. Since the beginning of 2017, the growth rates of domain capacity have accelerated and by optimistic forecasts have reached 140,000 at the end of December 2017 (Kaznet: Domain density).

Meanwhile, despite the fact that the RK is the leader in the density of domains in Central Asia, there are 0,74 domains per 100 people in Kazakhstan, while in Kyrgyzstan it is 0.14, and in Uzbeki-

stan – only 0.1. But in comparison with the average world values of about 4.4-4.5 domains per 100 people, this is almost 6 times less.

So, there is a huge work to be done to maximize the density of domains in Kazakhstan to the world average.

According to research on the development of the Internet market in Kazakhstan, social networks are the preference for Kazakhstan people. The history of social networks is associated with the advent of the Internet, which opened up new opportunities for rapid communication. Initially, the networks were intended for the military, then scientists joined, followed by the wide masses of ordinary citizens. Created in 1995, the first such portal Classmates.com, by 2008 had already 50 million subscribers.

In 2002, appeared a social network for business contacts – LinkedIn, designed to find colleagues, vacancies and to post information about their professional activities. In 2016, the network had 433 million participants.

In 2003, the MySpace blog platform was launched, specifically aimed at young people who want to read, listen to music, share video content, post their photos and blogging. In 2008, it had 114.6 million users. For a long time it was the most popular social network in the world, but the situation changed with the advent of Facebook.

The Facebook was launched in February 4, 2004 and was first available only to students at Harvard University. Then the audience was expanded to Stanford, Columbia and Yale universities. In September 2006, the network became open to all users over thirteen years old.

During twelve years, the social network lost its article and reached 1.71 billion active visitors a month. Mark Zuckerberg became the world's youngest billionaire at 23 years of age in virtue of his invention.

Facebook allows users to create their own page with photos and information, communicate with friends, leave messages on the walls, upload video clips and create groups, as well as pages for companies. Facebook as a tool to influence the audience use many large corporations and local organizations. Actively this social network is used by businessmen and politicians for reputational purposes.

In April 2016, the social network launched Facebook Live – its own Periscope.

The most popular social network in Russia, is Vkontakte. It was created by Pavel Durov on October 10, 2006 and was intended as a network site for students and graduates of universities.

As of October 2016, more than 80,000,000 users enter the social network daily. Of these, 65% are from Russia.

The social network Odnoklassniki was launched by Albert Popkov on March 26, 2005. In just eight months, the number of registered users reached 1.5 million, in 2007 this figure rose to 4 million.

In 2008, by analogy with Classmates, a paid subscription was introduced, but this time – not for additional functions, but at the registration stage. The popularity of the site declined, users switched to Vkontakte, and in 2010 paid registration was canceled. In 2010, 56% of network users are people aged 25-44.

In 2016, the function of money transfers and streaming broadcasts appeared on the social network, the company released the application «OK video» for Smart TV and integrated with Instagram.

In 2006, Twitter was launched. It was an SMS-service for communicating with a small group of people. The question «What are you doing now?» was the main from the very beginning. The first tweet appeared on March 21, 2006, Jack Dorsey left it: «I just set up my twttr». Messages on Twitter a few years ago could be published from ordinary phones – by sending to the required number text for posting. Initially, the number of characters was limited to 140. To fit the link, using abbreviations became popular. In 2016, there were made indulgences – and the service ceased to take into account the links in the constraint.

The whole point of Twitter is to put into these 140 characters the idea, thought, information for your friends. Briefness is the sister of talent.

In 2010, a social network appeared on the stage, the counter of which is square photos, similar to Polaroid photos, and filters. Five years after the launch, Instagram finally gave the opportunity to add photos and videos of any form.

In 2012, Facebook bought Instagram, the total purchase amount was one billion dollars, but in fact it cost 49 times more.

Why Instagram worked? Because photos are a universal language. Users do not even need to read caption, because the photos processed with filters tell stories by themselves.

For the first day after the launch of Instagram in 2010, it registered 25 thousand people. Considering the fact that the network initially worked only on iOS. In 2012, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced the 200 million registered users. In December 2014 Instagram by the number of users bypassed Twitter. In June 21, 2016, the number of users reached 500 million people.



In social networks Vkontakte and Facebook, people tell stories and share their thoughts. And the authors, that is, the creators of the original content, more in Facebook. In the Russian analogue, users prefer reposts.

In Twitter people does not share stories, but short notes. Microblogs teach laconism, they make you put ideas into a limited number of characters.

Instagram involves communication on a visual level. Sometimes it's easier to make a photo or video instead of describing something in detail. Such a narrow focus of the content in Instagram guaranteed it success.

Today, social networks in Kazakhstan are widely used, they are used by 70% of the population. According to a study conducted on February 16 – March 16, 2017, among the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan aged between 18 and 55 years old, according to the sample representing the population of towns and villages, the audience of users of social networks is distributed unevenly by gender and age categories. Thus, among users, women make up 55%, men – 45%. Urban citizens are more active in social networks, among them 76% of users, whereas among rural residents – 61%.

Those who are married are less active in social networks – among them 65% of users, while among unmarried – 81% of users.

The largest share of users of social networks was recorded in Astana – 88% of respondents, the smallest – in Shymkent – 61% use social networks.

Currently, the most popular networks are: VKontakte – 43%; Classmates – 34%; Instagram – 31%; My World – 21%; Facebook – 19%; Twitter – 5% and others – 3% (Social networks in Kazakhstan).

Vkontakte is represented mainly by urban citizens, among them the share of users is 63%, and among rural residents – 37%. The share of women is 52%, men – 48%. 60% of Vkontakte users are young people aged 18-29. The group of users aged 30-40 years is 28% and aged 41-55 years – 12%.

Users Classmates are predominantly urban population – 63%, rural residents – 37%. Among

users number women greater than men – 58% and 42% respectively. The largest share – group aged 30-40 years old – 37%, the youth of 18-29 years – 34% of users, the older group of 41-55 years old – 30%.

Instagram – users represent mainly the urban population – 67%, rural residents – 33%. Among users women outweigh men – 58% and 42% respectively. It is noticeable that in this social network the largest share is the youth aged 18-29 – 62%. Much fewer representatives of the age group 30-40 years – 26% and the group 41-55 years – 12%.

Users of My World is mostly urban population – 69%, rural residents – 31%. Among users women outweigh men – 53% and 47% respectively. If we talk about age characteristics, the largest share of users are the youth of 18-29 years – 44%. Users from 30 to 40 years old – 35%, the senior group 41-55 years – 21%.

Facebook users – 66% – urban population, rural residents – 34%. Among the users women outweigh men – 55% and 45% respectively. If we talk about age characteristics, the largest proportion of users are youth 18-29 years – 54% of users. Users from 30 to 40 years old – 32%, senior group 41-55 years – 14%.

In the regional context, the share of users of social networks most popular among Kazakhstan population is presented in Table 1.

In the regional context of urban users of Vkontakte, the largest share is occupied by Almaty residents – 18%, roughly the same shares – residents of the cities of Karaganda and Shymkent (12% and 11% respectively). Astana and Ust-Kamenogorsk have 8% of users, Aktobe and Taldykorgan – 6%, Taraz and Kostanay – 5% and Pavlodar – 4%. Among urban users of social network Classmates, more than half of the users are residents of Almaty (22%), Karaganda (16%) and Astana (14%). Among the users of the Instagram network, the largest share is occupied by Almaty residents – 18%. On second place, the residents of Karaganda – 13% and on the third place – Shymkent with 10%.

**Table 1** – Distribution of users of social networks by cities (%) (Social networks in Kazakhstan)

City /share of users	Vkontak (%)	Classmate(%)	Instagram (%)	My World (%)	FB (%)
Almaty	18	22	18	25	34
Karaganda	12	16	13	17	9
Shymkent	11	14	10	15	9
Astana	8	9	9	8	9

Continuation of Table 1

City /share of users	Vkontakte (%)	Classmate(%)	Instagram (%)	My World (%)	FB (%)
Oskemen	8	8	7	6	5
Aktobe	6	6	6	5	5
Taldykorgan	6	4	6	5	5
Taraz	5	4	5	5	5
Kostanay	5	4	5	4	5
Pavlodar	4	3	4	3	4

25% of the audience of the social network My World are residents of Almaty, 17% – Karaganda people and 15% – Shymkent people.

Among Facebook users, 34% are Almaty residents. The residents of Shymkent, Karaganda and Astana occupy 9% each.

In general, representation in all social networks under consideration is dominated by residents of the southern capital Almaty, Karaganda residents in the second place and Shymkent residents on the third. Residents of the capital Astana took only the fourth place in this rating.

### Conclusion

Today the spread of the Internet in Kazakhstan is very high, in some regions of the country the level of its penetration is approaching 100%. Especially, it concerns the population of the capital – Astana. Meanwhile, Internetization in rural areas is rather weak, access to modern broadband Internet is difficult and limited.

The use of the Internet in Kazakhstan is constrained by the following factors:

- low readiness and lack of need for it among the population of the country, especially among rural and older age groups;
- sufficiently high cost of connection, which does not suit many potential users;
- fears of the population for the safety of personal data and safety for children and adolescents.

To increase the availability of the Internet, the program «Digital Kazakhstan» was launched, which aims to bring the level of its penetration to 81%.

Social networks are actively used by residents of Kazakhstan, now the number of users has exceeded 70%. The most popular social networks in the country are VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Instagram, My World, Facebook and Twitter. The most active users of social networks live in Almaty, their representation is lower in Karaganda, Shymkent and Astana. Very low activity of users is observed in Taraz, Kostanay and Pavlodar.

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