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დეზინფორმაცია სოციალურ ქსელებში: მდგომარეობა და პერსპექტივები

აბსტრაქტი

ნაშრომში განხილულია თანამედროვე მედიაკვლევების სფეროში გამორჩეულად აქტუალური დეზინფორმაციის კონცეფცია. შესწავლილია მისი როლი და ადგილი მასმედიის დისკურსში ე.წ. პოსტ-ჭეშმარიტების ეპოქის კონტექსტში, სადაც სიმართლესა და სიცრუეს შორის ზღვრები ბუნდოვანია, მზარდია საზოგადოებაში გაურკვევლობის ხარისხი; ობიექტურ ფაქტებს კი სუბიექტური შეფასებები და მოსაზრებები ცვლის.

ამ შემთხვევაში დეზინფორმაცია გაგებულია, როგორც ყალბი ინფორმაციის შეგნებულად გადაცემა ზიანის მიტანის მიზნით. დეზინფორმატორი ხელმძღვანელობს განზრახვით - შეცდომაში შეიყვანოს ადრესატი და, მანიპულირების მიზნით მოახდინოს დეზინფორმაციული ეფექტი სხვადასხვა ლინგვისტური საშუალებებით.

ჩვენ შევეცადეთ შეგვესწავლა პოსტ-სიმართლის ეპოქისთვის დამახასიათებელი რამდენიმე ყველაზე ტიპური ნარატივი.

ნაშრომის ჰიპოთეზაცა და შედეგებიც უკავშირდება სოციალურ ქსელებში მანიპულირების მექანიზმს, რაც კიდევ უფრო დესტრუქციული ხდება, როცა „იმოსება“ მითებითა და ემოციებით, მედიამომხმარებლის განწყობების ცვლილებით და რეალობას სულ უფრო შორდება.

განსაკუთრებით სახიფათოა დეზინფორმაცია, თუ იგი, ერთი შეხედვით, უწყინარ მედიანაკადშია „ჩაკარგული“, სადაც შეუიარაღებელი თვალით სიმართლისა და პროპაგანდის გარჩევა ჭირს.

ნაშრომში ასევე განხილულია ე.წ. საინფორმაციო ხმაურის თავისებურებები.

დეზინფორმაცია, ცხადია, ინფორმაციული ხმაურის შემადგენელი ნაწილია, თუმცა მისი გავრცელება ყოველთვის გარკვეულ მიზანს ემსახურება, ხოლო ხმაური, როგორც წესი, საბაბისა

და მიზეზის გარეშე ავსებს საინფორმაციო სივრცეს და უკონტროლო ნაკადები საინფორმაციო ველის დაბინძურებას იწვევს.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: დეზინფორმაცია, მისინფორმაცია, მედია, ყალბი ამბები, ინფორმაციული ხმაური.

Thesis.

DISINFORMATION IN SOCIAL NETWORKS: SITUATION AND PROSPECTS

Disinformation Concept which is distinctly actual in the field of contemporary medial researches is considered in this Work. We also reviewed its role and place in the mass media discourse, in the context of the so called “post-truth epoch” where thresholds between the truth and falsehood are unclear, a degree of unambiguity in the society is still escalating; as for the objective facts they are replaced by subjective assessments and concerns.

In this case disinformation is understood as an intended transferring of false information to inflict damage. A misinformed intends to disorient an addressee, and for the purpose of manipulation to make a disinformation effect by means of different linguistic means.

We tried to investigate the most typical narratives characteristic for the post-truth epoch.

Hypothesis and results of the work are connected with a mechanism of manipulation in the social network that becomes much more destructive when it is “masked” with myths and emotions, changes of the media user’s mood and estranges oneself from the reality.

Disinformation is particularly dangerous if it, at a glance, is “lost” in an innocent media flow where it is difficult to differentiate truth from propaganda, with the naked eye.

The work, also, describes characteristic features of the so called “information noise”.

Disinformation, certainly, is an integral part of the information noise, however its spreading also serves to a definite target, and the noise, as a rule, without any reason and basis, covers the information space and uncontrolled flows cause contamination of the information field.

Keywords: Disinformation, misinformation, media, false news, information noise.

Thesis

This report relates to a problem of psychosocial mechanisms of disinformation: a process of manipulation with information, mainly the manipulations applied in social networks and internet media. Interpersonal attractiveness draws much attention; it is based on perceived similarity and formation of negative collective emotional state. Theoretic judgement is underlined by results of local and foreign researches conducted in the fields of medialogy, sociology, public relations and marketing.

Ways of struggling with dissemination of false information in online topics are being considered. Necessity of studying of dependence upon disinformation and dynamics of changes in psychosocial

features of a media user (belief, agitation, deviation of value-related orientation, social identity and others) are unambiguously noteworthy.

Technological achievements serve as a ground of the social development. However, rising hybrid dangers in terms of development of information technologies requires changing of approaches of the safety policy. The stated is particularly remarkable against the background of an opportunity of producing wars having a contemporary form using global networks.

Accordingly, hybrid dangers which appeared in terms of developing of information technologies in the form of cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns or anti-Western propaganda, make conditional a necessity of development of institutional mechanisms of overcoming of the stated challenges and developing of an integrated view on the corporative and state levels.

Information, being a focal component of daily life of each human being, always created problems to the common humanity in addition to distinctive benefits. If in the 20th century a key challenge was represented by obtaining and storing of information, recently specialists make their efforts to construe excessive information flows in the manner enabling them to find necessary information rapidly but with less “information noise” existing in the information environment.

Based on the data of Cumulus Media, in the year of 2018, the social network YouTube fixed 4.3 million views per minute, 3.7 million users addressed to the browsing system Google, 187 million letters were sent by e-mail and another 38 million - by WhatsApp, 25 000 Gifs were shared by Facebook. Following that moment, several years have passed and it is clear that the above-mentioned data have been changed as they are rising too rapidly (Gorke, et al., 2020, p.29).

We have a giant volume of information circulated in the network. It is very interesting what is the extent of usefulness and reliability of it for users if we deal with information noise, propaganda and disinformation.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that the term “information noise”, which is also referred as to the „junk information”, has been established and its application in the scientific literature is adapted. Moreover, a part of researches considers not only kinds of junk information, but represents recommendations of its sorting and utilization because of fulfilled works. However, we retain a right to assign a priority to the first idea in the present work, mainly to the information noise, and we will use this definition in the next parts of the text.

Compared with acoustic noise, the information noise causes dangerous risks in the comparatively long-termed prospects. As a cultural phenomenon, this term appeared in the 20th century and considers existence of a kind of elements in texts/ videos sequences which makes their understanding difficult, distort meaning of the main idea and/or hinder adequate acknowledgement of its meaning. In other words, information noise is an unfiltered flow of information inflicting a damage to the audience, instead of benefit.

In case if we supplement the stated data with information portals, TV, radio and printed publications, the problem to be considered in the article will become more vivid.

With the account of the above-mentioned, it is not under question that the user's brain processes a huge volume of information per second, but only tiny volume of it is valuable in fact. This information is created in the process of people's or electronic-computative activities, and surely considers existing of useless, false and, accordingly dangerous content. Proceeding from this, information noise contains false news, so called "fake news", and information, globally, is carrying disinformation.

False news, as a phenomenon, is of about the same age as the Journalism. However, disputes about the fake news, as of the factor having an impact on the agenda were started in the moment of election campaigns held in the USA. Hundreds of scientific works and conferences were devoted to this topic. For the last years, the term has completely lost its value and obtained a new meaning. Today, it is determined as the "news" which represents fabrication for the purpose of deception of information users, increasing of traffic and incomes. (Hunt, 2016).

Dangers connected with excessive information are being increased in critical circumstances. They become the most distinctive in the process of reporting of conflicts.

In the present work problems of increasing of information flows and contamination of information environment connected with it, generally, in media and, especially in social networks, as in the most popular means of communication are considered. We also discuss official web-sites of media outlets represented in social media (Facebook) and audience's perception of their content in the form of comments. As one of the targets of the research, we selected polarized broadcasting media outlets viewers of which receive absolutely different messages.

Obtaining of pictures which are different from reality among different channels by regular viewers of the Georgian TV Media is not surprising for anybody. However, while studying of viewers' feedbacks tracing of their opinions is especially important.

Local and international non-governmental organizations, on a yearly basis, trace efficiency of printed, broadcasted and online media operation, its mechanisms and impacts. Monitoring reports are public and available for a wide society. However, in frames of the submitted research, accents are distributed in different ways and are based on results of the research of reporting of the Georgian 2021 Municipal Elections in mass media. It is a report of monitoring of television talk shows in the period since the 24th of January – the 23rd of March, where subjects of the research were represented by six Georgian TV-channels: Public Broadcasting "Pirveli Arkhi", "Imedi", "Rustavi 2", "TV Pirveli", "Mtavari Arkhi", "Adjarian Television" (mediamonitor.ge, 2022).

Proceeding from difficulty of the theme, actuality of the work, its targets, objections and hypotheses are distinctively reflected, its methodology is described (content analysis (a method of a qualitative research) and comparative analysis).

3 hypotheses are have been processed:

- H1: development of internet to the largest extent increased a volume of information and information flows became uncontrollable;

- H2: Construing of information flows in this new information environment in the manner enabling to obtain only necessary and useful information, and to detect disinformation that is the most difficult challenge;
- H3: Dangers connected with excessive (unfiltered) information are particularly rising in critical circumstances, and this becomes the most vivid in the process of reporting of conflicts.

We apply hypotheses as instruments which assist us in in-depth reviewing of the given issues. Comprehension of research suppositions is represented in a methodological part of the article, and results, finally, in the conclusion.

Disinformation is closely connected with other kind of global dangers, such as disruption of the state (governance), social instability, large-scaled internet attacks and international conflicts.

Abrupt decreasing of belief towards traditional media, and, simultaneously, increasing of a belief towards the new media (social networks, blogs and others) is noticed. According to the last researches, 59% of users obtain information from social media. (Edelman, 2015, pp.5-6).

Simultaneously, a phenomenon of “false news” is widely spread in social networks. “False news” undermine reliability of a source of information and, generally, of the media. In parallel with increasing of a number of users of social networks, a risk of disinformation is being increased as well. In the year of 2013, the World Economic Forum named the massive digital disinformation among the most serious global risks (Howell, 2013, p.25).

For interpretation of key terms:

“Disinformation” means dissemination of false and fraud information by media outlets. In the represented work, disinformation appears as an instrument for having impact on the society via media outlets, its misleading and manipulation. It considers a process of manipulation with information: misleading of people by way of their incorrect or incomplete informing, intended distorting of a content and context. “Manipulation” is understood as a kind of psychological impact when a manipulator’s ability is used for entering of hidden targets, desires, intentions, relations or approached into the addressee’s mentality which are not in compliance with the ones obtained by the recipient. Manipulations are targeted at changing of one’s behavior or direction of anybody’s activity which is fulfilled with an extent of art being hidden for that person.

The key instrument for revealing of disinformation and struggling with it is media literacy which considers perceiving, acknowledging, interpreting of information and making of its critical analysis by the audience. However, we do not discuss media literacy one-sidedly and it is recognized as a focal component of the information provider (journalist), as well as of its recipient (audience). Proceeding from this, a concept of media literacy is considered, on the first hand, as an instrument of filtration of information, orientation in a large flow of information, and, on the another hand, as an instrument for creation and sharing of new information/ knowledge

„Online media” means separate internet programs, web-sites of traditional media outlets and social media. Examples of disinformation in social networks are exactly discussed in the work.

“Media environment” is a kind of environment created under the applicable legislation which considers a relevant activity of mass communication means. The stated concept also considers the fact whether how often different political forces manage media outlets according to their own interests and simultaneously protect or restrict rights to freedom of opinion and expression.

Unfortunately, media outlets solely apply their own resources for dissemination of desirable narratives too often. Proceeding from this fact, propaganda and disinformation covers a rather significant part of the media environment.

Accordingly, as it was mentioned above, Georgian media outlets are involved into the “information war” voluntarily. On the national scale, there are many media organizations, which actively disseminate propaganda and disinformation according to their editorial policy.

Dissemination of false information and propaganda in Georgia, generally, is connected with the efforts of creation of anti-western moods and changing of the political orientation. Many researches confirm that one of the key instrument of affecting the Georgian society is information, and all this is successfully used by the Russian Federation. (Avalishvili, 2016, p.5) Within the last years, a qualitatively new problem for Georgia – the Kremlin’s Information War was initiated which requires new ways of its settlement. Dissemination of propaganda and false information has definite targets. In case of Georgia, Russian disinformation probably is used for enhancing of anti-western moods, making obstacles in the process of integration of Georgia into the European and Euro-Atlantic space and creating of fear and instability in the society.

A part of review of the thematic scientific literature is broad as the problem, on the first part, is old, and, on the another part, is very actual and is often complies with the interests of classicists and contemporary researchers.

In the beginning of the research, with the account of priorities, we selected the following works for guidance:

1. General principles of the Charter of the Georgian Journalistic Ethics (Principles of the Charter, n.d.);
2. Journalism, “false news” and disinformation: Handbook for Journalism Education and Training (Ireton; Cherilyn, 2021).

The represented review of literature is aimed to discern contradictory opinions which could appear in the working process, and to separate the next steps of the research. We would like to mark out the following authors among the ones who had being cited by us:

1. Howell L. Digital wildfires in a hyperconnected world // WEF Report 2013. World Economic Forum. Eight editions. 2013; (Howell, 2013)
2. D. Duvanova, A Nikolaev, A Nikolsko-Rzhevskyy... Violent conflict and online segregation: An analysis of social network communication across Ukraine's regions, 2016; (Duvanova, Nikolaev, Nikolsko-Rzhevskyy, & Semenov, 2016)

3. Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, *Four theories of the press: The authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do*, 1956; (Siebert, Fred, S.; Peterson, Theodore; Schramm, Wilbur., 1956)

and others.

The European Communication Strategic Service started a new campaign, via social network, named “European Union against Disinformation”. The Facebook page combines different news, funny facts and videos to demonstrate disinformation which is disseminated in favor of the Kremlin.

The stated information is designated for a wide range of users, speaking in English and Russian languages.

On top of all, the European Union Strategic Communication Service suggests to readers weekly booklets about the disinformation produced by Kremlin. One can subscribe the booklet in Russian and English languages. The booklet analyzes articles and news containing disinformation which had been collected by the Strategic Communication Service all over the Europe.

Besides, anybody may see the information on the Twitter’s account: @EUvsDisinfo.

There exist conscious and unconscious kinds of manipulation by consciousness. Unconscious manipulation has a final target which is very unclear and a manipulator personally does not think about the methods applied by him to get his target. Conscious kinds of manipulation include affecting the consciousness of a human being to reach a definite target. One of its vivid examples is a propagandistic impact on social groups and individuals to change their behavior and philosophy of their life.

Disinformation is considered as a specific form of revealing of social activities in the communicative space of individual or group subjects which includes intended transferring of a specially selected information by means of marks (symbols), images or signals.

Generally, channels of impact include physical bodies, non-commercial organizations and mass media.

Online media, a bit earlier blogs and social networks, have much impact on behavior and life style of human beings. Social networks often acts not only as a one-sided impact channel, but as a global database of psychosocial features of people as well. Moreover, as some researchers state these data are much more accurate than the information obtained as a result of traditional sociological researches. (Kosinski & Youyou, 2015, pp. 1036-1040).

Recent researches demonstrate abruptly negative impact of disinformation on the attitudes towards socially significant problems (for example, vaccination risks, ethnical and religious conflicts, issues connected with national minorities and others). The same category includes terrorism, extremism, hybrid wars, dangers connected with natural disasters. Definite bodies are named as units of analysis in the scientific works who tended to act as misinformers or objects of disinformation in a real communication as well as by means of communication technologies (networks, internet, mass media). Very few researches cover group analysis.

We have several prospective approaches of studying of disinformation in the scientific literature: firstly, it is studying of an impact of disinformation on the interpersonal communication; secondly,

studying of an impact of disinformation on the group's defense mechanisms, including on the mechanisms of protection of identity of a positive group; thirdly, studying of dynamics of the collective experience on the mass consciousness in the process of having influence on the mass media.

Cognitive, emotional-estimative, value-semantic and behavioral components are included into the structure of dependence of people upon disinformation.

Cognitive components include the following aspects:

- Assessment of frequency of using of disinformation in media and social networks;
- Representations about sources of disinformation;
- Representations about a target of disinformation;
- Ideas about producing disinformation;
- Perceiving of connection with other risks;
- Ideas about ways of struggling with disinformation;
- Ideas about ways of confronting on the level of the government, organizations;
- Representations about expected and real results of using of disinformation;
- Perception of people who are able to use results of disinformation for own aims.

Emotional-estimative components include:

- A significance of disinformation risks in comparison with other dangers;
- Assessment of using of lie in the media;
- Assessment of sources of information.

Dependence of an individual upon disinformation is closely connected with psychological mechanisms among which, on the interpersonal level, the most distinctive are value-related orientation, social belief, a level of excitement, a volume of social capital, social identity.

A problem of disinformation in the contemporary foreign literature is studied in the field of several researches: firstly, the researches which are devoted to personal characteristics making a human being more sensitive; secondly, studying of an effect of false recollections; thirdly, a research for decreasing of sensibility of a person towards disinformation.

For the last years, another direction of the research was formed in connection of using of social networks in marketing and political projects – studying of media-related mechanisms of dissemination of false information in social media and its impact (20). Researchers connect the impact of information with the effects of “cascades” of availability of information, group polarization and confirmation of already established opinion.

In the process of research it was detected that users of the social network Facebook are much more dependent upon perception of a kind of information which has a conspiratorial or scientific character. (Del Vicario M, 2016, pp.554-559) A target of scientific news in the context of disinformation is weakening the scientific knowledge and a level of thinking; conspiracy news provide us with alternative arguments where it is difficult to check where is truth. Conspiracy News aim to simplify reality by explanation of significant social and political events, as a result of secret conspiracy or by means of authoritative bodies and organization.

Facebook's users who are generally polarized towards theories of science or conspiracy are divided into two different groups. These groups, to some extent, have similarities: they are tended to interact with users who have similar samples of group's polarization) and consume the information having similar characteristics. On top of all, internal structures of links in social networks are statistically similar.

Accordingly, in the opinion of foreign scientists (Del Vicario M, 2016) group polarization may become a key indicator for identification of the topics where dissemination of false and misleading information is the most expectable.

The following operations using social networks are actively developed: typical software is started with intended collection of information, including by means of fishing sites, breaking of accounts and spying, identity theft. On the second stage, we have generation of content: plots for media, dissemination of so called "mems", creation of false accounts and bots. On the third stage falsehood is strengthened, it means astroturfing solely; mems are disseminated via the created false accounts, "troll groups" and bots, fictive groups are being created, comments are spread. (Weedon, Nuland, &Stamos, 2017, p.13).

"False accounts" which strengthen falsehood are created by different ways, according to the target audience: for the whole world, or a definite region. Aims of strengthening of falsehood, as a rule, is supporting or levelling of definite cases, or problems, implementation of unbelief towards political institutes, confusion.

Popularization or equalizing of definite cases or issues is the simplest way for establishing of falsehood. This may include using of disinformation, mems and/or "false news".

In addition to the above-mentioned, it was stated that a level affecting of disinformation on a human being may have a long-termed perspective as the forgotten or outdated information is remained in memory despite of all efforts of its updating. Moreover, if the forgotten or outdated information appear in the memory, this is perceived as reliable and doubtless.

Information which is trustful for the majority of people is received even when it contains false statements. Simultaneously, information which differs from the viewpoints which were received generally are ignored and cause group polarization.

Dissemination of disinformation by means of trolls and bots are supported by the following aspects: multiplicity of sources, uncertainty, perceived similarity and motivation of a consumer (user), mistrust to traditional media.

The research demonstrates that consumers who have much trust to alternative sources of information (e.g. sources containing false information) than to the traditional media (official media) are more sensitive towards the false information. Alternative information very often is supported by conspiracy theories which explain significant social and political events as a result of activities conducted by authoritative organizations or people.

Conclusion

Proceeding from the above-mentioned, contemporary mediaology considers several prospective attitudes of disinformation which are connected with studying of impact of disinformation on interpersonal communication, mechanism of group defense of impact of disinformation.

Characteristics of content of disinformation has an impact on sensitivity towards its (conspiracy or a scientific nature of disinformation) as well as perceived interpersonal similarity, group polarization and confirmation of the already formed opinion.

Finally, we would like to mark out several prospective directions for following researches in this field.

Problems of developing of conceptual and terminological apparatus of description and classification of kinds and forms of disinformation in the internet are very sharp; deficiency of methodological instrument for studying of disinformation is vivid; results of empiric researches directed to establishing of a link between impact of disinformation and personal characteristics is contradictory.

Media-related mechanisms of formation of attitudes of an individual to disinformation in social networks must be clarified. Particular attention should be paid on studying of a role of collective emotional states in dissemination of disinformation, especially in connection with traumatic, catastrophic events.

Eventually, formation of a coordinated and unified approach will provide formation of sustainable mechanisms of struggling with challenges. Besides, situational knowledge (understanding of an essence) and awareness of the society will strengthen vitality of separate individuals as well as of the government in relation to contemporary challenges

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