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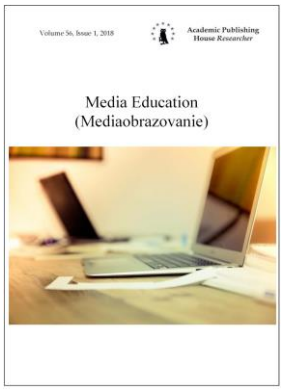

Teaching Future Journalists Media Research Methodology Using Digital Technologies

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Abstract

The process of teaching the future journalists the basics of media education requires the use of advanced research methods of the media environment, which are based on modern information and digital technologies. The article reveals the essence of the concepts of "information technology" and "digital technology". It is noted that the problems of the media market development at the present stage are associated with the lack of research methods used or deviations from them, which increases the risk of inaccurate analysis results. In this regard, it is appropriate to talk about the need for greater responsibility of firms, companies and services conducting research in the field of communications and media. In the practice of media research in Russia and abroad, one can constantly observe the transformation of traditional types and methods of media research (the study of website audiences with the help of counters of visits, cookies etc.).

Every year the role and importance of expert communities that can help to the effective development of the media research industry increases. One of the prospective areas that can contribute to the development and improvement of media research is the introduction of cloud computing and digital processing of large amounts of data (big data) and the expansion of artificial intelligence. They are connected with the development and increasing relevance of new information and digital technologies that can respond to new challenges of a humanistic and ethical nature.

These circumstances intensify the need for a comprehensive study of new tools of media research by future journalists in higher education institutions. The article presents the main promising methods of studying the media, carried out with the use of information and digital technologies. It is identified the most important competencies, which is necessary for successful media research in the modern world.

Keywords: digital technologies, information technologies, media research, media education, artificial intelligence.

1. Introduction

The objects of research in the space of modern media are all economic entities of the media industry, including traditional and new areas of media: mass media, mass communications, journalism, advertising, public relations, social networks, new media, blogs, live magazines, feedback and commenting on messages by users on the Network. In the researches considerable attention is paid to the factor of audience.

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The specifics of the functioning of the modern media industry was precisely defined by V.P. Kolomiets: "The media Industry is a wide range of markets that have an intangible nature of the product and a large number of different levels of stakeholders. For the state and society media are interesting for their intangible products, that's why each of the stakeholders is trying to influence them based on their interests, ideological preferences, tastes. This interest is manifested in the constant adjustment of the rules by which the industry lives, which greatly complicates the forecasting of its development. The unity of ideological and economic is an essential characteristic of the media industry. Therefore, media research is always a wide range of problems of both economic and ideological and aesthetic nature" (Kolomiets, 2015: 50-63).

The latest information and digital technologies are actively used today in media studies and this one allowed to bring them to a new level, to increase the speed of obtaining results and expand the scope of processed data.

Information technologies in the field of media research should be understood as a complex set of all types and components of modern communications in the system of scientific knowledge. The theoretical knowledge is based on the empirical material of the study.

Digital technologies imply a universal and high-speed system using digital equipment, software and the Internet. Such a system based on the methods of encoding and transmission of information, allows you to perform many diverse tasks in the shortest possible time.

Thus it can be argued that research in the field of media is carried out not only on formal grounds. Economic, political and ideological characteristics of media development, as well as social and psychological effects of publications are always taken into account. The method of message delivery which also affects the perception of the information received should not be overlooked.

In the context of the active development of the digital economy, the introduction of digitalization in social processes, and given the constant changes in this area, it is necessary to include in the practice of journalistic education (bachelor's and master's) disciplines, in which students will receive the skills and knowledge that are necessary to conduct relevant studies of the media environment. The competencies acquired within these disciplines can be useful for students both for their research activities and for practical work in the media industry.

2. Materials and methods

The basis of the study is the analysis of scientific literature describing the most promising methods of media research from the perspective of using them in the practices of media education. This research is based on such General scientific methods as:

- Historical method that allows to analyze the understanding of the phenomenon under study in different historical periods. The methodology of media research has recently undergone major changes. In particular, the degree of their reliability has significantly increased and continues to increase, the technological tools for studying the content and the audience of publications have significantly expanded.

- The method of generalization as the process of denoting general trends through the quotient.

The authors' argument is based on a comprehensive and systematic approach to the analysis of the phenomenon of media research and the use of new information and digital technologies.

The combined use of these methods and approaches in the process of conducting the study is most preferable, because this will allow to obtain reliable results and to identify promising practices of media education that can be used in the training future journalists current and promising methodologies of media studies with the use of information and digital technological approaches.

3. Discussion

American specialists were pioneers and leaders in the development of media research methods and their application in practice. The first studies of the media industry were conducted in the 1920s by G. Gallup and D. Starch. G. Gallup who conducted pools to determine the political orientations of the population, and later studied the audience of Newspapers, went down in history primarily as a researcher of political preferences of voters. D. Starch developed the methodology for studying consumer behavior and audience perception of advertising (method identification), in the 1930s studied radio audience.

In the 1990s, media research began to be actively introduced into Russian practice. The first regular media research in Russia in 1992 was conducted by the French company Mediametrie within the framework of the international project "Media Focus". Later Gallup Poll (UK) launched project “The Russian Media Monitor”. In the course of its implementation, measurements of television and radio audience were carried out by the method of diary panel research in 10 cities of the European part of Russia. In the summer of 1994 the software for data analysis was used in Russian regions. Then a number of research companies were involved in the study of Russian media environment and media audiences: Gallup Media, the "V-Ratio", "Mediamar", "Komkon-2", Fund "Public opinion", Russian Research, "RosMediaMonitoring", GFK, etc. A Number of these companies operates to this day (Gumenyuk, 2012: 321-324). At the same time, according to E.G. Nim, the sphere of media research in Russia is just being formed (Nim, 2013: 31-41).

E.L. Vartanova notes the relevance of media research in Russia because the society has seen the manifestation of the process of mediatization in the areas, independent from the media. These are politics, economics, science, culture, everyday life, personal experience of people. Secondly, there is a dominance of media content consumption in the leisure of modern people (up to 9-11 hours of free time), in connection with which the media turn into a kind of institution of formation of the worldview of the individual. Third, the need to study media in Russia is stimulated by the formation of a new economy, in which a significant amount of output is directly determined by the presence of media channels and its content. Fourthly, there is an expansion of opportunities for feedback between content producers and consumers, blurring the boundaries between different actors while increasing the importance of information production professionalism (Vartanova, 2015: 8-10).

In the process of teaching future journalists the methods of studying the media, it is necessary to focus on the study of the current technological state of the sphere of media research in Russia and the use of modern scientific knowledge about computer technology in the development of research of various types and media channels.

During last years a significant contribution to the development of methods of media research and it’s teaching was made by scientific works, which became recognized in theoretical and practical journalism including communications. This is primarily the publication of such scientists as A.G. Asmolov, D. Buckingham, D.V. Dunas, I.M. Dzyaloshinsky, A.V. Fedorov, C. Fuchs, J.L. Qiu, J. Gikas, M. Grant, S. Greenberg, A.N. Gumenyuk, S.M. Gurevich, V.L. Ivanitsky, V.P. Kolomiets, S.G. Korkonosenko, E.G. Nim, E.L. Vartanova (Asmolov, 2016; Buckingham, 2003; Dunas, 2017; Dzyaloshinsky, 2012; Fedorov, 2015; Fuchs, Qiu, 2016; Gikas, Grant, 2013; Greenberg, 2007; Gumenyuk, 2013; Gurevich, 2004; Ivanitsky, 2010; Kolomiets, 2015; Korkonosenko, 2009; 2012; Nim, 2012; Vartanova, 2015; 2018).

However, it should be noted that at present there is no single classification of methodological approaches to the study of the media industry in Russian science. In particular, I.M. Dzyaloshinsky identifies 7 methodological paradigms of the study of the media environment: political-ideological (resource) approach, communicative approach, metalinguistically approach, systemic approach, territorial approach, technological approach, media education approach (Dzyaloshinsky, 2013: 30-37). I.D. Fomicheva designates 14 research paradigms, based on the disciplinary approaches and areas in which the Department of the faculty of journalism of Moscow state University: philosophical, theoretical, journalistic, communicativity, legal, art / literary / aesthetic critical, cultural, linguistic / linguistic / semiotic and political / administrative, economic / marketing strategy, historical, psychological / socio-psychological, sociological, advertology (Fomicheva, 2011: 7-12).

According to the classification updated by researcher I.D. Fomicheva, strategies of empirical media research can be divided into two large groups – quantitative and qualitative research.

When conducting *quantitative* research, scientists receive statistical conclusions expressed in numerical terms. Quantitative research is carried out on a variety of similar objects. They are aimed at identifying trends and the prevalence of certain characteristics in social communities or in the content of many texts. Their main task is to determine the relationship between the features, the frequency of mention of objects belonging to different types, etc. Quantitative research is based on the coverage of a set of individual facts, the generalization of the characteristics of which leads to the production of statistical / multiple indicators. Examples of the most common methods of quantitative research: mass survey, content analysis of mass communication materials, frequency analysis of the author's or publication's vocabulary.

Conclusions of *qualitative* research are expressed in judgments of non-statistical nature-analytical conclusions and forecast. In this case, methods of studying individual objects are used: these are texts, social communities, historical and other events, the creativity or life of some authors, the history of newspapers or individual literature works, etc.

In addition to the diversity of scientific approaches to the study of the media industry, there is also the problem of contradictions between academic and industrial media research. "If academic science strives to find the truth, the industrial one contributes to the making money those who pay" (Kolomiets, 2015: 50-63). Different goal-setting of academic and industrial research of the media environment leads to humanistic and ethical problems, and in some cases to a decrease in the reliability of the results.

Industrial media research is of a momentary nature and is aimed at finding out the consumer, material preferences of the audience for the production of content by the owners of publications. Its task is successful and rapid monetization. Such studies are aimed only at predicting systemic changes in the media environment and media content. *Academic* research covers a variety of areas and can provide answers to fundamental questions and identify prospects for the development of media.

Conducting both academic and industrial research is necessary for the development and modernization of educational programs in the areas of training of journalists. In the XXI century the system of journalistic education in higher education needs the combination of academic and industrial approaches to the study of the media industry. It's necessary to learn the future journalists both to make a meaningful and intellectual analysis of the message taking into account audience preferences, and to determine financially oriented paradigm of media industry research. Since modern information and digital technologies can be used both in science-oriented and in industrial media research, it makes the processing of the data less labor-intensive for researchers and improve the reliability of the results.

The development and transformation of methodological approaches to media research involves the need to teach students to conduct media research using digital multimedia technologies. At the same time, a number of foreign researchers, including C. Fuchs and J. L. Qiu, criticize the active introduction of teaching students big data processing technologies into the practice of media education. According to them, digital technologies threaten the humanitarian and social sciences, turning these areas into computer science. The researchers emphasize that learning technology should not take precedence over teaching students integrated perception and analytical thinking (Fuchs, Qiu, 2016).

Along with this, the majority of foreign researchers consider that in modern media education it is necessary to focus on training students the possession of digital multimedia technologies in order to obtain full and multi-level data on the degree of influence of the media on the audience (Benhamdi et al., 2017; Dede, 2008; Gebremariam et al., 2018; Gibson et al., 2018; Kay, Greenhill, 2013; Šupšáková, 2016).

The position of these authors is relevant for Russia. The fact is that the specificity of Russian journalism education is academically oriented, so there is a lack of technological literacy of students. The system of higher professional education in the field of journalism, according to researchers G.S. Melnik and A.N. Teplyashina, needs the introduction of digital and multimedia technologies in the educational process (Melnik, Teplyashina, 2019: 86-92).

4. Results

At present the researches of media content and audience are most in demand. The results of these studies are actively used both in the media industry for planning of the broadcasting grid by radio and television channels, in forecasting the thematic and socio-demographic orientation of broadcasts and publications by electronic, print and digital media, and in academic activities as a basis for scientific research of the current state of media and prospects of its development.

Traditionally, the choice of audience research methodology depends on the channel of media messages and its specifics. When studying the audience of printed publications, the method of recent reading is usually used. With the help of this method researchers study the frequency of reading the press depending on the time of the year, day of the week, time of day, duration of access to the publication, the number of copies read for a certain time, the method of obtaining the publication by the reader etc. These studies can be carried out by face-to-face / telephone surveys, and with the assistance of so-called diary models (to study the audience of weekly publications).

The application of these techniques has a number of difficulties. In particular, A.N. Nazaikin states that face-to-face surveys are usually very time-consuming, telephone surveys are hindered by the complexity of the perception of the large number of names by ear (Nazaikin, 2014).

The researchers of television audience take into account the technical coverage of television broadcasting, the number of television sets, the total audience size on weekdays and weekends, the average time of watching a channel and broadcast (per year, per month, per week, per day), the share and rating of the channel and programs, social demographic characteristics of the audience of a particular program. One of the first methods of counting a television audience was the use of a diary model. The essence of this method is that each family member writes down daily in a diary what programs and for how long he watched on TV. A more advanced TV audience measurement technology – peoplemetry which uses a special instruments devices referred to as TV-meters. TV-meters automatically register channels and the time of their viewing. Each family member is assigned a separate registration button, there is a special button for guests. The collected information goes to a centralized server that accumulates the results.

In the process of studying the audience of radio listeners is usually taken into account: the total average daily audience of broadcasting and audience of the specific radio channel; the share of radio listeners of the station or radio program; station or program rating; frequency and place of hearing; social, demographic, consumer characteristics of the audience. The radio audience is mainly measured with telephone surveys or diaries. But this method does not take into account the background listening to the radio, and it can distort the data of the total percentage of listeners. A.N. Nazaikin writes that the use of audiometers, by analogy with TV-meters, is not always justified, since they, like telephone polls and diaries of radio listening, do not take into account the background hearing, in addition, they are exposed to radio interference (Nazaikin, 2014).

Thus, media studies using traditional methods cannot be absolutely accurate. They are used in the practice of research companies to this day, but along with this, there is a gradual introduction of new research technologies using Internet technologies, various “digital counting” methods. These technologies are just beginning to develop but they can already be assessed as the most promising and reliable.

The Internet as a global system of integrated computer networks and a special communication environment provides the user with almost unlimited, global access to the information resources of the planet. Its educational, communicative and recreational potential is great.

According to All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center, in 2016 the Internet became the second most popular source of news for Russians: 27% received information from the global network (for comparison, 57 % of people surveyed received information via radio, 3 % received radio, 3 % newspapers, magazines – 1 %). The indicator of Russian’s confidence in Internet resources and online media was also high – 22% of respondents trusted information from the Internet more than traditional media. The high popularity of the Internet and the level of confidence in the information posted on the Web is largely due to the fact that the Internet is an information and communication platform, in which not only specific Internet media, but also traditional print, radio and TV channels function effectively.

In this regard, it is advisable to refer to the experience of research on measuring the audience of Internet sites. The most popular method of collecting data about the Internet audience, used in its own space, is to collect information using special program counters. These programs allow you to monitor the audience, namely, determine the number of users of the site for the required period of time, compare the audience of several sites, determine the geography of visits and receive other information, for example, collect data on how the user enters the site (through search queries, using systems of hyperlinks or direct links) or track the movement of users on the site, citing publications by third-party resources, the so-called clickability (CTR) of headers, banners (allows you to calculate the coefficient of their demand).

Information about the audience of the site helps to accumulate the so-called cookies, i.e. small pieces of data stored on the computer of the user who previously visited the site. These "traces" allow you to recognize a user who has previously accessed the page and collect certain information about their preferences (time of use, length of stay, etc.). In order to obtain more accurate data, due to the fact that several users can use one personal computer or gadget, many sites register visitors, conduct user surveys to obtain a psycho-demographic profile of the audience.

Various user surveys conducted on the Web are highly valuable for editors. It concerns both the topics related to improving the work of the publication and on various socially significant issues. Voting, charts, open (with the possibility for the user to express their position) and closed (suggesting the choice of the answer from the pre-proposed) polls and tests can be used. These techniques are used in radio and television broadcasts in the form of fixed and mobile communications. At the same time, the Internet significantly complements the possibilities of survey methods, in particular, expands the number of respondents, including due to the absence of a strict limitation of the possibility for the audience to answer the question of the broadcasting time on TV or radio. The results of survey studies can be used by journalists in the preparation of publications, and the extended views of the audience – to serve as arguments in the live debate. I.V. Stechkin he states that the results of surveys in some cases may surprise the author and convince him that he should not take the liberty to speak on behalf of the audience (Stechkin, 2011: 156–161).

There are a number of difficulties in the application of traditional methods of research of Internet resources, in particular the use of content analysis techniques. This method of studying content is relevant for the study of print publications, radio and television broadcasts. For content analysis of network materials, descriptors (tags) or keyword search can be used through the archives on the websites of publications.

Thus, the measurement of the site's audience can be considered promising and developing areas in the structure of media research. The emergence of new progressive digital technologies allows us to improve this work.

One of the most promising digital media research techniques is the use of big-data technologies. This term is traditionally understood as great amounts of structured and unstructured data, the most complex digital technologies for their processing and systematization. Digitized information about attendance by users of certain resources, information about devices from which users get to sites, data from social media, information of mobile operators about the region of users of mobile Internet, indications of various devices (weather data, etc.) and many other facts can be used as raw data. Big-data technologies are used by marketers, sociologists and journalists.

Data journalism is "an area of professional journalistic activity based on working with a large amount of digital data, including the journalistic method and the format of author's analytical content aimed at searching or creating socially relevant subjects based on data" (Kolchina, 2014). As a rule, data-journalism is primarily aimed at visualization of large amounts of data, as well as their analysis. For receiving and processing big data, specialized search engine services (Yandex, Google, Mail.ru, Rambler), cookies, programs (for example, the Apache Hadoop toolkit) are used.

A promising modern concept of computer technology used in media research and closely related to big-data technology is the concept of cloud computing. Cloud computing is a distributed data processing technology. Large amounts of information are constantly stored in the so-called cloud, i.e. on Internet servers and storage systems. These servers and systems are combined into a single virtual server. Cloud storage is divided into *private* (when data can be used only by a limited number of users, for example, employees of one organization), *public* (they are intended for free use by a wide range of people), *hybrid* (combining several cloud structures interconnected by data portability technologies, for example, it may be a combination of public and private repositories), *community* (intended for use by oneorganization with a certain common interests, or several organizations).

The future of media research, their quality and reliability is closely related to the development of artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence in computer technology is the development and improvement of computer functions, similar to the power and strength of human intelligence (reasoning, training, problem solving). It is a rational computer controlled by man and a computer or robot program. Natural language processing, speech recognition and handwriting text, smart robots are promising areas for more active introduction and development of artificial intelligence.

These techniques and technologies for conducting media research are in close cooperation with the digitalization of public life, and the active development of computer technologies. To train future journalists in the theoretical aspects and practice of conducting media research, it is necessary to form a high level of computer literacy in students. It is necessary that students learn how to work not only in basic computer programs and have Internet surfing skills, but also have

the knowledge to work in professional services, including the skills to create and work in cloud storages, to extract big data from specialized services, mastered the basics of programming and professional terminology.

Taking into account the requirements of time, future journalists need to master the following competencies:

– Ability to acquire with the help of information technology new knowledge and skills, including the new areas of knowledge not directly related to the field of activity and use it in practice (OPK-7).

– Ability to lead the creation of an effective communication infrastructure of the organization (PC-13).

– Ability to set research objectives, select methods of experimental work, prepare the basis for scientific research (PC-20).

– Ability to interpret and present the results of scientific research, make practical recommendations based on them, put forward fundamentally new hypotheses, predict trends (PC-25).

For the formation of these competencies, future journalists need to study the processes and trends of informatization and computerization in the modern information and communication space. It is necessary to introduce educational practices aimed at developing students' skills to search, improve and implement scientific information using computer technologies, as well as at mastering the information and methodological skills of using modern digital technologies. It is necessary to modernize computer equipment and software in accordance with the requirements of the time, to train students in current and promising methods of conducting media research.

5. Conclusion

Thus, the need to train future journalists in the most demanded modern technologies of media research, taking into account the latest promising developments, has been identified. The main trends in the development of media research methods are highlighted, technological innovations are systematized, the development of which is necessary for the further work of students in the media industry. The range of core competencies and skills that future journalists have to master in the process of mastering academic disciplines, including questions of the methodology of media research, has been determined.

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