Promotion of protest ideas in tactical media

Promoción de protesta ideológica en medios de comunicación tácticos

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ABSTRACT:
In this paper, the main attention is paid to determination of the specifics of a new segment of online-media – tactical mass media. The authors study the information and organisational resources of mass media in promotion of ideology of political protest and realisation of political projects in the practice of media activists. The presence of leading information technologies has simplified the creation of the electronic newspaper and other mass media for the wide circle of users. Tactical media are economically effective and are technologically advanced in the field of communication; they have evolved on the basis of free of charge radio and mini-FM, cable television, etc. The paper is devoted to determination of the category “tactical media”, revealing the peculiarities of their formation, functions in the global information space and the role in the political mobilization. Tactical mass media are a subject of the political communication, a mechanism of the political control and psychological impact on society. They increase the risk of destructive social epidemics, which cause a devastating effect on the personality and social groups. Tactical media (predominantly, network mass media) are considered as a subject of political marketing, as a generator and a distributor of ideas, as well as an independent organiser of mass actions, as well as an instrument of influence on different social groups and society as a whole.

RESUMEN:
1561/5000 En este documento, se presta la atención principal a la determinación de los detalles de un nuevo segmento de medios de comunicación tácticos masivos en línea. Los autores estudian la información y los recursos de organización de los medios de comunicación en la promoción de la ideología de la protesta política y la realización de proyectos políticos en la práctica de los activistas de los medios. La presencia de tecnologías de información líderes ha simplificado la creación del periódico electrónico y otros medios de comunicación para el amplio círculo de usuarios. Los medios tácticos son económicamente efectivos y están tecnológicamente avanzados en el campo de la comunicación; han evolucionado sobre la base de radio gratuita y mini-FM, televisión por cable, etc. El documento está dedicado a la determinación de la categoría "medios tácticos", revelando las peculiaridades de su formación, funciones en el espacio de información global y el papel en la movilización política. Los medios de comunicación tácticos son un tema de comunicación política, un mecanismo de control político e impacto psicológico en la sociedad. Aumentan el riesgo de epidemias sociales destructivas, que causan un efecto devastador en la personalidad y los grupos sociales. Los medios tácticos (predominantemente, los medios de comunicación en red) se consideran un tema de marketing político, como generador y distribuidor de ideas.
1. Introduction
The modern media landscape will be incomplete if one would exclude tactical mass media from it. In essence, these are oppositional and critical Internet-media (Kaliyarova 2016, Kruglov 2016, Kozlova 2011), positioning themselves as an alternative to the traditional mass media. Tactical media represent a form of collective existence of the political activity of citizens, creating an informational product under the slogan “do it yourself” and “many-to-many”. They are becoming particularly popular in the period of crisis, during the conflicts and wars (Melnik 2014; Melnik and Misonzhnikov 2015).

Tactical media attract attention of national and foreign representatives of the scientific community. Scientists consider this media corpus from different standpoints: as esthetic and critical practice (Kireev 2003; Curcis 2009), as an instrument of local struggle for freedom of speech (Stalder 2008), as a platform of antiglobal ideology (Weibel 2015), as a phenomenon of civil journalism (Loseva 2016), as an element of noopolicy (Nikonov, Baichik, Zaprudina, Labush, & Smolyarova, 2015; Nikonov, 2013; Nikonov, Achkasova, Labush, Baichik, & Puix, 2016; Labush, Nikonov, Puix, Georgieva, & Bekurov, 2015). The problem of influence of marketing revolution on this segment of social (new) means of mass media is of scientific interest. However, scientific crudity inadequate scientific elaboration of this subject in the studies of journalism should be noted, which is connected with the fact that because of marginality and transience of existence, their disclosure and classification are hindered.

The relevance of the study of this type of mass media, on the one hand, is connected with the marketing revolution, which changes the approaches to using political media technologies, and on the other hand – with the fact that tactical mass media with their “set” of instruments of influence on the audience are actively intruding into political processes. The study of this media corpus is extremely important in the context of hybrid wars since they start to play a significant role in the political experiment, in the establishment of a new informational order, in the organisation of social movements through the global network.

The object of this paper consists, first, in revealing peculiarities of the functioning of tactical media; second, in determining their function when conquering the market of political ideas; third, in analysing potentialities of promoting political projects and their influence on the protest movements.

2. Methods
The authors of the paper use such general scientific approaches to the research as methods of systemic and comparative-historical analysis. The paper is also based on the discursive analysis, on the monitoring of mass media, as well as on research of scientific literature on the subject under study. Internet resources in the period from September 2016 to September 2017, such as Tactical media files, Framer Framed, autonomous university, Tolhuistuin, MediaUdar, Indymedia, were considered as an empirical base. The sampling was continuous.

The work presented in this paper is a continuation of studies on informational and communicative technologies during promotion of political ideas.

3. Results
The object of the authors’ interest – tactical media, declaring themselves uncontrollable beyond the control, alternative and traditional ones – can be considered on a par with such evolving kinds of journalism as citizen journalism, civic journalism, community journalism, guerilla journalism, collaborative journalism (Pustovalov and Berezin, 2013). In all these
types of journalism, the readers turn from a passive consumers of news readers into active newsmakers, converters, creators and distributors of information through the global network. The principle of the functioning of similar media – “space of participation, and not consumption”. However, tactical mass media have their own specifics. Analysts indicate that in Russia, the user content makes up a significant part of materials of such resources as the electronic periodical “Ridus” (www.ridus.ru), the daily Internet-journal “Look at Me” (www.lookatme.ru), the Internet-edition “Chastnii Korrespondent” (www.chaskor.ru), etc.

The authors’ research showed that the creators of tactical media set specific tasks: 1) to coordinate the actions, intrude into street space; 2) to struggle using tactical methods with domination of media corporations; 3) to transform information into political action, broad flash-mob; 4) to recruit in the ranks of “rebels”; 5) to wake up the spirit of protest; 6) to perfect new forms of collective existence; 7) to teach communication, leadership qualities, how to work with audience; to train effective communication and work with mass media, to bring up leadership qualities; 8) to master technical means of collection and dissemination of information.

Thus, the information platform “MediaUdar”, established in 2011, accomplished sequentially in the period under study the mission of establishing the “platform for interaction of activists from different regions of the country, supporting civil primary initiatives, building the platform for interaction of the oppressed groups of society (LGBT, migrants, etc.), rendering assistance to political prisoners, as well as protecting environment” (Kolesnikov 2013), conducted festivals of activist political art in different Russian cities in forms of workshops “Tactical media”, “Narkofobia” [Narcophobia] and “Dekolonialnost” [Decoloniality]; events of the Fem club (feministic club) and “Soiuz vyzdoravlivaiushchikh” [Union of convalescents]. The performance of the art-group “Nezhelatelnaia organizatsia” [Unwanted organization] was conducted in the epatage form; the project of the fellowship “Umstvennye otstalye” [Mental retarded]. The main actions, organised by tactical media, were monstrations which were characterised as a mass art action in the form of demonstration with slogans and banners. Participants use the action as a main means of communication with spectators, with each other, as a means of self-expression, as well as the art technique by means of which they comprehend the environment of happenings.

The concept of activity of tactical media on conducting monstrations was expressed in words of the media activist from Novosibirsk, Sergei Samoilenko, at the Xth All-Russian Contest of Modern Art: “Monstration as a form of public-art is located in the space among art activity, social activity and political gesture. Questioning and travestying “serious” political demonstrations, monstration is a distinct protest against absence of public policy in the country; it just not only marks the boundaries of civil freedoms, but also extends these boundaries becoming a school of solidarity, creative activity and civil freedom” (Loskutov 2010).

A key basis of the research is an idea that tactical means of mass media and other means of information and communication are today, first of all, an instrument of ideology, and not only information. In Kara-Murza’s opinion, the most important direction of their messages is that the ideas penetrate into the conscious of the audience through smuggling (Kara-Murza, 2001, pp. 51).

Scientific papers analyse the causes of unrests, the role of social media in their provocation and situation destabilization, determine possibilities of tactical mass media as an effective instrument of coordination and mobilization in protest movements. Tactical media are considered as a subject of realising the mechanism of forming the agenda (Panov 2013).

The unrests themselves are analysed in the structure of cognitive technologies of network wars (Deineka and Zabarin 2014). Tactical media are presented in these papers as a resource of manipulative practices and an organiser of special events. Destructive structures of the social network are considered in the Russian scientific literature as a means of an information war and a threat to Russia security.

The thirty-year work experience of this type of mass media makes the researchers of mass media consider analysis of the liberation potential, which tactical media used to resist the ruling order. Dutch researcher Rita Raley (2011) refers to the practice of testing the models
of political behaviour of mass media, which activate art-projects. Calling the actions of tactical media activity as “a virtuoso performance”, the author of the book “Tactical mass media as a virtuoso activity” shows how tactics of critical interference, alien thinking and resistance are realised in political practice and how symbolic characters and narrations transform the political game into actions of protests.

The researchers of tactical media state reasonably that their origin is the response to the postindustrial society and neoliberal globalisation. Considering the activity of tactical media, Felix Stalder analyses the political experience of tactical media communication with local audience accumulated over thirty years and emphasises the adherence of these mass media to their main goal (Stalder 2008) – promotion of the protest ideas.

Creators of tactical media realise the mass media model, able to attack the system “as a wolf pack”, in the information space. Earlier, as one of the authors of the protest text, Raimundo Viejo, stated, “there was an alpha-male, wolf, who was the head of the pack and those who watched them. Today we are one big swarm of people” (Viejo, 2011).

As the scientific analysis of media practice showed, tactical media identify themselves as an alternative to the traditional media, which, in the opinion of ideologists of tactical media, have lost their freedom everywhere. Tactical media promote actively the concept of counter-hegemony. The evidence of that is the works of media centers, independence of which is constantly emphasised by their creator and participants. They oppose strategic means of mass information during important political campaigns (using flash, swift attack). For instance, they express the viewpoint of opposition; possess radical and rebellious nature (try to influence the government, market, academic circles, juridical institutes). Tactical mass media are the subject of political communication and a mechanism of political control and psychological influence on the society. They increase the risk of destructive social epidemics, which cause a destructive effect on a personality and social groups.

They work more actively in the crisis period, during conflicts and wars. Thus, tactical mass media have comprehensive facilities for realising information confrontation, which is used intentionally for the worsening of positive reputation of the opposite actor, turns into one of the forms of interaction between political subjects, be it a politician, a country or a geopolitical unit. The essence of this interaction consists in attracting the masses’ attention to negative features of a political actor-opponent and positive features of an actor-ideologist and, as a consequence, for finding new supporters among the masses” (Information war as a model of interaction among political subjects. (Ermolaev, n. d.).

The majority of technologies, which are used for the political purposes of tactical media, are destructive, increasing the degree of contentiousness in the globalisation context. The study of the political documents on the websites: Tactical media files, Framer Framed, Autonomous university, Tolhuistuin, allowed identifying key domains, which are realised by tactical mass media. Their purpose is to destroy a social connection and to eliminate the cause of social and cultural alienation of social groups in society, to facilitate escalation of uncertainty, depression, anxiety, the reduction of morality, performance degradation, as well as unfolding destructive conflicts. Tactical media allow the weak to win a victory over the strong, using intelligent, tactical movements, to use creative actions owing to which they gain advantages. In this case, the appeals to the unity, consolidation and participation in “common righteous cause” sound “magically” (Serto 2013, pp. 44).

Tactical media are considered by the authors from the positions of political marketing, which they determine as a technology of effective social activity in the field of production, promotion, distribution and exchange with political information, as well as methods of political influence on various social communities and groups, who are offered information advantageous for them. Let us note that political marketing unfolds in the certain market – in this case in political – and is connected with promotion of a special product – political ones – images, brands, ideas or values.

Form the viewpoint of Bruce Neman – a famous researcher of political marketing – in the election practice of, for example, the USA, the “strategic triad” was used successfully: social media, “big data” combining various methods of processing a large volume of information, and micro- or nanotargeting aimed at the most detailed determination of needs in different
segments of the election market (Newman 2016, pp. 28). The use of the term “marketing triad” seems methodologically important when studying tactical media.

Marketing qualities of online mass media started to be discussed only from the beginning of the 2000s. Competitiveness of the network edition on the global information and political market depends increasingly on how the authorities, controlling media, introduce innovation and digital technologies in their business-processes and marketing practices. The question about the survival of mass media, named as tactical, remains undecided from the viewpoint of political competition.

4. Discussion

Today, in the academic discourse, more than a thousand articles, devoted to the study of the functional peculiarities of internet media, both foreign and national ones, are presented (Amzin 2016, Davidov 2000, Duden 2000, Vakurova 2001, Zadiraka 2005, Rushkoff 1996, Zasurskyi 2009, Podstavko 2011, Serto M. de 2013). The interest in the phenomenon of network and social systems is connected with fast development of computer technologies, creation of new producers of political information and new audience. Today new mobile audience searches for new ways of content consumption. In Russia, the computer network has already become a strong rival to the traditional media: “The extension of cyberspace use can be explained by several factors: by relatively low cost of information for any user, by unlimited possibilities to locate and disseminate information, by conducting a large amount of time in the world of the Internet, by emergence of a new type of citizens, who are interested in more intelligent and educated social problems and can become of a kind of “translators” of ideas and opinions” (Strengths and weaknesses of online media (Mediology, n. d.).

There is a multitude of scientific papers, in which authors are attempting to understand new opportunities of obtaining high-quality information products. Analysis focuses even on “mobile labour collaboration” in the context of power-consuming relations (Bondarenko, 2006). German researchers interpret social media as a “group of web applications based on a certain ideological and technological basis web.2, which allows members of social networks to create and exchange with content” (Kaplan and Hainlein 2010, pp. 59-68).

Recently in the Russian scientific literature, several works have appeared, where the measurement results of different segments of audience have been presented demonstrating how the audience has changed and continues to change along with revolutionary technological changes, transforming media industry. The difficulty in understanding the audience, in the opinion of the Russian author, Natalia Loseva (Loseva 2016), consists in the fact that not only measurement technologies, but also the audience qualities are changing. The following occurs quickly, sometimes during a year:

- changes of user’s habits;
- redistribution of the share of data (devices and platforms) in the information daily cycle of consumption;
- changes of the duration and profundity of users’ sessions. All this requires paying special attention to studying the parameters of audience, its needs and, besides, factors influencing them.

Fashion and attachment to different formats appear and disappear.

The tactical media network has demonstrated its potential in destructive political processes during political crisis especially vividly in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (Kenneth 2011, Marcinek 2011, Chen Di 2013, Earl and Kimport 2013, Murphy 2013, Parmrlee and Bichard 2013; Prell 2013).

Development of tactical mass media is connected, on the one hand, with alternative social and cultural movements. F. Stalder writes, “As well as many other things, which are now widespread in our informational life, the origins of tactical mass media are in the cultural innovations of radical social movements appeared at the end of the 1960s. They not only started to use technological changes allowing one to create media independently, but they also created absolutely new ideas on what mass media can represent <...> They rather
rethought mass media as a means of subjective expression and presented people who were not presented in the mainstream. Taking into account considerable technological obstacles for production and distribution of autonomous mass media, which existed in the 1990s, the first surge of media of the type “do-it-yourself” acknowledged itself as “community mass media” representing local social, cultural or ethnical minorities” (Stalder 2008).

Political activity of artists was one of the forms of media activism, media art practice, active interference into the media sphere. The struggle for social criticism was considered by the creator of tactical media as a part of the struggle for freedom of press. New qualitative characteristics of tactical media were obtained owing to the use of modern technologies, which had accelerated dissemination of messages, reduced the time of their transfer and a wide geography of distribution.

According to Eric Kluitenberg, tactical mass media played a significant role in formation of space: they allowed creating “hybrid space” which had overcome the opposites of “mediated” and “implemented” spaces having logic and distinctive features, which transferred the localised presences as well as influenced from afar” (Kluitenberg 2011).

Creators of tactical media state that they gain a genuine understanding of mobile social factors, content, campaigns and platforms, as well as strategic vision allowing their integration. These media claim invariably about their capability to transform complex data into powerful ideas. The latter statement is adjusted inevitably with the discourse about “big data” as a basis of the “marketing triad”. The fact that during the last decade, scientific literature has shown interest in the potential of tactical mass media, unique hyperlocal sources of political information are of importance (Branka 2011, Kireev 2003, Kluitenberg 2011, Vinogradova 2016, Melnik, Misonznikov 2015-2016, Romanov and Novoselov 2015, Zadiraka 2005). This phenomenon is also akin to processes of political marketing, connected with the fact that today the accents in the study of the audience have changed. The necessity of comprehensive analysis of data, contained in the social networks, for interaction between a specific organisation and consumers has appeared. In other words, in the political sphere there are mechanisms of promoting the product in different market sectors, as in the case of commercial companies, which use credit history, demography, customers and other information for realisation of their competitive advantages (Newman 2016, pp. 67). Tactical media became popular in the period from 1993 to 2003, after organising a number of festivals and conferences known as “The next 5 minutes (n5m)” (Garsia and Lovink 1997; “On the project “Tactical media connections”), “Tactical presence at Transmediale 2016”, 2016).

Interconnection between the art and political conflict has changed considerably because of the widespread of digital media and the Internet as a means of momentary distribution of images, texts and audio-visual expressions. Since the 1990s, tactical means of mass media have placed the technology of recording and “production” at their service. Art-activists began using digital tools and interfering in promoted symbolic space, which stopped being a single asylum for artists and art audience (“Art and political conflict of 2014”, Garsia and Lovink 1997; Zadiraka 2005, Pautova 2006).

At the present time, there is practice of the public tracing of art and political experience of tactical mass media and their interrelations with modernity in the traditions of preserving and transferring the generations’ heritage. In addition to the large-scale study of this heritage, public arrangements were conducted, including exhibitions in Amsterdam (October 28 – December 11, 2016) and in Liverpool (March 2 – May 21, 2017), conferences and presentations of art and political projects (Tactical Presence @ Transmediale 2016). On the pages of tactical mass media, the discussions, provoked by the practice of political struggle, especially with consideration of the changed political situation, are open: until recently, the cyber revolution has been considered as bloodless; today, it is running the risk of turning into a bloody war.

As a result of the crises in the Middle East, the religious fundamentalist movement influenced the art, which started losing its foothold because of unexpected catastrophic events in the political sphere (NYT Special issue: The war in Iraq is at an end. Mock edition of the coalition of artists and activists for distribution in press and on the Internet, n.d.).
The creators of tactical media put the discussion of the following questions in the public sphere: will the artists be able to react to the use of tough political power and other hardships, which dissidents face; how to contrast secular ideology with religious movements? (“Iraq war is at an end”. 2009. Edition of the coalition of artists and activists distributed in press and online, Special Edition New York Times, July)

From moment of their establishment, tactical media tried to mobilise masses for solution of political tasks and organisation of actions, which could be repeated in other regions of the world (for instance, in the USA, the protest movement “Occupy public places” affected the events of Maidan in the Ukraine, in Tahrir Square in Egypt, in Rothschild Avenue in Israel, etc.). To create the impression of actions’ popularity on pages of tactical media, the photographs, unofficial estimates of the number of participants, results are published. Today, a part of them forms protest groups demonstrating destructive behaviour with regard to the political system, ready to commit crime (extremism and terrorism) (Deineka and Zabarin 2014).

Despite the more than thirty-year existence of tactical mass media, some analysts treat the work of these mass media skeptically because of their predominance in the network of global topics (war, geopolitics, sanctions, etc.), which have negative influence on the formation of the agenda for civil society. It remains unclear how activists can change the planetary situation. The open variants (public support of state’s actions, military “voluntary”, etc.) inspire not all of them, - forbidden variants sometimes cause fear (Tactical media and art activism. Livejournal, n. d.). It is most often a “symbolic protest” ("one is unable to keep silence") or formation of alternative identity – all this is aimed at a specific purpose, is amorphous and leads to the loss of the significance of the protest and to the emotional fade (Tactical media and art activism. Livejournal, n. d.). Mass street actions are arranged for journalists, not for “mass people”.

5. Conclusion

Thus, tactical media are cheap media which appeared on the information grounds of the public cable television even before intensive development of the Internet. They call themselves as “mass media of crisis and opposition”. The activity of network tactical mass media is directed to development of the revolutionary potential, formation of protest moods of the readers, to provoking destructive strategies of behaviour. Tactical media declare themselves to be independent, alternative. The mass media for ”Do it yourself” attract like-minded people, teach professional journalism (filming), involve in mass media creation. Along with that, this corpus of network mass media has its own pronounced specifics. Protest technologies have dual character, pursuing not only constructive, creative (activation of social groups, uniting the nation), but also destructive purposes (lowering of the socium social activity, destabilization, disorganization).

The peculiarity of tactical media consists in the fact that they never achieve the state of perfection since they are based on the principles of changeability, momentariness, interactivity, and functioning in different coalitions; they solve only operational tasks that are adequate to the time; they practically always destruct traditional ideas of people about values and traditions. Ideologists of protest media put forward the programmes of new organisational logic of transnational horizontal networks, consider territories, authorities and rights as fundamental; insist on creation of specific time-space connections based on common interests and affective relations, which are by and large non-institutional, mainly in the informal sector; propose movement bypassing hierarchies of vertically integrated power structures into horizontal configurations of the social organisation; use the connection of the entire variety of local groups, websites, networks, geographical and cultural contexts and peculiarities in the network space into a new borderline area (Charting Hybridised Realities, 2012).

In 2016, the USA presidential elections attached a new stimulus to tactical media. The surge of agitation publications had swept across the media, which did not support the option for Trump. Thus, on the website, "not having a leader" of the movement “Occupy Wall Street. We are the 99 percent”, uniting the Americans "irrespective of sex, race, and political
Columns wrote, “When, in the course of human events, authoritarian demagogues threaten directly to the reasons, life goals and freedoms, and when the demagogue starts to control federal government, this is already not a government of nation or the government for nation. Freedom-loving people in the United States of America and all over the world are obliged to oppose any or all actions until the government does not understand that it is not a director of the events, not a leader anymore”.

The open calls for mobilization and counteraction against new authorities have been initiated: “Join us on January 20, 2017: with frank hatred for fascism in America, we are starting the struggle up to the end. Join us in asserting the promise for all Americans, undertaken obligations that we will always replace our government when it becomes destructive for our life, freedom and our striving for happiness” (Peoples’ Inauguration Direct Action January 20 2017, 2016)

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