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**Ukrainian television : the context of global modern media trends
(based on the example of the STB TV-channel)**

Abstract

The example of the most rated Ukrainian TV-channel STB illustrates the impact of the global trends on Ukrainian media sphere. Ukrainian and foreign academic literature was analysed and it was found that these trends include globalisation, westernisation, standardisation (McDonaldisation), digitalisation, convergence, tabloidization and multimedia development. The influence of these media trends on Ukrainian television was measured based on the results of media monitoring and content analysis. The article gives recommendations for solving some important problems of STB.

Keywords: broadcasting, STB, media trends.

Introduction

The transition towards an information society is accompanied by a significant transformation of Ukrainian media sphere, caused by the influence of the global media trends. The main ones are globalisation, westernisation, standardisation ('McDonaldisation'), glocalisation, tabloidisation, concentration, conglomeration, digitisation, interactivity, convergence and multimedia development.

At the time of the USSR collapse there were only two national TV-channels – UT-1 and UT-2, both state-run. Twenty four years later Ukrainian spectators can choose not only between 30 commercial national TV-channels (only one channel is still state-run in Ukraine), but also watch international channels via satellite television and benefit from online

television. The open global media market has led to the emergence of the global competition and, thus, to the content globalisation. As a result, through the last decade we can observe increased economic concentration of the media and ‘McDonaldisation’ (Ritzer, 2004) and tabloidisation of media content in Ukraine.

Global media tendencies are important to study in order to make a prognosis of the future development of Ukrainian television. The global media trends have had the biggest impact on the most popular commercial TV channel in Ukraine – TV-channel STB. The example of this channel can illustrate the idea of the French researcher Guy Debord: modern media transform the information society (‘knowledge society’) to the ‘spectacle society’ [2]. On the one hand, we should not underestimate the importance of the recreational function of journalism. On the other hand, the television media are meant to inform, educate, integrate spectators socially, and execute moral and ethical functions. Therefore, it is essential to observe and analyse media content and to develop recommendations for the TV-channel STB, which substantiates the significance of this research.

Thus, the topic of this study is an exploration of the global media trends and their influence on the content of Ukrainian TV-channel STB. The object of this study is the transformation in Ukrainian television content. The subject of study is the content of the most popular commercial Ukrainian TV-channel STB. The aim of the study is to explore Ukrainian television content in the context of the world's leading media trends and to form recommendations for the chosen media.

To achieve the aim of the study the following objectives are set:

- to examine the main global media trends based on modern international and Ukrainian scientific sources;
- to analyze STB’s content (broadcasting version, Internet site, pages on Facebook, multimedia applications etc.) to detect the impact of the global media trends;
- to conduct content-analysis of 81 news stories of the news programme *Vikna*;
- to develop proposals and recommendations for STB.

The **methodology** of this study is represented by the following methods:

qualitative analysis of academic literature and relevant documents (channel's rating and other indexes), historical method, logical method, interview (with former STB editor-in-chief), content analysis, media monitoring.

The novelty of this research article. For the first time in Ukraine this study summarises the most important global media trends and provides complex analysis of their impact on the modern Ukrainian television content (based on example of STB).

Several researchers have studied different aspects of this topic. Gorodenko [5] studied modern trends in online communications; Tsymbalenko [16] focused on tabloidisation of the press; Fedorchuk [3] developed the topic of the convergent newsroom. The analysis of the Ukrainian scientific periodicals shows that such trends as globalisation, westernisation, americanisation, coca-colonisation, McDonaldisation, tabloidisation, glocalisation, localisation, demassification, concentration, conglomeration, digitisation, multimedia development and interactivity in television media have never been previously studied in Ukraine. The trends of globalisation, westernisation, glocalisation, americanisation, concentration, conglomeration and interactivity were studied in other scientific fields (economics, politics, philosophy, sociology etc.), but not in the field of social communications. Digitalisation, McDonaldisation, coca-colonisation of the media have not been considered in Ukrainian scientific literature at all.

The most valuable sources for this study are the works of foreign researchers such as Toffler [14], Biressi, Nunn [1], Glynn [4], Jenkins [7], Kellner [8], Morley, Robinson [9], Ritzer [10] and Robertson [11, 12].

Main body

The prominent researcher of the information society Toffler [14] identifies six principles of the new media system. They are interactivity, mobility, convertibility, connectibility, ubiquitousisation and globalisation.

Interactivity is one the most positive trends that STB has implemented. StarLightMedia Holding, which includes TV-channel STB, has a separate department StarLight Digital. It develops Internet-content for STB such as its website, forum, pages on

Facebook, video channel on YouTube, multimedia applications etc. Another level of interactivity is provided by the online selection of some of the show's participants-to-be (in the shows *X-Factor* and *Weighted and happy* (the adaptation *The Biggest Loser*)).

STB actively uses SMM-technologies. The channel is represented in social networks V Kontakte.ru, Facebook and Twitter. There is not one specific STB group on Facebook, although each project has its own public page. The main problem is the large number of sibling groups created by fans. We have recently observed a decline in the channel's activity in social networks and its reorientation towards the video channel STB on YouTube and to the internal forum on the official website.

Mobility has become possible due to digitalisation of media. The viewers can access TV-content within seconds (via website www.stb.ua, a channel on the YouTube, a group in a social network). Another way to achieve mobility of information is to create multimedia applications for smartphones such as the application *iDiet* of the show *Weighted and happy* (first multimedia app created as part of the TV-project in Ukraine).

Ubiquity of information can be closely associated with the phenomenon of convergence. Ubiquity can be understood as the transmission of similar information via different media such as the press, television, the Internet etc. TV-channel STB as part of the StarLightMedia group successfully implements a strategy of converging media. As a result of media monitoring, the following convergence table was created.

Program's name	Broad-casting	Web-site	Facebook / likes	Sibling-groups	Printed version	App	Sister program
The Battle of the psychics	+	+	-	-	-	-	+ The psychics lead the investigation
16 and Pregnant	+	+	+ / 345	-	-	-	+ Post-show 'Let's talk about sex'
Vikna-news	+	+	+ / 3074	-	-	-	-
Save our family	+	+	+ / 478	-	-	-	-
Everything will be fine	+	+	+ / 43 352	-	-	-	+ Everything will be delicious
Let's talk about sex	+	+	+ / 297	-	-	-	-
Lie Detector	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Weighted and Happy	+	+	+ / 4335	-	-	+ iDiet	-
The Star's Life	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Karaoke on the square	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Honey, we're killing the kids	+	+	+ / 4471	-	-	-	-
The Cube	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
The Master Chef	+	+	+ / 8312	+ 1	+	-	+ Post-show 'Master Chef'

My thruth	+	+	+ / 274	-	-	-	-
An Incredible Truth About the Stars	+	+	-	-	-	-	+ Star News
One for All	+	+	+ / 2324	-	-	-	-
The phychics lead the investigation	+	+	+ / 452	-	-	-	-
Everybody Dance	+	+	+ / 979	+ 2	+	-	+ Post-show 'Everybody dance'
Ukraine's Got Talent	+	+	+ / 11339	+ 2	-	-	-
The house is on Dad	+	+	+ / 923	-	-	-	-
The bachelor	+	+	+ / 6900	-	-	-	+ Post-show 'How to get married'
I'm ashamed of my body	+	+	+ / 424	-	-	-	-
X-Factor	+	+	+ / 7360	+ 2	+	-	+ X-Factor Online
Seeking for truth	+	-	+ / 19	-	-	-	-

Table 1. *Convergence table.*

We should mention that projects' pages on Facebook are very unpopular as for the channel with the highest view share in Ukraine - 9,8% among the audience aged 14-49 in the cities with 50000+ residents¹. This should be the exact audience that is represented by active Facebook users. This phenomenon could become a topic of further research.

In general, this table illustrates the high level of convergence on STB. The channel has an ethereal version and puts all TV content on the site www.stb.ua. The show *Weighted and Happy* goes on air, has a separate page on the site, has its page in social networks and is represented by the multimedia application *iDiet*.

The advice-show *Everything will be fine* has a separate page on the site www.stb.ua and an additional project *Everything will be delicious*, which also airs on STB and has its own web site.

Talent shows *The X-Factor*, *Everybody Dance*, *Master Chef* go on air, provide pages and forums on the official website and groups in social media, have magazines, which publish mainly interviews with the stars of the shows, announce new shows, advertise other shows of the StarLightMedia group etc.

Thus, this is how substantially homogeneous content is transferred through various media.

Content globalisation can be associated with the international media franchises.

¹ According to the information from STB official website:
<http://www.stb.ua/ua/2014/09/05/48003/>

STB airs Ukrainian versions of the following international formats: *Ukraine's Got Talent* (the UK franchise *Got Talent*, Simon Kovel company SYCOtv); *The X-Factor* (the UK franchise *The X-Factor*, Simon Kovel company SYCOtv); *Everybody Dance* (the USA franchise *So you think you can dance*, Simon Fuller, Nigel Lizhou, FOX); *The Bachelor* (the USA franchise Mike Fleiss, ABC); *Weighted and Happy* (the USA franchise *The Biggest Loser*); *I am ashamed of my body* (the UK franchise *Embarrassing Bodies*, Channel 4); *Lie Detector* (the UK franchise *Nothing but the truth*, Sky1); *Master Chef* (the USA franchise *Master Chef*, FOX); *The Battle of Psychics* (the British format *Britain's Psychic Challenge*); *Honey, we're killing the kids* (the British franchise *Honey, we're killing the kids*, BBC), *Dancing with the Stars* (the British franchise *Strictly Come Dancing*, BBC, 2004), *The Cube* (the British game show, Adam Adler, ITV) and *Pregnant at 16* (American reality show *16 and Pregnant*, Lauren Dolhen, MTV).

It should also be mentioned that there are shows with unique format. They are *The Psychics Lead the Investigation*, reality show *The House is on Dad*, talk-shows *One for All* and *Let's Talk about Sex*, the show *Everything will be fine* and the talent-show *Karaoke in the square*. Other projects of STB production are: the informational and analytical programme *Vikna-news*, tabloid news programmes *An Incredible Truth About the Stars* and *Star's Life* and documentary programme *Seeking the truth*. There were also post-shows of different programs, but they are not currently aired (for instance, *Everybody Dance. Post-show*, *Weighted and happy. Post-show*, *Master Chef. Post-show*, *How to Get Married* – the post-show of the show *The Bachelor*).

Week day	Mon		Tue		Wed		Thu		Fri		Sat		Sun		average
	Min	%	%												
Content	685	56%	813	65%	790	68%	610	50%	170	13%	285	23%	245	20%	42%
International franchise	310	25%	120	10%	370	32%	395	32%	310	25%	855	69%	745	61%	36%
Minutes	235	19%	312	25%	0	0%	225	18%	780	62%	100	8%	240	20%	22%
Minutes	1230		1245		1160		1230		1260		1240		1230		100%

Table 2. Globalisation level of STB content

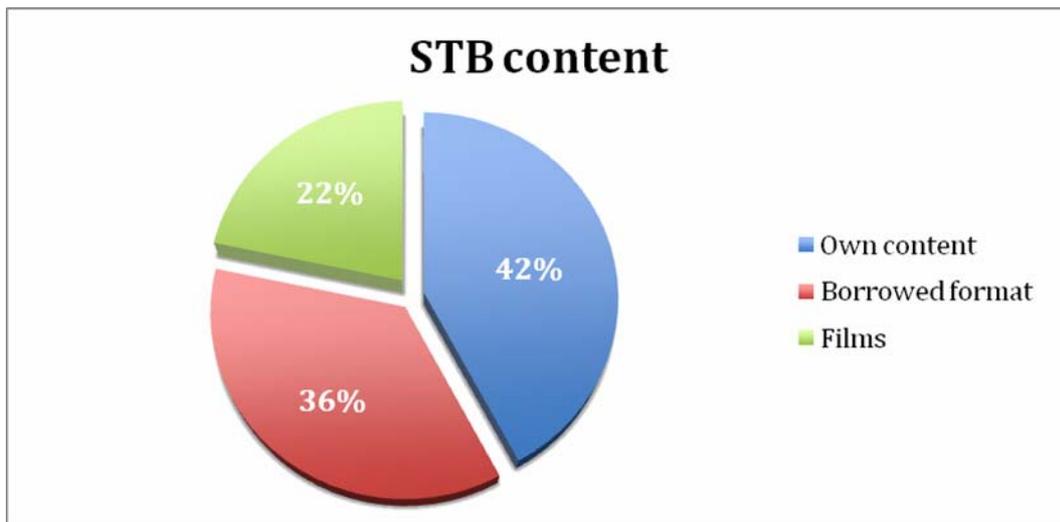


Figure 1. *Globalisation level of STB content*

Content analysis shows that on average 58% of the content is globalised (due to the adaptation of international shows formats (36%) and international films translation (22%)).

Ukrainian researcher Gorodenko [5] emphasises other media trends such as globalisation, westernisation, tabloidisation, digitisation, convergence, multimedia and concentration. Convergence issues have already been discussed above upon considering the ubiquity of content. Digitalisation can be considered as part of mobility, content sharing and interactivity. ‘McDonaldisation’ is closely related to the globalisation of the content and international television formats’ adaptation.

Such trends as concentration and tabloidisation require more detailed explanation based on the example of the channel STB.

It has already been mentioned that TV STB is now part of Ukraine's largest media holding StarLightMedia. The channel’s share according to the results of 2013 comprised 30.17%, which put holding in the first place in Ukraine. Its share of the audience with middle and high income in 2013 amounted to 59.3%. These figures demonstrate the high performance of the media holding.

Consolidation is an important factor in adapting media to the conditions of the global competition. However, the primary orientation towards profit from advertising leads to the reorientation of the channel towards the values of ‘McDonaldisation’ and

tabloidisation.

Tabloidisation is a particularly negative trend in the news programmes. News stories are submitted through the prism of people's feelings. Information loses impartiality and objectivity, journalism investigations turn into pseudo-investigations, important news are replaced by videos about animals and children from YouTube, newscasts are accompanied by customised commercials while maintaining STB style (company's colors, voice etc). This is an example of hidden advertising. If one wants to watch a news programme online, one should use a special video player with built-in advertising. All the mentioned facts testify a rather high level of tabloidisation of STB.

Remarkably, STB was launched as a form of information and analytical media. An interview was conducted with Eugene Fedchenko, editor-in-chief of the international department of *Vikna-news* on STB. The channel was primarily funded by the grant from the United States. The major programmes were news programmes *Vikna (The Windows)* and *Vikna v svit (The Windows to the world)*. Later STB lost its popularity due to the high competition and the grant's expiration.

Nowadays one can observe the tabloidisation of the news content of *Vikna-news*. Thus the share of the programme has increased to its historical maximum (16,4%, audience aged 14-49) in August 2014. The programme usually advertised STB shows through news coverage. One can observe the redundancy of the widgets (countdown the next show in the upper left corner of the screen during the news broadcast).

Currently *Vikna-news* has changed its media policy because of the significant events in Ukraine. Content analysis of the eighty-one news stories of the programme *Vikna-news* was conducted in November 2014. 25% of the content was tabloid. 20% of the content was sensationalist and 5% was dedicated to the coverage of crimes, which were not nationally significant, which is also a characteristic of tabloid media.

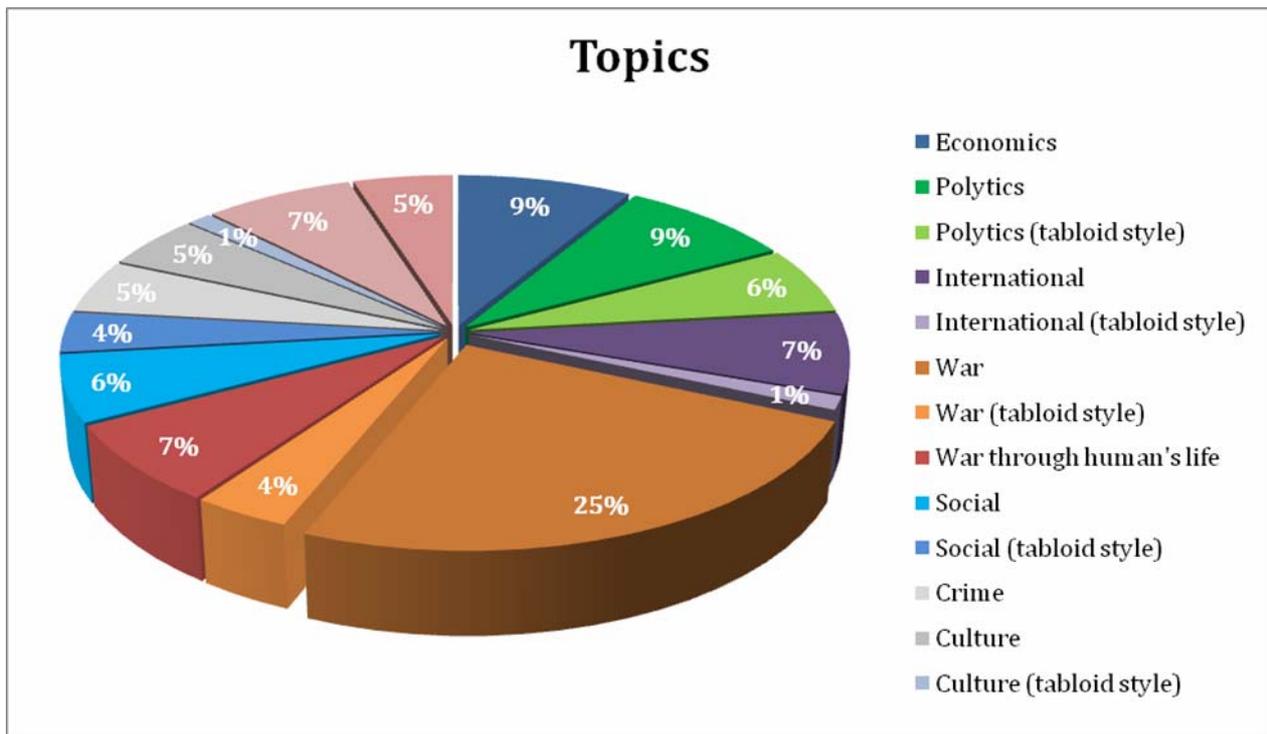


Figure 2. News topics coverage in Vikna-news

The tabloidisation is also evident in the show 'Lie Detector'. The format of the show implies washing dirty linen of the participants in public. Programmes about stars such as *The Unbelievable truth about the stars* or *Star's Life* are tabloid as well. These programmes often artificially sharpen scandals and create teasers with misleading information.

It can be concluded from what was discussed above that the most important media trends (for the channel STB) are globalisation, tabloidisation, McDonaldisation, interactivity and convergence. The complex of these trends causes the popularity of STB among viewers aged 19-49.

Qualitative analysis of the content enables the formulation of the following recommendations for STB:

- to strengthen the trend of convergence (for example, establish women's magazine *Everything will be fine*, to create multimedia applications for projects *Vikna-news* (up-to-date news), *Everything will be fine* (advices and recepies), *Pregnant at 16* (female calendar) etc). It is necessary to develop SMM on vk.com, Facebook and

Instagram.

- to replace tabloid news by features (such British genre as a feature is currently not represented in Ukraine);
- to stimulate further increase of own production and to diversify content with intellectual game shows or popular science entertainment shows.

Conclusions

The perspective of research in the field is seen in the further longitudinal analysis of STB content throughout one year for more valid results. After that it is planned to study the content of the top-5 Ukrainian TV channels, to conduct a comparative analysis of the global media trends impact on Ukrainian television. The summarised results will be presented in the Master's dissertation. The theoretical value of the work is represented by an attempt at the most complex analysis of the global media trends' impact on Ukrainian television media (STB). The research will be beneficial for television professionals, who will be able to make adjustments in various aspects of the channels' work.

Thus, the research gives a complex analysis of the impact of the global media trends on Ukrainian television.

The content analysis of *Vikna-news* themes has shown that a quarter of the informational content is tabloid. Content analysis of STB broadcasting schedule in November 2014 states that 36% of the content is formed by international franchise shows. Therefore the impact of globalisation and McDonaldisation on STB can be measured. Comparative analysis of the convergence level of the STB programmes has shown that the most convergent projects are *Weighted and happy*, *Master Chef*, *Everybody Dance* and *The X-Factor*.

Suggestions for the channel STB are to deepen the convergence trend in its projects through the creation of multimedia applications for *Vikna-news*, *Everything will be fine*, *Pregnant at 16*. It is also proposed to diversify the entertainment content with popular science shows and game shows. It is recommended to replace tabloid news with the popular British journalism genre – features.

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