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MEDIA INDUSTRY AND SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS AS INDICATORS OF ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

After the 2008 Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic mental health has become a major global concern which is influenced not only by the individual's environment but also by the external factors that include political and economic instability as well. Thus, the financial sustainability affects welfare of people, who are vulnerable to distress when faced with "fear of losing a job and reduced income, falling in debts, unavailability of essential goods, and unhygienic living conditions" [1].

However, exhaustion with the issues both personal and external often leads to escapism, "the practice of seeking distraction and relief from unpleasant realities, especially by engaging in entertainment or engaging in fantasy" [2]. It is illustrated in the rebirth of previously popular "universes", so the content resembling past times provides a sense of emotional safety and predictability, generating a positive effect in contrast to the anxiety associated with uncertain socio-economic conditions.

The object of the research is economic uncertainty and its underlying factors, while the subject is media industry and social media trends and their interconnection with the state of the economy. The overall aim of the study is to uncover how economic uncertainty is reflected in global trends across social media, the fashion industry, and the media industry (film and music). The current research adopts the content-analysis approach.

Our study investigated social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, thus, we found certain trends that can be analyzed. Firstly, "project pan" is realized as the reports on social media of how individuals utilize cosmetics every month (mostly on TikTok). This movement is aimed at conscious consumption of makeup products, where it is not recommended to buy new tools before finishing the previous ones. It can save both the planet from pollution and the individual's budget from impulsive purchases.

Furthermore, there is a "#2016" tendency where people share Instagram posts and stories with photos made in 2016, alongside active usage of filters, face masks that were actively applied in 2016 (also can be found on TikTok). This trend is supported by not only generations X and Y, but also by the generation Z who were children and teenagers at that time. This can highlight the nostalgia about the times when people were younger and the situation in the world was more stable and safer. Consequently, people focus on their past, not future: as the state of affairs in the world is rapidly and unexpectedly changing, it is impossible to make long-term plans.

"My vibe" is a TikTok flow of collages and short videos of certain aesthetic that represent either one's personality, their looks and lifestyle or the desired way of living (messy girl, dark academy, downtown girl, etc.). Mostly people desire to implement this "aesthetic" into their life. Hence, this trend displays the fact that the public is perplexed, indecisive, easily influenced from the outside, and unable to choose itself the mode of life, so it is preferable to follow the suggestions of the "For You" TikTok page.

Next, we studied the recent events that are happening in the filmmaking industry and discovered that there is a growing tendency to create sequels, prequels, spin-offs and other films closely connected with or continuing the well-known and successful franchises. For instance, we can mention Harry Potter series, which is now being filmed, House of the Dragon (prequel to Game of Thrones), The Devil Wears Prada 2 and Zootopia 2 (sequels), Now You See Me 3 (threequel), etc. Therefore, we concluded that it is safer and more profitable for the movie studios to rely on the reminiscence of already formed audience and "fun-base" of famous franchises rather than creating brand-new films, which helps to reduce marketing risks and increase the chance of the film payback.

Considering the music field, suddenly the artists who started their careers in the 2010s are gaining popularity at present. To illustrate, Zara Larsson became a well-known singer firstly after the release of her song "Lush Life" in 2015 and for the second time in 2026 when it was popularized on social media. With this song, she started a dance trend; this track is widely used on TikTok and Instagram, especially in videos with filters that were widespread in 2016. That is why, such pop-culture events also contribute to the rise of nostalgic feelings of social media users.

As it is believed, fashion is cycled; nowadays many trends from the 2000s and other epochs have returned (skinny and low-rise jeans, tracksuits, etc.). Such fashion trends recreate the styles of earlier generations, typically preserved in maternal wardrobes. Moreover, the youth is often searching for clothes in second-hand shops, 'flea market', and online resale platforms in order to economize on shopping or find vintage and luxury pieces of clothing at half price. This can be considered the evidence of young people being careful with their spending and refusing to pay just for the "brand".

On the basis of the analysis, we learned that the enumerated trends can be considered as indicators of economic instability for several reasons. Firstly, all of them depend on provoking the feeling of nostalgia about the past – when the population was younger and was not concerned about the situation in the world, as it was stable, reliable and allowed making long-term plans. Secondly, these movements are directed at reducing expenditures both for companies and for individuals in order to keep afloat. Thirdly, people prefer to choose the content and trends that have withstood the test of time, for fearing implementation of the novelty, since it is uncertain and is more comfortable and emotionally safe not to modify reality. Thereby, economic uncertainty is manifested in the media industry and social media trends.

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