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REPRESENTATION OF MASS MEDIA FORMS OF ISLAM IN
IRAQI SOCIETY

Rzhanova Svetlana Aleksandrovna (a)*, Ismael Khadeer Ismael (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) National Research Mordovian State University n.a. N.P. Ogarev, Saransk, Mordovia, Russia, rzanova@mail.ru

(b) National Research Mordovian State University n.a. N.P. Ogarev, Saransk, Mordovia, Russia,
hadeeralkurdi2@gmail.com

Abstract

The article studies activities of mass media (MM) involved in communication as a consumer and a producer of information in the context of democratic transformations in Iraq. Changes in real life changed TV practices, which was reflected in the dynamic development of forms of work with the audience. Synthesis and analysis of information on national topics made it possible to deepen knowledge about the information landscape of Iraq. In addition to specific socio-ideological attitudes aimed at a specific target audience, the religious component is implemented in many socio-political programs. The results of the study showed that the new media in Iraq influences the formation of a single religious space in Iraq, contributes to the preservation and development of national traditions, ethnic identity, and establishment of Islam. Muslim countries have been concerned about the religious education. The Iraqi mass media address various forms of promotion of correct religious thought in Islamic society. One way is Arab religious TV programs that are broadcast every Ramadan. The article examines numerous examples of religious programs which cover religious topics: quote verses from the Quran, drawing parallels with real life stories; interpret the verses from the Quran and tell real life stories of prophets, encourage the Iraqi people to follow ethic rules, answer questions. In addition, informational messages about cultural events related to Islam, photographs, educational TV programs, sermons, parables on religious issues, festivals, charity events, and media texts, pages on social networks are posted in the Iraqi media space.

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1. Introduction

Modern social scientists emphasize the inseparability of the social system and communication. The German social scientist Luhmann believes that every social system generates communication for self-reproduction. Communication consists of three components: message, information, and understanding of the message by the recipient (McLuhan & Herbert, 1994).

Communication can be considered as a process, a system of relations for the exchange of information – collection, production, distribution, and consumption. Therefore, such subjects (actors) can be distinguished as society, which constitutes the aggregate audience for the media system and its individual parts as the audience of specific media; text elements of the system, including information products broadcast by the media; the process of convergence in the media as a systemic process with its components (Baranova, 2016).

For the study of all these actors, their interactions, information products, it is immutable to take into account the social, political, economic, cultural environment.

The concept of mass media is quite deep and combines a number of terms that are related to the mass media.

In 1953, Marshall McLuhan introduced a unique technology of connecting the public and society (McLuhan, 2008). Due to the widespread use of this term, there is a need for scientific rethinking. Having studied the scientific literature, we have identified several scientific areas:

- whether new media will remain new as information continues to grow;
- there is content that is produced and distributed on the Internet platform (Facebook and Twitter, electronic newspapers, YouTube and others) and available using a computer, laptop, mobile or any other device.

2. Problem Statement

The body of scientific studies on this issue can be divided into several groups. Works by domestic and foreign researchers were used for analyzing mass communication in the mainstream of different sciences (Bryant & Thompson, 2004; Brigta & Cobley, 2005; Graber & Dunaway, 2014; Luhmann, 1984; McLuhan 2008; Ortega y Gasset, 1991; Perse & Lambe, 2016; Wimmer & Dominick, 2013;).

The second group includes studies on mass communication (Barabash et al., 2017; Doroshchuk, 2012; Garifullin, 2012; Iventiev, 2016; Rzhanova, 2017; Sokolov, 2002; Shaikhidinov, 2015). Scientists from the University of California draw the attention of the scientific community to the fact that a change in the media environment causes the emergence of new information products (Hernandez & Rue, 2015).

However, the problem of mass media as a spiritual phenomenon, a source of socio-cultural knowledge remains unresolved.

This requires the use of new theoretical and methodological approaches, which make it possible to substantiate the concept of new media in Iraq.

The content analysis of media products of mass communication in Iraq directly addresses the problem of quantitative research of new media with a qualitative study of specific types of Iraqi media: the study of their nature, unique properties.

The authors put forward the theory of development of a problem-related content for the Arab audience as an effective means of promoting national traditions. The scientific novelty of the work lies in the theoretical substantiation of the national-religious concept of the mass information process within a certain state as a set of ontological, axiological, epistemological positions and conclusions that prove and interpret the pragmatic role of mass communication.

3. Research Questions

A study of changes in the media system of Iraq following the collapse of the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein, the US-British invasion in 2003 revealed that the development of new Iraqi journalism has been characterized by conflicting results. On the one hand, as a result of the abolition of censorship and direct government dictate over the media system and journalists, new media outlets that have expanded access to information have emerged. “In a democratic world, the media have significant independence, which allows the formation of a multicultural space” (Rzhanova, 2017, p. 2)

On the other hand, the continuing political instability and the threat of Iraq's disintegration, actions of terrorist and separatist forces create unfavorable conditions for media and journalists.

An important trend observed in the Iraqi information space is the rapid growth of radio and television stations. Among the largest television stations is Al-Iraqiyah, the only nationwide terrestrial channel covering nearly 95 % of the territory of Baghdad, Ramadi, Fallujah, Najaf and Basra. The television channels of Iraqi Kurdistan are active. An essential characteristic of the modern development of Iraqi TV is competition with foreign broadcasting organizations, primarily satellite TV channels of all-Arab importance. These are “Al Jazeera” and “Al Arabia” (Rzhanova, 2020)

The analysis revealed that Iraqiya is the official Iraqi satellite channel of the Iraqi government, owned by the Iraqi MediaNetwork. Furkan is an Islamist Kurdish and Turkmen satellite channel owned by MediaNetwork.

Television plays a special role, since it is television broadcasting that offers the viewer a video sequence that contains information and presents the identity of people. Videos are the most popular and digestible content due to their accessible audiovisual appeal and dynamism that grabs the viewer's attention. Video attracts much more attention than static images.

Interactive TV is one of the most important features of new media. It is legitimate to consider interactivity as a manifestation of the convergence process, creation of new communication practices and virtual reality, which allows the user to receive information directly (Flew, 2014).

A prime example of this type of media in Iraq is the Alsumaria TV channel, founded in 2004 by a group of prominent Iraqi media professionals.

Religious programs play an important role in the Alsumaria television broadcasting network. Islam is the second largest religion practiced by people. The forms of cultural representation of Islam in the media space include: information messages about cultural Islamic events, photographs, educational programs, sermons, parables on religious issues, non-ideological films, festivals, charity events (Tulupov, 2016).

The Arab people honor the Holy Quran; Muslim countries care about the religious education of their society members. All Arab media propagandize religion, referring to various forms of Islam

promotion. For example, Alsumaria presents a humanistic program with aspirations for Arab and Islamic youth.

The host of the program, Islamic scholar Sayed Ali Al-Talkani, tells the story of fasting in human development, raises the issue of urbanization and religiosity. The program is broadcasted daily at 7:00 pm.

According to the presenter of "Iman Al-Asr", preacher Amr Khaled, the role of religion is to meet the needs of society.

Ideas of this program can be found in the Quran verses. The TV show provides an opportunity for viewers to get answers to their questions, to come to correct conclusions. Amr Khaled launched this program to improve the understanding of religion.

On April 19, 2013, the first presentation of "Al-Bakyat Al-Saliehat" took place, where participants discussed the call for an open discussion of the topic of religion. The spokesperson is Sheikh Saleh bin Awad al-Mugamsi, imam and preacher of the Quba Mosque in Medina.

Al-Bakiyat Al-Saliehat is broadcast on Channel One in Dubai. It is popular with the Arab people. The program is dedicated to religious topics, aimed at the interpretation of the Quran verses, and real life stories of the prophets and God's messengers.

The main goal of "Al-Bakiyat Al-Saliehat", like other religious programs, is to encourage people to ethics and charity, avoid human injustice, live in peace and goodness. Charity is one of the basic tenets of Islam. The program consists of 3 parts, each of which has a specific topic. In the first two parts, Sheikh Saleh Al-Magamsi reveals the essence of the issue under discussion, quotes verses from the Quran, drawing parallels with real life stories. The third part of the program is a feedback: they answer questions. It should be noted that the program reflects the peculiarity of communication between Arab journalists; for example, a greeting turns into a ceremony designed to establish warm and trusting relations.

The young generation is a powerful instrument of the new era, and it is very important to direct them in the right direction, to show them the true path. Otherwise, young people will be a serious problem. Huater is an 11-part religious curriculum. It has been broadcast by various TV channels depending on the season, including Channel 4 Al-Shabab, Ekraa, Al-Resala and Sharjah. The host is Ahmed Shukayri. "Huater" has become quite popular among the Arab youth. Its popularity was influenced by a manner of broadcasting, which was new for the Arab audience: simplicity of the style distinguishes the youth television program from others. In addition, deals with the issues, which are relevant for the younger generation and acutely on the agenda. Some describe it as cultural rather than religious or propaganda. This is due to the fact that some of the broadcasts were devoted to topics such as the impact of Hollywood films on the Arab youth, or held with the participation of young singers from different countries (Ahmed Abu Hater, Mohammed Al-Mazam, Abdul Salam Al-Hassani, Mashari Rashid Al-Allasi). Thanks to the success of the TV show and the widespread public interest, Al-Shukeryi was able to make Huater a fixed program throughout Holy Ramadan.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to show activities of the media from the point of view of mass participation in communication as a consumer and a producer of information; describe communication as

a system of relations for the exchange of information; analyze text elements of the system, among which one can distinguish information products broadcast by the media.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set:

- to identify the quantitative component of the information market in Iraq; to trace the competitiveness of the new media of the Iraqi state in the Arab information space; to consider the religious programs of Iraq from the point of view of information delivery technology; to determine the typology of mass media transformation of society.

5. Research Methods

The research methods used are various research approaches: systemic, axiological, verbal-centric, and contextual.

Structural and functional analyses were used as the main methods that reflect the dynamic concept of structure of mass media, since they allow us to identify semiotically significant aspects of media texts, their mutual relationships in a mass media product, which is especially important in journalistic metalanguage (Lobanov, 2016).

6. Findings

The results of the study showed that new means of access to information such as the Internet expand functions of the media as one of the leading sources of distribution and consumption of all types of information, opening up a different level of involvement of the media in the socio-political, social, and spiritual spheres.

It was revealed that the realities of the 21st century required an expansion of the range of issues covered, which can be traced in the information content of Iraqi television programs.

Interactive TV is one of the most important features of new media. The content-analysis of various types of mass communication revealed a special type of the information space in Iraq. We examined audiovisual media (television channels and radio stations). 57 television channels and 36 radio stations broadcast in Iraq and other Arab countries. As the analysis showed, the websites contain topical content on political events. The results made it possible to experiment with mass media in Iraq, creating information models of reality.

The media are not only a mediator between an individual and society. They are a full-fledged companion in promoting the ethnic identity of the Iraqi people to the masses.

TV journalists follow traditions in their programs: in particular, oratory is highly revered in Muslim countries, it is considered a sign of education. All presenters comply with the norms of intercultural communication, their speech is expressive and emotional.

7. Conclusion

The study of objects in the light of their interaction with social communities, processes, social relations determines the research approach to the media as institutions that carry out a multilateral exchange of information in large social systems. The process of convergence in the media is considered to

be a systemic process with its components: the history of development, social-psychological, economic, technological, organizational, political aspects, conditions and factors of development of the process in their relationship.

The formation of a single socio-cultural space contributes to the preservation and development of national traditions and ethnic identity.

In the information society, mass media are becoming effective means and methods of informational, journalistic and artistic influence on the audience. Mass media culture has a significant impact on people's worldview (Rzhanova, 2017).

The media create a special product – information – which reflects what is happening in reality.

The creation of a new telecommunications system has shown the ability of Iraqi television journalism to transform the methods, forms and genres in which reality is usually presented on the screen. Changes in real life led to changes in television practices, which was reflected in the dynamic development of forms of working with the audience.

Television is gradually changing the vector of working with the audience, leaving room for Internet content, which is required by the new mobile video format. Social systems exist on different scales, from two interacting actors to humanity. Systems are produced and reproduced through social practices, mass media culture should be considered as a spiritual phenomenon, a source of socio-cultural knowledge.

Synthesis and analysis of information on national topics made it possible to deepen knowledge about the information landscape of the Iraqi state. In addition to specific socio-ideological attitudes aimed at a specific target audience, the religious component is used in many socio-political programs.

Multimedia projects remain a powerful means of information (Hernandez & Rue, 2015).

Television contributes to the genre syncretism inherent in the nature of this means of informing the audience. As a result of varying genre fragments, original genre formations are created. Today, restoration and maintenance of public relations are becoming urgent problems. The ideas of X. Ortega y Gasset on the "mass man" have come true (Ortega y Gasset, 1991).

The results of the study showed that the activities of the new media in Iraq influence the formation of a single religious space, contribute to the preservation and development of national traditions, ethnic identity, and establishment of Islam. The Arab people honor the Holy Quran. Muslim countries have always taken care of religious education of their people.

It can be assumed that this is why all Arab media propagandize religion, referring to various forms of promotion of correct religious thoughts in Islamic society. One such way is Arab religious programs broadcast every Ramadan. The scientific and practical value of the study lies in the fact that the object of mass media discourse is verbal and value resources of spiritual and practical activities in the new conditions of the democratic statehood of Iraq.

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