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Воат А.А. Вербовочная деятельность секты «Аум-синрикё» в интернете

Voat A.A. The Aum Shinrikyo cult's proselytizing on the Internet

Статья посвящена исследованию современных техник вовлечения людей в деструктивные культы в Интернете на примере секты "Аум синрикё"

Ключевые слова: секта, вербовка, реклама, манипулирование сознанием

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The article reveals how Aum Shinrikyo, a destructive pseudo-Buddhist cult, actively uses modern Internet technologies to recruit new followers into their organization

Key words: cult, proselytizing, recruiting technologies, advertising techniques

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Modern advertising and recruiting technologies on the Internet have created a new special product, namely, a complex system of signs that affects a human through almost all major channels of perception [5, c. 34]. Many destructive cults began to use this tool actively and successfully in their recruitment, with Aum Shinrikyo among them [2, c. 63-66].

Advertising and recruiting techniques that destructive cults use in terms of their transmission channels on the Internet can be direct and hidden.

Aum Shinrikyo successfully uses following direct recruiting and advertising techniques:

- official website of this destructive cult;
- video channel of the cult;
- online broadcasting of meetings (it enables real-time participation in prayer meetings of the destructive cult);
- banner advertising;
- recruiting videos;
- spam (both postal and address (mainly e-mail servers and social networks)), spamming is performed on the basis of segmentation of customer-oriented bases;
- on-line cult seminars, conferences and prayer meetings;
- recruitment through IP-telephony (mainly via Skype and ooVoo);

Hidden advertising and recruiting techniques that the cult makes active use of to recruit new members are following;

- contextual advertising;
- those covering recruiting sites (which do not expressly indicate that they belong to the cult, but all their activities are aimed at recruiting new followers and raising funds for it [3, c. 227].

Another platform that Aum Shinrikyo cult actively uses for recruitment on the Russian Internet is social networks whose final product is social and group identification represented mainly by social groups, namely, VK and Facebook. The cult uses the following techniques here:

- creating of cult groups and fake accounts for further recruitment into this organization;
- direct advertising and invitations to various recruiting events;
- spamming, viral marketing through various schemes (using some striking audio- and video content), recruitment in affinity groups (for instance, a user can be recruited into the cult through a disguised group Buddhism);
- blogging (creating of transformed public opinion using biased articles and comments in blogs written by numerous active followers. As a result, target audience receives deliberately false information. Creating themed blogs in social networks, posting comments in other users' blogs and amateur video on YouTube and other video hosting services are among the most widespread methods) [4, c. 109].

I would also like to pay special attention to recruitment and indoctrination that Aum Shinrikyo performs in V Kontakte, the most popular social network in Russia, in my report. This process consists of the following stages:

At the first stage, an e-mail robot sends the word 'hello' from a recruiting account to a potential victim. If the victim responds to this message, the correspondence will be forwarded to the real follower of the organization who will carry on communication with potential victims from this moment. The cult's parlance has the term "bhakti" or "donating oneself and one's time to propagate the doctrine of the cult" for recruitment; an alternative of the initial stage of recruitment is possible when potential victims are invited to join one of the cult's social groups through spam and viral marketing that spread advertising videos for recruitment.

At the second stage, potential victims are invited to attend a course of free lectures on Buddhism on one of the disguised sites of the cult. Potential followers watch a video instruction on such websites in detail.

At the third stage, potential victims take free on-line recruiting video seminars and lectures of the cult within ten days. One lecture takes one hour. Seminars and lectures are held at 8:00 PM Moscow time. Thus, attendees are gradually indoctrinated in the organization's statements within ten days.

At the fourth stage, further studying of lectures is offered to victims, but for money by making a donation of \$2 via electronic settlement system, for example, Webmoney or Qiwi.

At the fifth stage, victims study video lectures about Shoko Asahara, Aum Shinrikyo's guru, and continues his or her being indoctrinated in the cult.

At the sixth stage, lecturers who supervise victims collect personal information about new followers and their contacts and begin to communicate with them

personally on a daily basis via VoIP with them. In addition, every lecturer has a certain number of learners.

At the seventh stage, new members of the organization begin to perform religious practices of the cult, for example, sacrifice for the guru, asanas, qigong, evening worshipping, Sunday worshipping the guru, all this happens on-line via VoIP. At the same time, victims study reading materials of the cult in detail, Shoko Asahara writings, and transfer money to the organization via electronic settlement systems. Donation in this stage amounts to about \$150 monthly.

At the eighth stage, after about two months of indoctrination, doing the bhakti practice is offered to a new follower of the terrorist organization. It means the recruitment of new members of the cult through spamming and communication with potential victims in social networks.

At the ninth stage, new members of the cult are invited to a closed workshop in one of the headquarters of the terrorist organization four months after the first lecture. This workshop costs \$500.

At the tenth stage, followers are invited to away events of the terrorist cult in other countries that cost around 1000 to 1500 dollars after six to eight months. Giving online lectures for recruiting or becoming an instructor for asanas and qigong via VoIP can also be offered.

This way, we see how Aum Shinrikyo, a destructive terrorist pseudo-Buddhist cult, actively uses modern Internet technologies to recruit new followers into their organization and suppresses, changes, and then destroys the ideas, concepts and beliefs in the minds of their victims that are undesirable for the cult with the help of modern electronic technologies; then it inculcates and solidifies the views, attitudes and ideas desirable for the terrorist organization among its followers. In the meantime, it actively raises funds for their operation [1, c. 198].

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