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INFORMATIONAL MANIPULATION OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH THE SOCIAL MEDIA

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In conditions of complex transformational processes of modernity there is a danger of manipulative influence on individuals of biased distorted information about current events in the social world via social media. This problematique requires in-depth scientific analysis, which aims to reveal the positive aspects of the functioning of social media in modern society, and to analyze the features of their informational manipulative effect on the state of social consciousness of individuals in general.

It should be noted that nowadays social media provided users around the world with a wide opportunity for self-expression, a platform for organizing public discussions, sharing experience and knowledge. A huge number of users of different educational, professional, social and cultural levels can connect to information exchange within the media space. In the rapid development of social networks, there are unambiguously many good sides, such as facilitating the search for information; the ability to use multimedia; creative self-realization; going beyond the usual interpersonal communication; recreation; verification of ideas through participation in interactions on a social network, etc. Thus, social media significantly improves the lives of people around the world.

On the other hand, with the development of social media, some serious problems of the type of emotional and psychological pressure began to appear. Every coin has two sides, of course. However, by 2021, people had become so enriched with the knowledge of the Internet that they were able to turn social media into a weapon of mass manipulation of the consciousness of society [1]. It is crucial to understand that we are now talking about hidden manipulation, and not about simple. Hatred and bullying on the Internet, discrimination, death groups or other socially dangerous organizations are all very important, but you can see it and you learn to resist this in the conditions of a developed social media culture. However, now a person may not even be aware of how and to what extent someone influences his consciousness through social media. People do not think about targeted advertising, collecting information about everyone in the networks and that not only we study social media, but they also study us.

According to a study by Martin Gilbert, in 1986 a person received a volume of information that could be placed in 40 newspapers. In 2007, thanks to the Internet and easy access to television, its number increased significantly: the information that a person received daily would fit in 174 newspapers [2]. In the 21st century, the frantic speed of technology development and large amounts of information impede concentration of attention. In the process of the formation of a modern information society, special attention is focused on the overabundance of information within society and, as a result, it is indirect influence on mental health and the integrity of the personality of an individual in this society.

In 1996, David Lewis introduced into circulation the concept that reflects a specific psychological state of a person, which leads to incorrect assessments of reality, false conclusions and to making unsatisfactory, erroneous decisions – «Information fatigue syndrome». David Lewis characterized this phenomenon as a progressive process with a constant craving for new information and its potential sources, chronic insomnia and anxiety for a new day and a decrease in the ability to make informed decisions. As you can understand, an excessive amount of information can have a destructive effect on human consciousness and allow any kind of manipulation.

If anyone thinks information overload is the worst, then this is a fatal mistake. Indeed, despite the rapid development of the Internet and social networks, there are cases when there is so little information that in fact there is no information at all. When there are few sources, it is normal not to trust them, and when their information differs, it is even more confusing. It is especially scary to look at this from a political perspective, as the authorities of many underdeveloped and developing countries continue to use the lack of information to their advantage. For example, in Belarus, during the beginning of the post-election revolution, the Internet was massively disconnected, cutting off the access of the population and the world community.

The Belarusian authorities borrowed this method of solving the problem from Russia, where the political elite has long influenced the consciousness of society in this way. I think many people know the opposition leader Alexei Navalny and his movement against the Russian government. Therefore, at the time of this writing, Vladimir Putin has never yet recognized the significance of his existence, as well as the existence of that grand opposition movement that stands behind him. At the numerous rallies that have taken place in Russia over the past couple of years, they usually jam the Internet and restrict the access of protesters to social media. Such a simple and seemingly banal manipulation significantly confuses people and scatters attention, since the lack of information means its constant inaccuracy. The less information about something, the less we trust it, and this leaves the country's politician space for tyranny.

In situations where there is enough information in social media to put together a certain picture, disinformation comes into play in the game of social manipulation. Disinformation is one of the forms of information and psychological influence and today is closely related to other types of global threats, such as the collapse of the state, social instability and international conflicts. Disinformation can be broadly divided into two types: unconscious information without a purpose to harm and, conversely, untrue information with the intention to harm. The first type very often originates precisely in a lack or too much data, when it is difficult to distinguish the truth from the lodge. The conscious type includes a conscious action by a person in order to influence social groups, individuals and spheres of the human psyche in order to change their socio-psychological characteristics.

An example of disinformation, as well as manipulation in general, can be considered the intervention of Russian government structures in the 2016 presidential elections in the United States in order to damage the Hillary Clinton campaign, contribute to the victory of Donald Trump and provoke political and social divisions in American society. A little later, specialist Robert Mueller conducted a two-year investigation into the final report and concluded that Russia was intervening «on a large scale and systematically». And in 2019, Netflix released the documentary «The Great Hack» about Cambridge Analytica, which is accused of using Facebook to manipulate voters in the UK and the US. Such manipulation is possible thanks to targeted political advertising that cannot be fully trusted. On Facebook and Twitter, fake accounts posted dubious news about Miss Clinton and, on the contrary, only good news about Trump appeared in the recommendations of people. If a person supported the Green Piece, they were shown in the feed the news that Hillary Clinton was in favour of mass slaughter of animals or ignoring global warming, etc.

Social media occupy an increasingly important place in the media space, which is confirmed by the interest actively shown by representatives of culture, business and government. Media and social communications are both now essential parts of economy as many businesses are socially responsible and customer-oriented [4].

There are a large number of resources created for different purposes and with a variety of content, and it is impossible for a poet to create universal methods of manipulation for social media. However, it should be emphasized that manipulation of news information is a very complex process, often leading to unpredictable and not always positive consequences for the interested party.

The opinions of critics on this topic still differ greatly, but one thing is clear: social networks can manipulate our choice and us, be it the choice of food products or the president of the state. Social media follow people, study their tastes and preferences; this is confirmed by the same-targeted advertising that everyone has become accustomed to for a long time. However, very few people still realize how easily the consciousness of society lends itself to manipulation by social networks. To put it more precisely: social media themselves do not carry anything bad, but when they fall into the hands of the wrong and cruel people, it can have dire consequences.

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