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Perception of Publicity Texts in Television Communications

1. The model of the structure of indirect communication

At the beginning of the last century, N. Berdiayev rendered the idea of “a fatal process of the automation of life”, of the change of organic types of life by mechanisms. According to him, the evolution of life would lead to “the triumph of machinery”, which meant the substitution of organisms by mechanisms manifesting the phenomenon of “the materialisation of life” (Berdiayev 1990, p. 235). This process should be accompanied by ugly manifestations leading to the destruction of “old beauty”. Therefore, he found the spiritual sense of the materialisation in the following idea: “automation can be understood as the way of spirit in the process of its liberation from material aspects. Machines sever spirit from matter, bring about their splitting, damage the initial organic integrity, the unity of spirit and flesh. And the world is relieved.” (Berdiayev 1990, p. 237).

Perhaps this metaphor can be rendered as a poetic one, but the psychological matter of the phenomenon described by N. Berdiayev brings about complex professional senses. This book, among other things, awakened deep interest and desire to penetrate into the secret of the mechanisation of human life. And we took an attempt to do so in the present research.

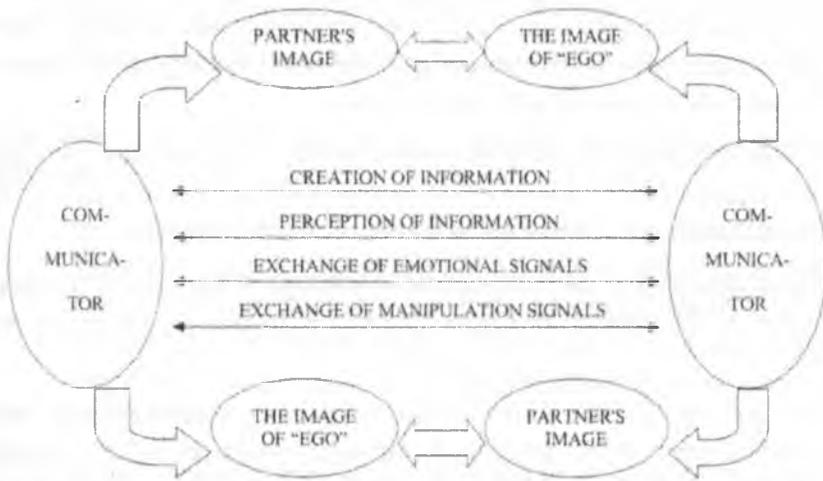
The evolution of human civilisation provides us reasons to suppose that the basic necessities of our species are the necessity to obtain information (signals, sensory stimuli, impressions, images, notions, situations, problems, etc.), the necessity to establish and spread one's power (to control a territory, to dominate over other people, to possess pecuniary values, to prolong his influence after his death, etc.), and the necessity to create a unique thing, to be unusual. Perhaps this is connected with the genetic memory of the act of creation of *Homo sapiens* and with an attempt to imitate our Lord. The ideas to reach the sky, to create artificial intelligence, to invent a *perpetuum mobile*, and to discover a means for immortality have been actual for centuries

and are known until today as the fundamental problems of philosophy, physics, medicine, technology, etc.

Thanks to the phenomenon called the scientific and technical revolution, man enormously increased his ability to satisfy various needs, and this can be interpreted as reaching certain limits, beyond which there exists a threat for the self-preservation of mankind. Man mastered material earthly space and took root to information space with the help of special instruments that he manufactured in order to increase the capabilities of the human brain and psychology. Over the course of years, man discovered that the structure, functions, and phenomenology of information space were similar to the rules of psychological and nervous activities. Moreover, the principles of isomorphism used for the modelling of complex indefinite systems allowed us to consider our species as the result of the selection of singular wave-like systems functioning in accordance with the set rhythms of the cosmos and formed under the influence of the informational induction of the universal autowave process. On analysis, the "human organism is represented as a self-regulating system being in constant search of dynamic homeostasis or homeoresis." At the same time, the cybernetic approach and cognitive paradigms based on it allowed us to use such informational (intellectual) systems as "artificial neuron networks", "genetic algorithms", "uncertain systems", and "dynamic systems of structural modelling" for the analysis of the interaction of people in human society and for the construction of the models of society as a whole, taking into account that human society might be considered a complex system similar to technical systems. And if the biological and physiological reductionism of I. P. Pavlov and behaviourists rendered man and psychology as a kind of animal wandering in labyrinths, the modern computer reductionism tried to render man and human society as a weak section in sociotechnical systems. The "weakness" manifested itself in the presence of will, motivation, emotions, etc. These qualities were a hindrance when it was necessary to make rational, "correct" decisions.

Specialists in technical modelling, mathematics, or computer technology use psychological knowledge in the form of structures and computer metaphors. All the rest of knowledge about our species is of no interest to them. And since such notions as morality, consciousness, shame, love, compassion, etc. can not be modelled by computer methods, they are called epiphenomena.

Most of the time people find themselves in the situation of indirect communication. In this connection, one of the most important problems consists of the revelation of distinctions between interpersonal and indirect variants of communication (see Picture 1). We demonstrated the existence of a substantial difference between these two types of communication (Matveyeva/Anikeyeva/Mochalova 2000).



Picture 1: The structure of the communicative act in the case of interpersonal communication

On the grounds of the analysis of the basic models of communication existing in foreign and home literature, we distinguished the unit of the process of communication to be analysed – the communicative act. We analysed the most important changes taking place in the structure of the communicative act at all the levels of interaction in connection with the presence of the machine that plays the part of a mediator. These changes were:

- 1) The change of the number of partners coming into intercourse simultaneously;
- 2) The increase of the significance of figurative regulation in the process of indirect communication;
- 3) The growth of the number of factors having influence upon the character of the contents of information, upon the specific forms, and upon the selection of verbal and figurative codes being used for the construction of

the message and the arrangement of sense accents. According to our structural model of the communicative act in the conditions of indirect communication, we distinguished seven factors having influence upon communicative messages: personal characteristics of the communicator; social roles and ethic standards of the communicator; style of management existing in the communicative corporation; status of the communicative corporation among other corporations; influence of the financial groups sponsoring the communicative corporation; state or public regulation of the communicative corporation's activity; ideological influence of the mentality prevailing in the given society;

- 4) The use of informational technologies by the communicator. It allows him to intensify the process of interaction at different levels and to concentrate informative messages in spatial and time coordinates;
- 5) The construction of the communicative message in the form of the model process of the creation of notion elements reflecting the subjective reality;
- 6) The application of the most effective forms of interaction with the audience in order to affect personal formations, systems of values, imagination and will conditions, that is, the qualities significant for making decisions under the conditions of free choice;
- 7) The TV visualisation of the desired image of a known person ("a charismatic personality"). This person becomes "the significant other" for the audience, the one who acts as a mediator in the process of the adoption of life standards, systems of values, and the specific language of television communication.

In our opinion, the structure of the process of indirect communication can be represented as a three-level system of interaction between the individual and collective sense. The system resembles a telescopic structure.

At the first level (which may be called above-sensual or mentality level), the participants of communication are:

- a) the social applicants of communicative interactions and the communicative corporation;

- b) the community of the spectators as the collective partner for the communication.

At the second level, the interaction is carried out in the quasi-reality of the communication partner corresponding to his image of the world. In this case, the partners are:

- a) the creative group of the communicative corporation;
- b) the audience as the carrier of socio-psychological characteristics.

At the third level – in the quasi-reality of interpersonal communication – the participants are:

- a) the communicator from the point of view concerning his personal characteristics, the peculiarities of his self-actualisation in the process of communication, the cognitive-communicative style of activities, and the peculiarities of the communicative repertoire and interaction with the heroes of the television transmission or members of the audience;
- b) the TV audience with its specific ways of individual perception and the peculiarities of the process of comprehension of the aims and contents of the TV transmission, and the character of “contacts“ with the heroes of the TV transmission and the attitude towards the authors.

It must be taken into account that the communicative act proceeds in the virtual reality for both the producers and the recipients of information. The image of the communicative partner is reconstructed by the recipient (viewer) on the basis of the communication itself (is associated with the face on the screen). At the same time, the authors (producers) arbitrarily reconstruct the image of the audience. By virtue of this situation, enormous possibilities arise. At the same time, the senses and behaviour of a large number of people can be manipulated by the authors. One of the psychological effects of this situation is the destruction of the borderline between the individual and collective sense leading to the erosion of clearly distinct social and interpersonal notions and roles important for the formation of the subjective picture of the world. The result manifests itself in the rapprochement of masculine and feminine images, in the erosion of such notions as “children”

and “adults”, in the disparagement of political leaders' images and their lowering to the level of ordinary people, etc.

2. The categorical structure of the perception of publicity texts

Our research was devoted to the revelation of the basic characteristics mediating the perception of publicity communications shown on TV. We examined psychological and philological structure of “good” and “bad” publicity texts. Material for the analysis was 154 publicity texts. The texts were taken from the publicity information shown on TV every day. Everyone who lives in Russia can see them on TV. After the preliminary examination, 54 publicity texts were selected. The structure of the texts was subjected to a complex psychological and philological analysis based upon especially elaborated methods of content-analysis. The results of the evaluation given by the experts were subjected to the factorial analysis utilising the method of the main components with subsequent rotation “VARIMAX”. The method of factorial analysis is a mathematical method for processing the records of semantic scaling. The factors received as the results of the processing made up a factorial space representing the subjective semantic spaces of the respondents. The subjective semantic space is the model of the categorical structure of consciousness that serves as a base for classifying various objects, notions, etc. by means of the analysis of their structure. The location of the objects under estimation in a semantic (or, as a synonym, a factorial) space helps to analyse them and to judge their similarity and distinction.

2.1 The interpretation and the analysis of the results of the factorial analysis of psychological criteria

In consequence of the factorial analysis of psychological criteria, six factors were revealed. They explained 44% of dispersion.

The interpretation of the factors was executed on the grounds of the criteria having the most important factorial load after the rotation; that is, the criteria maximally correlated with the factors revealed. For the first factor, the criteria were:

- the presence of exclamations (0.880);

- an invitation to compassion (0.814);
- emotionality;
- the presence of adverbs in the superlative degree (0.652);
- an appeal to aims, instincts (family, sex, children) (0.519).

This factor might be interpreted as “the factor of the emotional colouring of the message”.

The factorial values of the publicity texts were based on psychological criteria. In order to distinguish between “good” and “bad” publicity texts, the values of two groups of texts – the best and the worst ones – were averaged; that is, the central meanings of their values in the space of the six factors were calculated.

It turned out that “good” publicity texts contained more emotional colours than “bad” ones. The “good” texts invited the viewers to compassion; they touched upon the important spheres of the viewers' life: family relationships (attitude to one's parents, wife, children, and other personally significant people) and sexual behaviour which is an integral part of life not only for an adult but also for a child, taking into account different forms of this type of behaviour for each age group.

The most significant load on the second factor was applied by the following criteria:

- metaphorical component (0.793);
- the originality of the text (0.763);
- the presence of intrigue (0.755);
- the presence of a slogan (0.633).

Let us call this factor “the factor of originality”. On the basis of this factor, the maximal difference of values between “good” and “bad” texts was found. The same can be said about the third factor which will be discussed further.

The success of the text depends upon the presence of intrigue in it. If you want to attract the attention of the viewer to the subject of the advertisement,

if you want to make him think about it, you must create a plot presenting an intrigue. The use of metaphors makes the text more animated, colourful, and expressive. The slogan helps to memorise the text. In the aggregate, all these components add originality to the text, furnish it with the peculiarities which help to differentiate it from a great number of other texts.

The most significant load on the third factor was applied by the following two factors:

- the appeal to the instinct of the love of animals (0.710);
- the revelation of the image of an animal (0.703).

This factor may be called "the factor of the image of animals".

As mentioned above, this factor contains significant difference between the values of "good" and "bad" publicity texts. Publicity texts comprising images of animals are estimated much higher than similar texts without the images of this type. On the grounds of the research carried out earlier, it can be mentioned that this factor possesses a colouring important for our culture.

The most important contribution to the fourth factor was made by the criteria:

- the appeal to death, health, taboo, and deviant forms of behaviour (0.699);
- arguments of contraries (0.676);
- religiosity (0.530).

Let us interpret this factor as "the factor of the appeal to the 'thanatic' (destructive) instincts in religious forms".

According to this factor, no essential difference between "good" and "bad" publicity texts was found.

The maximal load on the fifth factor was defined by the following criteria:

- informativity (0.838);
- harmony (0.613).

Let us call this factor "informativeness-harmony". "Good" publicity texts are much more informative than "bad" ones. The combination of these two criteria (harmony, informativeness) in one factor shows the importance of the form in which information is presented.

A text may contain thousands of the smallest details. But its informativity can come to nothing if the structure of the text is disharmonic, because the viewer will not be able to comprehend it.

The biggest contribution to the sixth factor was made by the following criteria:

- aesthetic (0.806);
- culturological (0.578).

Let us call this factor "culturological".

There is no essential difference between "good" and "bad" texts according to this factor. But on the grounds of the previous research, it must be noted that this factor is significant for the visual row of the publicity text.

So, if the text is going to be successful, it must contain an intrigue presented in the form of a metaphorical slogan; that is, it must be original. The presence of an animal is essential, because love of animals is one of the basic human instincts and the appeal to it provides for the removal of the sensual control over the content of information.

The structure of the presentation of information must be harmonious; the information transmitted by television will be assimilated only in this case. The emotional colouring of the text makes its perception easier and helps to its memorisation.

The absence of the qualities mentioned above makes the text difficult for perception, and, consequently, the text becomes unsuccessful.

2.2 The interpretation and analysis of the results of the factorial analysis of philological criteria

As a result of the factorial analysis of the philological criteria, four significant factors were revealed. They explained 47% of the dispersion.

The interpretation of the factors was executed on the grounds of the criteria having the most essential factorial load.

For the first factor, the criteria having the maximal load were:

- logicality [formal logic] (0.734);
- pathos [appropriate style] (0.692);
- clarity (0.634).

This factor may be called "the factor of clarity from the point of view of formal logic". According to this factor, a substantial difference of the values of "good" and "bad" publicity texts was found. "Bad" texts were void of logic and inexpressive, and, consequently, they were incomprehensible.

The most significant contribution to the second factor was made by such criteria as:

- the type of the advertisement: representative (0.658);
- the design of UPB: situation [demonstration through action] (0.651);
- the design of UPB: the competitive comparison of the goods with similar goods (0.584).

This factor may be interpreted as "the factor of clearness in the representation of the goods". In "good" publicity texts, this factor is strongly expressed.

The most impressive load on the third factor was given by the following criteria:

- the presence of repeated word combinations (0.793);
- the presence of repeated words (0.762);
- the presence of repeated phrases (0.514).

We called this factor “the factor of the utilisation of repetitions”. There was a significant divergence between “good” and “bad” publicity texts here. The texts which contained repeated word combinations were highly estimated.

The maximal load on the fourth factor was given by the following criteria:

- pathos: expressiveness (0.752);
- colloquial syntax (0.661);
- inexpressive syntax (0.522).

This factor may be interpreted as “the factor of expressiveness”.

With this factor, a maximal divergence between the values of “good” and “bad” publicity texts exists. Thus, this factor is extremely important.

So, for the text to be successful, it must be expressive; it must contain colloquial word combinations; it must be comprehensible and correct from the point of view of formal logic.

The use of repeated words leads to an increase of the publicity text's rating. The best variant of the publicity text contains a unique trade offer accompanied by the demonstration of the goods in operation and by the comparison with other goods manufactured by competitive companies.

Visual representation of the goods makes the customer come to a certain conclusion by himself, without the adoption of ready conclusions prepared for him by the authors of the text. People rarely refute their own conclusions. The aim of the publicity text is to bring the future customer to the correct conclusion.

2.3 The factorial analysis of the full matrix. The interaction of philological and psychological criteria

After mathematical processing, four main factors which the success of publicity texts depended upon were revealed. Two of them were fully psychological; that is, the success of the text was determined by the psychological structures of a potential viewer the authors of the text appealed to.

The first factor: The suggestibility of the text was directly connected with its attractiveness (i.e., positive emotions plus a sensation of security) and with expressiveness and harmony (i.e., the aesthetic criteria of mass media in which the notion of expressiveness was substituted for the notion of beauty). Emotionality, exclamations and appeals to compassion made essential contributions to the suggestibility of the texts. The last statement is very important, because appeals to compassion demonstrate respect for the viewer, including self-exposure and the wish to consider the viewer to be a member of the company. What is relevant here is the method of varying aims which is carried out by the representation of absurd, ambiguous information with obscure sense. And finally, the first factor comprised a complex appeal to the instinctive elements of the viewer: to the instinct of habit, the instinct of intrigue, the instinct of prestige, and of significant values of the given society.

The second factor was the factor of personality having a clear philological structure with the presence of pathos expressed in the form of a unique trade offer. The philological content of the factor was directly connected with informativeness. However, it is important to note that informativeness is the quality which characterises "bad" texts, too. Therefore, this factor is necessary, but insufficient.

The third factor determining the success of the texts manifested itself through the presence of repeated word combinations – repeated words, phrases, idioms, etc. The basis of this factor is constituted by a deep psychological conformity with the laws of nature providing for clear perception and leaving deep traces in the transitory memory. It is common knowledge that new information must be repeated seven times (plus or minus two times) in order to be memorised.

The fourth factor determining the success of the texts had a complex character and could be described as follows: it would be better to present the characteristics of the goods in metaphorical forms offering the goods and describing them fully; that is, it seemed necessary to give as much information about the goods as possible, even if the information was contradictory.

Thus, a good publicity text must contain audiovisual metaphors of the goods addressed to the deepest layers of the human psyche.

3. The ethnic and cultural factor of the perception of publicity information

On the basis of the comparative analysis of the perception of publicity texts carried out in various cultural traditions (European, Japanese, American, and Russian), the viewers and the producers of advertisements examined the samples of publicity production belonging to these four cultural types (Matveyeva/Danilova 2001). The respondents were selected from the professional authors of publicity production (25 people) and from the viewers (40 people). We singled out the categories according to which the evaluation of the samples was carried out by the group of the 'Authors' and the group of the 'Viewers' (see the table in the Appendix). The Authors distinguished the emotional and communicative characteristics of the texts, their expressiveness, the power of influence, communicative comfort having the communicative aim of interactive partnership, and cognitive simplicity – complexity of the texts. The Viewers noted emotional comfort ensured by the communicative position of the Author, the characteristic of ethic and cultural values inherent to the texts, the characteristic of artistic methods used in the image structure of the texts, the category of power connected with the notion of socially normal sexual roles, and the characteristics of originality and humour specifying "the plot" acceptable for the given culture.

Taking into account the basic stable factors (emotional conformity connected with the communicative style of the texts, activity of influence connected with the characteristics of images involved and the style of artistic implementation, humour – optimism connected with the peculiarities of cultural tradition), the distinctions in the perception of the texts that belong to different cultural traditions were found between the Authors and the Viewers (identity in the perception of the samples of European and Japanese advertisements and diversity in the perception of American and Russian advertisements by the Authors and the Viewers). The peculiarities of the perception of TV publicity texts of different cultures by the respondents were analysed in detail. It was shown that the diversity in perception was con-

nected with the aims significant for the Authors and the Viewers, with the difference of life values inherent to the respondents sitting on the opposite sides of the TV screen, and with the difference of their ideas about the conformity and adequacy of the communicative style, their estimation of the stylistic peculiarities of the artistic implement of the advertisements, and the specific character of the nature of humour, if the last was present in the texts.

It was shown that at the level of life values the group of Authors reflected the change of the moral norm and interpreted the appeals that were present in the texts as "omnivorous and immoral". We revealed and described the image of "an ideal publicity text" (its characteristics were: originality, harmony, and truthfulness [found in the list of "the highest values of existence" according to A. Maslow], informativeness (for the Authors), trustworthiness (for the Viewers), appeal to humanitarian values at the level of life values, partnership, correctness, and benevolence in social contacts, newness, unexpectedness, powerful emotional impression determined by the image structure, the use of metaphors, and elements of intrigue. The group of Authors was mainly oriented on the stylistic and the artistic features of the publicity texts. The Viewers paid more attention to the contents of the texts. It was revealed that the Authors had a certain image of the Viewer and that they were aware of the prejudiced attitude of the Viewers to advertising. We concluded that the diversity of communicative aims was the cause of the difference between the image the Authors wanted to create in the Viewers' minds and the image created by the Viewers in reality. Thus, the Authors' image of their own creative product was not adequate for making a correct prognosis concerning the Viewers' perception of the publicity texts.

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Appendix: Factorial structure of the perception of publicity texts in the groups of the 'Viewers' and the 'Authors'

	Factor 1	weight	Factor 2	weight
V I E W E R S	unobtrusive – obtrusive	92	modern – old-fashioned	82
	calming – irritating	91	real – unreal	79
	shy – shameless	90	bright – dull	75
	respectful – vulgar	87	open – reserved	75
	protective – attacking	87	popular – specialised	73
	timid – impudent	87	optimistic – pessimistic	71
	moral – immoral	86	concrete – abstract	67
	attractive – repulsive	85	active – passive	64
	friendly – hostile	85	rich – poor	64
A U T H O R	calming – irritating	86	effective – inactive	70
	distressing – gladdening	78	modern – old-fashioned	66
	free of fear – frightening	76	open – reserved	58
	deferential – disdainful	76	active – passive	56
	attractive – repulsive	74	brave – cowardly	49
	clever – silly	74	public – private	46
	truthful – deceitful	73	strong – weak	45
	captivating – disgusting	73	bright – dull	41
	light – heavy	72		
	Factor 3	weight	Factor 4	weight
V I E W E R S	masculine – feminine	82	funny – serious	94
	mobilising – enervating	81	merry – sad	69
	strong – weak	62	original – ordinary	67
	ingratiating – arrogant	60	unusual – ordinary	66
	effective – inactive	57	emotional – rational	63
	exciting – calm	56	ingratiating – arrogant	59
	clear – incomprehensible	53		
	proportional – disproportional	50		
A U T H O R	merry – sad	82	rich – poor	59
	democratic – authoritarian	57	real – unreal	51
	optimistic – pessimistic	57	warning – permitting	48
	funny – serious	50	brave – cowardly	44
	permitting – warning	48	professional – amateur	44
	ingenuous – mysterious	48		
popular – specialised	45			

	Factor 5	weight
V I E W E R S	sexual – asexual	71
	complicated – simple	62
	private – public	60
A U T H O R	clear – incomprehensible	56
	simple – complicated	54
	usual – unusual	53
	concrete – abstract	53
	proportional – disproportional	49
	feminine – masculine	41

