

Social Sharing of Emotions in Social Media System on the Example of Creepypasta on Reddit

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Abstract. As part of this study, it was suggested that, like other social media, Reddit allows to embody models of communicative interaction in a digital environment. The comments under three creepypastas published on the subreddit NoSleep were selected as the object of the study. To prove the original thesis, the comments were analyzed from the perspective of social sharing of emotions (SSE) — a process characteristic of real interpersonal communication. The comments were studied manually using the method of intentional analysis. As a result of the study, the main intentional categories characteristic of the social sharing of emotions in the comments on NoSleep were established. It was concluded that SSE in the comments under creepypastas generally coincides with the existing models, and the differences found can be explained by the specifics of the digital environment and the concrete features of Reddit as social media.

Keywords: user comments; social networking site; Reddit; social sharing of emotions; creepypasta.

Socialinis dalijimasis emocijomis socialinės medijos sistemoje. „Creepypasta“ pavyzdys „Reddit“

Santrauka. Šiame tyrime teigiama, kad „Reddit“, kaip ir kitos socialinės medijos, leidžia įgyvendinti bendravimo modelius socialinėje erdvėje. Šio tyrimo objektas – komentarai po trimis „creepypasta“ siaubo istorijomis,

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skelbtomis „NoSleep“ subredite. Siekiant patvirtinti pradinę tezę, komentarai analizuoti iš socialinio dalijimosi emocijomis (angl. SSE) perspektyvos – proceso, būdingo tikram tarpusavio bendravimui. Komentarai analizuoti rankiniu būdu pasitelkiant sąmoningos analizės metodą. Atlikus šį tyrimą nustatytos pagrindinės sąmoningumo kategorijos, būdingos socialiniam dalijimuisi emocijomis komentuose „NoSleep“ platformoje. Nustatyta, kad SSE komentuose po „creepypasta“ istorijomis apskritai sutampa su esamais modeliais, o aptikti skirtumai aiškintini kaip būdingi skaitmeninei aplinkai ir „Reddit“ kaip socialinei medijai.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: vartotojų komentarai; socialinio tinklo svetainė; „Reddit“; socialinis dalijimasis emocijomis; „creepypasta“.

Introduction

Nowadays social media is a communicative meta phenomenon of the digital environment. This powerful and extensive system allows managing a network of online representatives, between which there is a relationship and interaction on the principles of self-management and self-reproduction. Along with that, content functions as the main component of online interaction at the rational and emotional levels (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021). We can talk about the relevance of such an understanding of the social media based on the assumption that it absorbs to the fullest extent the models of interaction of the representatives of the real physical world. This article presents the results of the study of communicative acts participants' reactions taking into account the theory of social sharing of emotions. The object of the analysis is Reddit social media due to its growing popularity. Reddit has an original approach to authentication. This network does not rely on a traditional understanding of user identification. This phenomenon should also be studied. Kietzmann included the identification: “the extent to which users reveal their identities in a social media setting. This can include disclosing information such as name, age, gender, profession, location, and also information that portray users in certain ways” (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 243) to defining characteristics of social media. However, Reddit does not insist that the user resorts to conscious or unconscious self-disclosure of subjective information, which Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) write about.

Creepypasta is a phenomenon that is actively studied by the scientific community. The term refers to so-called cospypastas — text blocks spread by copying from some forums and social media to others. The word ‘creepypasta’, which arose from the combination of the words ‘cospypasta’ and the English adjective ‘creepy’, first began to be used on the imageboard 4chan in 2007 to refer to the gothic and horror content that had the viral potential of the cospypasta. This “popular mode of digital storytelling is produced and consumed according to folkloric practices that in turn shape its form and aesthetics” (Balanzategui, 2019, p. 187). At first, creepypastas were the most diverse images and stories inspired by urban legends. Over time, they began to tangle combining elements of collective creativity, features of digital folklore, and aesthetic means of popular horrors and Gothic literature. Based on various studies, we can dwell on the following definition: creepypasta is a genre of a digital environment, which is based on a story with horror elements, designed to spread on the Internet. A similar definition is found in Ondrak (2018) concerning Line Henriksen's (2013) work:

Short pieces of prose, sometimes accompanied by an image or a video [...] meant to be copied and pasted [...] and spread on the Internet via social media, e-mails, and message boards [...] whereas copy-pasta can be about almost any subject, creepypasta is usually aimed at scaring the reader and/or viewer. (Ondrak, 2018, p. 162)

The genre is characterized by a high level of self-reflection and, although certain structural elements complicate its perception as a folklore unit (e.g., problems with authenticity), Balanzategui (2019) believes that the creation of stories and their consumption occur according to folklore traditions. Blank and McNeill (2018) hold the same opinion.

In the context of this research, creepypasta refers to the genre of the digital environment, which is based on the story with horror elements, intended for distribution on the Internet. Analyzing creepypasta, Williams (2015) suggests it as a “modern form of folklore, stories with horror elements that could be shared on forums with like-minded people”. This position is supported by Wiles (2013), saying that “creepypasta aspires to be urban legend: dark social memes with just enough familiarity to give a frisson of awful opportunity... Like pornography, creepypasta is single-minded in its pursuit of a particular response”. Understanding creepypasta as an element of digital folklore is found in several works. Thus, Brzostek (2016) analyzes the activity of the Polish Internet portal pl.creepypasta.wikia.com in the focus of user involvement in the creation and editing of Internet folklore. Sánchez (2018) explores regional variants of creepypasta in Argentina and how Argentinian authors adapt existing creepypasta plots to their realities. In Balanzategui (2019), this phenomenon is analyzed by the example of the well-known creepypasta *Candle Cove* in the context of how analog and digital cultures interact and what role digital Gothic plays in rethinking the technological changes of the present. Ondrak (2018) studies the genre in the context of its affiliation with the “post-postmodern storytelling that embodies traits of Jeffrey Nealon’s “Post-postmodernism”, Alan Kirby’s “Digimodernism” and Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker’s “Metamodernism” (Ondrak, 2018, p. 162). Thus, folklore elements of the genre allow us to talk about its meta-characteristics.

Creepypasta is a discourse that only functions in the digital environment. At the same time, being a fictional work, it is perceived by the rules of the community as real, and therefore requires the adoption of the role of real participants in the communicative process by the representatives. Also, the discourse is an integrator of numerous subreddits, and therefore can act as relevant, sought-after and effective content that stimulates rational and emotional interaction. Thus, we deal with subjects of communication whose identification is not a priority, and with content that is exclusively digital and fictional but is perceived as real both in terms of format and considering as one describing the events from the physical world. Communicative acts take place in the space of a social network, that is, in an artificially created social environment, which, although reproduces the main principles of social systems, presents them in a variant adapted to the functionality of a certain communicative platform (Labianca et al., 2013). This process can be studied within paradigm of social semiosis of J. Baudrillard’s simulacra but without acquiring the status of the sole and self-sufficient reality. The authors believe that this complex retains the balance of components of traditional communicative models. The presence of

components actualizes the idea of the transfer of the laws of real-world social interaction to the digital space.

The communicative specificity of creepypasta directly depends on media channel. For example, Williams (2020) describes the process of collective creativity on Twitter as collaborative and multi-modal storytelling, as it involves the response of the audience and also relies on the variability of means for storytelling. Balanzategui (2021) writes on the properties of creepypasta's multimodality in the online environment, whereas Alonso (2019) refers to creepypasta as an example of participative culture. Cooley and Miligan (2018) note that the creepypasta's network horror disrupts the dichotomy of the subjects and objects they affect by creating narrative spaces in which paranormal objects encroach upon the lives of their victimized subjects (Cooley & Miligan, 2018, p. 194).

Critical to modern creepypasta was the emergence of the NoSleep subreddit (*r/nosleep*) on Reddit in 2010, as community rules transformed the genre and attracted millions of readers and authors from around the world. This was facilitated by the unusual internal policies of the community, outlined in the rules of the subreddit. The main stylistic feature of the creepypastas on NoSleep is that they should be positioned as personal experience of a narrator, and thus the story will be conducted from the first person. Taboo elements unacceptable in the works include sexual violence, necrophilia, zoophilia, abuse, pornography, and persecution (if performed by the narrator). The rules of subreddit regulate the length of creepypasta — single accomplished stories must not be less than 500 words, and parts of serial creepypastas not less than 1,000 words.

An important requirement of the stories is their plausibility. This limits the author in artistic decisions in some way: he cannot develop large-scale subjects that would cover an entire state or involve famous persons in the events. The narrator, in turn, cannot be a baby, animal, or inanimate object, as this condition would not allow them to publish the post on NoSleep. Accordingly, users, when adopting the community rules, agree to the prohibition of asking for evidence of the truth of the story or to somehow demonstrate that the narrative is merely fiction. This is governed by the most quoted rule of *r/nosleep* — everything is true here even if it's not. Elements of the role-playing game contribute to moving beyond the traditional communicative model — creepypasta transforms the relationship between the author and the reader, the functions of the first partially transition to the audience. On the other hand, creepypasta not only destroys the usual ideas of the author but also deforms the structure of the plot. The classic plot of the fiction work presents to the reader exposition, rising action, climax, and resolution. Creepypastas, much of which are serial works, stop at the climax, allowing the audience to influence subsequent events in a story.

As being a digital version of folklore, we can conclude that, similarly to folklore, creepypasta tends to be used for social sharing of emotions (SSE) (Páez et al., 2015). Scholarly elaboration of this phenomenon began in the 1990s when Rimé (1991) laid the foundations for SSE theory. According to it, “after an emotional event, individuals will initiate interpersonal behaviours in which discussion this event and their reactions to it is central” (Rimé et al., 1991, p. 436).

Further SSE research was fruitfully conducted by both Rimé and colleagues, but most of the research was done by Rimé (1991; 1992; 1995a; 1995b; 1996; 1997; 1998; 2001; 2004; 2005; 2007; 2009). Thus, in other words, the social sharing of emotions is the recall of a certain episode in an understandable language to a certain addressee (even symbolic one) by a person who experienced it (Rimé et al., 1991). It occurs within hours, days, or longer periods after emotional events. It is a rehearsal process that can involve several recipients. Rimé et al. (1992) showed that more intense emotions become the object of social sharing more periodically over a longer period, encompassing more recipients.

Another possible research perspective is applying Shifman's (2013) memes theory to describe communicative process involving emotions sharing, though from our point of view it wouldn't give relevant results since memes are identical to neither creepypastas nor SSE.

Typical interpersonal SSE dynamics are represented as follows (Rimé, 2007): person A, who has experienced a certain emotion, shares it with person B. The latter expresses interest in this, which stimulates the sharing process. This gradually leads to the emotional connection between A and B, which is expressed by the desire to help and support person A. Subsequently, person B, who was previously the recipient of the SSE, can himself be the initiator of this process. In this case, it is called secondary social sharing of emotions (Christophe and Rimé, 1997). Its frequency and intensity directly depend on the intensity of the emotion during the initial exchange.

The study of variable factors of SSE participants such as demographic, sexual, age, etc. is a separate aspect of the researches. The results of research on demographic factors suggest that there are no significant quantitative differences in gender regarding the degree of SSE between men and women (Rimé, 2005). The only qualitative difference found is that women are more likely to share emotions evenly between family members, close friends, and romantic partners. At the same time, men will rather share them with romantic partners than with close friends and family members (Rimé, 2005).

The research has also shown that SSE recipients (Rimé et al., 1991; Rimé et al., 1996) change as people grow older. Children under 8 share emotions with parents rather than friends, while pre-teenage SSE recipients begin to include friends and other relatives. Subsequently, the roles of the environment are aligned: teenagers choose recipients among family members and friends, and young people equally choose between friends, family members, or romantic partners. Education and cultural environment do not affect the process of SSE (Baruffol et al., 1998; Singh-Manoux and Finkenauer, 2001).

Since the ultimate goal of SSE is to re-experience emotions, it is important to understand the motivation of individuals inducing them to do so. Duprez summarizes the results of previous research on motivations for SSE, and brings the following list of motives (Duprez et al., 2014):

- the desire to relive or remember a certain emotion;
- the desire to feel relief after experiencing negative emotions;
- search for help and support from others;
- the desire to be understood by others;

- the desire to understand what happened and to analyze it;
- the desire to get advice and search for solutions;
- escape from loneliness;
- the desire to influence the listener emotionally;
- the desire to attract interest;
- the desire to warn others.

However, SSE is a two-way process in which the recipient's reaction plays an important role. Generalizing the results of Christophe and Rimé (1997), Rimé (2005), we assume that in general the behavior of a recipient refers to one of five classes:

- social support: attempts to comfort, express unconditional support, show compassion and understanding;
- physical interaction: non-verbal comfort, for example, hugging, kissing, or touching;
- specific actions outside the discourse, for example, conversation;
- dedramatization: a look at the situation in the future;
- interrogation: the process of obtaining a larger amount of information or clarifying the emotional component.

Methodology

According to Rodríguez Hidalgo et al. (2015), SSE in an online environment is represented by a three-phase model. The first step is to initiate SSE, which can be represented by one of three types: full SSE, SSE-situation or SSE-emotion:

1. Full SSE occurs when its initiator describes a specific emotional situation associated with an event in life and marks it with a certain emotion.
2. SSE situation describes only a specific event (without emotional labeling).
3. SSE emotion, on the contrary, expresses only emotional labeling.

Regardless of what type is represented, the initiation stage may have a positive or negative valence, according to an emotion that is embedded in the message by the addressee. The second stage of the model is the recipient's feedback, which can be affective or cognitive (Rimé, 2009). Cognitive feedback is an attempt to rationally comprehend the initiator's message, which is usually accompanied by the actualization of one's views and the comprehension of priorities. Affective feedback can take three forms: emotional support and empathy (in case of the negative valence of a message) or admiration (in case of positive valence). The final phase of the model is the reaction of the initiator to feedback, which also changes depending on the type of feedback.

For this research purposes we are interested in comments in the context of SSE. Horror-core (the elements that are related to the story, such as plot, author's personality or character) doesn't affect the number of participants — within SSE, quantitative indicators don't transform into qualitative ones. Further analysis of stories with different number of comments clearly demonstrates this.

The object of the study — comments under creepypastas published on Reddit — was formed taking into account the following factors:

- selected creepypastas published in NoSleep, the largest community dedicated to creepypastas (as of November 2021: 15 million followers, the average number of comments per day: 229);
- selected creepypastas published during a specific period: September 2020;
- non-serial publications chosen since communication under serial creepypastas is influenced by the presence of cliffhangers in the text and the ability of users to influence the follow-up story with their comments;
- creepypastas of varying degrees of discussion chosen for comparing communicative features in different contexts.

Thus, a sample of comments from the three creepypastas corresponding to all these factors was made (collecting date — November 4, 2021): *My Sleep Paralysis Demon is Actually A Pretty Chill Guy* by user u/writechriswrite (publication date — September 4, 2020, 560 comments), *When I was a kid, my dad kept a second family in our basement* by user u/hercreation (publication date — September 15, 2020, 215 comments) and *I found a hidden company in my new house, filled with thousands of credit cards and one weird notebook* by u/duketuring (publication date — September 27, 2020, 66 comments).

The comments were selected manually because parsing software cannot upload all comments for publication since Reddit does not display them without authorization. We were primarily interested in substantive part of comments which contains emotional component. Thus, automated data collecting by separated word groups wasn't considered as relevant method. That's why linguistic layout markers method similar to Albota (2020) was used. In addition, only through manual grouping, it is possible to separate the submitted comments from the deleted ones. As mentioned on the official page of *Reddit F.A.Q.*, the platform shows the total number of comments left under the publication, taking into account those deleted by subreddit moderators, spam filter, or subreddit auto-moderation (Reddit, 2021). Thus, the actual number of comments differs from that presented on Reddit: with 560 comments under the first creepypasta, there were 204 active ones, with 215 comments under the second one 95 active, and with 66 comments under the third one 36 active.

The method of intentional analysis (Pavlova and Grebenshchikova, 2017), adapted to the characteristics of the research object, was chosen to establish the forms of audience feedback. Intentional categories for each comment were set manually, as well as its rating (by Reddit users ranking) and level. The feedback system has a complex structure: there are user comments of not only the first (direct feedback on text) but also the second, third, fourth, fifth, and even sixth levels. The results of data systematization are given in Table 1. We included the average length of the comment due to the direct relationship between comment size and time spent for its writing. Communicative purpose of the internet-comment is emotional evaluation of facts, discussion on the information given, expression of personal attitude so the shorter comment is, the higher its emotional component is (Thelwall et al., 2009).

To avoid discussing topics only indirectly related to the story of the initiator of communication (i.e., second, third-level comments, etc.), we considered only the first-level comments within the analysis.

Table 1. **Quantitative characteristics of comments under three creepypastas on NoSleep (as of November 4, 2021)**

Attribute	My Sleep Paralysis Demon is Actually A Pretty Chill Guy	When I was a kid, my dad kept a second family in our basement	I found a hidden compartment in my new house, filled with thousands of credit cards and one weird notebook
Number of active comments	204	95	36
Among them:			
▪ first-level	148	48	18
- average rating	52.5	56.5	38
- average length (words)	28.6	24.7	11
▪ second-level	27	20	3
- average rating	73	94.7	159.5
- average length (words)	25	55.7	19.3
▪ third and more level	29	27	15
- average rating	29.7	54.8	12
- average length (words)	26	24	12

Results

In the study, it was the folklore principle of the narrative that allowed to distinguish SSE mechanisms in comments under creepypastas in NoSleep on Reddit. Development of the narrative under the laws of social media (Eusebius et al., 2014; Gerim, 2017) and according to the requirements of the subreddit allows talking about the self-reproduction of content. The traditional roles of the addresser and addressee are broken — the text becomes the object of collective creativity because, thanks to the principle above, commentators contribute to the final story.

An important requirement for the existence of creepypasta is, as noted in the internal rules of the subreddit, the convention on the reality of what the narrator writes about. Because of this, the story is narrated in the first person, and readers respond to events as to those that happened in reality. The author thus uses NoSleep as a platform where one can share what happened to him/her, and in the comments, people not only respond to these events but also can give a piece of advice.

Creepypasta *My Sleep Paralysis Demon is Actually A Pretty Chill Guy*, 4,661 words in length, tells the story of a girl's acquaintance with a demon coming during sleep paralysis, whom she called Mr. BrownStickLegs.

During the analysis of comments, we were basing on the collecting data approach by Albota (2020). Thus, the analysis showed that among the intentional categories are the following:

- describing the emotional state after reading the story — 30.8% of the total number of comments. This category mainly reflects expressions of delight from reading or some other emotion. It can be expressed as an emotional reaction to the story (*“I'd been crying for a while already”* or more metaphorically (*“Your beautiful words have taken us on a stirring journey through your trials and successes”*) or reaction to some specific episodes (*“Why the f*** am I crying in happiness when he says “child, your soul tastes much better now?”*);
- attitude to the story — 22.1%. The category contains both expressive and rational comments that verbalize readers' thoughts about the story (*“This was absolutely beautiful”*);
- telling personal information — 18.3%. Category of comments in which readers appeal to personal experience under the impression of certain episodes in the story. Such comments can be both emotionally rich and rational (*“My sleep paralysis demon isn't good at his job”, “My first experience with sleep paralysis was when I was like 21-22”*);
- gratitude — 9.7%. Expressive comments in which users express their gratitude to the author (*“Thanks for sharing this with us”*);
- commenting on the character of the story — 8.6%. Comments by which users verbalize the impressions or opinions of the characters of the creepypasta (*“pretty chill guy” is an understatement*);
- comment on the indirect topic — 2.7%. Thoughts or information about things mentioned in creepypasta (*“Speaking with your mind isn't the only thing you can do in the space outside of time”*);
- support — 2.7%. Words of support and empathy addressed to both the author and the people in the comments (*“I just want to congratulate all the recovering addicts”*);
- question — 2.1%. Users' questions addressed to the author (*“What would you suggest to someone whose soul is barren but who has no Mr. BrownStickLegs of their own?”*);
- commenting on the details of the story — 1%. Thoughts on concrete episodes or topics mentioned in creepypasta (*“I wonder what my ocean of a soul would taste like”*);
- joke — 1% (*“Sustainable soul management with Mr. Brownsticklegs”*);
- other — 1% (mention of information that has no relation to the plot of the creepypasta).

When I was a kid, my dad kept a second family in our basement is a 2,590-word story about a boy whose father kept ghosts of his previous family in the basement. Among the defined intentional categories, we mark the following:

- question — 40%;
- attitude to the story — 34.5%;
- comment on the indirect topic — 5.5%;
- describing the emotional state after reading the story — 5.5%;
- commenting on the character of the story — 3.6%;
- support — 3.6%;
- telling personal information — 3.6%;
- commenting on the details of the story — 3.6%.

Similarly, there were analyzed comments on the story *I found a hidden compartment in my new house, filled with thousands of credit cards and one weird notebook* (2,875 words), which tells about a guy who found a notebook in a new house with a mystical story of a person. The study identified even fewer intentional categories, namely:

- commenting on the details of the story — 33.3%;
- question — 22.2%;
- comment on the indirect topic — 16.6%;
- attitude to the story — 11.1%;
- joke — 11.1%;
- commenting on the character of the story — 5.7%.

The visualized results of comparative analysis of categories are presented in Fig. 1, and the comparison of individual categories is presented in Table 2.

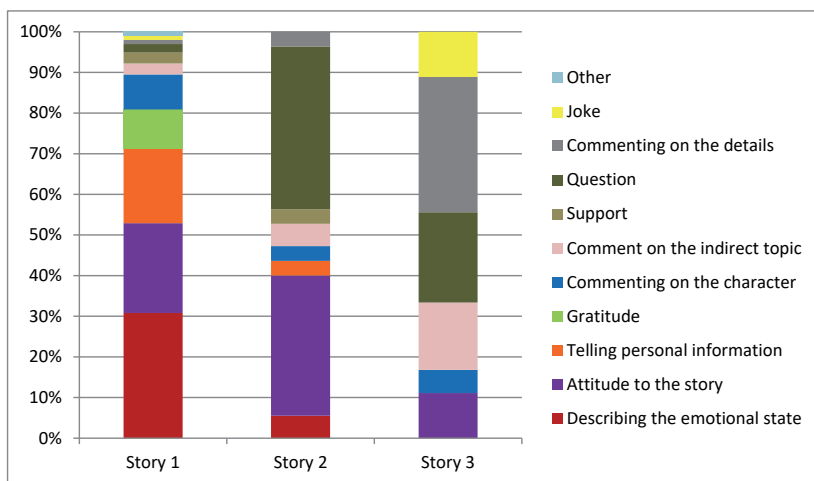


Fig. 1. Comparison of the percentage correlation of comment types under three different creepypastas

Table 2. Percentage of different intentional categories under three different creepypastas

	Intentional category	Story 1	Story 2	Story 3
1.	Describing the emotional state after reading the story	30.8%	5.5%	—
2.	Attitude to the story	22.1%	34.5%	11.1%
3.	Telling personal information	18.3%	3.6%	—
4.	Gratitude	9.7%	—	—
5.	Commenting on the character of the story	8.6%	3.6%	5.7%
6.	Comment on the indirect topic	2.7%	5.5%	16.6%
7.	Support	2.7%	3.6%	—
8.	Question	2.1%	40%	22.2%
9.	Commenting on the details of the story	1%	3.6%	33.3%
10.	Joke	1%	—	11.1%
11.	Other	1%	—	—

Based on the data above, we can observe several tendencies:

- 1) the share of comments with a pronounced emotional component decreases with decrease in the total number of comments (See rows 1-2 in Table 2);
- 2) the share of commenting on the details of the story and rational presentation of thoughts in the form of questions increases as the total number of comments decreases (See rows 5, 8, 9 in Table 2);
- 3) comments with an appeal to personal experience are clearly present only in the first sample (See row 3 in Table 2).

According to the results of comparative analysis, the variability of SSE directly depends on how discussable creepypasta is and on how popular is its plot beginning. We can see that a high percentage of comments with an appeal to personal experience is characteristic of the first story, the horror-core of which is sleep paralysis, a phenomenon which 8% of the population is familiar with (Denis *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the lack of episodes familiar to the general public reduces the likelihood of SSE feedback, which would include an appeal to personal experience, and with a decrease in the total number of comments, forms including emotional feedback also disappear, as well as the number of forms of SSE feedback in general decreases.

If we correlate the SSE process on Reddit to the models that Rimé offers, we can notice several common features: like at SSE in the physical world, the authors of publications on NoSleep share emotions experienced by their characters, and an emotional intimacy gradually arises between the author and the reader; which leads to different types of reactions of the latter. However, the specifics of the online environment make it impossible to determine the probabilities of secondary social exchange of emotions within this study. However, unlike the Rimé model, the recipient cannot stimulate SSE during communication.

Discussion

The reduction of the share of affective comments explains the fact that the creepypasta remains the story that the author tells the addressees. A large number of comments means that the narrative has caused a certain resonance that manifests itself in affective feedbacks, while the audience will be more balanced and rational towards less discussed texts. Drawing parallels with real social communication, we can assume that Reddit, taking the role of a communicative platform, works according to general rules even in an artificially created environment. A large number of comments, increasing the popularity of the message reduces the content load. Communicative interaction takes place in the sector of emotional interaction. Content that has a lower degree of discussion (fewer comments) remains in the sector of rational interaction.

Thus, we can compare the results with the initial online SSE model of Rodríguez Hidalgo (2015). **The first phase** of SSE is initialization. Creepypasta is an example of the digital fiction genre, and therefore the author may not experience the events about which they write in the publication. However, the ‘everything is true here even if it’s not’ rule turns the NoSleep subreddit into a place where all users come into a certain role-playing game in which everything described in the publication is real. The author of the publication initiates a quasi-SSE, which takes place in an online environment and, consequently, is subject to the online-SSE rules. However, SSE goes into the objective reality thanks to the convention of the participants in the subreddit.

In this case, unlike the usual SSE, in quasi-variation, the message will always have a negative valence (which is justified by the genre characteristics of creepypasta), and the SSE itself will most often be full since in creepypasta there is both a reflection of events and an emotional component (it’s important to remember that the creepypastas on NoSleep are written in the first person).

The second phase also in general corresponds to the Rodríguez Hidalgo model — the recipient’s feedback can be cognitive or affective, but the boundary between these types is erased. We highlighted SSE classes in comments under creepypastas. The recipients’ intention data partly corresponds to the five classes identified in Rimé (2005) and Christophe and Rimé (1997) but does not match those by Rodríguez Hidalgo. The main reason for this is the lack of a clear verbal difference between rational and emotional reactions. In addition, even though the initial messages have a negative valence, the emotional response can take not only forms of emotional support and empathy but also admiration. *My Sleep Paralysis Demon is Actually A Pretty Chill Guy* is an example of so-called ‘wholesome’ work that combines horror with positive plot elements (Reddit, 2017). Emotional feedback on such works can take the form of admiration, but the valence message will not change from that — creepypasta still has the main goal to scare the reader.

The third phase of the model is a non-permanent SSE element, as creepy authors are not required to reply in comments to users. If you look at the 100 most highly rated creepypastas on NoSleep, only authors of 35 of them answer in the comments. Because of this, the third phase in the quasi-SSE model can be considered situational and optional. Thus,

we can conclude that the online SSE model by Rodríguez Hidalgo corresponds to social sharing of emotions on Reddit only in general, not matching in details in particular stages.

Taking into account these results, we see it promising to analyze through the SSE prism other forms of digital fiction, ones devoid of horror-basis.

Conclusion

Given the above, it can be concluded that the example of Reddit confirms our original assumption. NoSleep comments confirm that there is interaction at the rational and emotional levels in this communication. Although the SSE does not fully correspond to the models of Rodríguez Hidalgo and Rimé, in general, the communication of the author and readers corresponds to this phenomenon, preserving its main characteristics. This allows us to conclude that the Reddit social network represents a model of communicative interaction of the physical world, embodying it in an online environment.

The study confirmed the SSE affinity in comments on the NoSleep subreddit with the original physical world model and the existing online SSE model. The sharing of emotions in comments under creepypastas generally corresponds to these models, embodying their structure, but within specific phases and stages has its characteristics that distinguish it among analogs.

Taking into account the results, we see it promising to analyze through the SSE prism other forms of digital fiction or comments under other posts on Reddit as part of different types of discourses (news, humorous, technical, gamer, etc.)

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