

SECTION 1.

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SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL HYPNOTIC MANIPULATION MECHANISMS OF PUBLIC MIND USED IN MEDIA SPACE ON THE EXAMPLE OF THEMATIC SUBSCRIPTIONS ON THE YOUTUBE CHANNEL

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ABSTRACT

Questions regarding the public mind through social networks (especially through video and audio content presented on the YouTube channel) have been actively analysed and discussed in recent years. The particular importance of this topic lies in the fact that these networks use a certain range of special mechanisms, techniques, and tools. They help to carry out a purposeful influence in mercenary ends on the mass consumer. Such a negative influence of socio-psychological mechanisms of hypnotic manipulation of public consciousness in the media space cannot always be recognized by an ordinary user. Gradually, manipulation on social networks (including YouTube channels) creates a distorted and even negative worldview image in the user's mind. It leads to an unconscious accent change in the perception of real events and in making decisions and reacting. Thus, an erroneous attitude to objective reality can be formed in a person's consciousness. Also, it can lead to an increased tendency to suggestibility, which, in turn, leads to a decrease in the criticality of the information offered in the social nets.

The study aims to analyze the most frequently used socio-psychological mechanisms of hypnotic manipulation of public consciousness in the media space, taking thematic subscriptions on the YouTube channel as a basis. Also, it aims to determine the correlation between the number of thematic subscriptions and the frequency of subscriber purchases under the influence of the content provided on the channel and the level of a person's suggestibility.

Methodology. *The methodological and theoretical framework of the study is based on theoretical views and empirical research on the manipulation of the consciousness of the individual (B. Grushin, E. Dotsenko, S. Kara-Murza, D. Olshansky). Also, it includes research on basic technologies and methods of manipulation and psychological impact (G. Grachev, V. Zankov, I. Melnik, A. Tsuladze). It also summarizes the scientists' ideas of the most frequently used social and psychological mind manipulation mechanisms (A. Manukyan, E. Shostrom). The research also investigates the features of Internet technologies for manipulating an individual's consciousness (E. Morozov).*

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the extension of the existing ideas about the socio-psychological mind manipulation mechanism. Also, the research identifies the main differences in the level of suggestibility of YouTube users depending on the number of thematic subscriptions using the Mann-Whitney U-test. The correlation between the number of thematic subscriptions and the frequency of purchases accomplished under the influence of the content provided on the channels and the level of user suggestibility was examined with the help of the r-Spearman rank correlation coefficient.

The conducted theoretical analysis of the problem and empirical research made it possible to formulate the following general conclusions: mind manipulation is considered a kind of domination over the spiritual state of people. This control is possible due to impose ideas, attitudes, motives, and behavioural stereotypes beneficial to the subject of influence. Active users with a larger number of thematic subscriptions on the YouTube channel have a higher level of suggestibility and are much easier, and can be subjected to mind manipulation. The correlation between the level of suggestibility, the number of thematic subscriptions on the channels, and the frequency of purchases made by users via the Internet are confirmed.

Keywords: *manipulation, suggestibility, hypnotic mind manipulation, socio-psychological mechanisms of manipulation, social networks, YouTube, thematic subscriptions on YouTube.*

INTRODUCTION

Many scientific works focus on the fact that social networks have a strong informational and psychological influence on the information consumer. The thematic justification of the topic will increase even more in the context of modern globalization of all spheres of human activity and the increasing popularization of the Internet space. The transfer of communication and interaction of people in the virtual space (especially in the

current conditions of the forced isolation of people due to the pandemic) has led to the erosion of the traditional understanding of the mechanisms for coordinating the interests of participants in information relations and an increase of the power of manipulative phenomena in social networks.

Manipulation has existed since the emergence of communicative relationships. The problem of social net users' mind manipulation has become a hot topic nowadays. It is getting even more severe with the development of communication technologies, media space, and the Internet due to the prevalence of information resources.

A large number of publications have been devoted to the study of suggestive technologies, but recently the problem of using modern Internet technologies to manipulate the consciousness of an individual, society, and state has become increasingly important. It should be noted that YouTube is one of the most popular and, at the same time, specific resources on the Internet nowadays. It is a service that has become the most popular place for posting video files due to the simplicity and convenience of the technologies offered to users. It is also the third by number of visitors platform in the world. That is why YouTube is becoming the most attractive platform for the use of various mechanisms for public mind manipulation.

PURPOSE

The research aims to conduct a theoretical analysis of the socio-psychological mechanisms of hypnotic manipulation of public consciousness in the media space by taking thematic subscriptions on the YouTube channel as a basis. Also, it aims to determine the correlation between the number of thematic subscriptions and the frequency of subscriber purchases under the influence of the content provided on the channel and the level of a person's suggestibility.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES ARE THE FOLLOWING: clarification of the concepts of "manipulation", "mind manipulation", and "suggestibility"; highlight the main social and psychological mechanisms of hypnotic manipulation in social networks; present the study results on the level of suggestibility of the YouTube channel users, in correlation with the number of thematic subscriptions; determine the relationship between the number of thematic subscriptions on YouTube and the frequency of purchases based on the content provided on the channel and the users' level of suggestibility.

METHODS

The methodological and theoretical framework of the study is based on theoretical views and empirical research on the manipulation of the consciousness of the individual (B. Grushin, E. Dotsenko, S. Kara-Murza, D. Olshansky). Also, it includes research on basic technologies and methods of manipulation and psychological impact (G. Grachev, V. Zankov, I. Melnik, A. Tsuladze). It also summarizes the scientists' ideas of the most frequently used social and psychological mind manipulation mechanisms (A. Manukyan, E. Shostrom). The research also investigates the features of Internet technologies for manipulating an individual's consciousness (E. Morozov).

HYPOTHESIS: We hypothesized that there is a correlation between the number of YouTube subscriptions, the frequency of online purchases, and the level of suggestibility. Thus, YouTube users with a large number of subscriptions are more prone to the effects of mind manipulation and have a higher level of suggestibility.

The research was carried out using social media. The study involved 60 people who were divided into two groups: the first group consisted of active YouTube users aged 24 to 45 years (average age 31 years) with 11 or more thematic subscriptions, and the second group consisted of YouTube users who have up to 10 thematic subscriptions ranging from 26 to 47 years old.

The thematic subscriptions on the YouTube channel were analyzed to determine the most frequently used socio-psychological mechanisms of hypnotic public mind manipulation in the media space. A questionnaire was used for this purpose. An author developed the questionnaire to determine the number of thematic subscriptions on the channels, as well as the frequency of purchases that users make under the influence of information that users receive while watching video content on the channel. Also, the following psychodiagnostic methods were used for the research purposes: Test "Conformity-suggestibility" (S.V. Klauchek and V.V. Delarue); "Test-questionnaire of suggestibility" (OP Sannikova and Yu.P. Fol).

Methods of mathematical and statistical data processing were used to analyze the research results. The analysis was conducted with the help of SPSS Statistics (version 21.0). To compare two independent survey samples (active YouTube users with 11 or more thematic subscriptions - group 1 (30 users), and users who have up to 10 thematic subscriptions - group 2 (30 users), we used the Mann-Whitney U-test. Spearman's r-rank correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation between the number of subscriptions, the frequency of purchases of various goods and services offered and

advertised through video content on the YouTube channel, and the inclination to suggestibility.

RESULTS

The empirical study was conducted throughout 2020. The collection of empirical data was carried out using social nets (VK, Facebook, Instagram), where a search and subsequent survey of YouTube users were carried out. This channel attracts users not only as a source of information and entertainment content but also as an opportunity to use Internet services for commercial purposes (to create a channel and promote it). Also, as noted by foreign researchers R. Marek (Marek 2013) and C. Vernallis (Vernallis 2013), YouTube is viewed by many users as a way to achieve personal success.

YouTube users were divided into two groups according to the results obtained through the survey. The first group consisted of users with 11 or more thematic subscriptions, and the second – had up to 10 subscriptions. Comparing the responses of users of these two groups, it was determined that active YouTube users who have up to 10 thematic subscriptions are much less likely to make purchases online than members of the second group (on average, 3 times more often than members of the second group). Besides, users with a higher number of subscriptions (group 1) are less critical of the advertisements that pop up while watching video content on the channel. Also, we analyzed the content of subscriptions of questioned users. The content coincided for both groups. It usually was entertainment, news, business, finance, career, games, video reviews of goods and services, travel, education, cooking, psychology and self-development, fashion, beauty, health, promotion, and business development through social nets.

The "Conformity-suggestibility" test by S.V. Klauchek and V.V. Delarue was used to determine the way how the thematic subscriptions affect YouTube users' suggestibility. It was found that users who make up the second group and have less than 10 thematic subscriptions on the YouTube channel are less prone to suggestibility, according to the obtained data. So 13.3% of users of the first group had a low level of suggestibility, 33.3% of users had an average level, and 53.3% - a high level. As for the respondents of the second group - 40% had a low level of suggestibility, 43.6% had an average level, and 13.3% had a high level.

"Test-questionnaire of suggestibility" by O.P. Sannikova and Yu.P. Fol was additionally applied to approve the obtained results. The data collected with the help of this test also showed significant differences in the level of suggestibility among YouTube

users, depending on the number of thematic subscriptions on the channel. The results also showed a higher level of suggestibility among users of the first group: 13.3% of users had a low level of suggestibility, 40% had a medium level, and 46.7% had a high level. The respondents of the second group had a much lower level of suggestibility. Thus, 46.7% of users had a low level, 33.3% had an average level, and 20% had a high level.

Statistical analysis of the data was performed using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test to validate the statistical significance of collected data regarding the YouTube subscriptions for both groups of users. This criterion was used to calculate the data obtained by two methods aimed at determining the level of suggestibility ("Conformity-suggestibility" and "Test-questionnaire of suggestibility").

The Mann-Whitney U-test helped to approve the statistical significance of obtained data by the "Conformity-suggestibility" test (S.V. Klauchek and V.V. Delarue). We compared to group 1 (active YouTube users with 11 or more topical subscriptions) and group 2 (YouTube users with up to 10 topical subscriptions); according to the results, the empirical values lay in the zone of significance (differences at $p \leq 0.05$). Thus, the obtained values were in the zone of significance ($U = 61.5$, $p = 0.034$). It meant that active users with more than 11 thematic subscriptions had a higher level of suggestibility and were much easier to manipulate ($M = 12.7$, $SD = + - 5.65$) than regular users with less than 10 subscriptions ($M = 7.7$, $SD = + - 4.29$).

The result of the statistical analysis of the data by the Mann-Whitney U-test when comparing group 1 and group 2 according to the results obtained using the "Test-questionnaire of suggestibility" (O.P. Sannikova and Yu.P. Fol) was determined. It was found that the empirical values were in the zone of significance (differences at $p \leq 0.05$). Thus, it revealed the presence of statistical significance of values between both groups. It was revealed for most of the test scales, namely:

- "Emotional responsiveness-emotional detachment" - ($U = 61.0$, $p = 0.034$). Thus, the test results showed that YouTube users were active. The users with 11 or more subscriptions showed greater sensitivity to the objects presented by the social environment ($M = 25.7$, $SD = + - 9.39$) than users with fewer amount of subscriptions ($M = 16.3$ $SD = + - 9.54$). Respondents of the first group were more sensitive and susceptible to different kinds of influences. Besides, they were more impressionable and could easily adopt the emotional state of the interlocutor;

- "Commitment to follow the suggestive influence - lack of commitment" ($U = 63.5$, $p = 0.043$). These results indicated a higher degree of commitment from YouTube users of the first group. It could mean that they were ready to trust and follow the impressions

received from any perceiving organ ($M = 26.3$, $SD = + - 9.82$) in comparison with users of the second group ($M = 16.9$, $SD = + - 8.29$). This suggested that active users of the YouTube channel with a large number of thematic subscriptions were more easily and quickly ready to carry out some actions under the influence of an impetus, unconsciousness, involuntary (possibly impulsive) action, imitation, and statement. Thus, these respondents were more prone to impulsive actions under the influence of an external stimulant. For example, they were ready to buy some products under the influence of good quality advertising;

- “General level of suggestibility” ($U = 61.0$, $p = 0.034$). Thus, active YouTube users with a greater number of subscriptions were more susceptible to manipulative influence ($M = 25.3$, $SD = + - 8.53$) than users who had less than 10 subscriptions on the channel ($M = 16.7$, $SD = + - 8.54$);

- As for the indicators on the scale, "dependence-self-sufficiency" ($U = 69.0$; $p = 0.077$) and "uncritical openness to the new-indifference to the new" ($U = 77.5$; $p = 0.154$). The survey revealed the empirical values were not in the zone of significance (differences at $p \leq 0.05$). These values showed the absence of statistical significance of these data. Thus, we could say that the level of dependence on society, the importance of being a part of this society, and the level of openness to new things did not depend on the number of thematic subscriptions. The indicators on the scale "dependence-self-sufficiency" were the following: Group 1 - $M = 24.3$, $SD = + - 7.81$, group 2 - $M = 15.3$, $SD = + - 10.17$. The indicators for the scale "uncritical openness to the new-indifference to the new" were the following: Group 1 - $M = 24.9$, $SD = + - 8.92$, group 2 - $M = 18.3$, $SD = + - 8.41$.

- Thus, summing up the comparative analysis, it can be stated that there is statistical significance in the level of suggestibility among YouTube users depending on the number of thematic subscriptions. Thus, those users who have more subscriptions are easier and faster to be manipulated.

DISCUSSION

The problems of manipulation and protection of human consciousness were investigated by P. Bourdieu, J. Halperin, G. Grachev, E. Dotsenko, J. Duprat, A. Zakatov, V. Zenkovsky, V. Znakov, S. Kara-Murza, I. Melnik, G. Pocheptsov, J. Rudinov, Ch.Dzh.Filmore, A. Shipova, E. Shostrom, etc. One of the conclusions that summarize their ideas can be formulated as follows: the basis of the fight against manipulation is decency and a critical attitude to statements, especially regarding the statements lacking scientific credibility and argumentation.

It should be noted that recently the increased attention of researchers has been attracted to the problem of information violence, the influence of the media on the personality, and public mind manipulation in the media space. It can be explained by the fact that manipulation is not just a way to propose a person do what others want but also a way to force him to strive to do it.

The concept of "manipulation" refers to a set of methods of covert control (quite often through lies) to achieve one-sided gain. If we generalize the views of many researchers regarding manipulation, we can distinguish the following main features of it. Manipulation is a type of informational and psychological action (not physical violence, but may involve the threat of violence). The target of the manipulator's actions is the consciousness and psyche of a person or a group of people. Manipulation is a hidden action. Manipulation should not be realized by the subject of manipulation to be successful. Manipulation is an action that requires skill (Grachev 2013). As for the definition of the concept of "mind manipulation", we should refer to the work of the famous Russian researcher of manipulative technologies S. Kara-Murza. The scientist notes that manipulation is a type of use of power; he writes about it in his monograph "Manipulation of Consciousness". The one who owns it - can influence the behaviour of others without revealing the nature of the behaviour expected of them (Kara-Murza 2007).

The main content of manipulative influence is the establishment of control over the object of influence to force him to act in a way that is needed for the manipulator. It is also necessary to highlight the main components of the manipulative influence. This is handling information (purposeful presentation of information in a beneficial for the manipulator way); harbouring manipulation (the manipulator has to hide the purpose of the manipulation and ideally make the very fact of influence invisible); the degree and means of coercion (the degree of influence on the masses and the mechanisms of manipulative influence is determined); targets of influence (highlighting those mental structures that the manipulator influences); the semblance of the addressee of influence to a technical instrument (manipulation objects turn into puppets controlled by manipulators).

One of the main conditions for successful manipulation can be explained by the fact that, in most cases, a modern person has neither time nor desire to check the veracity of the information received from media space. However, it should be remembered that with the help of the media, not only the worldview is formed, but also the actions of individuals. Considering the hidden nature of manipulation, researchers pay attention to the degree of distortion of reality during its commission - from outright lies to hiding information. That

is fully manifested in silence or concealment of certain topics, for example. The information about real facts can also be distorted with the help of a biased emphasis in the description or assessment of the situation, revision of information, etc. (Dotsenko 2003: 109).

Many researchers note that mind manipulation is a part of information warfare, which is also waged in the media space. Such a war is waged with the help of information-psychological weapons, which are mainly aimed at suppression, destruction, disorganization, disorientation, disinformation, and maladjustment of the object of influence. This type of manipulation can cause serious damage to both mental and physical health. Besides, this kind of mind manipulation contributes to spontaneous, unmotivated, aggressive (and antisocial) actions, causing temporary or irreversible changes in the person's consciousness and even leading to self-destruction. According to J. Stein, the main target of the information war is people's minds. (Crumm, 2012).

Today, with the expansion of mass media capabilities, there are more and more ways to manipulate public minds. Mainly it is associated with the specific features of the Internet space and social networks (Morozov 2014). A special tool for mind manipulation is communication on social networks, including YouTube channels. Such communication is realized through comments below the watched videos on the channels. Here we should refer to the opinion of S. Herring - the famous researcher of Internet communication. He notes that users perceive computer-mediated communication as a conversation, although it occurs in writing (Herring 2010).

A.M. Manukyan singles out one of the most common socio-psychological hypnotic mechanisms of public mind manipulation. It is the formation of associations, using stereotypes, and repeating the necessary information. The scientist notes that spam and trolling are the most powerful means of manipulative influence in the media space (Manukyan 2019).

It should be noted that social networks (VK, Facebook, Instagram, and especially YouTube) are becoming the most interesting platforms for promoting various products and services. Thus, due to YouTube's features that allow reaching a large audience, this social network is the most interesting tool for public mind manipulation to promote services and sell various goods. Thus, SMM should be mentioned here - this is an abbreviation for social media marketing. SMM is a set of activities to promote a brand on social networks. American researchers S. Tratter and F. Cape note that SMM is the process of attracting traffic or attention to a brand, product, or service through social platforms. It is a complex of activities for using social media as channels for promoting

companies and solving other business problems (Trattner and Kappe 2012: 27). That is why one of the tasks of our study is to determine the correlation between the level of suggestibility of YouTube users, the number of subscriptions on the channels, and purchases made under the influence of SMM through this social network.

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was applied to identify the correlation between the level of suggestibility of YouTube users, the number of thematic subscriptions on the channel, and user purchases via the Internet. The use of correlation data analysis (Spearman's rank correlation method) made it possible to identify the structure of relationships that correlate with each other. Thus, the following statistical significance was identified for the following parameters:

- the number of thematic subscriptions on the YouTube channel and the frequency of online purchases ($r = 0.598$, $p = 0.01$). the level of suggestibility ($r = 0.524$, $p = 0.01$), emotional responsiveness ($r = 0.513$, $p = 0.01$), dependence ($r = 0.450$, $p = 0.05$), non-criticality of openness to new things ($r = 0.427$, $p = 0.05$), commitments to follow the inspirational influence ($r = 0.533$, $p = 0.01$). Thus, the higher level of a YouTube user's suggestibility, the more open he is to new things and has high responsiveness, the more he depends on the opinions of others, the more thematic subscriptions he has on his channel, and the more often he purchases goods and services through the Internet;

- the frequency of online purchases and the number of thematic subscriptions ($r = 0.598$, $p = 0.01$), the level of suggestibility ($r = 0.663$, $p = 0.01$), emotional responsiveness ($r = 0.729$, $p = 0.01$), dependence ($r = 0.703$, $p = 0.01$), non-criticality of openness to new things ($r = 0.572$, $p = 0.01$), commitment to follow the inspiring influence ($r = 0.677$, $p = 0.01$). Thus, the higher level of a YouTube user's suggestibility, the more sensitive and susceptible he is to external emotional influences. Also, such people are less inclined to defend their point of view and depend on the opinions of others. The higher the level of their suggestibility, the more tolerant they are to the perception of new and to strive for a new sensation, as well as they more easily succumb to various impetuses that induce immediate action the more often they make purchases of various goods and services on the Internet.

Thus, it can be stated that there is a correlation between the level of YouTube users' suggestibility, the number of thematic subscriptions on channels they have, and purchases they make on the Internet, which confirms the hypothesis we mentioned earlier.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the results of the theoretical analysis of the studied problem, we concluded that the public mind hypnotic manipulation in the media space is based on using various technologies of information and psychological influence. In particular, it becomes possible with the help of such socio-psychological mechanisms as the formation of associations, the use of stereotypes, the repetition of the necessary information, spam, and trolling. These mechanisms have become a massive phenomenon in the world. In general, mind manipulation is understood as a kind of domination over the spiritual state of people, control by imposing ideas, attitudes, motives, and behavioural stereotypes that are beneficial to the subject of influence. Manipulation is a kind of spiritual, psychological (not physical) action. This influence on the mental structures of a human personality is hidden, and the object of manipulation should not notice it to be successful.

As a result of analyses of scientific sources on the selected problem, it is also possible to conclude that mind manipulation is possible only due to the distortion of information and control over communication. It determines human activity's attitudes, ideas, rules, and patterns. That is why information is a source of real force of action on human consciousness. Manipulation is associated with a purposeful distortion of information, particularly through the substitution of concepts and the absence of a common framework scheme that establishes the only principles of information relations. If we feel that information bypasses consciousness and acts on the subconscious, it is necessary to block this source of information.

An empirical study of YouTube users' suggestibility level and its correlation with the number of thematic subscriptions shows statistical significance between these parameters. Thus, the Mann-Whitney U-test using allowed us to confirm that active users with a larger number of thematic subscriptions on the YouTube channel have a higher level of suggestibility and are much easier to manipulate. Besides, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient helps to determine a strong correlation between the level of suggestibility, the number of thematic subscriptions on the channel, and the frequency of user purchases over the Internet. Thus, an earlier stated survey hypothesis is confirmed - YouTube users with a large number of subscriptions are more prone to the effects of mind manipulation and have a higher level of suggestibility.

In the future, we plan to identify the most effective mechanisms for public mind hypnotic manipulation that are used in video content on YouTube channels.

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