

Political Manipulation Of The Media (On The Example Of Mass Media Of The Republic Of Tatarstan)*

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Abstract. *Modern social processes are characterized by the growth of media influence, the accretion of media power, called the mediocracy. The social, political, and power impact of various state institutions are increasingly replaced by the information and psychological influence. In the system of social relations there is an increase in the information component, received from the press. However, along with the advantages of information exchange, there are complexities, objectively appearing from this issue, one of which is manipulation in the mass media. It is known, that the activation of these processes occurs during the pre-election period. In this regard, there is a profound social and scientific need to study the practices of media manipulation. This allows to have a new perspective look at the specifics of presentation of politicized facts, events, and to evaluate them. In this respect, the regional system of mass media remains an understudied segment. The analysis of leading mass publications of the Republic of Tatarstan shows, that their authors do not create fundamentally new events, but place emphasis on the ongoing processes. Despite the differences in the typology of publications (state and commercial media), they use similar manipulative technologies: differences are only in the combination of technologies and the frequency of their use. The goals of media manipulation are the promotion of candidate, the formation of the necessary image characteristics (positive and/or negative), the fixation of pre-set stereotypes in the public consciousness. The specifics of information support of the political campaign for the election of the President of the Republic of Tatarstan in 2015, on the basis of the analysis of forms, methods of its essential features, in the leading periodicals of the region, were defined in this study, in the time and content continuum.*

Keywords: mass media, manipulative technologies, political discourse, election campaigns, the Republic of Tatarstan.

Introduction

Manipulative technologies are a common phenomenon in the Russian mass media. Necessity to convince the audience of the conclusiveness nature of certain ideas, to bring the right candidate into power, is the reason for the subtle influence on the mass audience. Manipulative mechanisms, used by the regional press in the reflection of political events, are investigated. Such concept of manipulation is used, which is considered as the most universal term, characterizing the process of hidden influence on the human psyche.¹ The authors consider the manipulation as the process of hidden information and psychological influence from the sidelines of mass media structures on the mass audience, with the aim of changing the views, positions, desires, the overacting objective - beliefs and values, carried out through the media.²

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¹ R. R. Gazizov T. A. Nagovitsyna, "Features of manipulative technologies in Russian political discourse (on the example of the Tatarstan republic mass media)", in *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, XX (2016), Special Issue no. 2, p. 14-14.

² R. R. Gazizov R.R., "Practice of participation of periodicals of the Republic of Tatarstan in election campaigns," in *Bulletin of the Chuvash State Pedagogical University named after. I. Ya. Yakovlev*, II (2014), no. 82, p. 89-94.

It is known, that the activation of the use of manipulative technologies occurs during the period of coverage of political processes.³ Political campaign for the election of the President of the Republic of Tatarstan, one of the most economically developed regions of Russia, was investigated. The elections were held on September 13, 2015 on a single voting day. According to the official data, 2,932,564 voters were registered in the Republic of Tatarstan as of January 1, 2015.⁴ The President of the Republic of Tatarstan is the head of the republic and the highest official, who heads the system of executive State government bodies of the subject of the Russian Federation - the Republic of Tatarstan.

The study is based on the materials of journalistic texts, published in the publications of the Republic of Tatarstan - a region with a developed and ramified media system.⁵ The leading publications of the region have been selected for the analysis: printed ones based on their circulation, electronic ones – on the number of unique visitors, on a number of parameters. So, the following media were used in the work: print media (newspapers “Respublika Tatarstan”, “Vechernyaya Kazan”), electronic online media (“BUSINESS Online”, “e-Kazan”). They differ in form of ownership as state (“Respublika Tatarstan”) and commercial (“Vechernyaya Kazan”, “BUSINESS Online”, “e-Kazan”), respectively - on information policy: pro-state and opposition.⁶ Thus, the research of technologies in the practice of Russian media is relevant and significant both in the scientific-theoretical and practical-applied aspects.

Materials and methods

The research is based on a systematic approach to the study of media texts in the unity of their structural and functional components. General scientific methods were applied: observation, comparison. Specific methods, peculiar to philological sciences and mass media were used: content analysis, problem-chronological, structural, typological, which revealed the essential features of manipulation in the mass media. Political problematic of the above-mentioned publications were considered with a view of manipulation. The sections, headings, and individual publications, corresponding to the main problem-thematic area, were investigated: the regional elections of 2015 for the post of the President of the Republic of Tatarstan. The existence of these indicators in the title, the text, their relevance to the topic and the material problem were the basis for the analysis.

³ T. A. Nagovitsyna, R. R. Gazizov, "Mass media of the Republic of Tatarstan penal system: Social, psychological and communicative aspects," in *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, XX (2016), Special Issue 2, p. 9-13.

⁴ Central Election Commission of the Republic of Tatarstan http://izbirkom.tatarstan.ru/eng/forma4_1riur.htm, accessed in 07.07.2017.

⁵ V. Z. Garifullin, L. R. Sabirova, "The anniversary of the Tatar Journalism: Its progress and losses," in *Journal of Language and Literature*, VI (2015), Issue 2, p. 132-135.

⁶ V. Z. Garifullin, R. C. Garifullin, L. R. Sabirova, "The rise and development of economic journalism in the republic of Tatarstan," in *Journal of Language and Literature*, VI (2015), no. 3, p. 214-217.

The work is based on the scientific research, devoted to the contemporary problems of mass media development. The elements of the terminological apparatus of leading international scientists in the field of media manipulation were used: Ya.N. Zasursky, I.M. Dzyaloshinsky, E.L. Dotsenko, S.G. Kara-Murza.

Results and discussions

The elements of media system of the Republic of Tatarstan during the elections have specific methods of influencing the public consciousness, the effectiveness of which is determined, based on the principle of publication establishment and the degree of freedom of the editorial board from the authorities. Manipulation can take many forms: violation of temporary and logical connections, confusion of slander with the truth, substantiation of the thesis with false arguments, purposeful page assembly, and combination of materials and headings for the purpose of misinformation. In connection with these reasons, it becomes necessary to study and evaluate these phenomena.

In the process of coverage by journalists of political issues, communicative technologies, influencing the mass consciousness of the audience, are used, forming it in the given direction.

It has been established, that emotional issues played an appreciable role in the processes of hidden influence on readers. Solving the problem of representation of political discourse, the studied publications use the available information and technical tools for the purpose of concealing the audience's consciousness, forming it in a pre-determined direction. This feature is characteristic for all the studied publications: the newspapers "Respublika Tatarstan", "Vechernyaya Kazan", "BUSINESS Online", "e-Kazan". The analysis shows that the use of such methods as comparisons, historical analogies, truisms, "anchors" allows to influence on information flows, making their argumentation more convincing and clear. The methods, used in the studied periodicals, are based on the considerations of peculiarities of perception, psychology, and intellectual activity of the audience.⁷ For example, the method of using the words, relating to the basic values of society, is convincing without additional information, that shows the convenience of its use. Applying this technology, the media focuses on issues of democracy, family, health, and home.

The study of problem-thematic lines and information priorities of publications revealed the following facts. The newspaper "Respublika Tatarstan", which is a typical model of a pro-state publication, pays the most attention to the coverage of the activities of political elites (46% of the total number of newspaper publications on the topic), the individual as a political subject (35%), and the state as a political institution (19%). The newspaper "Vechernyaya Kazan" demonstrates a predominant commitment to the issues of the individual as a subject of politics (62%) and party pluralism (38%). The newspaper "BUSINESS Online" is also focused on the coverage of figures of regional political establishment, as well as

⁷ V. Z. Garifullin, L. R. Zakirov, "Functioning of civic/citizen journalism in the media space of the Republic of Tatarstan," *The Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art and Communication. TOJDAC*, Special Edition (2016), p. 2322-2326.

individual subjects (56% and 44% of materials). The focus of attention of the newspaper "e-Kazan" – is a person, as a subject of politics. The incumbent President of the Republic of Tatarstan R. Minnikhanov had the largest caliber among the figures of candidates. Then, with a noticeable difference in both the number of mentions and the scale of their submission, are other candidates in the elections: R. Bilgildeeva, H. Mirgalimov, R. Yusupov. Undoubtedly, in the pre-election period, the greatest attention to individual candidates and, accordingly, more active coverage, are marked by a certain manipulative effect.⁸

Thus, the conducted analysis showed that in the information agenda of the researched publications the figure of the acting leader of the region was brought to the forefront. In printed versions, this feature predetermined the layout of issues (mostly headline materials, that emphasizes their special significance), and in the general information picture, drawn by the publication. In electronic mass media (especially - in the newspaper "BUSINESS Online") materials are published in a certain detailing of time - every 7-9 hours).⁹

The practice of participation of the researched publications in political processes has shown that the main directions in their activity were coverage of issues, related to the renewal and development of electoral legislation; solution of organizational and technological issues, resolvable in the lead-up to the elections; promulgation of their results and so on.

Characterizing the approaches of publications to the issue of thematic preferences, it should be noted, that the newspaper "Respublika Tatarstan" is characterized by the ignoring of news about the opposition, political outsiders, and other similar topics. The content analysis shows, that its interest is aimed at reflecting the most important political events. In the newspaper "Vechernyaya Kazan", top leaders have numerically lower figures, but they exceed the mentions of other candidates for elections in 2015. In our opinion, this indicates the need to take into account the popularity of candidates. The publication "e-Kazan" revealed an increase in the importance of microstructures (for example, party leaders, candidates - outsiders, etc.) over macrostructures (state) .

The media practice has revealed the presence of "authorities" (influence groups). In the studied publications, the method is implemented in the form of approval or condemnation of a particular person or fact, by a generally recognized authority. It was established, that the method of "authority transfer" was actively used in the newspaper "Respublika Tatarstan". Speaking about the majority, in media practice there is also the method "winning side", which appeals to the unconscious desire of a person to be together with the "winner", "with all".

⁸ V. Z. Garifullin, R. G. Mingalimov, "Tatar journalism transformation vectors," *Journal of Language and Literature*, VI (2015), no. issue 1, p. 192-194.

⁹ Elena S. Doroschuk, Tatiana S. Staroverova, "Online Representations of Media in Modern Information Space of Russia Region," in *International journal of humanities and cultural studies*, Special Issue (2016), p.174-180.

In a direct connection with the previous method, the technique “common platform” can also be considered. Using this method, the authors of the materials emphasize, that all members of the group to which they belong, share the proposed solution to the issue, and therefore the audience should join the others. As practice shows, the most often this method is a selection of letters to the editorial office, when the representatives of mass media purposefully indicate the membership of the respondent in a particular social community.

In the system of manipulative influence on the mass media audience, other effective methods has been established: truisms - obvious statements, which are in accordance with reality, applying them, the manipulator can mask certain constructions as reasoning; the technique of anchoring - when faced with “an anchor” (established associative flow), a person begins to experience certain feelings, each time the same; the use of words, relating to the basic values of society - emotionally colored words, closely related to the basic values, opinions of society, and convincing without additional information .¹⁰

Summary

1. Manipulation in the political discourse of mass media is a process of hidden information and psychological influence to mass audience, with the aim to change attitudes, positions, beliefs and values, carried out through the media.

2. Manipulation is determined by a combination of technologies. The research revealed some technologies, the most widely used by regional mass media, in covering political events of 2015: selective choice, authority transfer, use of words, related to the basic values of society, historical analogies.

3. The use of manipulative technologies, their specificity and intensity are determined at two levels: federal-regional, represented by general political conditions in the country and the region; local, represented by the information policy of the mass media, its founder, their desire and ability to influence the socio-political situation.

4. The increase of microstructures importance (for example, party leaders, candidates-outsiders, etc.) has been revealed over macrostructures (state).

Conclusion

The studied publications are characterized by: prevalence of information genres, reprints from other publications, interest in individual subjects of politics, publication of politicians' appeals, use of the method “authority transfer”. The activity of mass media representatives in the process of political campaign representation consists in serving as a channel for informing the audience - potential voters, as the means of election propaganda and as a tool for civil control. The need for quick response to events determined the prevalence of information genres of presentation the reality. This feature also depends on the level of training of modern journalists, weak knowledge of traditionally complex - especially

¹⁰ M. G. Bogatkina, E. S. Doroschuk, R. R. Gazizov, "Converging Innovations in the Modern Humanitarian Science", in *The Social Sciences*, X (2015), no. 7, p. 1932-1934.

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analytical - genres of journalism, as well as the influence of Western trends, defined as "fact-based journalism".