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## MARKETING

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### FEATURES OF MARKETING RESEARCH IN THE MASS MEDIA BUSINESS

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study is to examine the tools and methods that mass media organizations use at the present stage to conduct marketing research of the target audience - to find out their needs, interests, expectations, assessments regarding the media products they consume; and also studying of a question of necessity and importance of carrying out qualitative marketing researches in the mass media organizations. Analysis, synthesis, observation and comparison methods were used in the study. We have considered the tools and methods used to organize marketing research in the media business, demonstrate their specificity. After all, media products differ from other product categories in marketing in terms of audience perception. It is shown that the need and importance of studying the media needs of the audience by a mass media organization is provided by the functioning of the media not only as a business but also as a social institution that aims to ensure the joint activities of people. It is substantiated that clarifying the needs, interests, expectations, assessments of the audience regarding media products for mass media organizations are extremely important as for no other organization, as for no other business.

**Keywords:** marketing research of media audience, media needs, mediometry.

**JEL Classification:** A12, A13, A14, M31.

### INTRODUCTION

At the first glance, commercial media comply with the rules of marketing as any other business. However, mass media organizations have their own specifics in formation of marketing. Our attention was drawn to the question of how marketing research takes place in the mass media, particularly in consumer research. After all, finding out the needs, thoughts, attitudes, behaviors, motivations of the target audience is one of the first steps in marketing, which then becomes systematic.

It is obvious that the audience parameters of the media are an important factor that affects other functional characteristics of the media – content, organizational, creative ones and so on. However, in the field of mass media practice in Ukraine, a system of professional information about the subjects of media product consumption has not yet been customized. Decisions on the organization of television, radio, and printed products are made either intuitively or taking into account the experience of competitors. However, it is obvious that the mass media audience needs

are to be studied in order to understand the nature of its media consumption. Audience expectations, according to some researchers, should take the form of clear requirements for the functioning of media organizations, and the communication needs of audiences should be studied while using the methods of communication, sociology, psycholinguistics, etc. (Whitney, 2009; Phalen, 2009; Ivanov, 2009; Rizun, 2008; Vartanova, 2003; Fomicheva, 2007).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study of literature sources allows us to understand that the clarification of the issue of marketing research in the audience aspect for mass media organizations took place in different aspects. Some scientific papers are devoted to the study of the concept of mass media audience separately (Whitney, 2009) and the features of its research (Phalen, 2009). Also, our attention was drawn studies, in which the authors raised the issue of the need to clarify the media needs of the audience and the appropriate tools (Fomicheva, 2007; Vartanova, 2003; Lukina, 2010). It is also important to study the specifics of marketing research in the Ukrainian media business (Ivanov, 2010; Rizun, 2008).

## **PAPER OBJECTIVE**

We can say that the study of the peculiarities of the organization of marketing research in the media business is fragmentary. Therefore, the task is to accumulate important facts on this topic, systematize this information, clarify the features of media marketing - certain tools and methods, and also the arguments about the importance and necessity of studying the media needs of the audience.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted using systemic and interdisciplinary approaches. The identified scientific problem was studied at the intersection of such areas as media economics, media marketing, media management, media sociology, media psychology. The connection between research tasks and such theoretical and empirical methods as: analysis, synthesis, observation, comparison is revealed. Using a combination of these methods has made it possible to build causal relationships within the object.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The relevancy to study the media needs of the audience by the mass media organization is laid down in one of the main functions of the media – informational one, which I.D. Fomicheva explains as follows: "Production and distribution of information to the mass audience, *taking into account its (the audience) various characteristics (composition, demands, needs, interests) in order to ensure the joint activities of people*" (Fomicheva, 2007, p. 53).

It should be noted that the concept of "media needs" has recently found its expression in the Ukrainian discourse of journalistic research. In particular, in the context of studying media consumption, it is widely used by researcher T.S. Krainikova. The vast majority of definitions of mass media, means of mass communication do not contain a focus on consuming characteristics of the audience. The media appear as translators of socially significant information, a factor in ensuring of social interaction. However, as already mentioned above, the market realities of mass media functioning require strict compliance with the expectations and requirements of the audience.

Understanding the characteristics of the media audience, knowledge of its needs should be the basis for the functioning of the media organization. A good example is the practice of studying the audience by the world-famous British TV channel "BBC". This is done by a special department, where the audience's reaction to the content is studied using the "Audience Rating Bulletin" for

each program of the channel. In the absence of sufficient information to study the media needs of the audience additionally involve a special section of researchers who conduct a more advanced study (Ivanov, 2009). V.F. Ivanov notes that "this is an example of the most consistent, systematic and comprehensive study of the audience by the largest radio and television corporation in Great Britain" (Ivanov, 2009).

Interesting examples of a serious, thorough approach to studying the media preferences of its audience can also be found among some Ukrainian media. So, experience of the regional newspaper "Industrialnoe Zaporozhye" has already got to textbooks. The editorial office of a not so large newspaper has organized a laboratory of specific sociological research, which has been operating for decades. Journalists decided to wander from understanding the audience as an "average" reader and with the help of specially designed questionnaires to learn the composition of the audience to understand its interests, opinions on various sections and topics of the newspaper. This work gave some results, which showed that the reality was significantly different from the hypothetical ideas about the audience that the newspaper had. Due to the satisfaction of the identified media needs of the audience, the edition was managed to significantly increase its circulation (Ivanov, 2009).

It is important to note that in discussions on the media audience there are two antagonistic approaches to defining its features, one of which is the attempt to study and understand the audience, its media needs, the other lays in the attitude to the audience as such that a priori cannot be known. Thus, especially among media practitioners, abstractness, remotability of the media audience is usually part of its main characteristics. The media theorist Martin Allor noted that "audience" really exists only as an analytical concept and does not occupy any real niche. Charles Whitney in his research on the media audience pointed out that its main characteristics are uncertainty, unpredictability and "unknowability", moreover, the concept of "audience" itself is relative one (Whitney, 2009).

However, a large group consists of researchers who insist on the need for the media to find out various data about their audience. For this purpose, a separate type of activity has been introduced in the media industry – it is media research.

The concept of media research (MR) has a broad meaning, it is so-called obtaining of some kind of information about the media. Traditionally, MR are conducted in the following areas: journalist, content, channel, audience, social effects, which are determined by the structure of the communication process. The issues of such media research can be varied according to the role of the media in society (Fomicheva, 2004, p.326). Research of the mass media audience is the broadest area, they are divided into quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative MR audiences are the detection of audience coverage and are the amount of people who consume the content of a particular media. For print media it is circulation, for audiovisual media it is a rating, a share indicator. This media audience data, also called media measurement or mediometry, is typically used by advertisers in media planning to select the most effective media channels to promote their products. It is believed that regular research began just when it became clear that "the media is the best channel for contact with a potential mass consumer of goods and services" (Fomicheva, 2004, p.5). Therefore, the so-called rating system used for television has developed significantly. It allows detecting the size of the media audience relative to the channel as a whole, part of its content or a certain period of time (month, week, part of the day, etc.). The mechanism of their implementation is that on the TVs of households that were included in the sample, special devices are installed – people-meters or TV meters. These electronic counters record the amount and time of viewing certain TV channels or programs. It should be noted that in the process of obtaining information about the number of TVs that were turned on at a particular time on a particular channel, the question remains unanswered - why did each of the viewers choose to watch this program. After all, the reason may be not only interest in the topic. Many subsidiary motives can influence the choice of the viewer, and therefore, the rating approach can no longer be considered exhaustive for the audience's media research.

The disadvantages of quantitative MR are appearing in the fact that they do not inform about the interests, tastes, media needs of the audience, do not answer questions about the attitude of the audience to the suggested media content. Such data can be obtained through high-quality media research, usually a survey (questionnaire, interview, conversation). This one and other possible methods allow to identify the media needs of the audience in the context of partnership ideas, public service, audience participation in the communication (participatory model of communication), etc. for the functioning of the media as a social institution (Fomicheva, 2007, p.291).

Instead, economic relationships with advertisers require the media to conduct qualitative MRs in accordance with the terms of the Index Affinity. By choosing an advertising distribution channel, advertisers look for their target audience among the general media audience of a particular media. Therefore, to prove to the advertiser the presence of his\her target audience, media organizations conducts research to identify demographic, psychographic and the other necessary characteristics of the audience. According to these data, the advertiser can make sure that he\she has found the necessary target audience.

Qualitative MR audiences are aimed at "studying the social characteristics and construction of typological models of the audience, making recommendations to the media to improve their activities taking into account the specifics of the consumer of information" (Fomicheva, 2007).

Researcher V.F. Ivanov points out that finding out the reasons for the audience of a media product should be very important for media executives (Ivanov, 2009). The researcher considers it necessary to "analyze the subjective characteristics (factors of consciousness) of consumers of media materials, including thematic interests, assessments, preferences, motivation of choice, satisfaction, etc." (Ivanov, 2009). After all, for the releasing of media products, data on how viewers themselves formulate motives for watching various programs should be very useful (Ivanov, 2009).

Media working for a large heterogeneous media audience should take its qualitative research seriously in order to be able to do "cross or multi-factor segmentation" and "find combinations of a number of features" of a diverse audience (Fomicheva, 2007). To do this, high-quality MR offers, for example, a modern method of life-style studies (lifestyle), which allows to identify numerous links between education and upbringing, values, tastes, hobbies, on the one hand, and behavior in the media – with another (Fomicheva, 2007).

The history of quality media research began in the USA, according to one version, with television, when there was a need to identify its impact on children. This initiated the organization of research of the media audience in other areas and on other types of mass media. According to another version, the precondition for the implementation of high-quality MR was the threat of declining demand for print media due to the advent of television (there was a need to fight for the attention of the audience, and therefore to study its information interests).

In the form of "interactive dialogue", the sender of information will be able to see the "implementation of the ideas and goals aimed in it", which is archival important for a truly professional approach to the organization of institutional communication (Zemlyanova, 2004, p.126). Well-known researcher H. Lasswell noted the importance of such an aspect as "the quality of having feedback in communication (reciprocity)" (Fomicheva, 2007). In order to bring the process of mass media communication closer to a two-way model, there must be not only the possibility but also the desire of communication participants to establish "a reverse regime - a temporary change of roles in the transfer of information" (Fomicheva, 2007).

Feedback from the media audience helps to learn about the responses to the content published in the media, which give "opportunities for non-professionals to participate in the management of information processes, to influence them" (Fomicheva, 2007). Therefore, audience marketing research for media organizations is extremely important, as for no other organization, as for any other business.

*The "culture of participation" or participatory approach provides endless opportunities to learn what really worries the audience, what are its information needs, because the audience can*

easily “take the initiative in asking questions for discussion” (Fomicheva, 2007, p.91, p.101). And it is the practice of giving the audience the opportunity to participate in the media activity provides the exchange of various types of capital (social, cultural), the accumulation of not only “information but also other types of symbolic resources” (Fomicheva, 2007, p.140). And this is the peculiarity of marketing research of the mass media audience. With the involvement of the media audience in the production of information, there is an opportunity for its large-scale impact on public life.

Each type of media has its own specifics regarding the organization of media research of the audience. The print media, which have a longer history than other types of media, actually introduced the first methods of studying the information needs of media consumers. The best way to find out what readers think is to use a variety of survey methods implemented by the editors themselves through feedback. It is the most convenient to use your own website or account in the social network of a newspaper or magazine - they are now available in the most publications. It is possible to get in touch with your reader through e-mail, online interviews, forums, blogs for both journalists and readers. It is an effective tool for expressing approval or criticism, determining the level of information requests, clarifying the interests and moods of readers. For a journalist there is an opportunity to communicate with particular people, not with the average reader, they can say “about what did not get for one reason or another on the newspaper columns, ask readers for information, confess to readers by themselves” (Lukina, 2010, p.188).

The Internet provides much more opportunities for high-quality media research of the audience. In Ukraine, the online segment of the media sphere still does not have a clear definition either at the legislative level or among scientists. The media community argues that only professional online media and Web versions of traditional media (online prototypes) can be included in the online media. Other resources of the Web are not entirely correctly included to the media. These are various information resources and means of communication that can carry out institutional mass communication, but do not perform the full list of media functions, do not reflect the media nature (Lukina, 2010).

A wide range of research methods for the media audience of the Internet can be grouped as follows: online counters, online surveys and registration; use of social networks; special programs for tracking user behavior on the Web. Therefore, in general, we can state the significant media measurement potential of the media structures of the Web in comparison with traditional channels, which is appearing in the reduction of time-consuming procedures for conducting both quantitative and qualitative MR audiences (Lukina, 2010).

New technologies, special software allow carrying out quite effectively in cyberspace and quantitative media research of the audience. Usually in this way data are obtained on: “the size of the audience of a particular sector of the Web; dynamics of attendance for any period (“hosts”, “cookies”, “hits”); selection of the audience by frequency of visits, amount of downloads and total time; depth of viewing and average duration of sessions on the sector's sites; selection of visits per days of the week and hours, as well as by weekdays and weekends; geographical composition of the audience; activity of visitors from different countries and cities of the world; selection of users' browsers by established languages; statistics on operating systems, browsers, monitor characteristics; general structure of traffic and main sources; search queries by which users find sites in the sector” (Lukina, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

Thus, the considered tools and methods used for the organization of marketing research in the media business demonstrate their specificity. After all, media products differ from other product categories in marketing in terms of audience perception. We have shown that the need and importance of studying the media needs of the audience by a mass media organization is provided by the functioning of the media not only as a business but also as a social institution that aims to

ensure the joint activities of people. We argued that clarifying the needs, interests, expectations, and assessments of the audience about media products for media organizations is extremely important, as for no other organization, as for no other business.

We analyzed that the Internet provides much more opportunities for high-quality media research of the audience. We noted the significant media measurement potential of the media structures of the Web in comparison with traditional channels. New technologies, special software allow carrying out quite effectively in cyberspace and quantitative media research of the audience.

Despite the existence of a wide range of specific tools for conducting marketing research in the media business, the question of their imperfection remains interesting for further research, which can manifest itself in various aspects.

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## ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ МАРКЕТИНГОВИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ У МАСМЕДІЙНОМУ БІЗНЕСІ

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Метою дослідження є вивчення інструментів і методів, які використовують організації масмедіа на сучасному етапі для проведення маркетингових досліджень цільової аудиторії - з'ясування потреб, інтересів, очікувань, оцінок щодо медіапродуктів, які вони споживають. А також вивчення необхідності й важливості проведення саме якісних маркетингових

досліджень в організаціях масмедіа. Дослідження проводилось із використанням системного та міждисциплінарного підходів. У роботі використано сукупність загальнонаукових методів: аналіз, синтез, спостереження, порівняння. Розглянуті нами інструменти та методи, які використовуються для організації маркетингових досліджень у медіабізнесі, демонструють свою специфіку. Адже медіапродукти відрізняються від інших товарних категорій в маркетингу в аспекті сприйняття аудиторією. Показано, що необхідність і важливість вивчення медіапотреб аудиторії масмедійною організацією передбачено функціонуванням ЗМІ не лише, як бізнесу, але й як соціального інституту, який має за мету забезпечення спільної діяльності людей. Обґрунтовано, що з'ясування потреб, інтересів, очікувань, оцінок аудиторії щодо медіапродуктів для організацій масмедіа є вкрай важливими, як для жодної іншої організації, як для жодного іншого бізнесу.

**Ключові слова:** маркетингові дослідження медіааудиторії, медіапотреби, медіаметрія.

## ОСОБЕННОСТИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ МАРКЕТИНГОВЫХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ В МАССМЕДИЙНОМ БИЗНЕСЕ

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Целью исследования является изучение инструментов и методов, используемых организациями масс-медиа на современном этапе для проведения маркетинговых исследований целевой аудитории – выяснение потребностей, интересов, ожиданий, оценок относительно медиапродуктов, которые они потребляют. А также изучение вопроса о необходимости и важности проведения именно качественных маркетинговых исследований в организациях массмедиа. Исследование проводилось с использованием системного и междисциплинарного подходов. В работе использованы совокупность общенаучных методов: анализ, синтез, наблюдение, сравнение. Рассмотренные нами инструменты и методы, которые используются для организации маркетинговых исследований в медиабизнесе, демонстрируют свою специфику. Ведь медиапродукты отличаются от других товарных категорий в маркетинге в аспекте восприятия аудиторией. Показано, что необходимость и важность изучения медиапотребностей аудитории массмедиийной организацией предусмотрено функционированием СМИ не только как бизнеса, но и как социального института, который имеет цель обеспечивать совместную деятельность людей. Обосновано, что выяснение потребностей, интересов, ожиданий, оценок аудитории относительно медиапродуктов для организаций массмедиа крайне важны, как ни для одной другой организации, как ни для одного другого бизнеса.

**Ключевые слова:** маркетинговые исследования медіааудитории, медіапотребности, медіаметрія.