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Influence of the Russian TV product on the Ukrainian audience

Introduction

Russian television has always been popular in Ukraine. Today television remains the valuable source of social and political news. It means that television is an affective instrument in shaping public opinion. The consequences of permanent information work of Russian's mass-media on the territory of Ukraine have absolutely measurable results, in particular, number of voices for pro-Russian political forces on elections. On the other hand, the basic principle of journalism is dissemination of reliable, objective and open-minded information about events and facts of social-political and international life. In other words, TV channels bear huge responsibility for the results of their activity.

The aim of the research is to investigate the social and political effect of the Russian TV-product's influence on the Ukrainian public opinion within Russia's information war against Ukraine. The task of the paper is two-fold: to define the orientation of television content of the Russian mass-media that are being broadcast over the territory of Ukraine; and to describe efficiency of the Ukrainian regulatory bodies' measures towards the adjusting of distribution of objective information about Ukraine.

Main results

Television is one of the most valuable instruments affecting public opinion. For the country, television is an important component of the foreign policy's implementation. The Russian television traditionally has a group of loyal viewers in Ukraine who have been present since the Soviet times. When at the beginning of the 1970s, television started its active development, the Ukrainian audience got an opportunity to watch firstly two, and then three TV channels. In March, 1973 two broadcasting programmes were officially established on the territory of Ukraine. One channel was broadcasting programmes from Moscow and another one was broadcasting domestic (Ukrainian) TV-programmes. The Ukrainian broadcasters had considerably less power, according-

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ly, the audience of central (Moscow) television significantly exceeded the Ukrainian audience[1].

It is possible to assert that already in those times ideological influence of the Russian (Moscow) information prevailed above national (domestic) one. The popularity of the Russian telecasts can be also explained by more various content and higher technical level.

During the end of 90th – beginning of 00th the establishing of the Ukrainian television market took place. Private national TV channels such as 'Інтер' and '1+1' started their broadcasting. Although on October 20, 1996 broadcasting of OPT (Public Russian Television) was fully stopped in Ukraine, a part of telecasts of this Russian TV channel was retransmitted by the 'Інтер' – TV channel (with 29% share of OPT). In addition, cable operators continued broadcasting OPT and other Russian TV channels. Later several satellite TV-platforms with OPT, НТВ and other Russian TV-channels were launched.

Ukraine has always been in the circle of interests of the Russian foreign policy. Therefore, the neighbouring state keeps information presence in Ukraine, and, accordingly, supports rating and interest of the Ukrainian viewers.

Since 2014 because of well-known political events in Ukraine, the active phase of Russia's info-war against Ukraine began. A key role in these processes belongs exactly to the TV channels. At the beginning of 2014 more than 100 Russian TV channels were officially broadcast on the territory of Ukraine. All Russian TV news channels (in particular, ОРТ, НТВ, РТР, Россия- 1, Россия- 24, РЕН-ТВ, Петербург 5, ТВ-центр, РБК ect.) were involved in the info-war and provided unreliable data, as well as the information that undermined the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Many people were exposed to the distorted information about the events in Ukraine in the interpretation of the Russian TV channels. American web-site Examiner.com issued a selection of fake reports of Russian propaganda against Ukraine based on the analysis of articles from the biggest news agencies of Russia like 'RIA-новости', 'Russia Today' and 'Российская газета'. For example, in March, 2015 Russian mass-media published the photo of the inhabited quarter in Slavyansk. This photo showed a 13–15–years-old teenager allegedly killed during the mortar fire of the Ukrainian army. In reality, this photo was taken in Saudi Arabia, with an executed local serial killer captured on it.

Here is one more example. On September 13, 2016 Russian news web-sites 'РИА-Новости', "Рен-ТВ", "Русская весна", "Правда.ру", "Свободная пресса" and many others reported that the official representative of Organization for security and co-operation in Europe (OSCE) refused the presence of Russian troops on the territory of non-controlled to the Ukrainian authorities districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk areas. Web-sites referred to the statement of OSCE's secretary general Lamberto Zannier

[1] История украинского ТВ глазами зрителя. Часть 1. – www.ua-reporter.com/print/186378, accessed 04 Oct 2016

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dated September, 9, who had an official visit to Ukraine. Also Russian editions gave Lamberto Zannier's quotation: "We say that it is a hybrid conflict, and a hybrid conflict envisages the presence of hybrid troops. When I am asked, whether the Russian units are present there, then I said that these units are not present there"[2].

However, in fact the OSCE's Secretary General did not declare that the Russian troops were not on territory of the occupied part of Donbas. He said, that observers of the OSCE's Special monitoring mission could not confirm the presence in the east of Ukraine of "Russian units as such". Later OSCE's representative declared, that observers fixed the permanent updating of military equipment and absence of decline of its amount, without regard to the battle losses of the soldiery forming so-called "DNR" and "LNR". Zannier added that a fuel and equipment also came from outside. In addition, OSCE fixed the presence of fighters from other countries who claimed that they arrived on private basis, and "deny any connections with the Russian's structures". Proper disproof was provided by 'Interfax-Ukraine'.[3]

Many similar examples are provided on the websites such as http://www.stopfake.org/, http://censor.net.ua, http://gordonua.com, http://24tv.ua and other open sources.

Understanding the negative influence of the Russian propaganda on the Ukrainian public opinion raised the necessity to minimize the influence of the Russian TV-products on the Ukrainian audience. By the decision of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine (NTRBCU) dated September 1, 2016, the broadcasting of 73 Russian TV channels was limited, among which НТВ, ТНТ, Звезда, Рен ТВ, Россия 1, LifeNews ect. Proper information was published by NTRBCU's chairman Yurij Artemenko on his FB page and NTRBCU's official webpage.

Let us consider this issue from another point of view. It is possible to limit technically broadcasting of only those TV channels that distribute its signal via cable networks or officially sell starting packages (as in the НТВ's case). For example, on January 2016, the following Russian TV channels presented by media-holdings were present in the cable networks of Ukraine: the Russian group "Ред Медиа" (enters to "Gasprom-media ") is represented by 12 channels: "365 дней ТВ", HD Life, "ТВ-бульвар" (STV), "Авто Плюс ", "Боец", "Индия ТВ", "Комедия ТВ", "Кухня ТВ", "Ля-минор", "МНОГО ТВ", "Мужское кино", "Русская ночь"; also "Gasprom–media" includes the number of fee-paying channels such as "НТВ+": "Наше кино", "Премьера", "Новое of кино", "Кинохит", "Киноклуб" ect. The Russian group "Цифровое телесемейство Первого канала" (enters to Russian Channel One) offers 7 TV channels to the Ukrainian cable operators: "Дом Кино Премиум", "Дом Кино", "Время", "Телекафе", "Музыка Первого", "Бобер" and "Карусель". The Russian group "НКС Медиа" (holded by "Rostelecom") is represented by 7 TV channels:

[2] В ОБСЕ подтвердили отсутствие российских войск на Донбассе – http://www.stopfake.org/fejk-v-obse-podtverdili-otsutstvie-rossijskih-vojsk-na-donbasse/, accessed 04 Oct 2016

[3] OSCE SMM doesn't confirm presence of Russian troops in Donbas, sees only 'fighters from outside the region' – Zannier – http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/369129.html, accessed 04 Oct 2016

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"Совершенно секретно", "Парк развлечений", "Мать и дитя", "24Техно", "24Док", "Настоящее страшное телевидение" and "Настоящее смешное телевидение". The Russian group Inter TV offers 6 TV channels: RTVi, "Наше кино", "Детский мир", "Телеклуб", "Мир сериала", "Шансон-ТВ". And yet another Russian group "Контент-Юрион" has the following TV channels on their offer: АВТО24, "Детский", "Еврокино", "Русский Иллюзион", "Иллюзион+" and "Zoопарк".

Therefore, distribution of the Russian TV channels through a satellite or the Internet cannot be prohibited by the NTRBCU's decision. According to the opinion of many media experts, the decision to limit on-line-broadcasting of the Russian TV channels over the territory of Ukraine will cause retroaction, increase of public interest to them, and accordingly, their ratings.

In order to estimate the reach of the Russian TV-product at the Ukrainian market, it is necessary to know the number of cable networks' subscribers, and also the number of satellite television subscribers who have the opportunity to receive the Russian open channels.

In 2015 the number of cable television subscribers in Ukraine based on the State Statistics Service was 2 million 584 thousand persons, that is 37% less than in 2012. The number of fee-paying TV-channels subscribers of satellite television in Ukraine in 2015 based on different estimations was 140–350 thousand persons[4]. At the same time the number of Ukrainians who have the opportunity to receive free satellite channels (both Ukrainian and the "forbidden" Russian) in 2016 based on the estimations of chairman of "Ukraine"-Media group of Serhij Lyaschenko exceeded 5 million subscribers[5], that is almost 500 thousand subscribers more than in a previous year.

Thus, for the last two years there has been a tendency showing the reduction in the number of subscribers of cable networks and insignificant increase of fee-paying satellite packages, at the same time the Ukrainian audiences have actively shifted to free satellite television that offers the open Russian informative and entertaining channels.

In addition, it should be noted that the market of satellite television in Ukraine is in the 'bootleg' stage. About 1–2 million households use card-sharing method. In other words, they buy access keys to the satellite platforms containing all "forbidden" Russian TV channels from pirates. Based on experts' estimations in Ukraine, only in 2015 there were accessible about 400 'bootleg' resources to the users with possibility of revision of any TV channels[6]. The attempts to adjust the 'bootleg' shows remain ineffective. Thus, it is very difficult to define the real number of subscribers of every

[4] Обзор рынка платного спутникового телевидения Украины – http://www.marketing-ua.com/articles.php?articleId=4923, accessed 04 Oct 2016

[5] Приват со спутником: 1+1 покупает крупного провайдера ТВ Viasat – http://biz.liga.net/all/telekom/stati/3266233-privat-so-sputnikom-1-1-pokupaet-krupnogo-provaydera-tv-viasat.htm, accessed 04 Oct 2016

[6] В Украине обнаружено около 400 ресурсов с пиратским телетрансляциями – http://itc.ua/news/v-ukraine-obnaruzheno-okolo-400-resursov-s-piratskim-teletranslyatsiyami/, accessed 04 Oct 2016

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segment of television (cable, satellite fee-paying and satellite free of charge). It is also possible to claim that prohibiting of the Russian news content does not diminish interest in them, and, vice versa, push the Ukrainian audience to search alternative methods to get their favourite channels.

As it is a well- known fact, responsibility of journalist includes distribution of reliable, operative and objective information. As for the responsibility of TV channel, it can be demonstrated via distribution of high quality news, creation of the special social TV-projects, talk shows, organization of the special social events and others stuff like that. In the case of the Russian TV channels it can be claimed that none of the above-mentioned components is executed in Ukraine, and vice versa, there exists a continuous, conscious and destructive information influence on the Ukrainian audience.

This thesis was confirmed in very interesting research conducted in the years 2014–2015 by political scientists from the New York University Leonid Peysakhin and Arthur Rosenans. The aim of the research was to study the relation between political predilections of the Ukrainians living at the frontier zone with Russian Federation and signal power of the Russian TV channels. The research has proved the existence of a direct relation between political predilections and quality of Russian television signal. Leonid Peysakhin marked that "Russian television had influenced the increase of support among population of pro-Russian candidates and political parties at the level of 12% and decreased the number of those who supports pro-western candidates and parties by 8%. In the cases when TV-signal quality of the Russian channels gets better at one point, the level of support grows by 2,3% for pro-Russian parties and falls by 1,4% for pro-western parties".

The researchers noticed the so-called "polarization effect", which demonstrates that "electoral districts, that earlier voted for pro-Russian candidates, also, as a result of influence of Russian television would more likely vote for them again. An effect will be reverse in the pro-western areas, where influence of Russian television results in much higher support of pro-western candidates", – says Peysakhin[7]. Researchers came to the conclusion that on the one hand, Russian television considerably increased an amount of those who voted for pro-Russian parties in the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014, and on the other hand, Russian TV polarized an audience: both pro-Russian and pro-western electors became stronger in their position.

Conclusion

Today, the presence of the Russian information product at the Ukrainian market remains high and its influence, as the above-mentioned research proves, is also significant. There are several explanations of high rating of the Russian TV channels. As it was marked above, one of the possible reasons is that certain part of the Ukrainian viewers

[7] Передатчики и выборы: исследование влияния российского ТВ сигнала на украинских избирателей – http://mediasat.info/2015/05/26/peredatchiki-i-vybory/, accessed 04 Oct 2016

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"got used" to watching Soviet, and afterwards, the Russian television. In addition, the language of translation, content itself or higher technical performance can also attract audience that is loyal to Russian television.

On the other hand, it is also possible to talk about inefficiency of the state policy in the sphere of regulation of the distribution of anti-Ukrainian information. In fact, simple prohibition of signal broadcasting has resulted in an opposite effect: the Ukrainian audience began to search alternative methods to get information over the Internet and free satellite channels. The way out of the issue of counteracting the distribution of unreliable and distorted information that undermines state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, would be the development of their own interesting and high-quality information product based on true positive changes in the Ukrainian society and obligatory implementation of decisions taken by public regulative organs.

Abstract: The article describes the dissemination of true information about Ukraine in the context of its influence on the Ukrainian audience. It is noted that the presence of Russian information channels at the Ukrainian media market is a component of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. The author claims that the impact of the Russian TV content on the minds of the Ukrainian audience remains high if not crucial at times. The attempts to limit the presence of the Russian information channels by the Ukrainian regulator have turned out to be ineffective. It is concluded that the ban on the Russian broadcasting pushes audience to look for alternative ways to access the Russian TV channels and increases an interest towards them. One possible way of resolving that situation is to create a better high-quality and interesting national information product.
Key words: informational content, television product, social responsibility of media, public opinion.

Wpływ rosyjskiej produkcji telewizyjnej na ukraińskich odbiorców

Streszczenie: W artykule opisano techniki upowszechniania rzetelnej informacji o Ukrainie w kontekście jej wpływu na społeczeństwo ukraińskie. Należy zauważyć, że obecność rosyjskich kanałów informacyjnych na ukraińskim rynku medialnym jest cześcią składową polityki zagranicznej Federacji Rosyjskiej. Autor stwierdził, że wpływ rosyjskich treści telewizyjnych na umysły ukraińskiego odbiorcy pozostaje znaczący. Próby ograniczenia rosyjskich kanałów informacyjnych przez ukraińskie organy nadzoru są nieskuteczne. Stwierdzono, że zakaz nadawania rosyjskiego przekazu zmusza widzów do szukania alternatywnych sposobów dostępu do rosyjskich kanałów telewizyjnych i zwiększa zainteresowanie nimi. Jednym ze sposobów rozwiązania zaistniałej sytuacji może być przedstawienie bardziej jakościowego i interesującego dla odbiorcy ukraińskiego krajowego produktu informacyjnego.
Słowa kluczowe: Ukraina, Federacja Rosyjska, treści informacyjne, produkt telewizyjny, społeczna odpowiedzialność mediów, opinia publiczna

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Влияние российского телевещания на украинских зрителей

Аннотация: В статье описаны методы распространения достоверной информации об Украине в контексте ее влияния на украинское общество. Следует отметить, что присутствие российских новостных каналов на украинском медиарынке является частью внешней политики Российской Федерации. Автор считает, что влияние российского телеконтента на сознание украинского реципиента остается значительным. Попытки ограничить российские информационные каналы украинскими органами надзора неэффективны. Констатировано, что запрет на вещание российских СМИ заставляет зрителей искать альтернативные способы доступа к российским телеканалам и повышает их интерес к ним. Одним из способов разрешения сложившейся ситуации может стать презентация украинского отечественного продукта, который будет более качественным и интересным для получателя.

Ключевые слова: Украина, Российская Федерация, информационный контент, телевизионный продукт, социальная ответственность СМИ, общественное мнение

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