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Russians Want President Putin to Follow Trump to Twitter Stardom

By Katie Marie Davies

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Dariya Akhmedova / For MT

If there's one politician who already has internet stardom firmly in his grasp, it's Russian President Vladimir Putin. But even after the endearing memes and the bareback horse riding, a growing number of Russians want more: a real Putin Twitter account.

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via GIPHY

Russians overwhelmingly want to hear what the president has to say. And they want to hear it from him. According to a recent survey by state-run pollster VTsIOM, 64 Russians want to know the president's opinion on all public matters.

Of those respondents, 69 percent said they wanted to hear from the president directly, usually in the traditional form of a televised press conference. VTsIOM's data also showed a new trend: Russians are desperate to see Putin follow in the footsteps of U.S. President Donald Trump.

While the Kremlin already runs its own English and Russian-language Twitter accounts, it leaves something to be desired of its coverage of the president's life.

Sure, it's difficult to imagine strongman Putin curling up in front of the television. But without social media, how can we ever be sure that he doesn't? How can we know what Putin really thought of Arnold Schwarzenegger's television hosting skills?

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> Yes, Arnold Schwarzenegger did a really bad job as Governor of California and even worse on the Apprentice...but at least he tried hard!
>
> — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) February 3, 2017

Television aside, how would a Putin Twitter account match up to its American rival?

Plenty of people have drawn similarities between Putin and Trump in recent months while their apparent bromance blossomed.

One thing neither can resist is the occasional dig at Europe.

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> Our country needs strong borders and extreme vetting, NOW. Look what is happening all over Europe and, indeed, the world - a horrible mess!
>
> — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) January 29, 2017

Of course, Putin may struggle to fit some of his more scathing criticisms into a mere 140 characters. Allegations that Europe is suffering from "obvious degradation of democracy" don't quite provoke the same social media buzz as Trump's infamous Twitter catchphrases. Who can forget the eloquent power of Trump's derisive:"SAD!" Or even the occasional "NOT!"

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> Doing my best to disregard the many inflammatory President O statements and roadblocks.Thought it was going to be a smooth transition - NOT!
>
> — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) December 28, 2016

But its what Putin doesn't say that distinguishes the two leaders. Donald Trump has been keen to defend his daughter - and her private business interests - in the public sphere.

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> My daughter Ivanka has been treated so unfairly by @Nordstrom. She is a great person -- always pushing me to do the right thing! Terrible!
>
> — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) February 8, 2017

President Putin is famously protective of the identity of his two daughters. In fact, many of Russia's most prominent independent journalists say that reporting on the president's family is strictly off-limits. Others allege that their reports on government contracts handed out to Putin family members have lost them their jobs.

Related article: Former RBC Editor Blames Kremlin For Dismissal

Putin also refrains from vocal attacks on the media. As any avid Twitter follower is sure to know, Trump's apparent nemesis is none other than the "failing" New York Times.

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> The failing @nytimes was forced to apologize to its subscribers for the poor reporting it did on my election win. Now they are worse!
>
> — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) February 7, 2017

Putin has only very rarely condemned an individual news outlet. And why would he? Plenty of Russian journalists spend their free time depicting Putin as a true Russian superhero — literally.

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> Putin is fielding some really hard-hitting stuff from a vibrant and critical media

today. pic.twitter.com/XW8GOqw4ZK

— Kevin Rothrock (@KevinRothrock) December 23, 2016

And while independent outlets such as the Dozhd television channel or the RBC newspaper may elicit the occasional cutting remark from Putin, the threat of an expensive lawsuit is a sure-fire way of keeping journalists away from certain high-profile targets, such as Putin's closest oligarch confident, Igor Sechin.

Related article: Putin Ally Attempts to Silence Coverage, Ends Up Attracting More

Of course, it could just be that after 16 years in power, Putin has set his sights a little higher. He might shun Trump-style Twitter storms, but Putin knows a few tricks to win over the internet.

Until we see a video of President Trump singing - the ball's in your court, Washington.

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