Mass Media Influence on the Population of the Khabarovsk Krai

E N Spassky¹, O V Stremilova¹, D S Stremilov¹
¹Far Eastern State Transport University, Khabarovsk, 680021, Russia

E-mail: srs2@festu.khv.ru

Abstract. The article presents the sociological research results on the attitude of the population of the Khabarovsk Krai to regional mass media, in particular, to the TV channel “Gubernia”. The research objectives are to form a socio-demographic image of the audience of the regional mass media, to study the attitude of the people to the quality of the information content of the regional mass media, and to find out the broadcasting needs of the people who are viewers of the regional TV channel “Gubernia”.

As a result of the research, it is concluded that there is no marked preference to the TV channel “Gubernia” according to the list of interests of the people of the Khabarovsk Krai. Informative and news broadcasts are among the genre preferences of viewers of all ages and genders. The study showed that the largest audience group is respondents aged 60 and above. The smallest group is young people under 30 years old.

According to the research the TV channel “Gubernia” is more in demand among the inhabitants of the provincial municipalities of the Khabarovsk Krai than among the residents of large cities. This can be explained, on the one hand, by the peculiarities of the information space of cities, and on the other hand, the sex and age characteristics of the regional provinces.

1. Introduction

The mass media is the institution established for the purpose of open public transmission of various information to a wide range of people aided by technologies for mass communication. Nowadays, it is impossible to imagine politics or everyday life without the mass media. Mass media is an important present-day factor of socialization as it ensures availability of the content of cultural and political processes for every person.

A special branch of sociology called the sociology of mass media or communicology deals with it [3;7;8;10;11;12;13]. Methods of research employed for analysis of mass communications are distinguished especially. [12; 18]. According to a British scholar in the field of mass communication studies D. McQuail, two research approaches can be distinguished – media-oriented and socio-oriented [13; 7]. The Sociology of mass media considers a critical approach to understanding the mass media that puts emphasis on its latent functions to be a very significant. Thus, N. Luhmann, considers mass media as an isolated social system and believes that the mass media creates an artificially structured reality of its own [11; 14; 15]. P. Bourdieu draws attention to the manipulative character of the mass media [1].

TV plays a very special role within the structure of mass media. Its major specific features are being omnipresent, visual, immediate and imitating reality within the frameworks of onscreen formatting [10: 104-105; 9]. It is the TV mass media that got mankind into the era of the “electronic”
and “information” society [2: 234-235], and turned the world into a “global village” [12]. TV absorbed other mass media in its time, nowadays a similar process based on digital technostructure is taking place [4: 34-52].

Research into the viewing audience has become one of the most significant trends in studies focused on TV mass media [2; 5]. These trends unite marketing research aimed at revealing ratings of different TV products [9], and traditional sociological research. One of such studies is a study of the television information-communication preferences of residents of the Khabarovsk Krai. This research was conducted by the Department of Philosophy, Sociology and Law at the Far Eastern State Transport University in December 2015 (The sociological research “Attitude of the population of the Khabarovsk Krai towards the regional mass media” was conducted in the territory of the Khabarovsk Krai from December 8th to December 25th 2015 (field stage). Sampling is of quota type on the parameters “gender” and “age”, employing a zone principle for the selection of municipalities, a route principle for the selection of streets and houses and a random choice principle for the selection of concrete respondents. In the course of research 1,700 people aged 18 and above were interviewed in 9 municipalities of the Khabarovsk Krai). The stated objectives of the research were as follows: to form a socio-demographic portrait of the audience of the mass media in the Khabarovsk Krai; to determine the attitude of the population of the Khabarovsk Krai towards the regional mass media; to study the attitude of the Khabarovsk Krai residents towards the quality of the content of the regional mass media; to identify the demand of the Krai population for the broadcasting of the regional TV channel “Guberniya”.

The first local problem set forth in the survey was to determine the volume of the regional TV audience and to rank the TV channels according to the popularity they have gained. The distribution of the answers to the question: “If you watch TV, which of the TV channels listed do you like most of all?” testify to the following: the leaders are the major TV channels of this country – “Channel One” (Russian: “Pervyi”, literary “the first”) (marked by 11.3% of respondents) and “Russia 1” (10.1%). The TV channel “Guberniya” is the fourth mentioned by the respondents (8.9%), being a little behind “Russia 24” (9.1% or respondents). As for the distribution of the viewers’ preferences depending on the place of residence of the respondents, the preferences were distributed as follows: in Khabarovsk, TV viewers’ preferences evenly distributed among 5 channels (“Channel One”, “Russia 1”, “Russia 24”, “Guberniya”, and TNT); in Vyazemsky “Guberniya” has a significant lead; and a relative majority of the TV audience in Pereiaslavka also shows a preference for “Guberniya”. In the other municipalities the channel occupies 3rd to 5th place.

Let us further consider the gender- and the age-related characteristics of the viewing audience of “Guberniya” TV channel. The data is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Gender distribution of the viewing audience of “Guberniya” (% of the total number of viewers within the municipality).

| Municipality          | Answers total / gender | male | %       | female | %       |
|------------------------|------------------------|------|---------|--------|---------|
| Khabarovsk             | 219                    | 72   | 42.8    | 147    | 67.1    |
| Komsomol’sk-on-Amur    | 62                     | 9    | 12.1    | 53     | 85.5    |
| Ayan                   | 25                     | 13   | 4.9     | 33     | 55.9    |
| Vyazemsky              | 59                     | 26   | 11.5    | 34.07  | 55.9    |
| Pereiaslavka           | 40                     | 19   | 7.8     | 47.50  | 52.5    |
| Sovetskaya Gavan’      | 28                     | 15   | 5.5     | 53.57  | 46.4    |
| Chegdomyn              | 35                     | 15   | 6.8     | 42.86  | 57.1    |
| Solnechny              | 23                     | 8    | 4.5     | 34.78  | 65.2    |
| Troitskoye             | 21                     | 8    | 4.1     | 38.10  | 61.9    |
| Total                  | 512                    | 185  | 100     | 36.13  | 63.9    |
From Table 1, female viewers prevail among the TV audience (more than 63% of the whole sampling), whereas male viewers make a little more than 36%. A similar correlation is observed in almost all municipalities, where the female audience exceeds the male viewership by one and half to two times (Khabarovsk, Solnechny, Troitskoye, Chegdomyn, Vyazemsky). Exceptional to some extent are Pereiaslavka (the male/female ratio is approximately equal), and Ayan and Sovietskaya Gavan’, where the male audience a little outnumbers the female. Thus, if the female share of the whole sampling is 54.3% (923 people) and the male share is 45.7% (777 people), the prevalence of the female audience over the male audience among the viewers of “Guberniya” is obvious.

| Town/municipality       | Answers total | % Age 18-29 | % 30-44 | % 45-59 | % 60 and above |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------|---------|----------------|
| Khabarovsk              | 219           | 42.8       | 23      | 10.5    | 19.2           |
| Komsomolsk-on-Amur       | 62            | 12.1       | 3       | 1.6     | 7              |
| Ayan                    | 25            | 4.9        | 8       | 12.0    | 32.0           |
| Vyazemsky niž             | 59           | 11.5       | 7       | 11.9    | 16              |
| Pereiaslavka             | 40            | 7.8        | 4       | 10.0    | 13              |
| Sovietskaya Gavan’        | 28            | 5.5        | 1       | 3.6     | 8               |
| Chegdomyn               | 35            | 6.8        | 5       | 14.3    | 10              |
| Solnechny               | 23            | 4.5        | 1       | 4.3     | 7               |
| Troitskoye               | 21            | 4.1        | 3       | 9.5     | 4               |
| Total                   | 512           | 100        | 47      | 9.2     | 121             |

The data on the age characteristics of the TV viewership of “Guberniya” testify to the prevalence of the respondents belonging to the senior age cohort among the viewers. In this respect, the youth age audience (18-29) is the smallest (in number), whereas the middle-age cohort comes second and third. This tendency is traced in the majority of the settlements under survey except for Ayan, Chegdomyn, Pereyaskavka and Sovietskaya Gavan’, where the middle-age cohorts prevail over the senior age cohort. Thus, the hypothesis that young TV viewers are rare users of traditional TV broadcasting, finds its substantiation (the number of those who do not watch TV is the highest among them), as they use different sources of information, which constitutes the major evolutionary trend of the Russian TV audience [6]. As for the thematic preferences of the viewing audience of “Guberniya”, the most essential are the news issues watched by 30% of the channel’s audience. Entertainment programs (relaxation and leisure) and movies (TV serials and feature films) come second and third with a serious lag behind. The least popular are the popular science and educational programs (4% and 3.5% correspondingly). Of special interest is the information on the genre preferences of the “Guberniya” viewership depending on the genre of viewers. In this way, Male viewers display distinct interest in socio-, political, information-analytical programs and documentaries (the parameters for these issues are very close). Interests of female viewers concentrate around movies, entertainment, culture-oriented, cultural and broadcast, authorial TV shows, and educational programs. Both men and women, watch news issues in almost the same degree, but women, by definition, watch news more. The only TV format with male prevalence is sports programs.
2. Summary
Having conducted the survey we have come to the following conclusions:

1. Structure of interests of the population of the Khabarovsk Krai does not display an clearly expressed preference for the “Guberniya” TV channels; it is ranked fourth among TV channels;

2. Information news issues of “Guberniya” TV channel are the distinct leaders among the genre preferences of the TV viewers and broadcast listeners of all ages and genders;

3. The largest age group among the television audience of “Guberniya” is the respondents above 60 and the smallest age group is young people under 30.

4. The “Guberniya” TV channel is more popular among people of the provincial municipalities of the Khabarovsk Krai compared with the residents of major cities. This can be explained by the specific features of the information space in major urban formations on the one hand, and on the other hand, by the gender and age characteristics of the periphery of the Krai.

5. We can consider established the fact of low viewers’ interest towards the traditional broadcasting including “Guberniya” TV among the youngest age group who prefer other sources of information.

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