

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT AND DIGITALIZATION

Oleinykov Sergei

PhD in Law, associate Professor, leading researcher.
Scientific Research Institute of State Building
And Local Government of NALS of Ukraine

Modern society has combined interpersonal, mass and specialized types of information interaction. Interpersonal communication fatally depersonalized him in the space of social networks, and mass communication leveled against the background of their rapid development. Mass media concentrate the main information sphere therefore; they remain the main field of existence and the main channel of influence on public opinion. Communication between people through the “magic window” of the media is fundamentally contradictory: it broadens the horizons of mass consciousness, but reduces the accuracy and volume of information. Thus, IT communication is a new practice of information interaction, the formation and functioning of public opinion through the Internet community. It is necessary to maintain communication, exchange opinions, and receive information. The role of bloggers - “opinion leaders”, who defiantly form public opinion, is growing. Social structures replaced by a society of processes (M. Castells). Instead of “space of places” comes “space of flows”, which modifies the way the information society develops, its economic, political and cultural development and changes the traditional sociological concepts of “social group” the concept of “social networks”. New technologies stimulate new forms of social communication and mechanisms for shaping public opinion.

The formation of an information society - global and local (national) is accompanied by the dynamics of the development of processing, accumulation, dissemination of information of different content and orientation, the development and implementation of high ICT in production, education, state (public) management. At the same time, the processes of qualitative renewal of society based on the expansion and availability of information flows – social networks, Internet resources, electronic messengers, etc.) in countries of any continent have caused a predictable intensification of the mobility of the spiritual life of the population, the erasure of traditional boundaries between spheres of society – production, political, intellectual, spiritual, cultural, educational, etc. New criteria for assessing the activities of subjects of public authority, political leaders, and legitimacy of their functions formed. As a result, the number of factors influencing the dynamics of the content and structure of public opinion – mass, regional, group, professional.

Mass media, in particular television, have become a multifunctional means of shaping public opinion and national consciousness. Digital television broadcasts programs for millions of audiences, and for individual choices. However, the freedom of citizens' access to information precisely through these channels remains incomplete.

It is impossible to convey objective information to the audience when the existence of mass media depends on private subjects or groups. For example, the power-political actions in Ukraine, where three television channels were closed (February 2021), are quite convincing and confirm the axiom about the importance of monopolization of the information field by political actors. They determine (dose) the proportions and quality of socially important information. These data are about a real public assessment of the functioning of power structures, their effectiveness and ability / inability to guarantee a minimum of rights and freedoms of citizens, their protection, protection and restoration. Therefore, in the field of activity of information generators, the relevance of public media, television, which not biased by the authorities or external subjects of influence, is not lost. Nevertheless, the authorities can use all resources – power, financial, legal, informational, socio-cultural (for example, the creation of political shows, mystified stage shows) and others. In particular, it uses custom-made information interventions, which created by political strategists. Their goal is to block opposition sources of alternative and reliable information that uploaded to the Internet. The government uses force and non-legal resources up to the persecution of bloggers, analysts, publicists and observers, independent experts who, contrary to the artificially created public opinion, reflect its dynamics in an objective format, parameters and indicators. Oppositional (alternative) public opinion often has a latent form and enters into a state of protracted ideological, ideological and legal conflict with the official opinion of the political power, its power resources and state security services, law enforcement agencies. The latter emphasizes the danger of a situation when the authorities underestimate the real public opinion. On the other hand, the pseudo-public opinion created by the institutions of power is even more dangerous. It generates turbulence in public consciousness, moods, expectations and attitudes, and fatally increases the gap between power and its social basis - society. The population no longer agrees silently and impersonally approve any anti-national initiatives. As a result, society drops the external semblance of the legitimacy of the authorities, which are following a destructive antisocial path, demonstrates inevitable dysfunctions and obvious social discrediting.

It is socially justified and rational to explore the possibilities of this type of electronic mass communication, which make it possible to maximize all the opinions of society and inform about social protests - coalitions of national minorities, youth, professional and other groups of the population. The totality of their positions will be able to influence the process of forming an objective public opinion, attract the attention of the authorities and stimulate their constructive activity.

In his methodological postulate of F. Allport, public opinion presupposes the awareness of his subject that other people react to some object in the same way as he does [1, p. 29-36]. B.A. Grushin argues that mass consciousness is a potential public opinion, which actualized in the act of communication [2, p. 251-283].

Studies of the peculiarities of the influence of electronic media on society carried out in the past decade. Public opinion in the context of political processes purposefully carried out by representatives of sociology [3].

Justification of the place of public opinion in information processes based on the concept of purposeful interaction between the subjects of the information space, their

role in the process of influencing public opinion. The need for it dictated by the problem of optimizing the action of such factors of public opinion as the culture of television journalism, the skill of communicating with representatives of ideological trends and social groups.

Most researchers agreed that the following relationship could exist between the individual and public opinion. 1) The individual is aware of the opinion of others and at the same time: a) accepts it completely; b) accepts it in part and corrects his opinion; c) remains unconvinced. 2) The individual voluntarily identifies his position and public opinion, without external coercion. 3) It forms his own opinion on the problem, but he lacks identification with the community, so he does not know anything about the thoughts of others. Public opinion, as a specific historical product of people's communication, is not a mathematical sum of individual judgments, but the formation of a traditionally democratic conviction and a special embodiment of the will of a social community.

It has relative independence and is capable of regulating influence on people, it also affects the communicative activity of a person and social groups, is generated as a factor of intensive group communication, intensive exchange of information. This information flow is diverse and is formed both spontaneously (mainly interpersonal communication) and purposefully (propaganda impact). In the latter case, the information impact is capable of forming legal attitudes, fixing or changing the old ones.

Systems analysis connects public opinion and mass communication. The first is included in the information flow that ascends from the population to the institutions of society. Mass consciousness formed within the framework of information relations, where public opinion formed not so much by social realities as by the media that function in society [4]. According to the Ukrainian Institute for Strategic Studies, the most important condition is publicity. People associate it with the activities of the media. According to the interviewed respondents, the object of criticism should be unlimited (92%); it is necessary to make public all views on the problem of the subject, including the thoughts of ideological opponents (85%); glasnost has a positive effect on society, but at the same time expresses anxiety about the possible negativity of this process (64%).

The right to receive complete and reliable information, to open and free discussion of any important public problem is inseparable from the principle of transparency in the atmosphere of a democratic society. Although it is asserted contradictory and ambiguous due to the diversity of opinions, their plurality and fragmentation of knowledge about the subject of public opinion.

The imaginary independence of opinions is subjective. The media often use the lofty concepts of "freedom", "democracy", "independence", which have a magical effect on consciousness by the power of the meaning of these concepts, but do not relieve social tension on any social problem. Moreover, this is natural: slogans carry an immediate euphoria, but not connected with practical matters. Public opinion is painfully born as result of the functioning of the media, actively interacts with official state policy, supports or opposes it, evaluates it and contains recommendations or requirements for its implementation.

Some conclusions 1. Public opinion as an element of information processes is turning into an essential constant factor in the activities of the state. Its carriers are citizens, whose active participation is stimulated to develop and make political decisions. 2. The emergence of a strong and effective information environment is facing an obstacle to the awareness of people in all spheres of public life and the growth of their social activity. 3. The role of public opinion is important in the context of information processes in the country, and is due to the need to develop clear socio-political and legal coordinates for the interaction of subjects of the information space, legislation on information, criteria for restricting access to it and defining criteria for state secrets. This indicates the relevance of legislative consolidation of the process of formation and identification of an objective study of public opinion thanks to public (civil) television, telecommunications, and the Internet. 4. In the professional sphere, the information policy of the state should take into account the factors of formation of public opinion and, at the same time, the tools of its research - the culture of the TV journalist, the skill and objectivity of the "talk-show" in real time, a wide range of discussed problems and television space.

Digitalization and the institution of public opinion.

As a socio-technical phenomenon of the current century and an attribute of a post-industrial society, signifying the rapid spread of mobile communications, interactive information services and the rollback of civilization from an analog form of information broadcasting to digital via the Internet, social networks, electronic messengers, through which a global change in technologies for managing social processes in the economy and education took place, legal practice, technological methods and forms, speed of information broadcast, coverage of a wide audience. In this irreversible process, digitalization significantly affects human thinking and mass behavior, its ethics and stereotypes with the necessary information content, acquiring unlimited opportunities for forming public opinion, generating it in accordance with the given algorithms by the forces of a few groups.

A new social environment ("platforms") of public discourse on significant social issues - education, ideology, legislation, political decisions, etc. - is growing and structuring, shaping and transforming public opinion at the global, state, regional and local (local) levels. Often – by means of propaganda, influence.

Digital means of communication play the role of an "intermediary" between the subjects of public authority and public opinion: informing the authorities about it and working as a channel of influence on it. The mechanism of such broadcasting known for a long time, but the figure in the 21st century has increased the possibilities of mutual influence of both parties.

Therefore, the actualization of the impact of digitalization on public opinion is obvious. However, this problem is difficult to solve, since any serious special studies and domestic statistics on such an impact not carried out.

References

1. Allport F. H. Toward a Science of Public Opinion / Floyd H. Allport // Public Opinion Quarterly. 1937, Vol. 1. # 1. P. 29-36 (electronic text): https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Allport/Allport_1937. (date of access - 2.04.2021).

2. Grushin BA Mass consciousness: the experience of definition and problems of research monograph / BA Grushin: - Moscow: Politizdat, 1987. 368 p.
3. Golovakha E., Panina N. Ukrainian society 1994 - 2001: Results of a public opinion poll // [site] - URL: www.dif.org.ua (date of access 21.12. 2020)
4. W. Doob L. W. Public Opinion and Propaganda / L. W.W. Doob: – Hamden, 1966. 166 p.