

Title: ElitsyMedia: The Russian Orthodox Church and the Creation of a Religious Social Media News Network

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Abstract:

In 2014, the Moscow Patriarchate launched its own social network, Elitsy.ru, to capitalize on their growing popularity and as an attempt to find new avenues through which to create religious community in the contemporary world. In the years since its founding, Elitsy.ru has expanded, with a variety of new projects aimed at enticing internet users. In this presentation, I will focus on one of these, ElitsyMedia, the social network's dedicated news and media branch.

ElitsyMedia states that its mission is to "return to the traditional system of value coordinates," striving to refocus people's views on current events, history, and culture to be more in line with Orthodox teachings. The creation of this project is in line with the Church's overall attempts to engage more with the population and state its case for the necessity of Orthodoxy for benefit of both the individual and the nation. Through an analysis of material produced for ElitsyMedia, I will outline how this channel offers a specific national religious discourse that can be widely distributed and easily shared through a variety of different platforms and social networks.

As worries about online echo chambers mount around the world, ElitsyMedia offers an example of an unabashed attempt to create an ideologically grounded information channel that pervades online. In the course of my presentation I will address how the ElitsyMedia's connection with the social network Elitsy.ru affects the content created and how it is shared. I will also speak to how ElitsyMedia aims to leverage the use of other social networks to advance its content and its messages. Ultimately, my presentation will use ElitsyMedia as a case study to investigate how conservative religious organizations can use social media as a new, and often more direct channel of dissemination in the contemporary moment.