PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF JOURNALIST COMMUNICATION IN THE MODERN UKRAINIAN CYBERSPACE

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Summary

The article is devoted to the peculiarities of conducting journalistic communication in modern Ukrainian cyberspace, in particular: models of interaction with the audience ("war chronicles" and "war emotions"), the functioning of war narratives in the media space and the interaction of leading online mass media with the readers in social networks. An attention is also paid to creating information cyberspace in times of war – specific media vocabulary related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The author provides recommendations on thorough approaches and methods of conducting journalistic communication in the cyberspace. It is argued that the communication space of Ukrainian online media, which is created in wartime conditions with the help of strategic narratives, is primarily an environment for the production of meaning for the new Ukrainian e-journalism. Its standards are being revised from the perspective of the so-called effectiveness of waging information warfare against the enemy, consolidating Ukrainians, and facilitating the transmission of wartime "infonoise" by the military and the civilian population.

Key words: journalistic communication, cyberspace, internet media, e-journalism, journalistic narrative, social media.

1. Introduction

The current trends in the development of the Ukrainian information society place high demands on journalistic communication in cyberspace, including social media. Internet journalism, which carries out networked practices of professional communication, has emerged as a new type of media that makes the most of the latest technologies, as well as a cultural and civilizational phenomenon.

Modern network practices of Ukrainian journalists are primarily aimed at producing the meanings of a victorious nation that is able to withstand the Russian invader, as well as at maintaining a comfortable information field for the patriots of Ukraine that promotes positive self-identification and self-preservation of the nation.

Such a responsible mission makes it important to conduct a deep and comprehensive study of the practical aspects of journalistic communication in cyberspace. Therefore, the ***purpose of this article*** is to characterize the peculiarities of journalistic communication in the Ukrainian web space, in particular, related to the war topics.

Achieving the purpose involves completing such the following ***tasks***, as:
• an analysis of the specific features of the communication space of media in wartime;
• a review of war narratives in the media space;

• an analysis of the communication tools of national cyber media, included in the "white list" of the Institute of Mass Information: "Suspilne", "Hromadske", LIGA.net, "Radio Svoboda", "Babel", NV, etc,

The **novelty of the research** is the author's recommendations for thorough approaches and methods of conducting journalistic communication in the online space. Descriptive-analytical and comparative methods were used as main in the research.

2. Communication space of media in wartime

The communication space of online media, the regularities of which were discussed in the previous sections of the study, responds flexibly and dynamically to social changes. As K. Nastoiashcha (2018) rightly notes, the transformation of the communication space (in social networks) is associated not only with the exercise of a certain influence on the personality of the network actor, but also with the restructuring of this space as a whole. First and foremost, communication sense production is changing, such as defining, labeling, and declaring certain meanings. This is especially true of the confrontation between hostile and Ukrainian narratives, which is quite expressive and dynamic in the online communication environment.

H. Zhukova understands communication practices as "ways of interaction aimed at transmitting information and generating meanings, creating, reproducing and transforming social reality, generating a sense of involvement in interaction with others, and, therefore, cohesion and identification of communities and self-identification of individuals" *(Zhukova, 2022: 15),* She also notes, that first of all, the harsh conditions and course of struggle during the military conflict, as well as reflection on events are documented. This applies not only to information materials directly related to military topics.

In times of war, a journalist, including an online media author, acquires a special status of a communicator. A. Chervinchuk defines two main ways to communicate with their audience in terms of "war chronicles" or "war emotions". These two modes of representation have different communication goals. The "chronicles of war" are primarily focused on the eventuality with its factual, documentary accuracy in order to provide readers (viewers, listeners) with an idea of the causes and consequences (context) of events. The communicative intentions of the representation of the "war emotion" are to feel the tragedy of war through subjective perception of events, to demonstrate the emotional experiences of specific people dealing with war "here and now," and to convey their stories to a mass audience *(Chervinchuk, 2022: 240).*

The communication space of Ukrainian online media in wartime, which is created with the help of strategic narratives representing "war chronicles" and "emotions of war," is primarily a medium for the meaning production of the new Ukrainian e-journalism. Its standards are being revised in terms of the effectiveness of information warfare against the enemy, consolidation of Ukrainians, and facilitating the transfer of military and civilian "infoshoom" to the military. At the same time, the communication function of journalism is increasingly integrated with the information function, and professional journalism is integrated with amateur journalism created by eyewitnesses and participants in military events.

3. War narratives in the media space

One of the main means of constructing the media communication space in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war is media narratives. The Doctrine of Information Security of Ukraine (2016) describes a strategic narrative as a specially prepared text, the purpose of which

is to be verbally presented in the course of strategic communications for information influence on the target audience. In a general sense, a strategic narrative can be called a story and a narrative, and in another interpretation (citing an analytical note by the National Institute for Strategic Studies), it is the basis of ideology *(Lebid, 2022: 296)*.

Among the most widespread Ukrainian narratives, the scholar identifies the following:

1) "the second army of the world", "the Russian army is an army of homeless people and looters" – calling a spade a spade, talking directly about the crimes of racists against Ukrainians;

2) "the president of Russia is a bunker grandfather" – debunking the myth of "imperial greatness" of Putin's ambitions, demonstrating the inadequacy of the behavior of the head of the Russian Federation towards not only Ukrainians, but also representatives of his own people;

3) "to take Kyiv in three days" – the discrepancy between propaganda and the real capabilities of the invaders;

4) "Russia is a terrorist country" – information fixation of the fact that the enemy deliberately commits crimes against peaceful and defenseless people, destroys Ukrainian infrastructure, and commits genocide;

5) "Ukraine is an invincible country" – a reminder of the phenomenal resilience of Ukrainians in the fight against a rather powerful and ruthless enemy;

6) "The West is Ukraine's partner and helper" - countering the hostile narrative of the world's alleged non-recognition of Ukraine;

7) "Glory to the Armed Forces!", "Glory to the Heroes!" – honoring the exploits of Ukrainian soldiers, which are devalued and infernalized in the Russian media in every possible way;

8) "Ukraine is united" – as opposed to racist narratives about the confrontation between the Ukrainian West and East, etc. *(Lebid, 2022: 297–299)*.

From our point of view, war narratives in the media are primarily important for building "communication of like-minded people" with the audience, creating a common language of the media space that would unite Ukrainians and provide them with an additional psychological resource to overcome the military crisis. Military narratives are successfully combined with other narratives that are equally important for the survival of Ukrainians.

Closely related to the narratives is another tool for creating information cyberspace in times of war – specific media vocabulary related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine: rashists, horde, orcs, cotton, holy heimars, swamps, dondon, graving, chmobiks, Pushkinopad, Belgorod People's Republic, etc. Such thematic lexemes can be considered communication markers (or linguistic tools for structuring communication discourse). V. Teleutsia (2018) calls communication markers "an important component of national identity". Since a military conflict is always a difficult and critical stage in the continuous formation of national identity, communication markers of the media play a special role in this process. Using this communication tool, the media contribute to the creation of a living and modern Ukrainian folklore, which, as in previous eras, contributes to the consolidation of the people and their survival in difficult times.

4. Communication tools of national cyber media

The online media, included in the "white list" of the Institute of Mass Information *(The Institute of Mass Information, 2024)*, are represented in many social networks. For example, the journalists of "Suspilne" have pages on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube; they also have accounts on Viber and Telegram. Users are also offered XML coding, which allows them to embed fragments of the publication's publications on their own

websites. The official website emphasizes that the media outlet belongs to Ukrainian society ("The socio-political online information publication "Suspilne Movlennya" (registration ID R40-01992) belongs to Ukrainian society and is financed by citizens' taxes"), which creates the image of a "people's" publication with direct and honest communication. It is emphasized that the website does not publish advertising, which is also likely aimed at increasing the loyalty of the audience tired of advertising speculation on the war *(Holovna. Suspilne. Novyny, 2024).*

"Hromadske"'s approach to forming communication with the reader is more "informal" and devoid of pretentious rhetoric: "Support Hromadske. We work for you and because of you. Be our friend". While "Suspilne" builds communication with the audience from the position of a "business information partner," journalists of "Hromadske" choose the role of "comrades" who share relevant news. Unlike "Suspilne", "Hromadske" is very active not only in the social media used by its competitor, but also in TikTok *(Holovna. Hromadske, 2024).*

"Liga" (LIGA.net) does not use calls to 'friend' on its main page, but encourages the audience to communicate by emphasizing its own competitive advantages. For example, when offering to subscribe to the publication's Telegram channel, a virtual actor-bot says that it has "only the latest news without spam" *(Holovna. LiGA.net. Since 1997, 2024).* The website of "Radio Svoboda" also promises the same thing: "Get notifications only about the most important news, without spam!" *(Radio "Svoboda", 2024).* While "Liga" focuses on the consumer of the information product, for whom the efficiency of journalists is of primary importance, the editorial staff of "Radio Svoboda" is concentrated on the importance of what will be communicated to them.

In addition to Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube, the online media "LIGA.net" is represented in Threads, a link to which neither "Suspilne" nor "Hromadske" offered on their pages at the end of April 2024. On the other hand, the publication does not offer its readers Viber communication, which is a significant problem for using all the opportunities to influence the Ukrainian-language communication space. After all, according to a survey by the IT magazine AIN.UA, Viber became the second most popular messenger in Ukraine after Telegram in 2023, with 18.5% of Ukrainian respondents choosing it *(Hrytsyk, 2023).*

Ukrainian online media, which are equally recognized by the quality authoritative ratings of the Institute of Mass Information, show varying degrees of readiness for continuous and full-fledged communication with their audience. Most likely, this is due to the technical difficulties of maintaining social media pages and messenger accounts, maintaining forums and other resources for communication between journalists and their audiences on media portals, and ensuring quality moderation of reader content.

Quite a few publications directly encourage their readers to engage in discussion, debate, and co-creation in improving journalistic materials. These include "Babel", "New Voice" (NV), and "Radio "Svoboda".

In general, communication tools are used by the media as complementary to the means of information influence. This is logical and natural from the point of view of rational use of editorial resources (technical, time, and human), but it often forces professional media to yield influence to amateur e-journalism and anonymous social media publics, which prioritize gaining reader loyalty through communication.

5. Conclusions

Based on the above analytical study of the applied aspects of journalistic communication in the modern Ukrainian-language cyberspace, the following recommendations can be made to the domestic media

• to form and to develop transparent and clear strategies of communication with their own target audience, adapting the experience of "The Washington Post", "The Financial Times", "The Guardian" and other leading world publications to Ukrainian conditions;

• to balance the use of "war chronicles" and "emotions of war" in publications as complementary ways of representing events and phenomena, and presenting personalities;

• to avoid "jeans", sexism and other reputational risks;

• to promote positive pro-Ukrainian narratives and communication markers of victory in publications to maintain and strengthen the information field that is comfortable for Ukrainians;

• to create accounts for journalists and media and actively interact with the audience in promising social networks and messengers: LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp, Discord, Threads, etc;

• to test the formats of newsletters ("information portfolios"), which include a selection of podcasts and publications;

• to introduce and to apply artificial intelligence technologies that will simplify the rapid preparation of media content on social networks;

• to research the audience's requests, preferences, and reactions to publications using AI;

• to communicate with the audience on websites and portals (forums, correspondence, comments, blogs, etc.).

As amateur operational journalism, common on social media, is gaining more and more popularity among the Ukrainian audience, it is important to gradually introduce professional journalistic standards. To do this, it is necessary to develop the trend of an active reader as a co-author and co-creator of content, in particular: publish the most meaningful and relevant comments from social networks on the websites of publications, encourage substantive discussions and debates, respond promptly to readers' criticisms and improve the work of the media based on their wishes.

The prospects for further research on the topic can be outlined in: application of artificial intelligence capabilities to optimize journalistic communication in cyberspace; development and implementation of professional standards for the quality of e-media communication; further development of social media tools by Ukrainian journalists, in particular Discord, Threads, and LinkedIn, etc.

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