

# DECODING CENSORSHIP ON RUSSIAN SOCIAL MEDIA USING FACEBOOK AND VK

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# RESEARCH QUESTION

WHAT ARE THE CENSORSHIP CRITERIA FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS IN RUSSIA?

## BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

- VK.COM
  - MOST VISITED IN RUSSIA (BY TRAFFIC) (SIMILARWEB, 2018)
  - SECOND MOST VISITED SOCIAL NETWORK GLOBALLY (BY TRAFFIC) (SIMILARWEB, 2017)
  - USED BY 40% OF RUSSIANS (LEVADA CENTER, 2017)
  - USED BY 53% OF 18-24 YEAR-OLDS (IBID)
- SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS
  - GROWING AUDIENCE, DRIVEN BY 18-25 YEAR-OLDS (IBID)
  - 10% GROWTH IN THE LAST 4 YEARS (IBID)

# MORE BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

- Ex. 2011 DUMA ELECTION PROTESTS
- VK PENETRATION INCREASES CHANCES OF PROTEST AND NUMBER OF PROTESTERS (ENIKOLOPOV ET AL, 2015)
- SOCIAL MEDIA HELPS OVERCOME COLLECTIVE ACTION PROBLEMS (IBID)
- SOCIAL MEDIA DISSEMINATE PROTEST INFORMATION (IBID; WHITE AND McALLISTER, 2013)
- GOVERNMENTS MAY USE DIFFERENT CRITERIA FOR CENSORSHIP (KING ET AL, 2013, 2017)

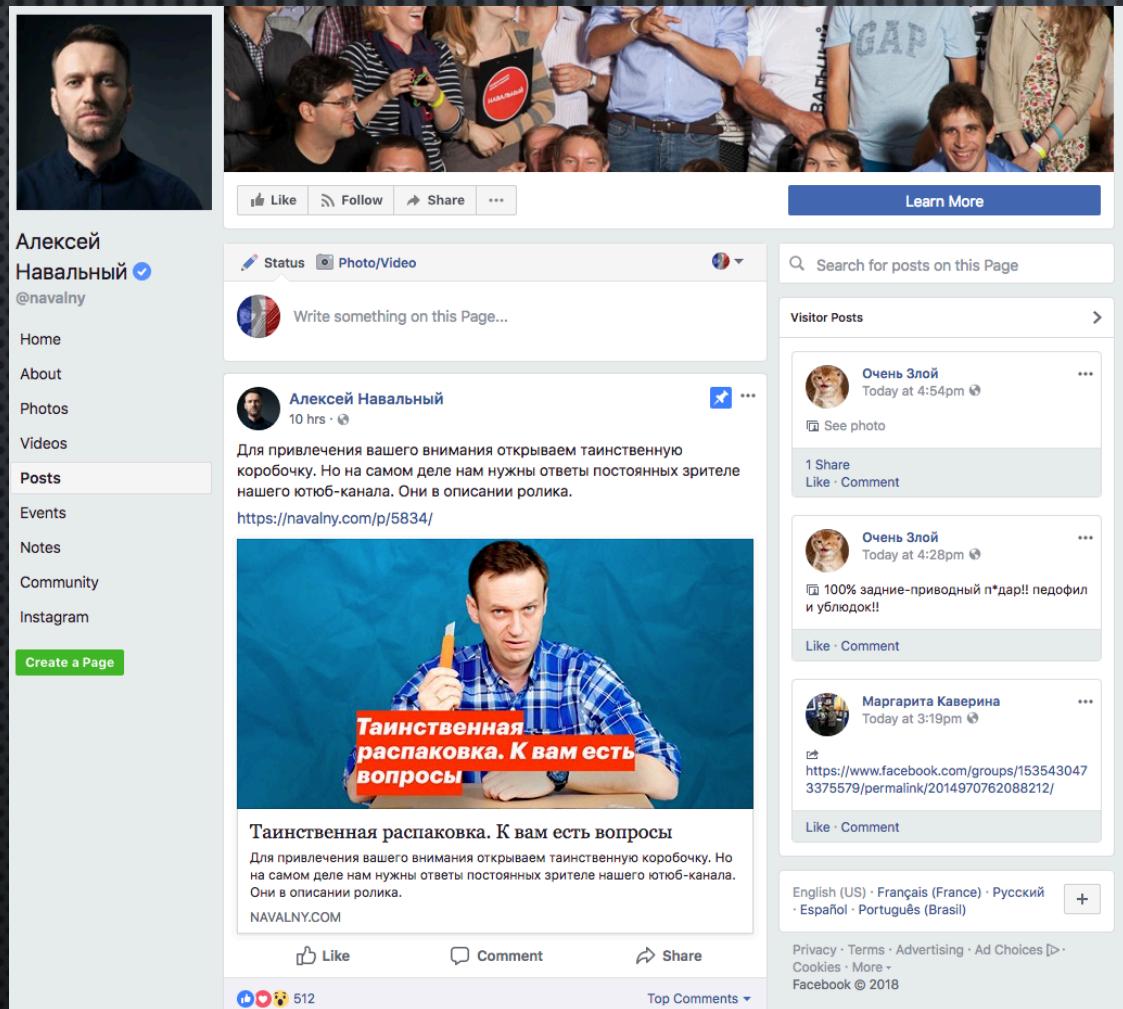
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# CONTRIBUTION

- GENERAL CONTRIBUTION TO UNDERSTANDING OF ONLINE PROTEST MOBILIZATION
- ESTABLISH METHODOLOGY TO TRACK THE EVOLUTION OF CENSORSHIP IN RUSSIA
- FILL THE GAP IN SYSTEMATIC KNOWLEDGE OF ONLINE CENSORSHIP IN RUSSIA

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND MODEL



Alexei Navalny's Facebook profile picture and name are at the top. Below is a post from his page:

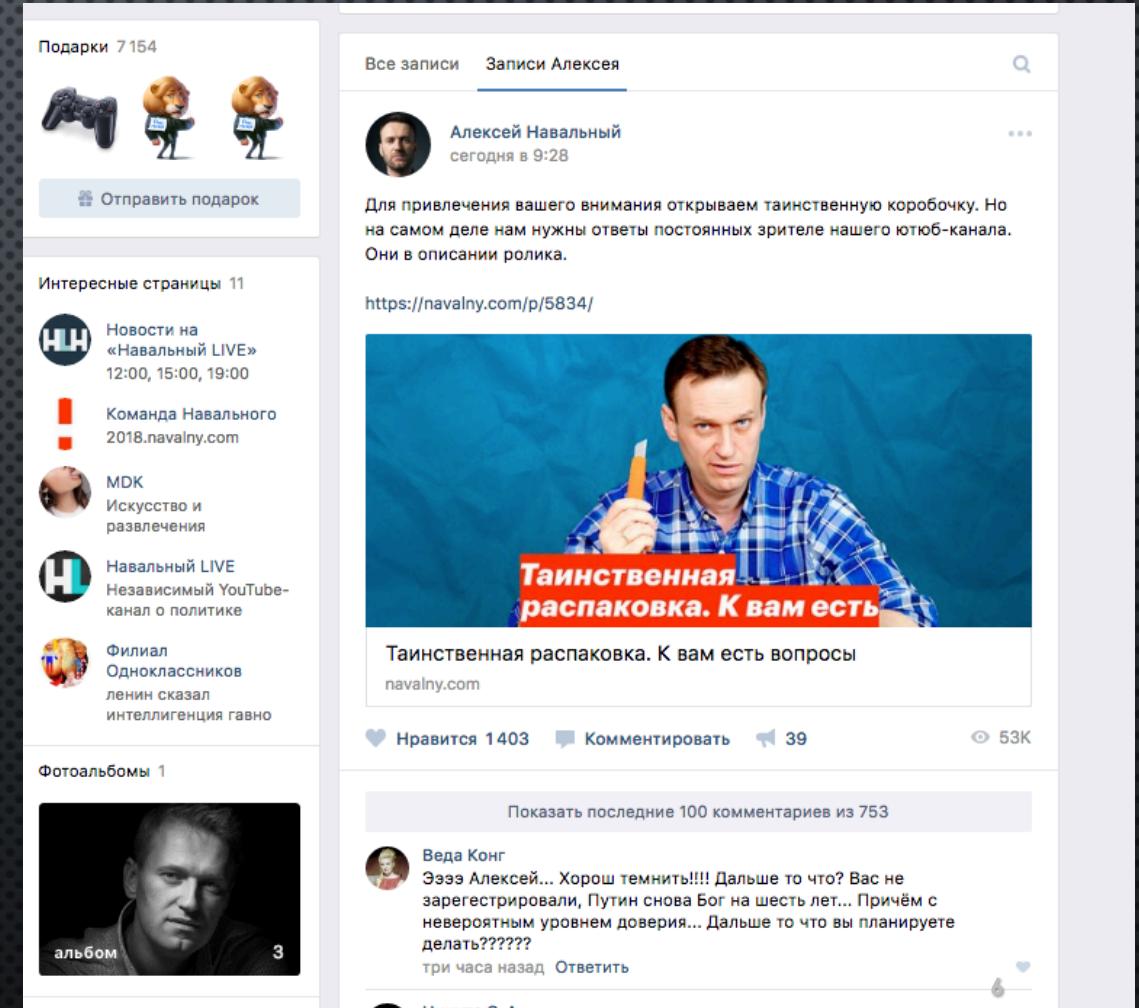
For your attention, we are opening a mysterious box. But in itself, we need answers from our YouTube channel. They are in the description of the video.

<https://navalny.com/p/5834/>

The post includes a photo of Navalny sitting at a desk with a cigarette, with a red banner overlaid: "Таинственная распаковка. К вам есть вопросы".

Below the post, there is a caption: "For your attention, we are opening a mysterious box. But in itself, we need answers from our YouTube channel. They are in the description of the video."

At the bottom, there are Like, Comment, and Share buttons, and a link to the post: "512".



Alexei Navalny's VKontakte profile picture and name are at the top. Below is a post from his profile:

Today at 9:28  
For your attention, we are opening a mysterious box. But in itself, we need answers from our YouTube channel. They are in the description of the video.

<https://navalny.com/p/5834/>

The post includes a photo of Navalny holding a cigarette, with a red banner overlaid: "Таинственная распаковка. К вам есть вопросы".

Below the post, there is a caption: "Today at 9:28 For your attention, we are opening a mysterious box. But in itself, we need answers from our YouTube channel. They are in the description of the video."

At the bottom, there are Like, Comment, and Share buttons, and a link to the post: "1403", "39", and "53K".

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND MODEL

- API/WEBSRAPING OF ALEXEY NAVALNY VK AND FACEBOOK POSTS (PUBLIC)
- NLP ANALYSIS (TOPIC MODELLING?) AND CLASSIFICATION:
- POST ATTRIBUTES (TEXT CONTENT, TYPES OF POSTS) ~ PROBABILITY OF CENSORSHIP

# ANTICIPATED LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

- EXTERNAL VALIDITY
- CONFOUNDING VARIABLES AND OTHER SOURCES OF CENSORSHIP
- TECHNICAL HURDLES

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