

DOI: 10.15838/esc.2019.1.61.13

UDC 32.019.52, LBC 60.54

© Ivanova E.M, Markov E.A., Solov'eva S.A.

On the Transformation of the Models of Interaction between the Authorities, Mass Media and Society in Regional Print Editions*



Elena M. IVANOVA

Cherepovets State University

Cherepovets, Vologda Oblast, Russian Federation, 8, Sovetsky Avenue, 162600

E-mail: marevgeny@inbox.ru



Evgenii A. MARKOV

Cherepovets State University

Cherepovets, Vologda Oblast, Russian Federation, 8, Sovetsky Avenue, 162600

E-mail: marevgeny@inbox.ru



Svetlana A. SOLOV'EVA

Cherepovets State University

Cherepovets, Vologda Oblast, Russian Federation, 8, Sovetsky Avenue, 162600

E-mail: ssa_doc@mail.ru

* This article is prepared in the framework of the Russian Foundation for Fundamental Research grant no. 18-411-350004 p_a “Transformation processes in information interaction of the government and the society in modern Russia (case study of the Vologda Oblast)”.

For citation: Ivanova E.M, Markov E.A., Solov'eva S.A. On the transformation of the models of interaction between the authorities, mass media and society in regional print editions. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2019, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 215-225. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2019.1.61.13

Abstract. The article describes the transformation processes that form the models of information interaction between the authorities, mass media and society in modern Russia. During the Soviet period, the activities of the media in the USSR were determined by the state, which shaped public consciousness in the country with the help of canonical ideological attitudes. By the early 1990s, the model of state domination over society was transformed into a new socio-political state – the domination of society over the state. The transformations also affected the activities of Russian mass media, which made a full turn by the beginning of the 21st century and returned to their original information and communication position. Genetic (state) nature again prevailed in the work of Russian mass media, which determined the formation of a hierarchical model of interaction between the authorities, mass media and society. These processes prove the need for active participation of power structures in the communication and information space of the country, which needs regulation and self-regulation with the help of evidence-based state information policy. We analyze the transformation processes under consideration with the help of several methods: structural and functional analysis, comparative analysis, reconstruction of the addressee of the media text, and some aspects of content analysis. The model of interaction between the authorities and the media affects the formation of the society of small towns, establishment of a positive information field, and identification of the population. We carry out the study on the materials of district newspapers of the Vologda Oblast. Our findings proceeding from the analysis of the current model of information interaction reveal its flaws, which is due to its monologue nature, alleged naturalness of national-civil identification, and creation of the image of the addressee with the identity of naive subject.

Key words: information policy, information interaction model, mass media, power, society, media.

Introduction

Scientific and political community takes special interest in the analysis of theoretical bases and factors in optimizing models of interaction between state bodies and the mass media.

The research in mechanisms and models of the dialogue “power-society” can help assess the effectiveness of interaction between state and civil structures and identify the existing contradictions and factors hindering this process.

In the conditions of modern socio-political space the issues of sustainable and stable development of the state are of particular importance. One of the factors to maintain the balance between authorities and emerging civil society is the communicative environment, where state bodies exercise their powers. The

dialogue between authorities and society is one of the basic values of the modern state, a regulating and system-forming factor of socio-political reality.

The problems of interaction between the public authorities, media and society are reasonably reflected in the works of foreign and domestic authors working in different scientific fields: political science, sociology, journalism, national history, psychology, social psychology.

If we focus on domestic researchers’ recent works in this sphere, we can see a significant diversity in the coverage and solution of the issue of information interaction between government and society.

A.A. Zinov’ev, A.S. Panarin, S.G. Kara-Murza touch upon the problem of interaction of the power, media and society institutions at the theoretical and philosophical level [1-3].

A.A. Grabel'nikov, I.I. Zasurskii, Ya.N. Zasurskii, L.M. Zemlyanova, E.P. Prokhorov, M.V. Shkondin, I.I. Yuzvishin, S.G. Koronosenko, A.I. Solov'ev, M.V. Shkondin, L.G. Svitich¹, S.V. Konovchenko, A.G. Kiselev dedicate their work to the analysis of communication processes (social, historical, modern) and the study of the mass media functioning, as well as the theory and practice of journalistic activities [4-11].

The pragmatic potential of the media in the context of socio-political and economic reforms is studied G. Diligenskii, M. Gorshkov, I.N. Tarasov [12-14].

Recent research is focused on the problems associated with a transforming political system of the modern Russian society and activities of the media in the context of political and economic reforms. N.R. Balynskaya, A.V. Bondar, E.V. Brodovskaya, E.V. Galkina, S.P. Potseluev, V.V. Kravtsov, S.S. Bodrunova are interested in this issue².

A significant amount of work is devoted to the role and importance of the media in the formation of a new political system in Russia. This is evidenced by a number of collective

monographs, collections of scientific papers, as well as dissertations on this topic. For example, the most complete scientific analysis of the presidential elections of the Russian Federation in 1996 is carried out by a group of authors representing academic scientific organizations [15]. This topic is reflected in the works of scientists, such as V.M. Yur'ev, D.G. Sel'tser [16].

Processes of the RF electoral system formation, issues of its improvement and results of its impact on the country's transformation, as well as the use of mass media in the elections are considered in the studies of well-known foreign political scientists and specialists, such as M. McFall, D. Simon, E. Schneider [17-19]. Methods of detecting the ideological content of mass media messages during the elections are considered in the work of English sociologist John. B. Thompson [20].

The transformation processes that occurred in the media field and influenced the formation of a new system of mass-media are reflected in the work of M.Yu. Galkina, K. Lekhtisaari [21].

However, in our view, academic studies lack works devoted to the study of communicative-informational relations between the state and society and those transformational processes that occur in the Russian mass-media. This indicates the presence of some gaps in theoretical research on this issue. The article is devoted to the study of the causes and factors that form current transformational changes in the models of interaction of the government, media and society.

In the Soviet times the country had a hierarchical model for government-media interaction, they were under the ideological control of the CPSU. This dependence allowed the authorities to use the media as a tool of domination over the society, forming public consciousness through the introduction of ideological attitudes.

¹ Svitich L.G. *Journalism in the System of Global Information-Creation Processes: Doctor of Philosophy dissertation*. Moscow, 2002. 324 p.

² Balynskaya N.R. *Specific Feature for Media Participation in Political Processes in Modern Russia: Doctor of Political Science dissertation abstract*. Ekaterinburg, 2009. 34 p.; Bondar A.V. *Strengthening State Institutions as a Factor in Consolidation of the Russian Society: Doctor of Political Science dissertation*. Saratov, 2009. 423 p.; Brodovskaya E.V. *The Transformation of the Political System of Modern Russian Society: Institutional and Socio-Cultural Components: Doctor of Political Science dissertation*. Tula, 2008. 389 p.; Galkina E.V. *Civil Society in in Russia's Modern Political Environment: Doctor of Political Science dissertation*. Krasnodar, 2010. 412 p.; Potseluev S.P. *Dialogue and Para-Dialogue as Forms of Discourse Interaction in Political Experience of Communication Society: Doctor of Political Science dissertation*. Rostov-on-Don, 2010, 436 p.; Kravtsov V.V. *Innovation Journalism and State in the Modern Media Environment: Doctor of Philology dissertation*. Moscow, 2014, 398 p.; Bodrunova S.S. *Mediacracy: the Media and State in Modern Democratic Communities: Doctor of Political Science dissertation*. Saint Petersburg, 2015, 426 p. .

In the mid-1980s the model of the state's domination over the society was transformed into a completely opposite model – the society's domination over the state. Moreover, a special role in this model was played by the media, which for some time turned into an independent institution of the political system. But at the beginning of the 21st century Russian media returned to the model that was characteristic of the Soviet period, however, in a bit different, not homogeneous, but heterogeneous quality.

The modern Russian media system combines features of the Soviet (hierarchical) and other models considered by researchers: communicative, libertarian, social responsibility, social partnership, etc. But due to the impact of specific features of the Russian socio-economic reforms on the media, as well as the manifestation of characteristics of different types of existence and consciousness in the Russian society (the use of ideas characteristic of the Communist ideology, Eurasianism, Western liberal values, and Orthodoxy by different social groups), the state nature of the Russian media prevailed, led to the restoration of the hierarchical model of interaction between the government, media and society³. Thus, the Russian media made one complete circle in its development, returning to the hierarchical model, predetermining the inevitable presence and active participation of power structures in communicative and information space of the country [22, pp. 189-190]. The need for authorities' active participation in regulating the media and the entire information and communication space is substantiated by the protection of national interests of the country.

³ Markov E.A. *Transformations of Communication and Information Relations between the State and the Society in Russia: Doctor of Political Science dissertation abstract*. Saratov: GOU VPO SGSEU, 2011. 37 p..

According to L.I. Yakobson, the information space is formed by the media and the blogosphere, which unites communities of politicians, officials and journalists [23, p.135]. In this regard, it is important to consider the model of information interaction between the authorities and the media, its effectiveness and possible transformation directions in the Vologda Oblast.

Speaking about this model, it is necessary to take into account the fact that their joint performance influences formation of the society of small towns, creation of a positive information field, identification of the population, formation of the sense of small homeland and involvement in the overall civilizational process. In addition, the regional media are an effective means of implementing people's social activity within small territorial entities.

However, population's social needs are not always adequately understood by public authorities. Therefore, the need to coordinate state interests and civil society's needs becomes more acute and the problems to monitor models and mechanisms for state-media interaction require constant scientific analysis and reflection.

Scientific interest in the regional media's activities is obvious, as the local press, television, radio are not only an important link in the chain of solving the problems of single information space formation, but also have great opportunities in connection with reassessed importance of the region.

Among numerous studies of the regional press, there is a sufficient number of works devoted to the processes of authorities-media interaction [24-30]. Scientific novelty of the proposed study is associated with the identification of a special model of interaction of the government, media and society. It has similarities with the Soviet, but its vulnerability

is associated with incorrect construction of an addressee's image with identity of a naive subject. The novelty of the research lies in the combination of cognitive modeling methodologies and political methods to study the press.

Methodology

The Vologda Oblast regional periodicals, included in the Federal register, having the status of NGOs, and their web sites are a study object. The existing model of information interaction of the authorities, media and society in the Vologda Oblast is a subject.

In the course of the study the methods of comparative analysis are used to determine similar and specific properties of the regional media in the Vologda Oblast; the method of reconstructing a media text addressee to identify key typological characteristics of a regional newspapers reader. The method of content analysis is used to single out semantic units in texts of the regional print media, establish relationship between different text elements and the general meaning, purpose, and text information volume. Spatial, temporal and functional factors are taken into account to develop approaches to the formation of an optimal model of relations between the media and authorities.

Study data

Survey data are obtained due to the analysis of 39 regional publications, 26 of which – regional newspapers. The study includes publications for 2018 in the newspapers “Sokolskaya Pravda” (“Sokol Truth”, Sokolsky District), “Sovetskaya mysl” (“Soviet thought”, Velikoustyugsky District), “Sel'skaya nov'” (“Rural Novelty”, Cherepovetsky District), “Zvezda” (“Star”, Sheksninsky District), “Nasha zhizn'” (“Our Life”, Babaevsky District). The choice of publications is determined by the principle of geographical determination and the desire to study features

of the modern content of regional newspapers. Most regional newspaper offices are now NGOs and act as founders. However, regional publications are significantly influenced by the agreements on information cooperation concluded by editorial offices and district administrations. In our point of view, this factor has a significant impact on a character of publications. Most regional newspapers have a rigid content model, similar ideological and stylistic characteristics.

Most district residents, for example in Babayevsky, Sokolsky, Velikoustyugsky districts, are the audience of 45+ with a certain attitude to the information “consumption”, therefore, regional newspapers remain familiar information channel for readers.

To substantiate the approach objectivity, the study uses sociological data of the Vologda Research Center of the RAS (VoIRC RAS) about regional population's attitude to the media.

According to I. Dzyaloshinskii, the most effective model of media-society interaction is a model of social partnership. Its goal is to increase the “transparency” of economic, political, social, information processes, as genuine dialogue, genuine partnership, genuine trust are possible only in the atmosphere of information openness [29].

The most important indicator of the media performance is assessment of their activities by the region's population [30]. The Vologda Oblast is one of the few RF regions, where for twenty years the team of the VoIRC RAS has been monitoring the economic situation and social well-being of the population. One of the monitoring areas is related to the identification of people's attitude to the media's activities. The data from these studies are published in the VoIRC RAS Bulletin “Efficiency of public administration in the population's estimates” [30].

The surveys results show that in 2012–2017 the proportion of people who believe that the media provide objective information about the economic and political situation decreased from 53 to 48%, and the share of region's residents satisfied with the volume of relevant content went down from 49 to 43%. Thus, given the fact that the media are a state-society interaction channel and one of the information policy tools, we can assume that in the current model of interaction of the government, media and society, there are certain shortcomings. We should mention a biased simplified image of the information recipient in the regional media, which involves a flawed, one-sided communication model of media-society interaction.

The regional media should take into account problems and interests of their readers. Their universality is found in the desire to be useful to the most concentrated audience. The communicative model specifics is the ability to be understandable and accepted by the regional audience. Accordingly, modeling of the media-authorities interaction system should be associated with projection of the created discourse on an addressee.

The effectiveness of the transmitted information impact is determined by objectivity of the ideal image of a reader constructed by the publication, who, identifying himself/herself with the constructed subjective position, acquires his/her identity within the discourse. However, a real information recipient is usually different from the ideal, which leads to conflicting assessments of the media.

According to E.V. Chepkina, the discursive identity of an addressee is based on a special subjective position constructed in texts. The addressee identity has no constant characteristics and completion, since communication within the discourse framework has no completion [31, 32].

The position of a regional press addressee is formed by a set of factors, such as a choice of events, a way of their actualization, key concepts, ideological and evaluative coloring of subject positions. Thematic preferences of a publication, construction of a title complex, selection of vocabulary are of particular importance in this case. The main attention is paid to repetitive meanings that help reconstruct the position of an addressee prescribed by the discourse.

First of all, the local press refers to meanings of the conceptual field "regional affiliation". The analysis of scientific literature shows that the most relevant factors to identify the media audience are territorial and economic [33, p. 77; 34, p. 25; 35]. They determine the course of our research. In the article most attention is given to the ties, a recipient has with a particular area (which is associated with representatives of the local authorities), and his/her (recipient's) pragmatic interests and collective values.

Construction of the subject position of an addressee is primarily associated with the territory of his/her residence, the locus. Any indication of an addressee location unites a reader with publication subjects. Often this method is used in headings: "*Sheksninsky cathedral: miracle that happens day after day*"; "*Bridge named after M. Zarodov has new clothes*"; "*Sokol is successfully implementing the concept of active longevity*"; "*Fair in Erga*"; "*Veliky Ustyug has begun to repair yard territories*".

Reference to the connection of texts content and, accordingly, their addressees with a certain territory also determines the national-civil identification: "*Vologda Oblast Government will help the municipalities to completely update the park of school buses*"; "*For the first time in our city, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill led the all-night vigil*"; "*Presidential Envoy to the Northwestern Federal District approved the development program of the Veliky Ustyug*".

Territorial identification of a constructed subject is closely related to ideological characteristics, which imply an ideological community of regional authorities, editorial staff, and readers. Therefore, the use of ideological clichés becomes typical: *“Flag is a symbol of the Motherland”*, *“Prove your name by your deeds”*, *“With fire in the heart”*, *“Science of doing good”*. All of them are addressed to a constructed addressee, who should take all ideologically marked constructs for the adequate description of reality.

A regional press reader is constructed by the media as a subject, presumably believing in what he/she is told to [36, p. 189]. Therefore, it is more important for the regional press to design an ideal life of society, a situation of an addressee's involvement in the community of like-minded people than to talk about his/her problems. In this case the parameters, such as age, gender, social status, income level of a reader, are of secondary importance. The constructed image of an addressee is included in the group of “friends” (in opposition to “friend-foe”): *“Know friends”*; *“Our bright native spot”*; *“And we make no secret that we belong to the village”*; *“Priceless cargo we carry with love”*; *“Vologda Oblast Government will help the municipalities to completely update the park of school buses”*. The last heading contains the identification of a “subject-reader” with an editorial office and authorities, which involves the formation of a positive image of power and the role in ensuring stability.

The hierarchy of value, news have, in the regional press is corrected by the priority of forming a positive image of regional and municipal authorities and the region: visit of the Patriarch, assessment of the President Envoy, the Vologda Oblast government will help.

Modeling of social reality is determined by founders' interests. The Vologda Oblast is a stronghold of stability on pages of the regional

press. Texts of such content prevail. Since the struggle for the definition of society and its identity are constant, the constructed media picture should look as a matter of course for an addressee [37].

Region's residents are regarded as an object of authorities' concern: *“Veliky Ustyug has begun to repair yard territories”*, *“For thousand of families”*; *“Easement area will be cleared”*; *“Teachers will get compensation for the State Final Examination”*; *“Gas prospects”*. At the same time, newspapers attribute the identity of a passive object of political, ideological and administrative impact to a direct addressee of journalistic publications – a resident of a district or a small town. This is manifested in the presence of headings with directive modality: *“What do you have? A garbage heap? Let us see!”*; *“We do not sit idly by”*; *“Gifted children will be supported”*.

Citizens themselves are supposed to work hard, as well as support authorities' decisions: *“Growth and gain – that's not everything”*; *“Forty cubes daily”*; *“Sports ground – by ourselves”*; *“Right initiative”*.

Construction of the identity of a subject, a regional press reader, is closely connected with a high degree of personification of actions of a governor, regional and local governments: *“Local governments are urged to solve different tasks; if they are not solved, the municipality's life seems inconceivable”*; *“More than three million rubles from the regional budget are planned to be allocated for the organization of passage to land plots for large families. The Head of Cherepovetsky District Nikolai Vinogradov held a retreat on this territory”*. The activity of top officials sets the main values of social reality: information reasons and their conceptualization, choice of what events and characters deserve attention.

The analysis shows that it is important for the regional media discourse to cultivate the

Table 1. Key parameters to determine the effectiveness of regional newspapers web-sites (October 2018)

Newspaper	Updatability	Attendance from the moment of establishment	Hypertext linking methods	Dialogueness	Pragmatics of materials
“Nasha zhizn” (Babaevsky District)	With the release of a new number	597,984	Links to the website of the administration, the Governor, the Government	Guest book is not active, login through user registration	Unilateral information on the situation in the district and region
“Sel’skaya nov” (Cherepovetsky District)	In the same way	336,390	In the same way	In the same way	In the same way
“Sokolskaya Pravda” (Sokolsky District),	In the same way	182,204	In the same way	In the same way	In the same way
“Sovetskaya mysl” (Velikoustyugsky District)	In the same way	Not considered	In the same way	In the same way	In the same way
“Zvezda” (Sheksninsky District)	In the same way	40,669 for the last month 900 persons a day	In the same way	GB is active, login through nickname, updated regularly	Content generation is subject to reader request

idea “the region maintains stability and unity in support of the federal and regional authorities”. According to N. Luman, this kind of messages that do not have any new information perform an important ritual function. Excessive, meaningless communication “can be used to confirm social cohesion: people tell each other the same thing to witness solidarity” [36, p.22].

Criticism in regional editions, if present, concerns small shortcomings in the zone of municipalities’ responsibility: “*One of managing companies in Sheksna extorts means for repair of balconies from flats owners*” (newspaper “Zvezda”, No. 68 (11618), the material is located on the fourth page within TV programs).

The exclusion of inconvenient news items from newspaper publications significantly narrows their subject matter and creates the illusion of a lack of alternative points of view on what is happening. We believe that the real reader of the regional press is heterogeneous, well acquainted with region’s problems, ready to take part in their solution, so artificial avoidance of contradictions in the local press largely reduces the effectiveness of interaction between the media and society.

Given the heterogeneity of the modern media, the ability to change content when changing the way of information presentation, we consider websites and social network groups of the analyzed regional newspapers “Nasha zhizn” (Babaevsky District), “Sel’skaya nov” (Cherepovetsky District), “Sokolskaya Pravda” (Sokolsky District), “Sovetskaya mysl” (Velikoustyugsky District), “Zvezda” (Sheksninsky District) in terms of the view indicated in the criteria analysis.

The following parameters are chosen: attendance, content structure (subject), information updatability, hypertext linking methods, dialogueness (forums, guest books, need for registration, etc.), quality of information and pragmatics of materials, information about founders.

The tables demonstrate that websites of most regional publications are informational. Most often they duplicate materials presented in the printed edition. At the same time, the content structure, the main sections and the hierarchy of news messages are completely repeated: politics, information on the achievements of the district’s residents, announcements. Communities in social

networks VK, Twitter and Instagram also duplicate the information contained in the newspaper. There is no active discussion. The main page of websites contains a link to the website of the Governor and local authorities. The degree of website dialogization is minimal and is mainly represented by private ads and advertising.

However, a special role in the Internet space of publications under review belongs to the newspaper website “Zvezda”. Its informational structure is determined by the needs of its readership. The news hierarchy depends on the relevance of events taking place in the area. The website contains public information about the number of visitors; it is simple and convenient in terms of building a dialogue with the reader. This is the only one of reviewed online publications where a guest does not have to register. This largely determines the degree of its availability and popularity among the readers. Of course, the main reader’s request is related to the solution of their own pragmatic problems. But the advantage of the publication is not only their participation in problem decision as a mediator. Work with the reader in the Internet space helps them navigate in the society and make proper decisions.

It is no coincidence that according to the ranking of media resources of the Vologda Oblast for 2017 conducted by Medialogia company, the newspaper “Zvezda” in Sheksninsky District ranks fifth (16.33) in the category of TOP–10 most cited media of the Vologda Oblast⁴.

Conclusion

Permanent dialogue between the authorities and the society is of utmost importance for the modern state: it is a system-forming and regulating factor in the socio-political environment. However, the one-sided model

for its implementation, substituted by a monologic form of communication that only simulates dialogism, indicates the pseudo-naturalness of the national civil identification of the addressee of regional periodicals [37, p. 123]. The image of a naive addressee modeled by regional publications is presented as an economically prosperous subject grateful to the local authorities for this.

In our view, the idea of the recipient of information as an addressee with an identity of a naive subject is incorrect as it lowers the reader’s interest in published materials and has a negative impact on the efficiency of the interaction model of the government, the media and the society.

The model does not correlate with the concept of “quality press”, which ideally should encourage the reader to think together, develop their own attitude to essential social processes.

We believe that the only possible model of successful interaction between the government, the media and the society is a partnership model in open public policy. Its creation is only possible if we refuse the image of a naive reader built by regional publications. The most important method is the introduction of dialogue models of information and communication interaction in the state-media-society system and the focus on emotional style and relevant content. The content of the current media agenda should determine the mutual interest of civil society and public authorities. Only then the harmonization of social-state relations becomes the determining factor in sustainable and stable development in modern Russia. The idea of civil society is a mechanism of constant change and improvement, transition to a more civilized state. If its influence becomes obvious, then the concepts it generates are constantly present in the communicative social environment where the government only implements its functions.

⁴ Medialogy. Available at: <http://www.mlg.ru/ratings/media/regional/5760/> (accessed November 27, 2018)

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Information about the Authors

Elena M. Ivanova – Candidate of Sciences (Philology), Associate Professor, associate professor at department, Cherepovets State University (8, Sovetsky Avenue, office 312, Cherepovets, Vologda Oblast, 162600, Russian Federation; e-mail: marevgeny@inbox.ru)

Evgenii A. Markov – Doctor of Sciences (Politics), Associate Professor, professor at department, Cherepovets State University (8, Sovetsky Avenue, office 312, Cherepovets, Vologda Oblast, 162600, Russian Federation; e-mail: marevgeny@inbox.ru)

Svetlana A. Solov'eva – Candidate of Sciences (Philology), Associate Professor, associate professor at department, Cherepovets State University (8, Sovetsky Avenue, office 312, Cherepovets, Vologda Oblast, 162600, Russian Federation; e-mail: ssa_doc@mail.ru)

Received November 16, 2018.