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FACT AND FACTUAL INFORMATION IN THE MASS MEDIA

Abstract: Application of the factual principle of information presentation is of particular relevance in the present conditions of global use of information environment as a confrontation field of different models of modern civilization development. The main objective of the study is to substantiate the basic status of fact and its interpretation in the media system. The factual principle is realized within the factual field, which is a set of information about changes in the social environment, the presentation of which is integrated by lexical, grammatical, logical, stylistic connections and has respective focus and pragmatic attitude. Factual field is formed by a system of interconnected factors: basic fact, which is a communicative nucleus, the core of the message in the mass-communication process; factual environment, which is created by the facts illustrating the basic fact; journalist skills, which includes the ability to convince with fact-based proofs and arguments. Factual field is the natural component of social interaction. Consistency and comprehensiveness of factual field is realized in the interconnections of the objective (basic fact, factual environment), and subjective (means journalist skills) factors. Factual principle of information presentation in mass media is based on the following functional characteristics: flexibility, consistency, associativity, analyticity, reliability, professionalism of fact presentation. The essence of the fact phenomenon functioning in the media is realized in the following components: in the change of the objective reality and in the interpretation of such change in the mass media.

Keywords: fact, factual information, mass media

The facts are clear change in objective reality, the result of social communication and human cognitive activity. During communication interaction, realized through mass media, the fact performs its primary system function – to be confirmation (denial) of evolution in the elementary, biological, social communication, due to the universal nature of the presentation of objects in the mass media practice. Applying the factual principle of information presentation is of particular relevance in the current conditions of global use of information environment as a field of

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confrontation of different models of civilization development. **The aim of research** is to substantiate the basic status of fact and its interpretation in the system of mass media. For this purpose it is necessary to solve the following problems: to find out the nature of the fact phenomenon and its functioning in the mass media; to explore the significant connections between different by their nature facts that are represented in the mass media; to determine the functional characteristics of the factual principle of information presentation in the mass media; to develop a classification system of the facts according to the defined characteristics.

The fundamentals of understanding the essence and nature of communication processes were laid in the works of Ch. Peirse, F. de Saussure, Ch. Morris, M. Heidegger, R. Barthes, J. Baudrillard, H. Gadamer, U. Eco, who studied the rules and peculiarities of communicative interaction on the intersection of the ideas of cultural philosophy, semiotics, mass communication theory, linguistics, literary studies, media studies, aesthetics. Exploring the nature of the sign, sign systems and their interpretative characteristics, the scientists laid the theoretical basis for understanding the communicative interaction.

In the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce the central position is occupied by conceptualization of sign relations, manifested in the elementary model: object – sign – interpretant. This triad of components of sign relations forms the concept of semiosis, which encompasses the dynamic process of interpretation of the sign, the only possible way of its functioning. According to Ch. Peirce, the basic postulates of sign relationships include: the sign shall be interpreted to be a sign; each sign is able to generate an interpretant; the process of interpretation is endless[1].

Investigating linguistic phenomena, F. de Saussure offered innovative ideas on the division of language and speech, of language as a system of signs, the distinction between synchrony and diachrony. He introduced into scientific use the term "signified" and "signification", which are fundamental not only in linguistics (including terminology), but also in understanding the essence of interpretative nature of mass media communication. The scientist defined the linguistic sign as an indissoluble unity of "signified" and "signification" comparing them with the two sides of a single sheet of paper: a linguistic sign unites not a thing and a name, but a concept and an acoustic image. The ideas of F. de Saussure developed into the philosophical direction of structuralism, which having become the methodology of humanitarian sciences, and in particular, the theory of mass communication, interprets the phenomena of life as a complex system of interconnected components[2].

[1] Ch. Peirce, *Selected Philosophical Works,* Moscow 2000, p. 448.
[2] F. de Saussure, *Course of General Linguistics*, Kyiv 1998, p. 324.

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Charles W. Morris, defining semiosis as a process, in which the sign is functioning, developed the theory of semiosis, supplementing the classic views of its essence. Charles Morris suggested a three-dimensional model of semiosis, which covers semantics (characterizes the relation of a sign to its object), syntactics (covering the signs relations to each other) and pragmatics (indicates the relationship between signs and those who use them – interpreters). It is these dimensions of semiosis that constitute the subject of study in various spheres of semiotic analysis. In terms of research of trends and patterns of factual information functioning in social communication of particular interest are the views of the scientist on pragmatics as practical aspects of the signs functioning. According to Charles Morris, newspaper statements, political opinions, philosophical theories are increasingly considered through the prism of the interests that are expressed and maintained by the production and use of certain signs. Any sign can be considered in terms of psychological, biological and social conditions of its use. Sign expresses interpretant (interpretation), but it is not its denotation (real object); only at a higher level the relation of the sign to interpreter itself becomes a matter of designation (concept)[3,4].

Considering the processes of communicative interaction, including its interpretative nature, it is important to take into account philosophical ideas of German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who laid the theoretical foundation of hermeneutics of the late 20th century. According to M. Heidegger, to hear the text, in which existence realizes itself, does not mean to understand what the text says, but above all, to understand what it does not say but still emphasizes. In circumstances where the communicative acts are full of metaphors and metonymy, the philosopher calls for a deeper understanding of the text, which in the end turns out to be almost the opposite of the conventional interpretation. M. Heidegger gave ontological shape to hermeneutics: from the art of interpretation, from the method of interpretation of historical texts, hermeneutics has become "the implementation of existence". M. Heidegger argues that it is necessary to speak and think that existence really is here. Language allows to appear what attracts any utterance and any thought, allows it to exist. This is what is constructed as a distinctive feature, as the duality of essence[5].

The follower of M. Heidegger, German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, explained the ontological nature of the hermeneutic circle, the core of which is the thought that in order to understand the whole, it is necessary to understand simultaneously its separate homogeneous (uniform) and heterogeneous (diverse) parts and vice versa. Explaining the interpretative nature of the text, H.-G. Gadamer

[3] Ch. Morris, *Basis of the theory of signs,*"Semyotyka", Moscow 1983, pp. 37–89.
[4] Idem, *The meaning and signification,*"Semyotyka", Moscow 1983, pp. 118–132.
[5] M. Heidegger,*Time and Being*, Moscow 1993, p. 447.

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formulated the following theses: the interpretation is fundamentally open and can never be completed; comprehension is inseparable from self-understanding of the interpreter[6].

Considering the process of sign functioning, Umberto Eco emphasizes its ability to be free in the interpretative process. In his view, the sign on the one hand is the key concept for the semiosis process and on the other hand – a tool by which the object can become clear or break up into its constituent parts. One of the most important characteristics of the sign is its ability to be interpreted. Any sign receives its meaning at the crossroads of many interpretations, which in their turn are tightly woven into the cultural context. U. Eco emphasizes the importance of communicative circumstances as such reality that determines the choice of code:

the situation changes the meaning of the message; (a red flag on the beach and a red flag on the square are different things);

the situation changes the function of the message (prohibition sign on the highway is more emotional and imperative than the same sign in the parking areas);

the situation is changing the informative load of the message (skull and bones on the bottle and on the high voltage electrical box do not mean the same thing).

According to U. Eco, the reality of specific communicative circumstances radically affects the semiotic universe of cultural conventions, it accelerates in everyday life in the purely theoretical world of abstract codes and messages nourishing cold detachment and self-sufficiency of semiotic meanings with vital sap of nature, society, history[7].

Thus, semiotic theory is the basis for the study of the functioning patterns of factual information and its interpretative capacity, implemented in social communication.

The question of functioning of factual information in journalistic activities and applying the factual principle of information presentation in the media was considered in various aspects of Ukrainian theorists of journalism and mass communication (V. Buriak, M. Vasylenko, O. Hoyan, V. Demchenko, V. Kachkan, V. Luzanchuk, B. Potiatynyk, V. Rizun, A. Chichanovskyy, V. Shkliar).

Exploring philosophical and methodological foundations of the modern theory of journalism, a Ukrainian scientist O. Aleksandrov raises the question of functioning of factual information in journalistic work and its ability to influence the consumer of information. Scientific views on the application of the principle of conceptual representation of facts are valuable. Determining the value of philosophical aspects of fact and the author's conception, O. Aleksandrov emphasizes

[6] H.-G. Gadamer, *Hermeneutics and Poetics*, Kyiv2001, p. 288.

[7] U. Eco, *Lack of structure. Introduction to semiology*, Saint Petersburg 1998, p. 432.

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individuality, concreteness; individuality links the fact and generalized concept by the help of which the fact is known and evaluated not from the standpoint of now, but as a factor of the future. Without the concept of reality, without the author's vision of the fact or condition of the whole world, this intellectual operation is not possible and journalistic work will be deprived of influence on the reader. Analyzing the specific structure of journalistic work and forms of its presentation, the scientist emphasizes its binary structure caused by temporal and spatial characteristics of event that leads to integrative of rhetorical and narrative foundations presentation of factual material in journalistic work[8].

Methodology of analysis is based on the use of such methods of scientific knowledge: to systematize and classify; to integrate knowledge about the nature of the fact phenomenon and its functioning in the system of mass media; to explore significant connections between facts different by its nature, which are published in the mass media; to determine the functional characteristics of the factual principle of information presentation in the mass media; to establish the patterns and peculiarities of functioning of factual information in the mass media.

Factual principle of providing information to the media is revealed within the factual field, which is a set of information about changes in the social environment, the submission of which is integrated by lexical, grammatical, logical, stylistic ties, has the proper orientation and pragmatic guidance. Factual field covers basic fact, factual environment and means of journalistic art to convince by arguments based on facts.

The basic fact as the real event, responding to the essential requirements (cause public concern, have information value, be news, be reliable, expeditious and complete), is a communication core, core messages in communicative process. Getting into in the field of media attention and reflection, the fact undergoes several transformations before it will be presented in one form or another. As Y. Lotman pointed, transformation of event into text refers to its transfer in the system of a language, subordination to certain structural organizations[9]. Text as the information content of a document, applications, messages, performs a number of functions that implement both information and communication purpose of the text, they are messages directed from storage media to the subject; collective memory, capable of continuous replenishment, updating some aspects of the media and temporary or complete neglect of others; text becomes interlocutor; communication between the text and cultural context.

[8] O. Aleksandrov, *Proceedings of the theory of journalism*, "Dialoh. Media-Studiyi" 2007, no 6.
[9] Y. Lotman, *Semyosfera: Culture and Explosion*, Saint Petersburg 2004, p. 703.

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Factual environment of message forms such facts that illustrate the basic fact. Factual environment belongs to social communication environment as an integral component that is a set of communication conditions of society, which are created as a result of the formation of numerous converted forms of meaningful activities, the result of which is designed especially for the system of social interaction or indirectly, for other areas of social practice that generalize the flow of information and knowledge further development in the structures of social communication.

Factual environment plays a key role in the implementation of the basic characteristics of the text, which, according to M. Yatsemirska, include logic statements completeness and communication intentions. The same basic fact on different factual background may have different meaning, and, therefore, implement different social interaction, a continuous exchange of information in social communication process[10]

Successful application of the factual principle of information presentation in mass communication depends on journalistic art to persuade by facts, select them from the current reality, compile, analyze, establish their connection and interdependence, build according to their own views and ideas. Behind the media text, there stand language peculiarities of journalist, his outlook, intellectual and professional level, cognitive ability.

Journalistic skills are found in compliance with the requirements of logical and linguistic consistency in the coverage of the facts. Logical consistency provides accuracy and compliance coverage probability of factual base (reference, certificates, citations, determine the place, time and circumstances); clarity (specification, comparing eyewitnesses' quotes about their own experience); clarity of the situation depicted by the journalist; journalist attitude to a certain fact; visibility (consideration of factual details, their obvious strengths). Linguistic consistency implies the compliance of primarily stylistic features of journalistic work in the media: brevity, adjusted length and rhythm of message, accuracy and simplicity of words and phrases.

Factual principle of providing information to the media is based on the following functional characteristics: versatility of spread, systematic presentation of facts, associative representation of facts, analyticity of facts representation, credible presentation of facts, and their professional representation of.

The universality of distributing of the factual principle of representation reality lies in its implementation in all genres of journalistic work. Common to all genres is the ability to provide the most striking facts from the flow of event, emphasize the event, make it the center of interest.

[10] M. Yatsemirska, *Culture Professional Language of Journalist*, L'viv 2004, p. 368.

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Systematic presentation of the facts in the journalistic creativity is expressed in a fixed single fact, in the compilation of its characteristics in the context of the amount of facts taken from its development, in formation of system of facts and understanding and revealing of essence phenomenon as integrated fact system. This chain of logical operation makes it possible to implement the factual principle of information presentation in the media comprehensively and systematically: single fact – the sum of facts – fact system – phenomenon. To present a single fact as the identification of phenomenon is one of the most important professional qualities of journalistic work. The fact enters into relationship with other facts and with general provisions.

Associative representation of the facts is revealed in the functional paradigm of the fact that is demonstrated in its existence in the associative relations. In journalism, facts are often linked on the basis of associative connections where combined facts that are not involved in one event, not related in time and space. Associative relations are based on moral and ethical aspects of two facts which are not in a particular field of factual events, phenomenon. Facts are linked in a single moral entity.

Analyticity of the fact presentation is implemented in journalism, where facts are connected, studied and analyzed. Here the facts help the journalist, they are the starting point of journalistic performance. The art of journalistic analysis, the ability to observe, investigate the facts and draw conclusions on their basis, generalization – all this is the bulk of the work of journalist in preparing and writing comments, articles, reviews.

Authenticity of fact presentation is based on meeting the communication needs of readers in the journalistic writings in the news media, in any journalistic text as a document that has a sign of truth and reasonableness. Unfortunately, this attitude not always finds confirmation: in actual practice, journalists too often use unverified facts and sometimes specifically „invented" for sensational rumors, violating the principle of presenting factual realities of social life. Media text may contain arguments and reasons not related to journalistic work, based on factual and documentary principles of objectivity and reliability. Facts are represented in regional, national and international media text with a broad thematic spectrum. They are the only effective means of manipulation of the mass consciousness[11].

Professionalism of fact presentation reveals that the evolutionary change of quality criteria of journalists work caused a gradual replacement of the phrase "press news" with the phrase "news media", defining a fact not as "raw material", but as material processed into special literary product. Professional intuition of

[11] L. Shchukyna, *Problem factors in modern television advertising*, "Problemy Massovoy Kommunykatsyy na Rubezhe Tysyacheletyy" 2003, p.146.

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reporters involves their ability to cognitively and intuitively distinguish the fact from such signs that promise material interesting for the audience.

Competition among media outlets and agencies; news existence of certain facts in other channels of information; defined editorial publications policy; forced or intentionally news and facts combination of local, national and international importance, important and interesting facts of social life.

In the news report factual basis is the core which, by the way of its interpretation, can make a variety of angles or explanations, but in new mass communication product, the fact always detects such properties as universality and necessity. This is caused by specific of news journalism. According to Z. Vayshenberh, the fact is in the key concepts of news journalism: purpose – to meet social needs in knowledge about changes in the world; object of reflection – real society is an important phenomenon at the time of its obvious change; function – to inform the public of changes in the real socially important phenomena[12].

Interpretive component in factual information contradicts with the principle of news objectivity. Availability of evaluation that detects subjective attitude towards objective reality, is a must-element of news message, that may pursue objectives (particularly in terms of information warfare) of manipulation of public consciousness, zombies. That is why, according to V. Rizun, participants of communication interaction should treat information, containing factual material, as the questionable and inaccurate thing that requires testing, specific analysis[13].

Thus, the essence of the fact phenomenon and its representation in the media is in the use of universality of factual principle of information presentation in the media. Factual principle is implemented within the factual field, which is a set of information about changes in social environment, the submission of integrated lexical, grammatical, logical, stylistic ties, and has the appropriate focus and pragmatic guidance. Facts field is formed by the system of interrelated factors: the basic fact that is the communication core, the core of message in the mass communicative process; factual environment that shapes the facts that illustrate the basic fact; journalistic skills, ability to persuade covering evidence and arguments based on facts. Factual field serves as an organic component of social interaction. Systematic and complex of factual field appear in conjunction of objective (basic fact, factual environment) and subjective (means of journalistic skills) factors.

Factual principle of information presentation in the media is based on the following functional characteristics: versatility, consistency, analyticity, reliability, professionalism of fact presentation.

[12] Z. Vayshenberh, *News Journalism*, Akademiya Ukrayins'koyi presy, Kyiv 2004, p. 262.

[13] V. Rizun, *Problems and prospects of development of journalism education in Ukraine at the beginning of the 21st century*, "Naukovi Zapysky Instytutu Zhurnalistyky" 2004, vol. 16, p. 6–13.

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