

Stereotyped Media Images as a Method of Forming Delusions of Ordinary Consciousness

Olena Rosinska, Oksana Zhuravska, Natalia Zykun, Vitaliy Gandziuk

Abstract: *The article reveals the psychological foundations of the manipulative influence of the media on the ordinary consciousness of the information consumer, analyzes the methods of manipulative influence. The survey of respondents has determined the activity rate of information consumption, the level of interest in various media formats, the respondent's degree of awareness of the specificity regarding influence on their consciousness.*

Methods of media influence on ordinary consciousness include various types of fragmentation of information, game by facts and figures, logic violations, semantics (use of metaphors, emotionally evaluated vocabulary, language of symbols, archetypes, antitheses) of stereotypical images for attaching certain connotative stereotypes to the consciousness in order to strengthen influence, and others. Consequently, the technologies of influence determine the need for psychosemantic analysis to study stereotypical, mythological and archetypal images of ordinary consciousness. The research demonstrates the relevance of the psychosemantic approach to the study of ordinary consciousness in the modern information society, the impact of crisis processes in the society development on the changes in certain levels of ordinary consciousness and the main tendencies of its transformation; as well as the empirical research of the formation of the ordinary consciousness by mass media has been demonstrated.

Keywords: *ordinary consciousness, mass media, manipulation, stereotype, technology.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A range of researchers explores the issue of media influence on the ordinary consciousness. Particularly, S.Bogatyriova, R.R.Garifullin, O.A.Dotsenko. A.A.Diakov, S.G.Kara-Murza, O.Yu.Balezina, A.S.Tkhostov and A.S.Neliubina studied the problem of information manipulation. The research by V. P. Sediakin and I.V.Solovyov provides a fundamental development of the information needs theory by the information consumers. P.H.Gasanova, O.M.Lofova, V.F.Petrenko learned the of psychosemantic aspects of ordinary consciousness. The research is based on a range of theories: psychosemantic approach to the human consciousness (O.F.Bondarenko,

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V.F.Petrenko, O.A.Lapshova), ordinary consciousness theory (Ye.Kant, S.B.Krymskii, N.L.Muskheleshvili), social consciousness theory (L.S.Vygotsky and A.N.Leontiev, O.M.Lofova); mess media influence theory (J.Klapper, L.A.Naidionova, V.O.Popova, J.Baudrillard, M.McLuhan), theory of combination of the real and elusive in ordinary consciousness (F.Garyfillin, V.F.Kazibekova, O.Ulybina), theory of ethnic stereotypes (O.M.Lofova, V.F.Petrenko, O.V.Ulybina), theory of social stereotypes (W.Lippman, L.P.Mardyieva, S.G.Osmachko), theory of manipulation by mass consciousness (S.G.Kara-Murza).

II. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the offered work is to study a mechanism assuring the manipulative influence of media at the level of subconscious despite the admittance by the respondents of its absence, having provided the specification of the data received within the Ukrainian realities. To implement that, during July-October 2018 there was made an experiment intending to detect the influence of a semantically aggressive media text on the respondents (in general 61) as well as mirror reactions. The association experiment allowed making a comparative analysis of the respondents' reactions who fell or did not fall under media influence. While determining the mechanisms of media influence on the ordinary consciousness, a theory of communicative influence and manipulations, as well as a theory of meeting the information needs of the audience, have been taken into account. For the experimental research of influence of an aggressive text on the respondents, there has been chosen an online publication where 4.6% of lexical units have a negative connotation, particularly, present a reader a simple dichotomous structure of society 'us-them': contains the hate language, open pleas for confrontation, active aggression.

III. RESULT

Ordinary consciousness serves as a particular regulator of individual's behaviour that rests on the volume of knowledge which is not often acquired rationally but perceived ready; particularly, that entails collective knowledge accrued by generations and acquired during the process of socializing. This peculiarity of ordinary consciousness facilitates regulation and co-ordination between society's members' actions.

Hence, one can notice that ordinary consciousness as a product of the social consciousness acts as a medium, a system of relations between an individual and social environment, exercising a function of a regulator. Correspondingly, ordinary consciousness has problematic nature. This is what determines the necessity of its research in psychology. Studying the ways

how different social phenomena, particularly, superstitions and stereotype beliefs arise and are spread seems to be especially interesting.

General ideas about the world structure, regularities in the development of the process of being are represented in primary mass ordinary consciousness and that, correspondingly, is an important basis of consciousness as it is; that is why it would be wrong to restrict theoretic consciousness, completely differing and detaching it from the ordinary one.

The information and psychological influence on the mass consciousness specifies, first of all, influence on an individual's psychics and masses to form a non-critical attitude to the information being received, to impose stereotypes, since in general, mass media is an information manipulator by consciousness, suppressing consciousness criticality and offering an idea to have been already formed regarding a phenomenon or an event in question. It is empirically proved [7] that the information about an event or a phenomenon received the first is considered the most probable in the ordinary consciousness; that is the reason why superiority in presenting information for mass media is so important. The principle of repetition frequency is used the same massively; owing to it, the information repeated several times is kept in mind unconsciously, perceived by an individual as probable, true. This allows further influence on the behaviour and the reaction of masses. Moreover, it is not required to influence all masses as a total because it is enough to use an effect of 'infecting' when a part of society members receives the information and provides it to others. Using different methods of influence, mass media do not only represent reality but construct it. To understand special mechanisms used by mass media to form misrepresentations one should consider basic approaches to the analysis of this issue.

The methods of manipulation, in researchers' opinions (V.O. Popova [5], O.V. Sladkova [6]) include the following: delusive generalization based on presentation of a private fact as a general one (method of shift); focus on particular facts ('agenda') to form a certain vision and a method of distraction-related to it (some facts are made more important to hide other ones); method of emotions accentuation encouraging to choose the better from the worst (method of intimidation), suggestion related to intimidation; provision of particular information, fragmentation; direct judgmental commenting often violating the logic sequence; playing with figures and facts to create a deceptive impression of objectiveness, disinformation. The use of the methods specified resides in formation in ordinary consciousness of a falsified vision for further manipulation for receiving or keeping power, economic influence etc. This powerful impact of printed mass media, television, radio and internet is explained by quite a high level of trust of the population to them. Suggestion has a powerful effect due to the use of emotional and judgmental words, a language of symbols, archetypes, the use of metaphors, contrapositions, visual images associated with particular stereotypes, bringing out targeted emotions, etc.; audio support, since the vibe of music applied to a particular text is a powerful manipulative method; mythologization and stereotyping of the information in order to increase the power of information influence upon the consumer, doublespeak.

Mass media can be considered as the main manipulator by the consciousness of the masses to form a required attitude to an event, a phenomenon or a person. To implement manipulations, mass-media use particular technologies, for example, the first presentation of certain information in a concrete sense, numerous repetition that leads to unconscious memorizing and finally shift information into the area of individual's acquisition and form his/her stereotypes, presentation in a relative context. «A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral. It is not merely a way of substituting order for the great blooming, buzzing confusion of reality. It is not merely a short cut. It is all these things and something more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defences, we can continue to feel safe in the position we occupy» [3].

The carrier of mass consciousness is the mass, i.e. a particular total of individuals united with a certain commonality, thus, the nature of mass consciousness is dual – individual and group, coming out at these two levels. Personal values are united in the individual's consciousness with the social, group ones, often formed by different manipulative strategies of mass media. Ordinary consciousness of the individual, even if he/she is not aware of it, has a nuclear – collective consciousness he/she acquired during socialization. Thus, the inclusion of social stereotypes into the media message allows the implementation of the most powerful influence on consciousness. Every individual, being a member of a social community, is a carrier of mass consciousness, regardless of his/her national, social, professional area. In the individual consciousness, only main ideas, beliefs, knowledge, values and interests common for a particular amount of individuals are represented; and mass media is the environment where the mass consciousness exists, a medium between the individual and the environment representing the facts and events and influencing in this way on the individual consciousness. Media also encourage the formation and support of social connections.

Media can govern the reality creating an effect of 'forgetting' the information and decreasing dramatically the effect from its perception. Jean Baudrillard told about the weight of historical memory for the intensity of emotions from a perception of an event: the higher memory level is the higher social emotions level is, the more powerful is the effect through involving the stereotypes of memory. It is almost impossible to control the influence by mass media on consciousness, since they function, especially at the time of the Internet, as a strong system of information exchange, which can generate an information flow of such a power that exceeds the threshold of a possibility of analytical perception by a person. The person, with his/her consciousness, when becomes included in the system of information presented by mass media falls under the influence of technologies on his/her system of values, views, attention. He/she is not able to analyze the information, reflex the perceived, that is why she/he falls under manipulations that create transformations in consciousness, particularly delusions and illusions. Thus, the personality becomes a

communication object from the communication subject.

Nowadays manipulative capability has become one of the key properties in mass media technologies. Moreover, it occurs non-forcibly and is mostly based on non-deliberate deception. The real motives of manipulation are hidden from the information consumer, a method of aggressive attack - attention and consciousness governance, in general, is also hidden.

The danger of information manipulations can be more powerful because in the hierarchy of sources they take the first place, as a person looks for answers and explanations for various reasons in mass media. Moreover, the majority does not take into account that the media messages are created by the same people as they, that subjective basis is notable; instead, we perceive the information from different channels as objective. These processes in the information field M.McLuhan called 'a narcissistic symbiosis' [4, p. 36], when intimate, i.e. individual views are perceived as something extrinsic, which must be formed with objective information. Instead, the commonality of information takes the place of objectivity. This reveals great opportunities for manipulation.

Studying the influence of mass media on the ordinary consciousness through the use of stereotyped thinking is important for research of misperceptions of ordinary consciousness that are often generated by stereotypical constructs. Particularly, the ethnical stereotypes, which, as we will see during the process of empiric research, are quite long-lasting (O.M.Lofova, V.F.Petrenko, O.V.Ulybina).

Stereotyping is one of the basic forms of manipulation (*Manipulation by Awareness* by S.G.Kara-Murza) when a brain 'saves up on thinking' coming to usual stereotypes, clichés, indurated views. 'Severe mistakes and failures in our practical actions arise from a narrow view, from falling under even a short-term stereotype sprung up for some time. It does not matter if we believe an unconditionally untrue message or build our untrue interpretation. In both cases, our behaviour does not meet reality and we are going to fail' [2]. A social stereotype in this context is a steady total of ideas formed being based on own experience as well as different information sources.

Since the stereotypes are the key components of consciousness both individual and mass, it is possible to influence consciousness strongly by appealing to them, in particular, W.Lippman formulated a concept of stereotyping as a basis for propaganda [3]. A stereotype can often be elusive when a wrong idea 'packed' in a familiar attractive package of other ideas or an idea interpreted in a wrong way is offered to a respondent. Stereotypy is a basis for ordinary consciousness, a kind of a template, ready scenario for actions and responses, and the stereotype serves as a support in the perception of information and decision-making. Thus, using a stereotype, mass media make manipulations with information more effective.

The stereotype is usually far from own experience of a person, currently, it is often generated by mass media, and its endurance is formed by immediate connection with an outgoing idea, with work with a particular person or group unconditioned values at the background. The grade of stereotyped thinking influence depends, first of all, on the level of an individual's education: the lower the level is the longer stereotypes last in consciousness. It is quite hard to destroy them, and purposeful work of mass media can also be the main agent in this, the same as during their creation. One

should also notice that some stereotypes, usually ethnical or professional, remain long-lasting regardless of the educational level [4].

The availability of social stereotypes in consciousness allows easy creation of a required context for interpretation of the reality, leading consciousness to the formation of a delusive view, distorted worldview. The stereotypes are an integral part of mass consciousness; due to that, this consciousness can be easy to govern through stereotyped territorial, national social, gender ideas.

IV. DISCUSSION

For the Ukrainian society of the latest time, a notion of a social stereotype can be added with such a component as a regional stereotype – an idea about the prevalence of particular regions residents over the other ones regarding the intelligence, culture, civilization etc.

The Ukrainians' ordinary consciousness is characterized by confrontation based on the regional residence, born by a difference in historical development of the regions, ethnic composition, language properties and other factors (for example, publication of War of Stereotypes: Banderist from the Arms Cache Against a 'Skhidniak with a Bottle' on the online resource of Radio Svoboda). This historical-and-cultural and mental contradiction is a basis of regional self-reflection, which is expressed in antithesis spacious categories of 'east' and 'west', i.e. different assessing filling of regions perception in the ordinary consciousness.

Historical myths regarding the geographical position of Ukraine, its place in the geopolitical vision, ways of its development have been represented for centuries and specified by the wants of neighbouring countries for this territory. This, correspondingly, formed particular mental geographical myths, which are quite powerful in the current information environment and influence significantly social and political view of the modern Ukrainian state. In fact, in the ordinary consciousness of a modern Ukrainian, particular mental constructs determining his/her national, social, cultural perception are created. They generated an explosive idea about value-based inequality of the regions, i.e. value-based superiority of Western Ukraine in the cultural and historical sense and about undisputable devalue of Eastern Ukraine. This mental perception of the geography of the country was grounded first of all on the prevalence of the Russian population in the East, low cultural level of the region, the disrespectful attitude of its residents to the national language. These manipulative ideas, in our opinion, are a part of a divisive strategy of particular political forces both in and out of the country.

If the concept of Eastern Ukraine, Donbas, has been marginalized for almost decades, the concept of Western Ukraine is offered to consider in the context of mental inclusion into Europe, which, undoubtedly, is connected to so-called 'Austrian myth'. The 'Austrian myth', of course, concerns mostly only western Ukrainian territory, particularly, Halychyna. For Halycian cultural tradition, it has a great meaning since it automatically extrapolates its reality from marginal Eastern Ukraine into desired Central one' [7, p.287]. Despite a notable artificial nature of this myth

raising Halychyna above all other regions in the context of striving to Europe, it becomes quite popular due to information manipulation, the shift of certain cultural and historical accents.

The Ukrainian culture functions through a range of long-lasting discourses creating a narrative of its self-determination. That creates a ground not only for the formation of a particular level of national reflection but also for the promotion of destructive ideas into the mass consciousness. Expressed aggressively using emotionally labelled words and the hate language in the text of quite popular online media, these stereotypic statements and appeals, based on a social narrative, undoubtedly, reach its purpose – a plea for confrontation, intensification of aggression.

A publication of Vgolos [Aloud] online-resource has been chosen for experimental research of how an aggressive text influences respondents [8]. While selecting the text we have been based on such main concepts about manipulative influence: information influence, information-and-psychological influence, suggestion, special information operations, etc.

While analyzing the text of journalist’s material, we have found out lexical units that present a reader a simple dichotomic structure of society – ‘us/them’, which is inherent, in general, for ordinary consciousness through the perception of general cultural and national archetypes. The author uses the words ‘us’, ‘them’, appealing to subconscious emotion of hate to a stranger who has arrived in someone’s territory. The stranger is presented as a carrier of ‘another’ culture or as a person with no cultural and moral values. The author does that consciously using the hate language: ‘jerk’, ‘scum’, ‘it’, ‘non-Russian, who has arrived and is not satisfied with anything’, ‘an invasion of Russian-speakers’, ‘completely strange people for you, with other vision, with another psychology’, ‘rummy customers’, ‘for the Ukrainians such people bring household and psychological discomfort’, ‘bring here mental and cultural ruining’, ‘Donbas enclaves’, ‘ingrained Soviet mentality’ refugees’. In general, the text includes more than 40 units that present the hate language and around 30 units that contain open pleas for confrontation, expressing active aggression. The text comprises 1,518 words (taking into account functional words), hence, around 4.6% of the units have a negative connotation. Although this percentage is low but it is intensified with the context and positions which are permanently stressed with a general intention of the narrative: lords-guests, relatives – strangers, a Ukrainian – a Russian speaking separatist, attack – protect, invasion – single defenders, culture – lack of culture.

The author of the text is a creator of a completely typical at the level of the ordinary consciousness narrative of ‘I-defender’, ‘alarmed citizen’ who beats an alarm facing the cultural threat, a mental enemy, who impinges on the values important for wide masses. This narrative cannot leave readers indifferent since connects a wide context of their social and psychological experience. The criticality of a general social situation allows strengthening general emotional influence, since, as V. Labov and J. Valetsky state, the narrative of a turning point is topical for personal psychological experience, correspondingly, the opposite reaction to a threat works off.

Since the narrative relates to the value-based interpretation of the past, it must obligatorily include obvious

common ideas about what can be considered right and valuable [1]. The author of the text also appeals to these ideas, is based on them, manipulating skillfully by social regional stereotypes, rooted in the readers’ subconsciousness.

The author also works with mental stereotypes of confrontation between ‘us’ (‘ours’) and ‘them’ who is subconsciously ready to protect ‘ours’, that is why even a tolerant and educated person, as the research showed, can succumb to urging providing concrete examples of cultural differences, appealing to the influencers, demonstrating own position which results from persuading examples.

Thus, a stem of the narrative is a plea of ‘one of us’ to ‘us’ to confront to ‘them’ because already there is a common experience of ruining and loss of important values before the ‘invasion’.

61 people took part in an experiment; out of them, 8 people are men (13.1%) and 53 people are women (86.9%). In the preliminary talk, 57 people (93.4%) declared inadmissibility of biased attitude to a person due to the factors out of such person’s control. Significantly, 60.3% of the respondents understand that the author partially misrepresents the facts and 27% state confidently the intentional misrepresentation; however, the prevailing majority comes under the influence of suggestion and persuasion.

The data of the survey demonstrate that the respondents who expressed in the talk almost absolute tolerance concerning the objective factor of inclusion of a person into particular groups demonstrated intolerance under the influence of manipulative material (the values of perception of truth and readiness to share the attitude of the article author – 47.5%). 27.9% do not agree with the article author, almost the same amount (21.3%) believe this material to be untrue. The percentage of respondents who try avoiding peremptory agreement or disagreement with the position expressed in the article is almost the same. The higher percentage of the respondents who think that author expresses her thoughts incorrectly pays is notable (41%); moreover, it is much higher than the percentage of those who do not agree with the author or believes the material to be untrue. In other words, a part of respondents understand that the author is incorrect but at the same time, they are ready to share her point of view.

The question concerning the emotional response the material causes provides a possibility to trace the whole range of respondents’ emotions.

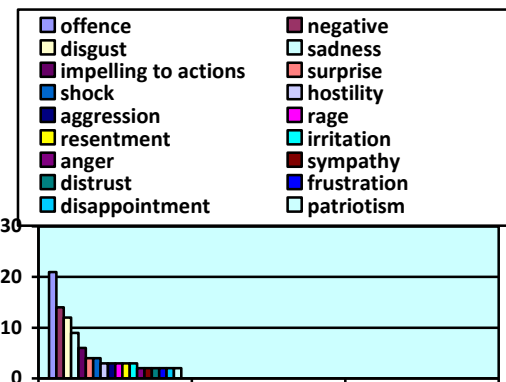


Fig. 1. Respondents' verbal reactions.



Out of 61 answers the most frequent were: offence (21), negative (14), disgust (12), sadness (9), impelling to actions (6), surprise (4), shock (4), hostility (3), aggression (3), rage (3), offence (3), irritation (3), anger (2), sympathy (2), distrust (2), frustration (2), disappointment (2), patriotism (2).

The majority of the responses received (totally 65 for 61 respondents) is indicators of active negative response of the readers to the journalist's material perceived. Moreover, during an unguided interview the same respondents, being out of the extraneous influence stated the importance of tolerance regarding different groups of the population.

Totally there have been received 99 answers-responses, thus, negative or openly aggressive ones amount to 65.65%.

Also, there have been received 6 answers that the respondents felt in the text a plea to fight – 6%, 3 answers regarding sympathy (it is specified that this feeling is towards native residents of the territory) – 3%.

The power of emotional influence of the text confirms the fact that only a third of respondents indicated that the text concerns their interests (37.7%); however, it is the ordinary reality, personal experience that forms beliefs of the ordinary consciousness carrier. 27.9% pointed out that the text does not concern their interests, 34.4% say that it concerns only partially.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The effect of the media influence on ordinary consciousness is related, first of all, to the fact that reality in the structure of ordinary consciousness is represented by real and elusive components according to various means. Moreover, the irrational component is often involved into situations stressed for an individual, which assimilates ordinary consciousness to confabulated one, thus, can get activated manipulatively on purpose, through suggestion by mass media of fear, disappointment, frustration, etc. Confabulated consciousness is a result, on one hand, of seeking over-senses by a personality, and on the other one – a simplified view to the reality; hence, through a particular selection of facts what cannot be proved empirically it portrays itself as a myth.

On the grounds of empiric researches, the work states that manipulative influenced by mass media on ordinary consciousness is implemented at the level of subconscious even if the respondents admit its absence, having provided specified data received within the limits of Ukrainian realities.

The methods of manipulative influence on the mass consciousness of audience include mythologization (confabulation) and stereotyping of information, suggestion through emotional and value-based lexicology, symbols, archetypes, metaphors, antithesis; manipulation by figures; audio support of the text information, doublespeak, etc.

A stereotype is a basis of ordinary consciousness one hand, a steady idea about a particular social object, and on the other hand – a template, ready scenario of actions and responses for the perception of information and decision-making by an individual.

For the experimental research of the aggressive text influence, it was chosen a publication on the online resource of Vgolos, which exploits a stereotype of 'east' – 'west' for information and psychological manipulative influence through persuasion and suggestion. At the level of lexicology, the influence is performed using relevant lexical units: over

40 lexical units out of 1,518 available in the text present the hate language and around 30 – active aggression, i.e. 4.6% of lexical units have a negative connotation. At the level of narration, the author extends the content of the situation with ill-mannered Russian-speaking person to the scale of global confrontation, appealing to the model of a narrative of 'I-defender/alarmed citizen' acceptable for ordinary consciousness of this period.

Stereotyped thinking of the majority of the population in any country creates grounds for the formation of an information environment substituting the reality is, by matter, a simulacrum, made by the mass media for different purposes.

So-called 'media cover' of the audience, which is believed to be the most powerful manipulation, is reached the most efficiently by catching attention and keeping it through the formation of image of unity (this is the method used by the author of the journalist's material analyzed in the empiric section of the work). The stereotypes ('us'- 'them', 'ours' – 'theirs', etc.) are the basis for this manipulation; moreover, the stereotypes are already built-in into consciousness by the propaganda of the mass media.

Mass media is a powerful factor of forming the ordinary consciousness, which is already proved by a large scope of theoretical researches; however, it requires concrete research in national realities. Further study of the language of media texts through the methodology of social discourse analysis, in particular, in the aspect of the interaction between media and society, media and power, is considered a fruitful and promising area of psycholinguistics

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