
Розділ 3. ЖУРНАЛІСТИКА ТА ЗАСОБИ МАСОВОЇ ІНФОРМАЦІЇ

Part 3. JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

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JOURNALISTIC OBJECTIVITY IN THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL ELECTIONS IN THE CONDITIONS OF DEMOCRACY

The article explores the problem of ensuring the objectivity of information in the process of political elections. The author argues that absolute objectivity does not exist, because journalistic activities are determined by the position of media owners and political preferences of journalists themselves. However, in a democracy, political and cultural pluralism brings about a variety of media attitudes in the election, which enables voters to make free choices based on understanding of their interests.

Keywords: *journalism, mass media, information objectivity, political elections, democracy.*

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ЧИННИК ОБ'ЄКТИВНОСТІ ЖУРНАЛІСТСЬКОЇ ІНФОРМАЦІЇ В ПРОЦЕСІ ПОЛІТИЧНИХ ВИБОРІВ В УМОВАХ ДЕМОКРАТІЇ

Актуальність. Президентські вибори 2019 р., які, за висновками багатьох експертів, стали найбруднішими за всю історію незалежної України, значно актуалізували проблему об'єктивності журналістської інформації в електоральному процесі.

Мета статті — розкрити механізм забезпечення об'єктивності журналістської інформації в процесі політичних виборів в умовах демократії.

Об'єкт дослідження — проблема забезпечення об'єктивності демократії в процесі політичних виборів.

Методологія статті ґрунтується на системному, структурно-функціональному, компаративному та біхевіористському підходах до дослідження проблеми.

Новизна матеріалу полягає у переведенні проблеми об'єктивності журналістської діяльності з морально-етичної площини в площину її практичної реалізації.

Практичне значення зумовлене можливістю використання цього матеріалу в навчальному процесі з фахової підготовки студентів за спеціальністю «Журналістика».

Висновки. Абсолютної об'єктивності журналістської діяльності на політичних виборах не існує, оскільки ця діяльність детермінується позицією власників ЗМІ та політичними вподобаннями самих журналістів. Проте плюралістичність демократичних режимів спричиняє феномен відносної об'єктивності, який полягає в тому, що виборці можуть користуватися різними виданнями, які відображають різні позиції та підтримують явно чи приховано різні політичні сили та різних кандидатів, порівнювати їх публікації та потім робити самостійний вибір. Відносна об'єктивність має забезпечуватися: заборонаю концентрації інформаційних видавництв у руках одного власника; посиленням контролю та кримінальної відповідальності за публікацію недостовірної інформації; посиленням роботи щодо формування політико-правової та професійної культури журналістів (у зв'язку з цим доцільно ввести до програм фахової підготовки журналістів у вищих навчальних закладах України як обов'язковий предмет «Інформаційне право», спрофілювавши його на потреби їх професійної діяльності); підвищенням уваги до виховання політичної культури громадян.

Ключові слова: журналістика, засоби масової інформації, об'єктивність інформації, політичні вибори, демократія.

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ФАКТОР ОБЪЕКТИВНОСТИ ЖУРНАЛИСТСКОЙ ИНФОРМАЦИИ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ ВЫБОРОВ В УСЛОВИЯХ ДЕМОКРАТИИ

Исследуется проблема обеспечения объективности информации в процессе политических выборов. Автор подчеркивает, что абсолютной объективности не существует, поскольку журналистская деятельность детерминирована позицией собственником СМИ та политическими предпочтениями самых журналистов. Однако в условиях демократии политический и культурный плюрализм обуславливает разнообразие позиций СМИ на выборах, что позволяет избирателям сделать свободный выбор, исходя из понимания своих интересов.

Ключевые слова: журналистика, средства массовой информации, объективность информации, политические выборы, демократия.

Relevance of research topic. The 2019 presidential elections, which, according to many experts, became the dirtiest in the history of independent Ukraine, significantly corrected the problem of the objectivity of journalistic information in the electoral process.

Problem statement. The establishment of democracy in Ukraine is associated with the quality of political elections, because its universal (minimum) criterion is the formation of a government power based on the results of free, competitive and general elections (Diamond, 1996). Although democratic elections are based on free-will citizens, their results are heavily dependent on the information that voters receive from the media. This determines a very important role of journalism in political elections. This

is evident, in particular, from the Law of Ukraine “On Information” (*On Information*).

In the electoral process, journalism acts as an institution of political socialization of the population, and journalists as agents of this process. The public need for information urges journalists to objectively cover the electoral process. Ensuring objectivity of journalistic information also requires electoral legislation. Thus, the Laws of Ukraine “On Elections of People’s Deputies of Ukraine” (Article 66) and “On Elections of the President of Ukraine” (Article 56) say: “News agencies and mass media distribute reports on the course of the election process, events related to elections, based on the principles of authenticity, completeness and accuracy, objectivity of information and its impartial representation” (*On Elections of People’s Deputies of Ukraine*)

Previous research. Although the issue of the place and role of journalism in the electoral process was reflected in the scientific literature, ensuring the objectivity of journalistic information has not yet received proper coverage. In writings by Stanley Kelley (1962), James Carey (1993), Jeffrey Scheuer (2007), Zilola Komilova (2004) and Ukrainians Mykola Buchyn (2012), Ihor Kulas, Roman Holovenko and Iryna Zemliana (2018) to advocate the objectivity of journalistic information or describe is posed as an urgent problem that needs to be addressed or analyzed by its shortcomings, but the mechanisms of this process are not disclosed.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the mechanism of ensuring the objectivity of journalistic information in the process of political elections in a democracy.

The main material. To achieve the aim of the article one should answer two questions:

What is objectivity of journalism?

How can this requirement be implemented in practice?

In the philosophical encyclopedic dictionary, objectivity is interpreted as “the relation of independence from the subject, from the subjective factor;” and professional objectivity as “the ability of the subject to take an intersubjective position in his professional activity, that is, that which does not depends on his (or someone’s) preferences, emotions, bias, but is determined only by the essence, logic of the case and is in full accordance with socially institutionalized norms and standards (such as legal or moral norms). (*Philosophical Encyclopedic Dictionary*, p. 441).

Thus, one can conclude that the essence of the objectivity of journalistic activity is independence of journalists not only from someone’s preferences, emotions, etc., but also from their own ones, in *full accordance* with their professional work and legal and moral standards.

But can this be implemented in practice?

In the above certainty of objectivity, we are dealing, speaking in Weberian terms, with the *pure type* of this phenomenon. But, as you know, there is nothing absolutely pure in this world, including absolute objectivity.

Absolute objectivity of journalistic activity is impossible due to the following factors:

First, it is carried out through the mass media, which in one way or another depend on their owners. Media holders in a democracy are state structures (government, parliament, local administrations) and local government structures (regional and district councils), political parties and public organizations, private individuals. Their criticism is limited to *individual* disadvantages and *individual* officials.

Experience has shown that the mass media owned by government structures (state or local government) never sharply criticize the shortcomings of their structures, even when they are poorly functioning. In the period of election campaigns, such media, as a rule, generally become agitators of those forces that are headed by certain power structures.

As for party editions, they are created for the information of members and sympathizers of their parties and propaganda and agitation among citizens who are not yet politically determined in order to form their adherence to this party. The propaganda activity of party editions is greatly enhanced during the elections. Naturally, they never truthfully ignore the disadvantages and negative phenomena of this party (for example, the corruption scandals associated with its representatives in power structures).

Publications owned by civic organizations (according to Arthur Bentley (1908), by interest groups) are engaged in certain social interests for the protection and implementation of which they have created. The interests of certain social groups may contradict the interests of the majority of society, but such publications will never write about it. During election campaigns, many public organizations start agreements with political parties, which, on the one hand, support the public organization of a particular party or its candidate, on the other hand, the party, in case of its coming to power, undertakes to fulfill the demands of this public organization. In this situation, the pressmen of public organizations are also turning into party agitators.

The mass media belonging to individuals and entities are often defined as "independent". However, their independence is also conditional. The adjective "independent" is used to denote their relative independence from power. The owners of influential independent media are mostly representatives of big business, which predetermines their commitment to those political forces that are more conducive to the realization of their business interests. Although informational activities are carried out by editorial boards of the media, they must implement a program approved by the founders (i. e., owners) of the publications. (Romanyuk, Kovalenko, 2017).

Secondly, journalists, like all normal people, have their own ideological beliefs, political preferences, and their own life experiences that cannot in any way influence their professional activities. It is very naive to demand that all journalists hold an absolutely neutral and objective position in the elections. Journalists, and all citizens, have the right to support or not support certain political forces or candidates in the elections, which cannot but affect their professional activities. By covering the political forces and candidates supported by the journalist, they usually emphasize their positive features and avoid mentioning their shortcomings. On the contrary, when a journalist covers the activities of those forces or candidates to which he is biased, he on the contrary emphasizes their shortcomings and ignores the positive aspects of their activities. And even when a journalist tries to be extremely objective in the coverage of election events, his subconscious mind there are the filters through which election information is perceived, differentiated and ranked.

However, impossibility of absolute objectivity does not mean that objectivity is impossible at all. Unlike autocratic regimes, which are characterized by political, political and cultural monopolies, democracies are characterized by political and cultural pluralism. (Romanyuk, Kovalenko, 2017). Political pluralism presupposes a multi-party system and free competition of all legal parties in government-owned competition. Cultural pluralism is manifested in the diversity in ideas, concepts, ideologies and their free competition of people's minds. In a democracy, the media pluralistic. It is the diversity of political orientations and media positions that are creates conditions for the relative objectivity of the information space. Those who do not publish a single edition, who are supporters of a certain political force or a certain candidate, will publish other publications that support alternative political forces or alternative candidates. That is, political democracy, in contrast to undemocratic regimes, causes that citizens, using various sources of information, can compare various informational messages, make their own conclusions on this basis, and exercise their own will in the course of voting in political elections.

Thus, the task of a democratic government and civil society in the period of election campaigns is not to attempt to achieve some absolute objectivity, but to ensure free and fair competition of positions and programs of various political forces and candidates.

And then there is another important question: what is honesty of information?

In our opinion, honesty is an integral part of the objectivity of information. Media and journalists during election campaigns cannot, for the reasons described above, give up their political preferences and views that affect their publication. However, one thing is that if a journalist explicitly or implicitly supports a certain political force or a certain candidate on the basis

of his convictions during the coverage of political events, and the other, thing is when he deliberately publishes false information for legitimate reasons, disseminates fake information, thus deliberately misinforming citizens about the real state of things.

False information is information about something that does not really exist. It can be either a false apparent merit of a political force or a candidate who is mentioned in this publication, or about false sins of their opponents. The latter in media communications is called "black PR". However, not all negative information is "blackhead." If the negative facts about the political force or the candidate that the journalist cites in his publication are true, then such information cannot be considered "black PR". On the contrary, such information enables voters to have a closer look at this political force or this candidate and then make a more balanced choice in voting. "Black PR" is also false, defamatory information, created specifically for the misinformation of voters, usually on the orders of his rivals.

Commonly misleading information in the elections is *ordered* sociological research that is published in order to make voters vote for a certain political force or a particular candidate. In electoral campaigns, most voters focus on supporting those political forces and candidates who have a real chance of getting into representative bodies. The citizens are helped in navigating in the electoral space by sociological surveys conducted by polling public opinion. Taking this into account, dishonest political forces and candidates who do not have a sufficiently high ranking for victory often resort to the publication of fake survey results. Such results can be published without conducting surveys. Otherwise, the results of a real poll can be substantially adjusted in favor of the subject who ordered it. In the third case, the survey relies on a non-representative sample. However, in all these cases, voters receive inaccurate information that may affect their electoral choice.

Conclusion. Although there is not and cannot be some absolute objectivity of the media, the more so in the electoral race, the pluralistic nature of democratic regimes leads to the phenomenon of relative objectivity, which is that voters can use different editions that take different sides and explicitly or implicitly support various political forces and different candidates, compare their publications and then make their own choices.

Relative objectivity should be ensured by:

1. Prohibiting a concentration of information publishing houses in the hands of one owner;
2. Increasing control and criminal liability for publishing of inaccurate information.

Intensifying of work on shaping political and legal and professional culture of journalists (in this connection, it seems expedient to introduce

«Information Law» into the program of professional training of journalists in higher educational institutions of Ukraine, and adopt to the needs of their professional activities);

Paying more attention to the education of political culture of citizens.

The latter is also very important, since in order to use different sources of information and then to make their own conclusions on this basis, a person must have certain knowledge and ability to make self-analysis.

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