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TV NEWS IN THE INTERNET: VISUALITY DEGRADATION

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Abstract

TV news formats in the modern media environment, contain not only video and sound components in their interaction, but also include printed text, which competes traditional expressive means of television content. Format changes in the internet-adapted TV news bring to fundamentally different product distanced from the generic connection with the natural qualities of a television message. During the study of the regional and local TV channels on-line news in St. Petersburg variants of the broadcast news internet presentation and the elementary parts of news items were identified and described. TV news exists in three main variants: as an analog of a television program version, as its modification for the Internet user, as a special on-line version. Modification can vary from interactive navigation and full reportages to some changes of the TV video accompanied by the text and final fragmentation with the textual component dominance, while the video performs a complementary or illustrative function. The results of the content analysis demonstrate the simplification of the news content of the TV Internet channel "Piter TV". Text accompanied by a still video became the main component of the news feed. A large number of amateur and borrowed video and a scanty number of full-fledged reportages testify to the degradation of the visual components value in the internet-adapted TV news. Decline of TV on-line news visual components indicates a radical transformation of the relevant formats in the Internet environment, which may bring broadcasting TV to enhance the aesthetic and personification of the visual content.

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Keywords: Television news, news formats, audiovisual content, fragmentation, Internet TV channel.

1. Introduction

Modification of forms and practices in television journalism is determined by its functioning "between supply and demand". The high level of competition in the media field and, as a result, consumer dictate force TV channels to search for optimal options for presenting information, taking into consideration all factors and conditions that may affect audience choice. It becomes necessary to take into account both the traditional habits of television viewing, and to adapt to a more pragmatic and focused approach of a viewer to the audiovisual information consumption. Digital space is a strong challenge to TV journalism, both in terms of content and in terms of the ways of its representation. (Korkonosenko & Berezhnaia, 2016). This brings changes in the traditional structure of audiovisual content, especially news, which is a popular and dynamically developing Internet information segment. (Lukina, 2013; Vartanova, 2014; Balmaeva & Lukina, 2016; Nielsen & Sambrook, 2016; Kolesnichenko, 2018).

The processes of information visualization in the Internet seem contradictory. Visuality becomes functionally relevant in different areas of knowledge, video provides rich material for analyzing social practices, its importance in communication is enhanced (Knoblauch, Baer, Laurier, Petschke, & Schnettler, 2008); there is a productive trend of data visualization (Shevchenko, 2014), the significant role of video in new media is determined (Kruglova, 2017). But video perception takes time, a viewer should have interpretation skills as well as technologies that ensure the availability of visual details. Anyway, the TV formats in the new media environment, contain not only video&sound in their interaction, but also include printed text, and such a competition changes functions and significance of the television "text" visual components. Such competition is reflected in the consumers' preferences differentiation while they choose video or textual news format, as news companies have to take this into account. According to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism Digital News Report 2018 (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018), consumers in European countries and the United States are more focused on textual news, while eastern Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Hong Kong expect news videos increase. A common way for consumption news is watching video after the text has been read, in addition to the text. Urazova (2014) points out that the transition to a multimedia environment inevitably leads to the new principles for the media market subjects functioning, giving new properties to the distributed information product. Hypertextuality, interactivity and multimedia content of publications (Kachkayeva & Shomova, 2017) are among such specific and necessary properties for the Internet environment. They give the audience new opportunities of content choice and interaction with it and contribute to the development of new dynamic consumer information options. The screen size determines the role of the "picture" (its quality, dynamics, visual detailing, color rendition, word-to-image ratio). Accordingly, a large screen makes entertainment and the use of special effects possible, but a small one, usually used while consuming news, determines conciseness and the presence of additional, explanatory elements (voice commentary, text). A viewing situation affects its structure (linearity / fragmentation), consumer activity (presence / absence / intensity of feedback, interactivity; ability to content demand). A characteristic feature of journalism in the new environment is also the absence of a complete text, as it exists in constant development, updating, therefore has no permanent structure or composition.

2. Problem Statement

Visuality has been a television competitive advantage since its birth. TV researchers insist that the TV visual means of expression, personification and drama narrative determine its special impact on the audience. Combining cinema and radio, television returns the viewer to natural ways of obtaining information, including "sound concrete and the primary imagery of the world" (Vasilieva, Osinsky, & Petrov, 2004, p. 11). TV images create a language with which people can perceive life as a whole, as it breaks a linear-logical dimension of printed text.

Television information comes irreversibly, simultaneously through different sensory perception channels; video compresses the content, enriches it with additional meanings, interaction of message components determines the information saturation on TV. Wherein the image mostly meets the aesthetic function, and the word more often solves ideological tasks (Zaretskaya, 1985). Understanding TV visual impact and its ability to manipulate people's minds let McLuhan (1966) formulate the famous "medium is the message". The television images hypnotic effect was indicated by Sappak (1963), Harris (1994). Researchers noted that in audiovisual form any thought becomes real and seems very significant (Susskaya, 2018). Professionals in the field insist on the exceptional role of the "picture" for television journalism (Magront, 2015; Bogatov, 2017; Dedov, 2015; Carroll, 1997). The visual component reduction in TV message (poor-quality shooting, monotonous, formal footage, lack of dynamics, etc.) always caused criticism in the professional community, the so-called "talking heads" led to a comparison with the radio, which indicates loss of the most significant component of telecast. A television journalist professional minimum includes visual language training, the rules for the words and images correlation, the basics of screenwriting skills for building a solid material. Thus, the theory and practice of television journalism asserts for TV the primary value of the visual image and the need for its organic interaction with the word. However, in the new environment, the structure of visual content significantly changes, its fragmentation occurs, the expressive palette is narrowed, the quality level of the visual component is reduced. The Internet TV channels practice is characterized by a visible lack of professionalism, the lack of voice-over text, specially voiced materials, the predominance of commentary over the facts, the absence of rigid format frames, amateur or technologically imperfect filming, as well as an imitation of amateur style (Lukina, 2013). Changes in the television expressive means balance in the internet-adapted TV news makes one wonder whether their properties in the new environment really additional opportunities for TV are or we watch the formation of a fundamentally different product distanced from the generic connection with the natural qualities of a television message.

3. Research Questions

The questions facing this study are related both to the description of the current situation and to the forecasts of its development.

3.1. First of all, it is necessary to determine what kind of transformations are there in the TV news while they are adapted to the internet consumption, and how the role of video components changes?

3.2. The answer will bring us to the next question: Are those changes present fundamental transformation of TV news content?

3.3. And, as a result, the question arises: are the TV news content transformations in the new environment are variants of its adaptation, or we are dealing with new formats that are not related to generic TV properties?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify current adaptive practices of transferring news content to the Internet environment, to trace the role of video components in television news as they adapt to the Internet environment and to determine the level of transformations taking place in relation to the natural qualities of television information.

5. Research Methods

The study has been held in two stages.

5.1. First, the variants of the broadcast news internet representation were identified and described as well as the news stories' elements, which can be separated from the whole story and presented separately. The local and regional TV channels' news issues content became the empirical basis for this stage of the study. Those were channels "78 ru", "St. Petersburg", "48 Region", the news issues of regional offices of the federal TV channels "Vesti-St. Petersburg" (Russia 1), "Today in St. Petersburg (NTV).

5.2. At the second stage, we traced the news elements usage in the news formats of the "Piter TV" channel as the first information Internet TV channel in St. Petersburg with regional oriented content. According to Medialogia (2017, 2018) company, "Peter-TV" is gaining popularity in the media. In mid-2017 it occupied the 16th position in among the most quoted St. Petersburg media with a citation index 17,17; by the end of 2018 it rose to 11 position with 52.23 and during the year entered the top 10.

"Picture of the day" news feed has been selected for content analysis as it is comparable in functionality to daily news issues on broadcasting TV channels. The analyzed materials were published in the period from November 2017 to April 2018. The total number of news items is 1190.

6. Findings

Regional and local TV channels show the variability of news presentation in the Web.

6.1. Regional and local TV channels show the variability of news presentation in the Web

Television news is presented in three main versions:

• As an analog of the broadcast version;

• As its modification for the Internet user;

• As a special online version.

Modifications may vary as follows:

• Interactive navigation with broadcast news version;

• Minor adjustment of the video accompanied by the text. In such cases, the text does not include S.O.T (sound –on- tape, short interviews in TV reportage), which user can find in video. Such a practice is typical for programs "Vesti-St.Petersburg", "Today in St. Petersburg", "NTV-Petersburg"; "News", St. Petersburg TV Channel.

• Full fragmentation to the elementary parts with a predominance of textual information, where the video performs a complementary or illustrative function (Izvestia 78, 78.ru).

Elementary parts of fragmented broadcast news version were identified and described. They are a still video (photo, drawing, diagram); moving video (silent video, voice-over video, life – video with sound, S.O.T., stand-up. It was also noted that the channels use video from different sources in the news materials (amateur, DVR, surveillance cameras). Fragmentation occurs in case of news issue is presented in the Internet sites, as the broadcast version still meets the standards of news broadcasting.

6.2. Internet channel news formats

"Picture of the day" ("Peter-TV") (see Table 01) content analysis revealed the following internet channel news formats options:

Text + photo / illustration. The news is represented in text and is accompanied by photos (one or a series). Pictures can be taken by the TV channel itself, but can be taken from other resources, can be amateur or frames from well known animated cartoon.

Text + amateur video. The news is represented by text and is accompanied by amateur video taken on a mobile phone, smartphone, DVR, camera, surveillance camera.

Text + photo + amateur video. The news content is represented by the text and is accompanied by both photos and videos. Screenshots from the video are also used.

Text + video from another source. The news is presented in text and is accompanied with a video from another information resource: movie trailers, video reports from state agencies (Ministry of Emergency Situations, police, etc.), as well as videos from social networks YouTube, Telegram, Instagram, VKontakte are used. Sources are always listed.

Text + photo + video from another source. The news is represented in text and is accompanied by photos and videos from other resources. Also, scans are used from a published video or any other photos related to the subject of the message.

Text + video "Piter TV" + S.O.T. The news is represented in text, which is accompanied by video produced by journalists; video timing - no more than a minute; there is an interview in this kind of format.

Text + video "Piter TV" + S.O.T. + voice-over text + life. Text is accompanied with the traditional format of terrestrial TV; news item can include voice-over-video, life, S.O.P., stand-up as well as any kind of still video.

Table 01. "Picture of the day" ("Peter-TV") news formats

Format|/News elements	Number of materials	%
Text + photo / illustration	377	31.7
Text + amateur video	299	25.1
Text + video from another source	215	18.1
Text + photo + amateur video	126	10.6
Text + photo + video from another source	121	10.2
Text + video "Piter TV" + S.O.T.	43	3.6
Text + video "Piter TV" + S.O.T + voice-over video + life	9	0.76

The results of the content analysis demonstrate the simplification of the news content on the television Internet channel. Text accompanied by a still video became the dominant component of the news feed. A large number of amateur and borrowed video and a scanty number of full-fledged reportages testify to the degradation of the visual components value in the internet adapted TV news.

7. Conclusion

The current situation gives the possibility of a wide choice of news consumption for the audience. News broadcasting formats are still in use, they are adapting to the new environment and new formats are being developed in the Internet. As the communicative situation develops, there is a gradual loss of visuality as the basis of television journalism and the video narrative culture. There is an increasing fragmentation, simplification and visual components role reduction in the news items as they depart from their TV scenarios. The integral elements of news stories become visual appendices to the published off-screen text, the stand-up disappears, a correspondent distance himself from the event, personification is decreasing. Interactive content contributes to the involvement of the target audience in the process of its production, which is the communicative advantage of online media, but leads to a decrease in the level of professionalism and quality of video stories being evaluated according to traditional TV professional standards.

Degradation of visual components of news TV content indicates a radical transformation of the relevant formats in the Internet environment. This indicates the loss of the natural qualities of TV in this segment and demonstrate the new type of content with different ways of video & audio & text correlations which, accordingly, need also other ways of such content evaluation. However, the competitive advantage of television broadcasting is still its visual nature. It can be assumed that in a situation of growing competition, TV will enhance the aesthetic and personification of the visual content components.

Acknowledgments

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