

## THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE MASS MEDIA IN THE POLITICAL SOCIALISATION OF THE ACTOR

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**Abstract:** The article aims to analyse the role of the mass media in the political socialization of the actor. According to the purpose, the research process required a comprehensive application of the following methods: descriptive-analytical, inductive-deductive, and bibliographic. The study of political socialisation is based on two primary principles. The first is the "principle of primacy", according to which one learns better what one learns first. The second is the "structuring principle". It consists in the fact that the primary training structures the further training. As a result, the immediate attention of researchers of political socialisation was focused on the study of the primary socialisation mechanisms and institutions – the family and the school. This caused insufficient attention to the socialisation function of the mass media. The main factor favourable for eroding the claims of the mass media for "intellectual" independence and, at the same time, for ensuring their activities in modern societies, is market type of relations. The mass media activities concern the market as the main means of stimulating consumption. The most critical systemic orientations deal with the distributed support of the components of the political system, namely, with the support of the political power, the political regime, and the political community. The article analyses the main approaches to the influence of the mass media on the political socialisation of an actor. The research results can be used in the development of educational materials on normative disciplines.

**Keywords:** Influence of mass media, Manipulations, Political consciousness, Political socialisation.

### 1 Introduction

The focus of political socialisation specialists is usually on the content of political orientations, the sources through which these orientations are taught, as well as the very specific learning processes. However, until recently, relatively little attention was paid to the study of the role of the media in political socialisation.

One of the reasons for this is too narrow vision of "political" and, accordingly, the narrow vision of "power". In turn, this removed from view one of the most important sources of political information – television entertainment and political news, which under normal circumstances were not considered the subject of analysis.

### 2 Materials and Methods

The purpose of our study is to analyse the role of the media in the political socialisation of the actor. According to the purpose, the research process required a comprehensive application of the following methods:

- Descriptive-analytical is to analyse the principles of the impact with the subsequent comparison and generalisation of the results);
- Inductive-deductive is to observe and describe the selected characteristics of the influence of the media;
- Bibliographic is for the collection and processing of literature on the research topic.

To complete the picture of transforming the mass audience into "interpretive communities" and the average recipient of the mass media into a personified subject of the media-communicative space, it is necessary to involve scientific principles of persuasive communicative theory by A. Bandura, F. Zimbardo, and M. Leippe.

In this combination, it can be stated that this is the current scientific foundation of the analysis of socio-cultural objects,

which are in fact, the metadiscourse of the media (despite all attempts to politicise it) and other products (including art) of the media themselves. However, the materials of the analysis of organisations that follow the narrative of Russian information propaganda in the media space and online media and their influence on the formation of public consciousness deserve special attention [9]. This topic is the subject of research by InterniuzUkraina, NGO Detector Media, particularly the latest "Pro-Russian and anti-Western conspiracy in the information war.

### 2.1 Key Trends 2020-2021 from the Institute of Mass Media and the NGO Detector Media

Many studies of the group "Rating", "Social Monitoring", "Razumkov Center", KIIS, organisations "Infosapiens" and "Democratic Youth Initiatives", etc. address this issue. In the domestic scientific discourse, the researched issues are considered in the works of G. Pocheptsov (specifics of information wars), B. Leonov (information terrorism), Y. Polovinchak (the use of manipulative media technologies), M. Ozhevan (confrontation of strategic narratives), O. Samorukova, S. Mohylka, Y. Kokarchi (destructive behaviour in social networks), V. Gorbulin ("hybrid war" of the Russian Federation against Ukraine), A. Onkovych (information and psychological operations in social networks), N. Semen (social networks as a means of counteracting aggression of the Russian Federation), and others.

### 3 Results and Discussion

The mismatch between democratic imperatives of openness and incomprehensibility for the vast majority of mechanisms for making vital political decisions, on the one hand, and the lack of adequate mechanisms for representing the interests of citizens in public space, on the other, is the trigger of news in the media.

This circumstance requires the presence of transparent channels of interaction between media and the general public. In fact, there is weak public support for most political parties and movements in Ukraine (only 2-3% of citizens are party members), lack of clear goals and, consequently, lack of understanding of their activities by individuals, determined by the lack of effective channels of interaction between party structures and ordinary citizens.

The active introduction of the latest digital technologies has stimulated the powerful development of social media, which combines information content and online communication with its consumers. Social media covers various services: online media, social networks, the blogosphere as a collection of blogs, microblogs, video hosting, etc. In Ukraine, social media began to develop particularly actively in 2014-2015, including online resources of public associations, volunteers, activists, politicians and experts. They covered the course of events such as the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea, the beginning of hostilities in the Donbas, and became a full-fledged alternative to the press and television.

Opinion leaders and influencers from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and others are increasingly expanding their influence: several bloggers with a total audience of 400-900 thousand subscribers represent an information resource equivalent to the average information channel. Recently, Telegram, which serves as a social network, has become one of the main areas of gossip, hate speech and disinformation narratives and it is becoming increasingly popular in Ukraine. A study by the NGO Media Detector shows that 49 out of 100 most popular telegram channels in Ukraine belong to the news and media category. Among the top ten, the six are often "draining", provocative and neglecting the news standards.

Of course, new political institutions do not immediately and automatically receive support and recognition from the general

public, much of which may be rather sceptical and conservative. In addition, in the absence of large-scale awareness-raising campaigns in the media, new political institutions and new forms of political interaction, in general, are unable to spread and develop in society. Under these conditions, it is important to create favourable mechanisms to support civic initiatives and form counseling and educational centres designed to explain and demonstrate the possibility and viability of new ways of political participation in public life. In this regard, the emphasis should be made on the possibility of solving problems close to the immediate life of the individual, as namely the problems of the life-sustaining nature directly concern the majority. At the same time, namely around these problems basic practical schemes and the nature of the perception of political, in particular, governmental institutions, are formed [1, 3, 9].

A specific feature of the democratisation of socio-political life in the post-Soviet countries was that the movement itself was initiated not "from below" as a result of political pressure on government institutions of the general public, but "from above" - in the interests of the relatively narrow political elite. In contrast to Western Europe, where democratic transformations have taken place over the last few centuries and modern political systems have emerged from long processes, in post-socialist countries existing forms of political democracy have been introduced without the necessary, adequate sociocultural background of understanding of processes [6,8]. As a result, the adaptation of democratic political mechanisms takes place in very specific, so to speak, non-classical conditions, which determines the unexpected socio-political effects due to the mismatch of the existing political culture of citizens to fundamentally new forms of political interaction and participation in socio-political life. An additional factor of tension was the current changes in the very ways of functioning of democratic political mechanisms caused by globalisation changes, in particular the formation and dissemination of transnational information practices of the media.

These circumstances also affected the nature of the interaction of public opinion and political institutions in the post-socialist field. At the same time, they reflected a key role in establishing this interaction between the media, further subordination of which to market and, more broadly, economic imperatives raise fundamental questions about media ethics and the values they must adhere to informing the general public about current socio-political events.

It is generally accepted that political values and attitudes correspond to certain political objects. Such objects can be political leaders, specific policies, a set of political ideas, and so on. Orientations of individuals can be divided into two groups. Systemic orientations are related to the legitimacy of the political system and its active support. Distributive orientations are related to issues such as "who and what should be presented in society." Systemic orientations are essential for the stability and survival of the political system.

And in this sense, "the function of the mass media should be seen not in production, but the representation of the public. In this case, the "representation" should be discussed in a certain "narrowing", reduced meaning. Due to the fact that for all systems, including the media system itself, "publicity" is always used to describe the other, inaccessible side of their borders and cannot be specified in the direction of certain partner systems - it (publicity) must be represented in the form of such reality constructs in which all subsystems and even all people can take part. Thus, the representation of publicity through the media currently provides both transparency and opacity, i.e., some thematic knowledge in the form of certain specific objects and uncertainty about who and how reacts to it" [10, p. 164].

The political functions of the media as an expression of public opinion presuppose the presence of the "public" highly educated group of people who can make independent judgments in a situation of debatable conflict of opinion, and are able to build a holistic and coherent system of political views [3]. Among the functions of the media, there are the following: 1)

information; 2) socio-political functions; 3) economic functions of stimulating consumption; 4) entertaining [7]. The specificity of all these functions in modern societies is determined by several forms of universalization of interactions inherent in their basic subsystems. In economics, this type of universalization is a market capitalist system based on monetary equivalent, in politics – democracy and popular sovereignty, in the social sphere – liberal individualism and formal legal regulation of conflict. These are particular types of algorithmisation of social life, set by the very rhythm and method of organization of modern civilization [5].

The main factor favourable to the blurring of the media's claims to "intellectual" independence and at the same time to ensure their activities in modern societies, is the market type of relationship. The media act concerning the market as the main means of stimulating consumption not only in the field of advertising but also as a translator of different lifestyles set by a particular type of consumption.

The most important systemic orientations deal with the distributed support of the components of the political system, namely with the support of political power, the political regime and the political community. Political power includes various government positions. The political regime is related to the "rules of the game" in the political system, such as supporting or not supporting democratic forms of government and the social course. Support for the regime may include positive attitudes towards the legal system and support for basic socio-cultural values [2]. Finally, the political community defines itself by a sense of common socio-political affiliation or belonging to a group of jointly controlled people. Orientations to the political community are usually defined in terms of patriotic symbols, individual trust in citizenship, or trust in people (social trust) [7].

The study of political socialization is based on two main principles. The first is the "principle of primacy", according to which students learn best why they study first. The second is the "structuring principle" – the principle declaring that primary education structures go first. As a result, the main attention of researchers of political socialization was focused on the study of primary socialization mechanisms and institutions - the family and school. This caused insufficient attention to the socialising function of the media.

An alternative point of view is held by J. Carlson, whose focus is on the socialisation functions of the media, namely the impact of entertainment television on viewers and the socialisation component of this impact. The researcher proceeds from the thesis of the hidden effect of television on the audience. This position was most clearly explained in several "cultivation analysis" studies. In its most general form, the idea of cultivation theory is based on such a logic of reasoning: "It is unlikely that a single message could affect thoughts and values. If a certain type of message is constantly aimed at reinforcing a certain point of view, this can significantly affect over time. Most likely, the effects of mass communication messages are expressed in the perception of social reality. Research has shown that if the television world is seriously different from reality, then individuals who actively consume television express opinions that are more in line with what is shown. The adoption of the television version of reality takes place in parallel with the support of values and opinions inherent in this television reality" [2].

In confirmation of this thesis, V. Andrushchenko notes: "The spiritual space of society is overflowing with permanent "cassette", "chain mail" and similar scandals, which are constantly being revived; dubious PR technologies dominate it in support of the next candidate; from time to time there are loud campaigns to discredit a politician, statesman, and even the President of Ukraine. The average citizen is almost convinced of "media corruption", "continuous corruption of officials", "the dominance of bandits on all levels of government", and "rejection of decent and fair people" [1].

In this sense, "political narratives are strategic tools. Political decision-makers or stakeholders often create problems (in the

artistic sense) as a context for the actions they seek to take. It's not that they are doing damage or destruction to be able to do something, it's that they represent the world in a way that makes them, their skills, and their actions necessary" [4].

Individuals become accustomed to values and attitudes during socialization. Of course, norms, values, and attitudes are not unchanged, but, on the contrary, are significantly modified throughout life. But specific for today is that, on the one hand, the revival of socio-cultural dynamics – economic, political, and cultural change. On the other hand, the transition in the post-Soviet territory to fundamentally new forms of socio-political life, radical change in norms, values and attitudes of individuals becomes fundamental.

Determinant here is the process of socialisation or rather changes in both socialization procedures and values themselves. In this case, we should talk about a kind of resocialization, which, however, not only internalizes the individual's socially recognized norms and values and forms in him the appropriate social order but transforms existing, socialized items earlier. As a result, resocialization is a fundamentally different process than socialization. Its success or failure also has fundamentally different consequences than the consequences of success or failure of socialisation. The problem is that resocialisation deals not just with already formed individuals and sets of norms, values and attitudes, but with active actors in public life who are in those social positions that under traditional conditions were not considered as positions of individuals who should be socialised.

The proposed approach first identifies differences in the content of programs shown on television and what actually exists in life. Then the focus is on the audience. They determine, in particular, whether the assessments of the reality of those involved in active viewing are shifted towards "pictures of the world" broadcast on television. At the last stage, it is determined to what extent television cultivates thoughts and attitudes that coincide with the definitions of television reality.

J. Carlson used this approach in a study of television programs that show scenes of violence, as a result of which he was able to identify several hidden effects of television communication. According to his findings, the content of broadcasts with scenes of violence has two important points. The first is that the world around us is extremely dangerous, where anyone can become a victim of aggression at any time. Second, the display of violence plays a key role in maintaining the existing social order on television, creating a sense of danger in viewers and thus strengthening social conformism to social norms [2].

The market concept modifies Enlightenment theory by formulating it in economic rather than political or ideological terms. According to this concept, the media is a market in which information, advertising images, political ideas, etc. circulate. These products are chosen by consumers according to their own tastes and preferences. The consumer is an individual who represents an independent value. He has an indisputable right to be guided by his preferences, and he is rational enough to find what suits his aspirations and desires.

Only a market based on ownership and competition can provide him with the desired variety of choices. Any state intervention will reduce and distort this diversity. As in the market sphere, the only function of the state is to ensure the ownership of entrepreneurs, producers, and suppliers of media products.

However, this approach hides certain dangers, as the unrestricted free market tends to monopolize, concentrating in the hands of large media corporations, which denies free competition. In this situation, the state must take care of the public interest through certain obligations to market agents. Hence the theory of social responsibility of the media.

#### 4 Conclusion

We can say that the media in modern society is responsible for forming an individual semantic image of the "real world", which is

created on the basis of information received by the consumer with the index "real". In this regard, the information function of the media is at the same time meaningful. First, media reports specify the way a subject or fact is given. By choosing the way the subject is presented, the media can vary widely the perception of the subject that arises in the recipient of information.

Secondly, the news report highlights certain moments in the semantic continuum and thus arranges purposeful activities, cutting off what does not matter. Thus, the message gives meaning to certain fragments, denying by selecting the meaning of others. This is how the semantic sphere of life is formed, in which the important is singled out, and the unimportant is ignored.

The media organise the semantic space of the world, which is located outside the individual's personal experience, thus creating the subject-event framework, which provides points of reference in the space of communication outside the individual's actual experience. There are two oppositional approaches to defining the role and its assessments of the political socialisation of the actor; both have shortcomings and highlight the problems that exist today in the field of public-media interaction.

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