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The Impact on TV Charity Acts on Mass Audience

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Abstract

The vast majority of researchers considers TV's psychological impact on mass audience to be completely negative effect. In this article we tried to find positive aspects of such impact by the example of TV charity acts. For this purpose the method of focus-group was used, in which the audience were shown different video fragments of TV charity action. More than that their emotional empathy level was measured in order to find out emotional impact of charity plots. As the result, connection between emotional empathy level and reaction on definite elements of charity acts was discovered. The responders with a low emotional empathy level preferred the plots, based on facts, concrete methods of solving problem. For a high empathy level – more emotionally colored stories with a strong audial effects were preferable.

The article confirmed the hypothesis that concrete plot's elements influence emotional viewers' state and make them take part in a charity act. Such decision is based on the plot, attitude to the main characters. It appeared that the way of accounting the money had a great importance. And it is different in actions of 1st and 5th Channels and attracts different target audience. Thus the article proves that it's necessary to study positive aspects of television impact on mass audience and to work out the mechanisms, which can improve and develop the content of this sort on native television.

Keywords: psychological impact, TV charity action, emotional empathy, cognitive empathy, audial effects, visual effects.

1. Introduction

A couple of decades ago we couldn't imagine more powerful information supplier than television. And nowadays we can speak about global using of Internet technologies as the main informational resource. The same situation was at the dawn of television origin, when journalists could hardly believe in an opportunity of exchanging printed publications for this new bizarre technology (Winterhoff-Spurk, 2005). Events of further years showed fallacy of these notes and the TV set eventually took the central place at present human's place instead of holy images in a traditional "red" corner (Tretyakov, 2015).

Such comparison with sacral objects is no accident, for television began largely defining human way of leaving, his belief system and creating an urgent "agenda". Researchers couldn't hardly failed to pay attention to such kind of influence, for television was getting an instrument of mass audience's manipulating impact. And the central place in problem formulation of major researchers of television impact on the audience became its negative constituent. The most urgent moment of those learned writings was learning of aggressive television content's impact on real

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aggression (E. Noelle-Neumann “The Spiral of Silence” theory, mediaconspiracy theory, reinforcement theory; A. Bandura “Bobo doll”; cultivation theory by G. Gerbner; R. Huesman and L. Aron “Van Vinkle’s effect” et al). All these theories and experiments did really demonstrate importance of given problem. But researchers had a tendency to pay attention just to a negative effect of suchlike impact and it led to contradictive results (Latynov, 2013).

And there by researches, which could indirectly proved possibility of positive television content impact on the audience, were no test practically. It is known not so many examples, which pay casually attention to this problem (Morgan et al., 2009). Many scientists lose sight of the fact, that this impact can cause not only a negative, but also a positive effect. One can also name examples of researches where TV programs impact are regarded allowing of no appeal to its possible negative or positive effects. This kind of researches means that such effects are formed in accordance with those “demands”, which consumer of this informational source has. Depending on their ability to process the information, a particular effect can be formed (Klimov, 2009). Though a majority of researchers keep on postulating only a negative impact strength of television, that we can see in Gay Kamberbach’s article (Kamberbach, 2005).

It is thought that Mass media can influence three main objects: emotions, cognitions, behavior (Matveeva, 2000 at al., Vinogradova, Melnik, 2015; Winterhoff-Spurk, 2007). Modern television’s content is aimed to change exactly emotional sphere. This is due to the fact, that television loses the role of being informational source and becomes maker and source of emotions. For example, Elena Lavrova’s work proves that news programs influence the audience and this effect comes out in emotional and cognitive components of views about danger in human’s world picture (Lavrova, 2017).

Even news channels present emotions, but not information, as the main product. So the research is aimed to measure empathy level to investigate the effect from TV charity actions’ impact on the audience. Empathy can be defined as a special mechanism of environmental cognition. It is a way of self-knowledge through sympathy to somebody’s feelings (Rogers, 1984). Such self-knowledge can occur for account of emotional experience and background experience comprehension. Thus empathy is considered to be divided into two kinds: emotional and cognitive (Davis, 1983).

Emotional empathy is placed on sense cognition or cognition through somebody’s feelings. Cognitive empathy is cognitive inner human’s world reconstruction, abilities to predict somebody’s behavior proceeding from possibility of taking somebody’s intellectual view (Goldstein, 1985).

That is why the scientific world needs researches, which could help to look at the problem of television psychological impact on mass viewers from the other side (Tselykh, 2019). It is easier from this point of view to search a negative impact exactly as it can cause mass effects: fear, aggression, disgust etc. While a positive effect is connected with individual world picture of a definite man, his unique value system and motives, what makes the research of this phenomenon more difficult. But yet it became more popular thanks to emergence of a new television format in Russia – charity TV acts. This format gives an opportunity to look at television in a new way as a tool, which can help to a definite segment of the population, and it helps to develop the audience’s ability to prosocial behavior.

Charity actions of 1st Channel and 5th Channel are the biggest and successful projects in this sphere on native TV for the last decade that’s why these actions were selected as the object of the research.

The aim of the research consisted in studying of TV particularities, which influence the audience’s emotions by the example of charity acts. The research has a number of research tasks, such as studying of elements, that influence emotional and cognitive audience’s spheres, and also analysis of these elements and matching them with possible changes of viewers’ behavior (making a decision of taking part in charity acts).

Two hypothesis were put forward:

1. Using of definite audio-visual effects in charity actions can influence the audience’s emotions forming intention to take part in a charity act.
2. Viewers’ intention of taking part in a charity act depends of empathetic ability level. People with different empathetic ability level have different factors, which have a decisive impact on making a decision to take part in a charity act.

2. Materials and methods

The research involved 16 participants. 8 women and 8 men. The age of the participants ranging from 23 to 36 years old. All the participants presented different Russian regions such as: Moscow city, Moscow region, Voronezh region, Smolensk region, Astrakhan region, Tula region, Udmurtia republic, Crimea republic, Novgorod region, Saratov region, Tomsk region, Orenburg region, Sverdlovsk region, Mordovia republic, Bryansk region, Kursk region.

Emotional Empathic Tendency Scale was used for defining empathy level (EETS), which was elaborated by A. Mehrabian and N. Epstein (Mehrabian, Epstein, 1972). Russian adaptation of EETS was made by Y. Orlov and Y. Yemelyanov (Soldatova, Shaigerova, 2008). Thus this methods allow to descry empathic tendencies of a research's participant. It identifies grade of ability to emotional response from a recipient on somebody's emotions and also – for how much somebody's emotions coincide with recipient's mark of these emotions. A. Mehrabian defines emotional empathy as an ability to empathize to somebody, to feel all the things, which this person feels, and identify oneself with this person and his emotional state.

The results of using this methods allowed to unit the participants into focus-group. The recipients were shown four plots with charity acts' elements of 1st Channel and 5th Channel. These elements were selected while analyzing the content of these two TV (charity) promos. As a comparison of these actions some of its elements, which were rather differ from each other, were analyzed. On basis of these differences (that will be presented below) the following stimulus materials were selected:

1. Video introduction auditory (no visual reinforcement) fragment of 5th Channel's charity act. The aim was to verify impact degree on the audience by auditory effects separated from visual.
2. A plot with a "star" (in the particular case – with Dmitry Bilan). It was necessary to find out the power of a concrete person's impact on the plot's perception.
3. The plot of 1st Channel with an ill child starring. This fragment had a strongly marked emotional argument.
4. The plot of 5st Channel with an ill child starring. This fragment influenced cognitive constituent.

3. Discussion

The researches proves that distortion of reality perceptions in mass media can often cause distortion in spectacles' perception of reality (Till et al., 2016). Social values and norms transmitting by mass media can not only change attitude to real events and facts, but also influence and form main people's suppositions and knowledge in society.

Similar results has research of Tan E. and Visch V., who represent the model of cinema spectacle's imagination (Tan, Visch, 2018). Nowadays film directors create consciously a fantastic game, which helps the audience to build their imaginable worlds to keep on cinema plot and orient them on participating in joint dream work. Thus mass media not just influence the audience views, but create illusion of opposite effect.

In some countries media content in the form of TV serials has become an important instrument for spreading definite forms of a national identity (Scherer, Thelen, 2020). This phenomenon has been called as «content-tourism» and it is a new type of tourism, caused by mass media images. It's turned up that serials are a daily ritual practice and a part of national memory's culture, they contribute significantly to national identity forming.

Lately it has become popular to use the definition of two-screen review. In other words, it is simultaneous consumption of media content and using of the second mobile phone's screen in social media mode. Such experience of simultaneous view gives positive advantages, including decline of fear to miss the event (Larkin, Fink, 2016), increase of subjective well-being (Chang, Hsu, 2016), and also a fortification of identification with a definite event and its participants (Cunningham, Eastin, 2017).

Some researchers claim, that "different functions of two mediums (the 1st and the 2nd screens) are able to be complementary and co-exist during watching" (Cunningham, Eastin, 2017: 5), while the other researchers find hierarchy of using a mobile device as auxiliary towards the status of traditional TV watching (Tang, Cooper, 2017).

A new term – "social television" has even appeared, which defines some reverse link on the second screen in real time from events, occurring on the first screen (Lim et al., 2015). It helps to show all the advantages of social presence, which are given by two-screen environment. This

display can be shown while translating major events. People all over the world watch sport mega events (Wenner, Billings, 2017), such as the Olympic games, World championship etc. The last tendencies in the field of viewers' study demonstrate, that viewers often consume content from more than one device simultaneous (Henderson, 2017), and this practice is called as using of the second screen. When a user makes different actions on a secondary device, in order to imitate a social experience of shared viewing, he participates in a special kind of communication, which can be called as social television (Devlin et al., 2020).

A group of researchers systematized works, connected to the impact of pro-social media (television, films, video games etc.). The main focus was on donated funds and other forms of pro-social behavior (Coyne et al., 2018). They have discovered, that pro-social mass media have no impact on donator's behavior. Pro-social content (voluntary willing aimed to benefit other people), distributed by different instruments of mass media, influenced significantly pro-social thinking and empathic concern, but did not have a significant impact on concrete behavior, including a donation.

Meta-studies select three main factors, which influence the increase in donations: tax concessions, encouragement of intuitive judgments for women and legitimizing of small contributions. Two factors reduce donations: compassion fading and big launching sum of funds. And using of pro-social mass media's content had no impact on the amount of donation (Noetel et al., 2020).

In other words, social television is a reverse link, which the viewer can give while watching media content. Among others, viewers' donated funds can play the role of this inverse link within charity actions (Bennett, 2018; Berman et al., 2018; Nikunen, 2016; Hirdman, 2016).

4. Results

Comparison characteristic. TV charity acts as a new TV program format are being made not for channel's rating increasing and for audience's attraction as a definite television element. Though it is worth mentioning that these actions certainly are used by a TV channel in image and reputational aspects, to increase the attractiveness of content consumers. But as the matter of fact this kind of format isn't intended to attract the audience by its own material. On the contrary, these actions are fitted especially into the most successful highest-rated shows of a TV channel and cover the most versatile audience. TV charity marathons don't attract the audience, but use attraction of highest-rated shows to collect necessary means. In Table 1 one can see comparative result of charity actions produced by 1st and 5th Channels.

Table 1. Comparative characteristic of 1st and 5th Channels' charity acts

<i>Action's characteristics</i>	<i>1st Channel</i>	<i>5th Channel</i>
Frequency	1–2 times a month	Every week
The days of the week	Wed, Thurs, Fri	Thurs
Presence of promo	No	Yes
The story with «star» character	No	Yes
Repot video	Yes	Yes (but once a year)
The duration of the video with the child	5–6 min	3–4 min
Symbol	No	magic seven-petal flower
Time distribution	Evening predominantly	Distributed throughout the day
What programs is it connected with	“Good morning”, “The time”	“The morning on 5 th ”, “Now”
In the block of ads	No	Yes (promo with the star)
The cost of 1 SMS-massage	75 RUB	Not normalized
Tonality	Emotional	Rational

This table allows to see the main contradictions in charity acts' format of two channels. The most bright example of such contradictions can be seen in the frequency of broadcasting:

charity marathon of 5th Channel covers the whole channel's broadcasting for a definite day (Thursday), the frequency also has a constant value (every week). 1st Channel involves only morning TV air and evening news programs, but the frequency of actions release is not determined strictly (1–2 times a month). The main particularity has a way of collecting necessary means: 1st Channel has normalized price and it is 75 RUB for one SMS-message, aside from the participant of charity action gets a responding SMS-message with a word "Thanks". On 5th Channel the viewer decides by himself how much money to send, in this regard, responding message is not provided. 1st Channel regularly releases video reports about money spent on other children treatment, who got extra money from gathering for a previous character. 5th Channel doesn't publish regular reports about charity acts that was carried out (only annual results).

5th Channel's TV marathon has a symbol (magic seven-petal flower) and its own video introduction. It contains a separate plot with a "star" personality, who appeals to the audience to take part in charity action. It is particularly noteworthy a different plot tonality on both channels. If 5th Channel's plots line up according to concrete fact and cognitive aspects of impact, then 1st Channel's plots can be traced emotional reasoning and creation of bright images.

Empathy level. 4 groups of respondents were distinguished and they were distributed according to the score obtained on the scale. Methodological key of the scale gives distribution according to empathy strength (Soldatova, Shaigerova, 2008). As the result, this sampling structure was obtained: groups with high empathy level – 2 recipients; above the average level – 4 recipients; below the average level – 7 recipients; a low level – 3 recipients.

Focus-group. It is worthwhile to say that the research has only one focus group without dividing it into two groups with a low and a high empathy level. It was due to the fact, that at the time of conducting a focus-group's moderator didn't know recipients' results according to their empathy level, that allowed to except his subjective estimate and unconscious pressure on recipients' opinion to depend upon their empathy strength.

Focus-group results can be presented as figurative maps reflecting the main notes of the recipients about different elements of charity stories they saw. Figure 1 shows respondents' opinion from groups of high and above the average level empathy.

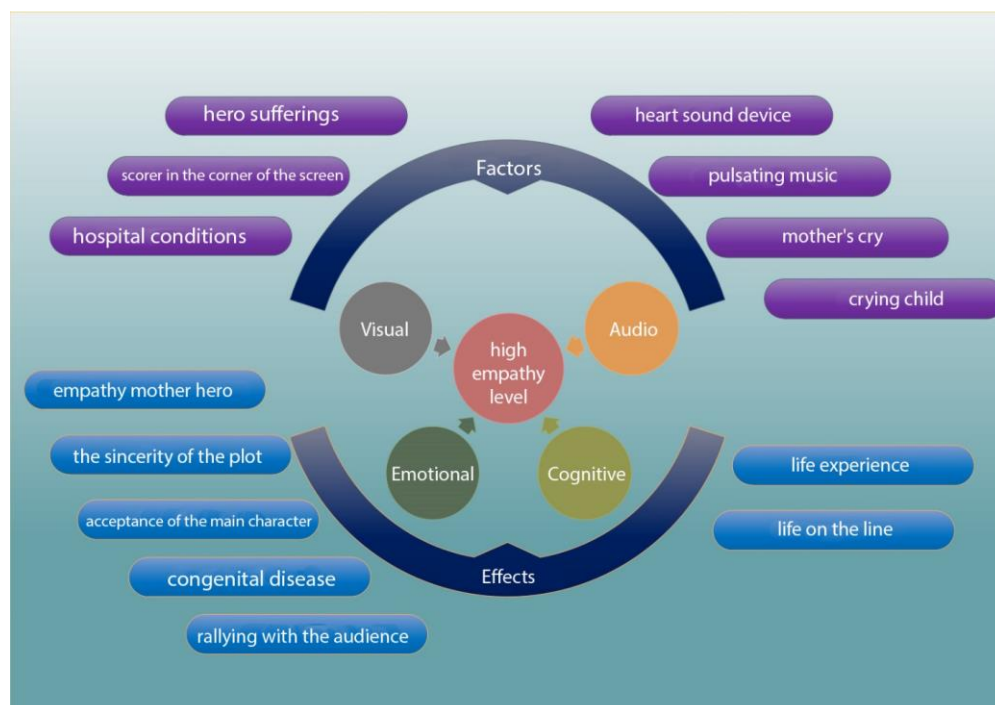


Fig. 1. Figurative map of views about TV charity acts among the responders with a high empathy level

This picture demonstrates dominance of elements from a high part, which are audiovisual effects. Audiovisual and visual story's elements play a big role for changing in emotional state of the responders who have developed empathetic abilities. This group's responders noted audiovisual

effects as the most important effects, which, in their view, make them to empathize. Such as: pulsing music; baby's cry at the beginning of a charity video; pulse monitor's sound.

12 responders marked these sound effects and gave an emotional response to them during listening. At the same time the majority of responders noted their mistrust to the TV act's plot, which wasn't supported by a visual material.

The story with "star" character (Dima Bilan) caused a negative attitude to this personality among the participants. Despite this the responders with a high empathy level were ready to accept this character of the plot, when his words and behavior seemed to be quite sincere for them.

Half of the participants of these groups noted that it was very important as for emotional factors to know whether the child has an innate pathological disease. Also they wanted to know whether child's parents were aware of his disease before the child's birth and were able to do anything with it, or not. These facts are extremely substantial for these responders and they are ready to participate in a charity act if disease has been acquired shortly or right after birth.

The participants with a high empathy level also noted mother's cry in the plot of the action. This audiovisual effect influenced their emotions greatly. Child's sufferings had a slightly less degree of emotional effect. Such sufferings were evident as cry, visual scarring after surgery, child's disability to do some action because of his pathology.

After having watched two last charity stories the responders with a high empathy level noted another important factor for them – hospital conditions. They pointed out that if they see any hospital attributes (hospital gown, hospital room, syringe etc.), it influences their plot's perception and has also emotional impact on taking their decisions. In this case, they are more likely ready to take part in a charity act as hospital conditions create the illusion of problem's importance and the need for assistance.

It is worthwhile to note the position of shaped-card's element "Mother's empathy to the main character". It is no accident, that he is on the board between effects and factors, because he does influence the responders from these two sides: both consciously and unconsciously perceptible. Such phenomenon can be named as "empathy towards empathy". And this phenomenon was described by the author in more detail in the previous article (Litvinov, 2018).

Fig. 2 demonstrates attitude towards charity plots of the participants with a low and below the average empathy level.

This picture demonstrates more cautious attitude from the recipients to audial effects. It was significant to note that visual components have importance for these groups as well. Elements of cognitive factors prevail basically. And the most important for the responders with a low empathy level is to see and hear proofs, facts confirming that their help is really needed and will bring the result.

The responders of given groups noted an important element: "on the edge factor" – that the child needs the help right now otherwise it will be too late. This fact exactly turned out to be the most important for almost all the responders with a low empathy level.

The responders with a low empathy level had also negative attitude to the plot with Dima Bilan. And all the negative emotions towards this character overlapped completely any desire to participate in a charity act, they weren't ready to take him seriously. They gave voice to their own variants of famous personalities to whom they were ready to listen for and take part in the action only because of this character's presence.

Half the recipients of given group noted another important factor – demonstration of a concrete problem's solution. A concrete doctor who will operate the baby were showed in the charity video; a concrete hospital where the operation will be carried out; a concrete medication is necessary for him. All this persuaded the responders that they ought to help the baby for there is a concrete solution to his problem.

There were also effects and factors, which were noted by the recipients from different, according empathy level, groups. About half the recipients noted the factor of personal life experience. Many responders came across similar situations in their real life. And this fact plays a big role: if the problem is familiar for a person and something alike has already occurred in his life, then he is almost certainly ready to take part in a charity action.

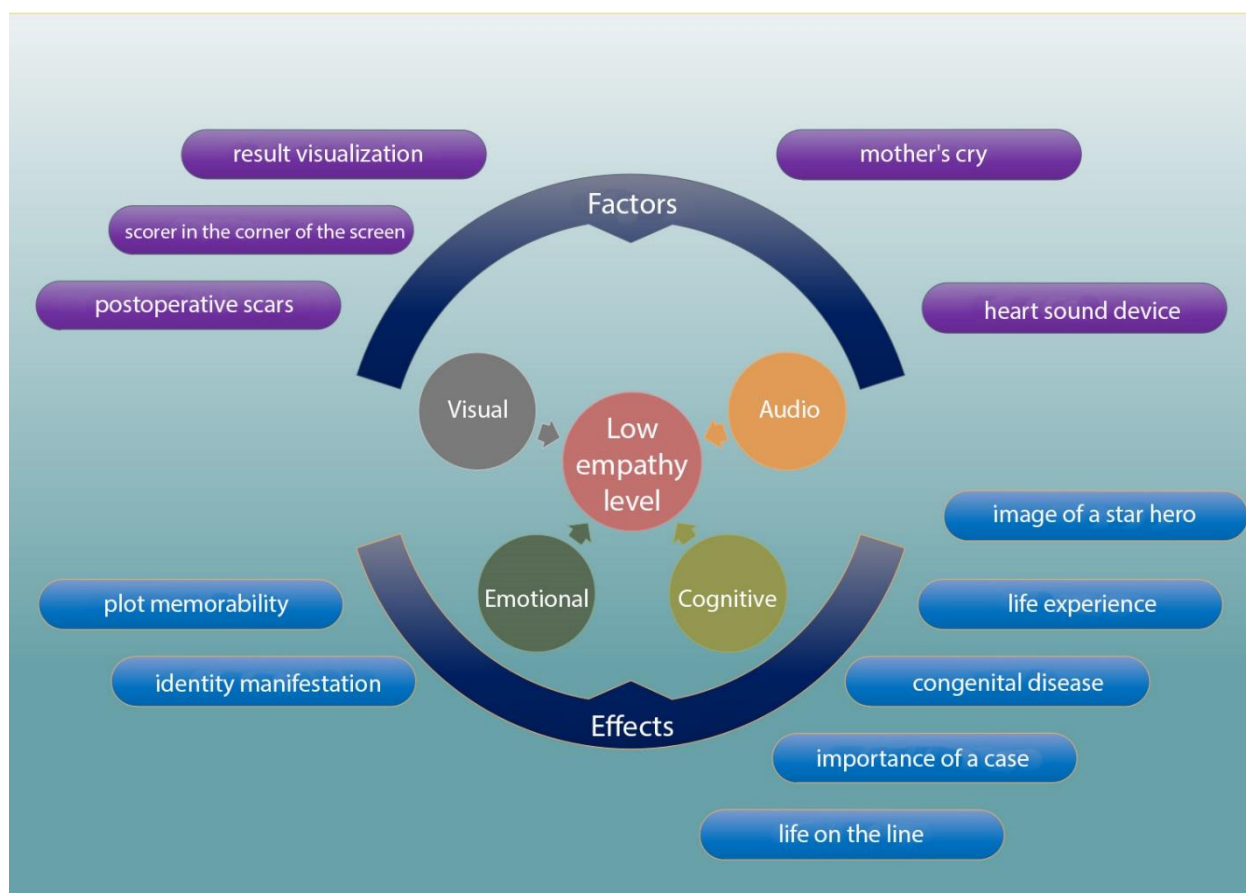


Fig. 2. Figurative map of views about TV charity acts among the responders with a low empathy level

All the responders noted important visual effect for them – the counter in the screen's corner, which was making the amount of money already collected to the moment. The responders claimed that such effect had a strong emotional impact on them and contributed to their decision-making about participation in the action immediately. General opinion on the matter can be described by the words of one responder:

Responder 12: "You can see that just a little bit are left, and you like cannot but help".

The responders noted the difference of TV charity acts of 1st and 5th Channels, which could influence in their decision-making about participation in the action. So the responders from the group with a low empathy level noted, that they prefer way of sending SMS-message to confirm their participation in the action of 1st Channel. In this case, normalized price of sending SMS-message is 75 RUB. The responders pointed out, that it simplifies the choice and doesn't make to muse on what sum is to be sent and how it will correlated with the amounts of the other viewers.

Responder 8: "It should be easy for you, like «Kindness» [this word should be sent via SMS], so here is your kindness: 5541, 75 RUB, that's all, that is your kindness".

For the representatives with a high empathy level, on the contrary, the variant of sending SMS-message for participating in 5th Channel's action was more preferable. As presently constituted, the price of given action is not normalized, and every viewer can send that amount of money, which he wishes. The participants commented on their choice that it isn't important for them what average means were sent by the other viewers. The most important for them was to control the sum by their self in accordance with their own financial situation, and that was the only point, which helped them to take the decision of sending SMS-donation.

Responder 3: "As for me, for example, it is utterly indifferent. I evaluate my financial capacities. If I have 100 RUB then I sent 100 RUB, if I have 50 – 50. But fixed-price, for example, sets up the stress".

5. Conclusion

This research has proved two hypotheses. Definite audiovisual effects influence the responders' emotional sphere and are able, on this basis, to initiate a certain action. These audiovisual facilities were: demonstration of the main character's postoperative scars, his physical injuries, natural anomalies; hospital conditions (people in white overalls, medical devices, in hospital, polyclinic); pulsing music; baby's cry at the beginning of a charity video; pulse monitor's sound and etc. It is worthwhile to say that specific elements of TV charity's plots were identified and which were able to cause the bowels of mercy, emotional and cognitive empathy among the mass audience. By that one can say, that these effects influence the audience of channels positively.

The second hypothesis has also proved – people with a higher level of empathy express more emotions reacting on charity acts' plots and they are more likely ready to take part in these actions. Impact degree of TV charity acts' audiovisual effects depends on ability level towards empathy among the audience. Our research displayed, that depending on a particular responder's intensity of emotional empathy level his emotional state changes after watching charity stories, and motivational mechanisms of initiation of participation in a charity act are completely different among the viewers with bright and mild empathy degree.

The responders with a high empathy level consider two audiovisual effects to be very important, which can be called conditionally as the effect of "compassion" and "hospital conditions". If the responders see, that the main character of the plot suffers somehow, then they want to stop his sufferings by their participating in a charity act. An important effect is also hospital conditions surrounding the main character: such conditions the responders with a high emotional empathy level associate with hero's suffering, and that stimulates them to take an active part in TV charity action.

Defining role in decision-taking of participation in a charity act among the responders with a low emotional empathy level plays making of concrete facts, proofs or association with their own life experience. They react little on emotional aspects and audiovisual effects, but having a low emotional empathy level, they can show a high level of cognitive empathy. This fact, in turn, coincides with theoretical justifications of the authors, who divide empathy into emotional and cognitive (Davis, Rogers, Goldstein).

The effect of visualization of the result was important for the responders with a low empathy level. If the story showed a concrete doctor, hospital, medicine, which were necessary for recovery of the main character, then the responders understood all the significance of giving the hero a hand and they were ready to become a mover of this help.

The 1st Channel's system of raising money was more preferable for the responders with a low emotional empathy level. It was due to the following factors:

- 1) normalized sum for sending SMS-messages;
- 2) release of the stories, presenting results of performed operations.

And the responders with a high emotional empathy level preferred TV charity act produced by 5thChannel. This group's responders were eager to choose necessary amount of money, which they were going to send for charity goals. Such decision correlated with their personal financial capacities. Apart from the responders with a low empathy level, they didn't pay a great attention to the story of the report, the main value was a participation itself and a desire to help.

It is worthwhile to say about the effect from the counter in screen's corner, which noticed all the responders. The counter, making the amount of money already collected on a real-time basis, became, for the respondents with a high emotional empathy level, the element of a unified integration with a vast crowd of people, and they considered themselves a part of this vast crowd. This effect expressed for the responders with a low emotional empathy level a significance of holding action as a huge number of people participated in it.

Thus the responders' desire of participation in a particular charity action was determined by two main factors: emotional empathy level, and presence of cognitive, emotional, aural and visual elements in a charity plot as well. If we imagine these three characteristics' relation (a choice of a definite channel's action, emotional empathy level, presence of particular elements) as a 3D model (Fig. 3), then it is possible to identify the following patterns:

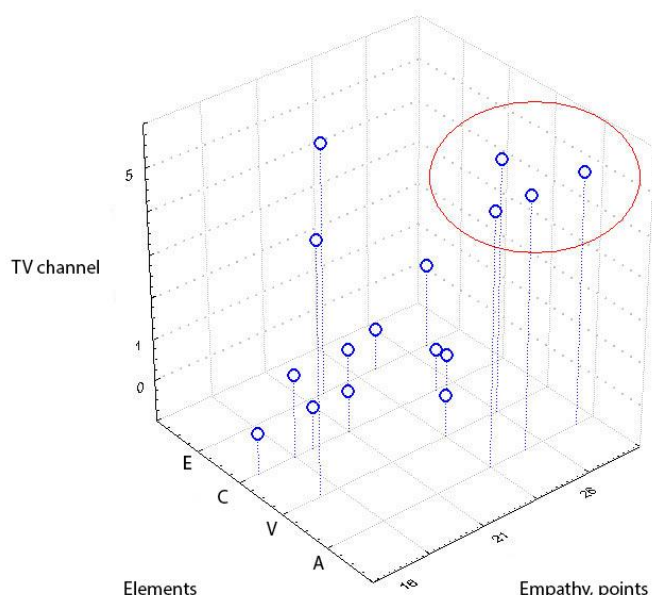


Fig. 3. 3D model: correlation between the choice of charity action (1 – 1st Channel, 5 – 5th Channel) and empathy level index with emotional (E), cognitive (C), visual (V), audial (A) elements

- 5th Channel's action is more preferable for the participants with a high emotional empathy level, for whom the presence of audial and visual elements in a charity plot is especially important (Fig. 3, the fragment colored in red);

- the participants who chose 1st Channel's action didn't show any regularities: this action can be chosen by the participants with a different emotional empathy level and who prefer a variety of charity action's elements.

On this evidence can be made the conclusion, that the strategy of 5th Channel's charity act is mostly aimed on the audience, which possesses particular personal characteristics, while the strategy of 1st Channel's charity act is directed to a wider audience. Perhaps, these differences were connected with the fact, that given TV channels differ significantly by rating and TV audience's share.

Social significance of the research is in the fact, that discovered and described factors and effects can be used for efficiency increasing of TV charity acts. Meanwhile it is necessary to pay attention to both specific particularities of the audience with a high emotional empathy level and specialties of the audience with a low emotional empathy level. It can help to create new TV format directed on prosocial behavior in the society (Miklosik et al., 2020).

As the result, the research has reached its main aim of studying TV impact's specialties on the audience's emotions by the example of charity acts. These specialties allow us to confirm concepts of the researchers, postulating the possibility to change human's behavior and his emotions with the help of TV audiovisual effects (Matveeva, Winterhoff-Spurk, Bandura, Gerbner). But, unlike the prevailing opinion in the scientific community about only negative strength of such effect, our research demonstrates mechanisms of its positive impact.

Further researches of positive effect from TV content's impact on mass audience (including TV charity acts) should develop in the direction of study of TV viewer's individual aspect, and further review of every charity stories' elements. The main drawback of our research was the fact that sample of the participants was small enough, that prevented from embracing to the full all the individual aspects, which could influence change of the responders' emotional state and initiation of his behavioral changes. All these drawbacks will be taken into account during further detailed researches.

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