

Modern media influence: mass culture – mass consciousness – mass communication

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Abstract

The article examines the interconnection and interdependence of mass culture, mass consciousness and mass communication. The realization of media influence on the recipient is investigated due to a combination of the three worlds: real, information (individual memory) and symbolic (social memory). The significance of any linguacultural event is noted in the media. Information sources include education systems (knowledge, myths), religions (myths, faith), propaganda, advertising, culture, mass culture (myths, messages). The media dialogue of cultures enlivens social communication, organizes the flow of knowledge, myths, emotional experiences, volitional influences in social time and space. The mass communication environment of any linguistic culture, prone to personifying social institutions and the mythologization of personalities, constructs its own reality, the source of which is the sender's mythologeme. Products of mass culture are expressed in the number and quality of artistic myths embodied in books, films, music, theatre and concert performances, and media messages. Mass culture is an industry for the production of myths. Social order and artistic method in combination with mythological units and the general mythological concept are the tools for creating myths in any society in the coordinates of the system "culture – person". The article ascertains that the modern media reality reflects myths, stereotypes and metaphors in the media dialogue of cultures.

Key words: mass culture, mass consciousness, mass communication, media communication, media discourse, media influence

1. Introduction

Mass media culture implements the impact on the recipient due to a combination of the three worlds: real, information (individual memory) and symbolic (social memory). The significance of any linguacultural event is noted in the media. Information sources include education systems (knowledge, myths), religions (myths, faith), propaganda, advertising, culture, primarily mass culture (myths, messages). The language of the media in various linguistic cultures enlivens social communication, organizes the flow of knowledge, myths, emotional experiences, volitional impacts in social time and space (Sokolov, 1996: 4). The mass communication environment of any linguistic culture, prone to personifying social institutions and the mythologization of personalities, constructs its own reality, the source of which is the sender's mythologeme. Products of mass culture are expressed in the number and quality of artistic myths embodied in books, films, music, theatre and concert performances, and media messages. Mass culture is an industry for the production of myths (Zheltukhina, 2003; Zheltukhina, et al., 2017). Social order and artistic method in combination with mythological units and the general mythological concept are the tools for creating myths in any society in the coordinates of the system "culture – person".

2. Theoretical research base: condition of problem's study

Massmedia, religion and politics are based on mythologizing consciousness, faith in the magic of words, the role of the leader-deity (Normann, 1994; Sheygal, 2000; Zheltukhina 2003; Dobrosklonskaya, 2005; Ponomarenko, 2013a,b,c; Klushina, 2014; 2015; Zheltukhina, 2014; 2015; Zheltukhina et al., 2016a; Zheltukhina et al., 2016b; Zheltukhina et al., 2016c; Zheltukhina et al., 2016d; Zheltukhina et al., 2016e; Zheltukhina et al., 2017, etc.), the use of manipulative techniques of influence, ritualization of communication (genres of promises, sermons, slogan, etc.). In the modern mass media, a social order is implemented in order to confirm or destroy stereotypes, to create or disclose socio-political myths, to critically interpret the past with the projection to the present (Sheygal, 2000), the formation of a specific axiological picture of the world (for example, appeal to German folklore in the 30-40-ies (Kamenetsky, 1972)). The most suggestively marked are folklore texts that combine the word, rhythm and action, the images of anthropomorphic mythological creatures (for example, a lullaby) and promotional texts containing repeatedly replicated ideological clichés that express ideologems, i.e. one of the categories of collective representations that develop a mentality and culture (Kiklevich, Potekhina, 1998; Klushina, 2014). The subordination of the media discourse to propagandistic purposes (the "cold war", "independence", etc.) is reflected in the schemes of various antinomies "black" – "white", "one's own" – "someone else's", "ours" – "yours", "good" – "evil", etc., characterizing the global opposition of views, ideas, goals. The media discourse as a means of propaganda can be used for simplification, schematization, polarization of the political opposition.

The phenomenon of controlled massification (Shishkoff, cited in Bessonov 1971), the manipulation of human fears is the social and state cultivation of situations of fear and states of fear via targeted media management to become a highly developed industry. The media consciousness industry differs from its other branches in the direct ideological significance of its products. It provides the collective recipient with the appropriate feelings and emotions of fear and horror, thoughts and opinions about the dangerous world around them. Informing serves not the development of his thinking and the free formation of his judgments, but coercion to think in a certain direction through ready-made judgments. Thus, the impact of media fears on the unconscious of the mass begins to dominate the information aspect.

3. Methodological bases and research methods

Methodological basis of the work is the system approach that includes system and complex, systemic-structural and systemic-functional approaches. The purpose and problems of our research have defined the choice of analysis methods. In our work, such research procedures as hypothetical-deductive method, inductive method, descriptive and comparative method, definition analysis, elements of cognitive interpretation are used. Besides, in our research content analysis methods were applied to identification of the substantial party of mass media texts. The discourse analysis, studying structure and discourse units, and the integrated approach to the analysis of mass media texts consisting in studying of their semantics, pragmatics, syntactics with use of the component, contextual and stylistic analysis were realized.

4. Results and discussion

The culture of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has endowed the language of mass media with a symbolic meaning that demonstrates the mythologization of reality in the spirit of creating a gloomy and hopeless picture of the world. It is associated with the transition of the genre "horror", the genre "thriller" to the genre "life itself" with a certain simulation of part of the reports of catastrophes, as well as the combination of the discourse of love and the discourse of death. The negativity of information in mass media can be explained by the inconsistency of cultural layers of two epochs (the archaic values of the one, and the lack of ideology in the other), the interaction of life instincts (Eros, sexual desire, narcissistic egolbido – loss of incentive of the texts) and death (Thanatos, the end of the world, the motives of suicide, the ambivalence of love-hatred and sadomasochism directed against the "ego" (Frejd, 1997: 183)). One cannot but agree with E. Lassan that such processes characterize postmodern consciousness as the deformation of genre traditions, blurring the boundaries of concepts and the breakthrough of instincts. The tools for creating the egocentricity of the text are radical irony, the transformation of precedent texts, the presence of specific markers for the presence of the subject (*as it were, in fact*), the accentuation of attention to the "ego" of the sender. Along with the egocentric transformation of the texts of the genres that existed before, new genres appear, the catastrophes of the week becoming their symbol (Cherednichenko, 1987). Thus, the discourse of intimidation and death very often coincides with the discourse of erotization in the media discourse. When one is presented in unity with the other, the effect of a single whole is involuntarily created upon perception.

In modern society, an objective view of the world is necessary, for a person, being aware of the mechanism of censorship of consciousness (Frejd, 1997), to be always able to critically assess constantly changing reality. It is noteworthy that mass media, trying to implement the function of evaluation and criticism, instead of disclosing various rumors, pseudo-arguments, lies deliberately spread in order to influence feelings, emotions, moods and behavior of people, they successfully and globally generate and disseminate rumors, actively use pseudo-arguments and lies. At the same time involuntarily, but most often intentionally the media achieve the goals set, influencing the psyche and human behavior. Mass media actively exploit the mythological nature of human consciousness, based on emotionally affective and symbolic images in the transmission of information.

The phantasmal nature of the media discourse consists of *mythological* and *literary* (the designation of fictional creatures), *conceptual* (the terminology of erroneous scientific concepts), *ideological phantoms* (the designation of social utopias, illusions, etc.) (Normann, 1994: 53). The statement of G.G. Pocheptsov that imperial rule needs phantoms for self-preservation (Pocheptsov, 2001), allows us to explain the phantom globalism of the language of the media and the language of politics, observed in the modern world, including democratic countries. This indicates the special significance of the creative and magical functions of the language of the mass media. Phantasmal nature of denotations generates mythologems in the symbolic space of media discourse, and determines the existence of a specific category of predictive value associated with the interpretation of the content of various kinds of utterances. Esotericism or the mystery of the media discourse depends on the degree of its mythology. Myth contains a mystery, a riddle, is the expectation of a miracle, faith in the supernatural, the product of the illusory mind. Mythology and esotericism are more inherent in the discourse in totalitarian systems (Sheygal, 2000, Kravchenko, 1999). Esotericism depends on the media institute, its political and other orientation, its interests and goals. The flipside of esotericism is the surmise, which is intentionally laid in the media reports: "Organizing messages of the agency should not be done so that the recipient of the mass media cannot perform predictive activity" (Rozhdestvenskij, 1997: 593). The institutional character of the language of mass media correlates with the leading pragmatic principle of interest (the message should

be interesting, contain new, unknown information) and the surmise as the predictability of the message (the recipient carries out predictive activity that is deliberately programmed), relies on stereotypes and myths, creating different images. Thus, the institutional character intersects with other markers of exposure, suggestiveness (Zhelutkhina, 2007; 2010), namely stereotyping, mythologization and metaphORIZATION of consciousness.

It is characteristic of the mythological consciousness to appeal to precedent, especially to the image and deeds of the hero-ancestor, authority (Avtonomova, 1991; Ehliade, 1994; 1996a, b). This explains the active functioning in suggestive media texts about the fears of precedent phenomena (including precedent names) in intentional use, for example, synonyms among the common nouns. For example, *Aibolit = a doctor, James Bond = a spy*:

Who is being treated by the Duma Aibolites? (MC, 30.01.1999);

And however wild, monstrous, medieval it is (Chechnya – DG), no matter how many James Bonds have been decapitated – it still remains the hope and support of English plans in the Caucasus (Zavtra, No. 1, 1999).

In the process of influencing the human of the crowd, myth acts as an initial, primary, system-forming element, universal for all forms of social ties and types of society.

In the studies of the German scientist K. Huebner, the concept of myth is connected with the language of subjective signs (the so-called numinous language) (Huebner, 1996: 17). Moreover, these are the signs that encompass both the external world and man in their interaction. Numinous meanings, according to K. Huebner, play a decisive role in the myth. However, according to the concept of R. Barthes (Barthes, 1996: 258-259, 285-286), myth is a secondary system that presupposes a primary system. The primary system, according to Barthes, indicates the reality, which he calls "pure matter," while the "secondary" together with the mythical idea or mythical concept, is to a certain extent built on the primary and therefore cannot flow from the "nature of things". Mythical concept, according to R. Barthes, "deforms" and "alienates" the original meaning, as a result of flow R. Barthes called myth the "stolen language".

K. Huebner, refuting the concept of R. Barthes, proceeds from the fact that there is no pure matter or nature in itself, but there are only different interpretations of reality, and non-mythical interpretation has no advantages over mythical interpretation (Huebner, 1996: 336). Here R. Barthes is materialistic, and K. Huebner acts as an idealist, treating reality as merely its interpretation. Recognition of the importance of contacts (communication with popular authorities, whose opinion of the candidate and whose support actively form the image of the politician) seems rational in the concept of R. Barthes.

Taking into account the mythological nature of mass consciousness allows exerting propaganda effect on the recipient. Western researcher O. Thomson believes that propaganda has always accompanied the life of humankind: the authorities, the church, and the opposition, both in political and religious spheres (Thomson, 1977: 3), have used a certain technique of persuading the masses in all historical epochs. Propaganda is an attempt to influence the opinion of a large number of people on controversial issues, eliminating the neutral dissemination of views (Lasswell, 1950). Nevertheless, other points of view interpret the notion of propaganda more broadly. The same historian O. Thomson, opposing H. Lasswell, writes: "Propaganda refers to any means of introducing and transmitting images, ideas or information that affect human behavior taken from its active or passive side. This includes almost all aspects of art and communication" (Thomson, 1977: 7).

According to the American sociologist T. Parsons, the task of propaganda is to influence the relationship, and hence people's actions with the help of linguistic

stimuli, words – in writing or orally (Parsons 2002). T. Parsons sees propaganda as a means of social control, on the one hand, and as a technical tool capable of changing the situation, on the other. He divides propaganda into an *intensifying*, *revolutionary* and *destructive* one. *Intensifying* propaganda reinforces people's attitudes towards certain values, social systems, and assessments. This is done within the context of social control. *Revolutionary propaganda* is aimed at forcing people to accept new values and ideas in conflict with the existing ones (for example, *the situation in the USSR during the period of perestroika*). *Destructive propaganda* is aimed at destroying the generally accepted system of values – it is, in fact, already the manipulation of the public opinion, psychological warfare.

The analysis of media information about fear with the help of such tools as *a unit of myth* and *the concept of myth* shows that information media messages are actualized as versions of a myth – information, publicistic or artistic-journalistic. Any information on fears, terror, danger, catastrophes, etc. in the press, on television, radio, on the Internet is an example of a constructed myth. Information in the media that exists only due to the methods of presentation is propaganda. News, filed in a proper way, is propaganda.

The modern process of creating myths in the media has spawned a new genre – show-journalism (ostentatious, entertaining journalism). There are such show-publicists on every TV channel and in all the leading media in Russia today. Against the backdrop of such show-journalism, analytical journalism, analytical style require from the public the tension of thought, which few can. Such journalism is "boring", not television like, not fascinating, it is being displaced from the screen.

Manipulation of consciousness in mass media, in contrast to conventional propaganda, is a process associated with a tough, aggressive, impact on people, certain social groups, including those who due to various reasons get out of social control. This is a process based on a system of measures aimed at dramatic change of people's outlooks, the decomposition of their minds, and the change of their social conduct. According to T. Parsons, this is destructive propaganda. P. Freire complements the idea of T. Parsons, regarding the manipulation of the human mind as a means of his enslavement: there is no manipulation before the awakening of the people, but there is total suppression, while the oppressed are totally crushed by reality, there is no need to manipulate them (Freire, 1971: 144-145).

Mind control through fears, including political fears, presupposes the active use of the public psychology, as this sphere is the most vulnerable, the most sensitive to influence. It includes such mental formations inherent in social groups and communities of people, as needs and interests, consciousness, feelings, moods, public opinion, mentality; such mass mental processes as communication, persuasion, suggestion, imitation; such mental states as excitement, rise and fall, enthusiasm and stress, determination and confusion.

Manipulation of consciousness is, in fact, psychological warfare, which assumes a propagandistic influence on a human consciousness in ideological and emotional spheres (Zheltukhina, 2003). Psychological warfare is a system of influence on people's consciousness mainly through the sphere of social psychology. This system of influence includes, in most cases, immoral, inhumane means – disinformation, rumors, and information-psychological sabotage and as the most extensive means – provocation.

Disinformation, according to the French researcher P. Nord, is "a weapon of intellectual action, aggression against the human mind" (Nord, 1980: 6). Through the weapons people can be misled, made helpless, they will not be able to use their strength. Disinformation is a message that deludes people by imposing a distorted misconception of ideas and reality. Among these messages, there can be sensations, false information, and half-truth information. Disinformation aims at creating stereotypes of thinking, shifting beliefs. Disinformation is a tool, which can be used to

paralyze the will of the people and their leaders.

Rumors are a tool of disinformation, which prompts people the line of conduct (Dmitriev et al., 1997; Borodina, Zheltuhina, 2015, etc.). Rumors can be false or with elements of truth, in their intent and organization they can be inflammatory, frightening, panicky or encouraging. They can be born based on unacknowledged information – the fact is known, but the content and details of the event are suppressed.

Information-psychological sabotage is implemented by statements, assessments, elaborated actions, special measures aimed at destroying public mind, changing attitudes and orientations. Sabotage, as a rule, is aimed at instilling doubt in the socio-political and moral values of a given society or political party, movement, destroying credibility to the government, encouraging people to take certain actions, arousing nationalistic feelings, national prejudices, which should lead to destabilization of the society. Among the measures used in information-psychological sabotage, there is a certain kind of journalism, threats and even blackmail.

Provocation as a means of manipulating consciousness is based on mythology. It is cynical, acute, episodic, capable of having an instant influence on the consciousness of the society, certain social and professional groups and individuals, party leaders, organizations, firms and companies. Provocation as a means of influencing people's minds, as a means of combating political opponents, as a means of gaining power, upholding and strengthening it, is used in the media in both democratic and totalitarian societies. Provocation can be planned and spontaneous.

A *myth* is a motivated message. The task of the myth is to give a purposeful meaning to the subject to be sold; to create a metalanguage, i.e. the language over the existing ones. Myths in the mental space of the consumer become tools of manipulation of the human psyche at the level of the unconscious, as the connection of concepts with objects and with each other is not understood by the consumer.

Myth does not deceive anyone, it does not lie, and it only slightly shifts meanings. Advertising is the creation of myth. Myth in advertising and politics is based on basic instincts and universal human values, which are based on the basic instincts – food and sex, more often complementing and enhancing with the second one. For example, *Well, what are you waiting for? (A woman's voice) – you have longed for this, scrolled all the details in your head a thousand times... you knew: the day will come, and you will do it ... Come on, this is your tariff! (advertising a phone)*. The choice of the topic is quite understandable – strong emotions arise around the same instincts, forming "complexes", fears, i.e. partly or completely unconscious ideas, fused with a strong emotional experience.

5. Conclusion

So, nowadays the media practice methods of subconscious stimulation, when the recipient's attitude to objects and phenomena of reality is formed with the help of standardized simplified ideas (*stereotypes, images, myths, rumors*), embedded in information messages, automatically causing a negative or positive reaction to a particular event in the mass consciousness. It is established that the efficiency of perception is increased if the content of information coincides with the experience, attitudes, and stereotypes of the recipient (the stereotypes of perception of conflicts in Chechnya or Ukraine created by the world media as a factor in the decision-making by PACE members in Chechnya in 1991-2003, the UN and leading states as far as Ukraine is concerned in 2014-2017, etc.). If there is no time to understand the information, the recipient is guided by the existing beliefs.

In addition, it is easier to convince people of ideas that are relevant to their interests, needs, beliefs and the will (Porshnev, 1974; 1979). When convincing there

are used the mechanisms of the impact of words, sound, colour, light (e.g., accompanying Hitler's speeches with Wagner's music, producing an oppressive impression of fear, threat: the metaphor of "mechanism" – "heavy military machine"; broadcasting hymns, marches, rallies with the goal of "mass psychosis" of the crowd being passionate; the propaganda of Paul Joseph Goebbels: mental simplification, material limitation, constant repetition, emotional inflaming, the action of which is implemented by A. Hitler, G. Bush (*We will liberate the Iraqi people from the dictator!*), US and EU sanctions against Russia in the matter of the Crimea and Ukraine, etc.).

The contradictory nature of the information delivered to the recipient may contribute to misleading him or her or disclosing intentions of the kind. The media try to guess ideas, needs, etc. of the recipient to express and change them in the right direction. For example, the mechanism of distraction from important information is actively used by filing it at a certain time together with other news. In addition, appealing to recipients' values and needs are operated with in order to encourage their prejudices and interests, and the true intentions of the sender are not disclosed. The consequence is one-sided coverage of events, the policy of double standards, which causes a distorted idea in the mind, fear, terror, panic, etc. (for example, *private ownership of land*: mainly the agricultural sphere is discussed, not the industrial, household; the delimitation of concepts: a) from the point of view of the West and Kiev, adherents of the Euromaidan (*fighters for democracy, freedom and independence, adherents of national unity, etc.*) and their opponents from the South-East of Ukraine (*terrorists, militiamen, federalists, separatists, pro-Russian, colorades, etc.*), b) from the point of view of Russia, the South-East of Ukraine, protesters from the South-East of Ukraine (*militiamen, rebels, adherents of federalization and etc.*) and their opponents (*junta, maydanovtsy, maydanovs, maydans, maydanuty, banderologists, nationalists, benderovtsy, fascists, assassins, beasts, savages, the right sector of Euromaidan, right-wing militants, hundreds of self-defense of the Maidan, heavenly hundred, etc.*).

Thematic classifications of fears are based on highlighting the object or subject of fear, the scope of its implementation: social, political, economic, everyday, business, educational, etc. fears. Due to the fact that political media fears (M.R. Zheltukhina) prevail in modern society, we would like to dwell on them in a more detailed way. Political fears are understood as emotions arising in a situation of political threats within one state or in the international sphere. Media influence on the feelings and emotions of the recipient is carried out in the flow necessary for the sender, namely in informing about possible threats in the media, in the formation of certain fears, real fears, neurotic fears, fears of conscience, etc. Thus, the cultivation of political media fears, a drastic change of attitudes in the minds of people is quite possible in certain socio-political and economic conditions and with massive propaganda of various linguacultures in the media. This conclusion suggests that the modern media reality reflects the mythological, stereotypical and metaphorical nature of the dialogue of cultures, which is due to certain "pliancy", manageability of public consciousness and mood, its stereotypical, mythological, metaphorical nature in various linguacultural communities.

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