

## Russian TV content: mode of "reducing selection"

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**Abstract.** This article analyzes the contemporary Russian television content. The modern Russian television is seen to actively use technological innovations, but hardly changes the principles of content formation. Meanwhile, the development of web-based communications has led to a fundamental change in the form of information consumption by large groups of the population. Inability and unwillingness to engage the audience into creative activities to develop and work on the content is the main problems of the modern Russian television.

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### Introduction

TV content is an important part of popular culture, due to this fact researchers of social and economic processes are interested in this phenomenon, and many of them point to a relationship between culture and socio-economic development.

In the second half of the twentieth century the theory of the relationship between cultural values and socio-economic development evolved in two directions. According to the first, the convergence of values as a result of modernization is the main driving force for changes in culture. Thus, there is an inevitable decline in traditional values and replacing them replacement with modern ones. The second approach involves the stability of traditional values, despite the changes in the economy and politics, the independence of the values from the economic conditions and their independent effect on cultural changes, which are caused by the socio-economic development [1].

Today, the development of the theory of cultural differences and their impact on the socio-economic progress is largely connected with the search for opportunities for the effective application of theoretical concepts and practical recommendations to ensure the cultural backgrounds that would promote social progress.

Recent studies have analyzed a wide variety of issues and cases concerning the interrelations between media and social change and their capacity for shaping the current social and political discourses in the World. The multidisciplinary approach to content and society will open new avenues and discussion on the role of the media in social transformation and empowerment [2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7].

Moreover, the concept of the audience is changing. In the twenty-first century there are novel configurations of user practices and technological capabilities that are altering the way we understand

and trust media organizations and representations, how we participate in society, and how we construct our social relations [8].

What can be said about the Russian television as an agent of cultural process?

### Method

The study is based on methods of coordinated meaning management (B.Pearce, V.Cronen). CMM, created as a part of sociocultural tradition, goes back to such trends as social constructionism, pragmatism, symbolic interactionism, rhetorics, narrative approach in psychology and organizational communication, ethnomethodology, interpretative ethnography, etc.

Empirical data was also analyzed by the content analysis.

### Discussion

By the second decade of the new century, the Russians have formed a basic "media kit" consisting of home media devices and services that most Russians see as necessary and desirable. This kit includes five items: a TV, a device for playback/recording (VCR, DVD-player, etc.), a computer (or a laptop), home Internet access, subscriptions to pay TV. TV takes the central place in the home "media kit". More than half (57%) of the urban population of Russia have two or more TV sets at home [9].

Available TV channels are also an important feature that affects the TV demand. In 2011, the Russians have been significantly expanded selection of TV channels. In urban households the average number of TV channels increased from 27 (in 2010) to 35 channels. And for the past three years (2009-2011) Russians has got 10 more TV channels.

Three of the major Russian television channels, "First Channel", "Russia 1" and "NTV" cover almost the entire population of Russia. 9 in 10 Russian citizens regard television as the main source of information about the country and the world [10].

Thus, in contemporary Russia TV is beyond competition in terms of the audience coverage. That is why TV was chosen as a mean not only to disseminate information but also as political influence, including the promotion. TV channels "Russia 1", "First Channel", "NTV" are the main competitors in the Russian TV market. Broadcast coverage of the "First Channel" and "Russia 1" exceeds 98% of the country, due to the "legacy" of the Central Television; "NTV" signal covers about 77% of the territory of our country.

According to opinion polls, 90% of the urban population watch TV almost every day, 54% of the respondents state that when they are at home, the TV is always on [11].

Daily audience and time spent on other media – both traditional and modern – is in general much lower.

Russia is characterized by high dynamics of the television audience. In about ten years, television has lost a large part of the "advanced" audience that has turned to the Internet or expanded the audience of radio stations. In the past two years, the major part of the Russian TV audiences is the near retirement and pension age, and representatives of the general public who do not have higher education. The largest part of the TV audience is the citizens aged 55 years and older. Housewives and young people watch TV a lot. Thus, in the evening (19:00 - 23:00) one member out of three from the age group 15 to 24 is at television screen [12].

In addition to television Russian homes are already equipped with other media tools and services. More than 55% of urban households have a DVD-ROMs (DVD-players, DVD-recorders, Blu-Ray, etc.), 66% are connected to the Internet.

#### **Main trends**

Speaking about the further development of the Russian television system, experts identify the following trends.

1. Dimensional television (3D).
2. Integration of TV broadcasting and information technology.
3. Interactive Video information system (IVIS).
4. Improving TV systems and signal transmission.
5. Digital terrestrial television channels. (Krivosheev).

The main tendency of media development is the growth in pace of integration. In 2012 the convergence of platforms is the usual practice in the media space. The emergence of the iPad and other similar devices, periodicals editors celebrated with release of electronic clones of their print media, supplemented with video content, and other useful products [13].

But the practice quickly showed that this strategy is only partly justified. In particular, in terms of the geography of the Internet in Russia, historical background plays a decisive role. Traditionally the resources were concentrated in the center of Russia, or more precisely, in the two capitals – Moscow and St. Petersburg. Within the regions there is also an increase in center-periphery inequality. Regional centers and cities of export industries adapt to new conditions much faster than cities with smaller populations and rural areas. There is an increase in intraregional income inequality, access to education and other social services. The Internet has divided Russia not by regions, but by types of communities: the people and the largest cities (as well as smaller cities in the export and border regions) that quickly integrate in the information globalization through advanced modernization of the lifestyles and higher earnings. [9].

Meanwhile, the TV is actively developing integration possibilities. The rapid growth of digital content and expanding range of technical means to create, transmit, transform and support it, including audio, video and multimedia (more than 30 types of display devices) cause numerous effects in the media field. Costs and sizes of multimedia technologies are rapidly declining. So, from 2000 to 2008, the cost of such equipment decreased by 8 times, and weight – by 130 times. There are considerations about the prospects for free distribution of several of types of devices with built-in and contextual software. Achievements in the display systems field will contribute to this process.

Thanks to the Internet and the mass distribution of digital technology forms of content consumption are changing from passive consumption on the given (linear) program to nonlinear programming and self-programming, personalization and interactivity as well as to the involvement of users in the creative activities, content development and processing. By 2030, taking into account growing information overload and success in creating intelligent interfaces "human brain – the interface", we expect increased adoption of new methods of content consumption.

Activities of non-professional participants, consumer-users (user-generated content – UGC), whose share is for about 15% of the "digital universe", is becoming more and more economic and even socio-political important.

Many different projects are implemented on the Internet base in several directions: Internet Television, Web television, etc. often united by the common name of the OTT model, also IPTV develops quite independently.

New projects load the network media-component with TV and video content, enriching it with new technologies such as P2P, gridcasting, CDN. However, monetization of content in most projects leaves something to be desired. In addition, the TV has obvious advantages in providing content quality.

The most popular foreign projects – Netflix, YouTube, Hulu Plus, Pandora, iPlayer – and hundreds of video sharing (the audience - about 1 billion people), in Russia – Zoomby, RuTube, Yandex Video, clips Vkontakte, Mail.ru Video, tvBeeline, Trava.Ru, Omlet.ru, Ivi.ru, Now.Ru (audience - about 31 million people).

Multimedia projects develop intensively in the rapidly growing, thanks to the Internet, social networks and social media.

Influence of social networking results in an integration of major Internet applications, such as search and email, into a multi-functional application. Social networks, in particular Twitter, represent a convenient place to discuss TV programs and media world. In the Web environment, the main areas of media content consumption are mobile devices, use of several different devices at the same time (for example, TV and computer) and viewing videos online.

#### Features of TV content

Existing studies record some features of the content offered to the mass consumer.

For example, in 2011, the division of programs according to the main types of broadcasting: information, education and entertainment (according to the European Directive on Audiovisual Media Services) corresponded to the main trend of the past years: predominance of entertainment content. Structure of almost all major Russian channels shows a clear predominance of entertainment programs (some large channels even position themselves as the entertainment ones, among them, such as "STS" and "TNT"). Thus, according to TNS data, in 2011, the total broadcast of 20 federal channels made more than 168,393 hours or by 1090 hours more than in 2010. In this case, the largest genre group in terms of broadcast duration (type by TNS) was featured movies, which mostly represents the type of entertainment broadcast. Featured movies covered more than a half of the 20 main Russian channel broadcast – 53.2% (89,559 hours). This genre group includes feature films, television series, documentary films and series, animated films and productions.

Proportion of feature films on TV channels made one fifth (20,3%) of the total broadcast and 38,2% of the total film screening (the overall length of films made 34,202 hours). Proportion of TV series reached 19.3% of the total broadcasting and 36.2% of the total film screening (32,425 hours, which is by

5153 hours more than in 2010). Animated films and TV series took the third place in broadcasting amount and 6.8% of the total broadcast, 12.8% of the total film screening (11,409 hours). But the volume of documentary films and series was only 6.7% of the total broadcasting and 14.6% of the total film screening (11,287 hours).

News programs took the second place in broadcasting in 2011 (14.8%, or 24,861 hours). Daily news presented three-quarters (75.2%) of these programs (18,687 hours).

Entertainment programs took the third place (14.5% – 24 405 hours), music programs (5% - 8399 hours) were the fourth one (5% – 8399 hours).

Socio-political program took only the fifth place, the percentage of which in the total broadcast made 4.1%, or 6905 hours, although this is by 190 hours more, compared to 2010.

In 2011 the amount of "educational programs" decreased. Their percent in the total broadcast made 4% (6756 hours, which is by 2243 hours less, compared to 2010).

Total broadcast of "children's programs" excluding cartoons and programs of "Carousel" channel in 2011 amounted to only 0.3% of the total broadcast hours (554 hours).

The data received from analytical center "Video International" (ACVI) that analyzed genre and thematic broadcast structure of the 9 major Russian channels ("The First Channel", "Russia 1", "NTV", "STS", "REN TV", "TNT", "Home", "DTV / Pepper", TV3) are similar to those mentioned above, although there are significant differences due to the broadcasting specifics of the most popular Russian TV channels. Thus, featured movies made 45% of the nine channels broadcast. At the same time documentary films makes only 3% of broadcast (mainly due to the "TV3" channel), and 21% of broadcast belong to feature films and series. (For comparison: in 2010 film screening excluding documentaries estimated almost the same time – 41%, of which 19% – feature films, 22% – series.)

According to ACVI data, entertainment programs on these channels in 2011 made 18%, advertising and commercial programs took the third place –13%. Informational programs accounted reached only 7%. Informative and educational programs, cartoons, and socio-political programs had an insignificant percentage (5%, 5% and 4% respectively).

Information and education broadcast is virtually absent on channels "STS" and "TNT". The main genres of the two channels are TV series (26%) – on "STS" and entertainment (28%) – on "TNT".

The relatively high proportion of informative and educational programs is broadcast by "REN TV"

and "The First Channel" – 11% and 10% respectively. For other channels, this proportion does not reach 10%.

Genre structure of film programs (feature films and television series) is also a curious aspect. Thus, the largest Russian channels prefer to show detective series. The detectives take 25% of all serials. At the same time "NTV" and "DTV" ("Pepper") broadcast this genre more often – 62% and 61% of series, respectively.

The second most popular serial genre is romance (24%), and the melodrama rate for some channels was considerably greater. Thus, for the channel "Home" melodrama made more than a half (56%) of all serials. "Russia 1" had the same rate for melodrama (55%).

Sitcoms is only 22% of all serials, being most popular for entertainment channels ("TNT" – 76% of all serials, "STS" – 54%)

67% of all TV series featured on the major Russian channels in 2011 are domestically produced. North American productions (27%) are in the second place. However, we must specify, that the percentage of the North American series is much higher on some channels (thus, "TV3" – 75% of all serials, and "DTV" – 50%, in both cases they are shown more often than Russian). But the production of films, demonstrated on Russian channels, mostly concentrated in North America – 52%. And, for example, as for "TV3" and "TNT", their proportion reaches 82%, 80% – for "STS".

Speaking of TV content, one should consider the emergence of fundamentally new participants on the market. First of all, these are, Internet companies and electronics manufacturers whose content offers are much similar to the proposals made by pay-TV operators.

The key types of content presented on the website are the movies, music videos, TV shows and cartoons, which largely overlaps with the most popular non-terrestrial broadcasters' programs. However, the proposals of the last ones are incomparably more diverse, not to mention the fact that it is a linear television what gives viewers the opportunity for background viewing, so beloved by Russians.

### Conclusions

Television community does not recognize problems of the new communication environment, where TV programs delivered via different channels and technology platforms, as the current challenges of today. However, many analysts believe that, although the Russian digital media environment is still not as

diverse as in other developed countries, still we can already see that the increase in "non-linear" TV consumption on digital platforms (mainly the Internet) leads to further fragmentation of the audience. The main feature of modern television is the desire for entertainment. And today it applies to all genres including news programs, analytics, and documentaries. Due to the fact that TV content in Russia is perceived not only as entertainment, but also as an important component of the culture, obvious lowering of cultural standards and ethical requirements in modern Russian TV programs has a particularly adverse impact on both the cultural and socio-economic life of the country.

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