

The Cultural and Educational Mission of Kazakh Television

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Abstract

Mass media have become a socio-cultural phenomenon as they have a strong influence on public consciousness. Television is an ambitious actor in mass media. Using the case of Kazakhstan, we discuss the impact that television makes on developing the population's cultural and spiritual values. The study research method includes the comparative analysis and dialectical approach. We explored the need that society has in social information to influence personality development through various social communication channels. The carried out analysis makes it possible to summarize that Kazakhstan television has not yet established the system to perform cultural, educational, and social functions. TV channels fill more than 80% of their airtime with entertainment programs. Television programs hardly touch upon relevant public issues. They are monotonous in genre and presentation style. The findings point out the fact that airtime scheduling is not efficient. Only entertainment programs and light show projects are prime, which does not correspond to the public demand. The study proposes revising mass media's editorial policies and absorbing entertainment contents, focusing on the socially relevant and culturally cognitive broadcasting format.

Keywords: Television, social problems, national policy, cultural mission, information order, social structure

Introduction

Mass media consolidate their value in social processes and become more influential in people's lives. A specific role in this is assigned to television. It has become an essential socio-cultural phenomenon as it has a strong influence on public consciousness, especially the younger generation (Ali, Asghar, & Mamoon, 2017). One of the activities that today's television deals with relates to forming spiritual and moral ideas and establishing appropriate moral norms in society. In this regard, it seems relevant to explore the role of television in national policy. Kazakhstan might be an illustrative example of a developing country undergoing an intensive transformation of social relations.

Today's television educates and enlightens, shapes views, a system of values, and behaviors. Media resources largely determine people's behavior strategies and set target-oriented trends (Chernova, Tretyakova, & Vlasov, 2018; Chernova, Zobov, Starostin, & Butkovskaya, 2017). Along with mass forms of communication, Kazakhstan TV is a multi-function entity. It is actively involved in the political and socio-cultural life of society. But

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there are also concerns about the imperceptible substitution of the traditional system of values with the new Western-style one, distortion of the world's real picture by mass media, observable in many countries (Tejkalová, Láb, & Strielkowski, 2015). There is an arising need to understand the influence that mass media make in spiritual and cultural spheres in the Kazakhstan society and identify the nature of the audience's susceptibility to today's forms and contents of television production.

Therefore, the research aims to measure Kazakhstan television's influence on forming spiritual and cultural values and social priorities. This study analyzed society's need for social information, evaluating the quality of mass media's editorial policies by absorbing the entertainment content on national TV channels.

Literature Review

Spiritual, moral, ethical, and imaginative learning in the surrounding world is achieved through continuous information exchange between the government and the society, individual, and community-based organizations. Therefore, government institutions pay crucial attention to the social feeling of subjects in the media space. It is known that theoretical conceptualization of the functions that today's mass media perform (Television including) started in the 1950s with Lazarsfeld (1948), McLuhan (1996), and Lasswell (1948). McLuhan (1996) assigned a decisive part to television in managing socio-cultural processes and fewer cultures' emotional climate.

The theorists who discuss today's television feel strongly about the quality of social, educational, and cultural functions. People widely believe that television's social and cultural-educational mission should aim to consolidate viewers' intellectual capacity, personal integrity, and new knowledge. In the research, we extrapolate the conclusions made by Castells (1996), Barinov (2008), and Yudina (2008) in terms of the influence of television on social relations and the development of the market for such services.

It is specific for the development of the Kazakhstan TV market to prioritize national identities and the specifics with which the population perceives technological innovations. Yessenbekova (2018a), Amandosov (1994), and Balakaev (2007) discussed these issues. Television is perceived as an influential social institution and effective communicator that influences people's worldview (Zasursky, 2001; Dumazedier, 1993; Kabdolov, 1992). According to the standard view, by creating a real picture of the world, television raises culture and influences spiritual values, morality, and ethics formation.

Based on extensive empirical data on mass media's role in social development, we would like to draw attention to using the community mentality to achieve more credibility that the population feels towards mass media (Anderson, 2015; Litvintsev, 2007; Yessenbekova, 2018b). We will discuss these features in detail below and define the factors that influence high-quality products with social, cultural, and educational content.

Methodology

Our research analyzes today's mass media in Kazakhstan's performance, i.e., how they perform their spiritual, cultural, and educational mission. To do this, we suggest discussing editorial policies of mass media because of transformation processes in society.

The research methodological framework includes the comparative analysis and dialectical approach to studies of Kazakhstan's information space processes and television's influence on society's cultural and spiritual spheres. We analyzed viewing grids of main TV channels (Qazaqstan, Khabar, Khabar24, Channel 1 Eurasia, AstanaTV, 31 Channel, and TK). We considered subject matters, content, and genre differences of TV programs and editorial concepts.

The research's primary empirical material included viewing grids of national TV channels, results of measurements of the TV audience made by TNS Central Asia, and

sociologic measurements on Kazakhstan audience's TV programs' perception. We analyzed the channels' programs from June to July 2020 and divided them into four groups: informational, social, educational, and entertainment.

We divided TV programs by genre and content, rated national TV channels through media outreach and average daily share. Based on the findings, we will make a list of recommendations to enrich subject areas of TV programs, increase the number of projects intended for the high level of culture and education of the audience, and improve educational programs.

Results and Discussion

When performing cultural and educational functions, national TV channels in Kazakhstan lack a unified system and consistency. The analysis revealed the main problem in TV channels' program policies: ignoring the content richness. Currently, only entertainment products prevail. Most programs with cultural and educational content produced by channels are intended for average viewers. The level of this content is low. There are few high-quality original projects. There is also inversion in the TV channels' viewing grid. Entertainment programs displace in-depth journalism that shapes the attitude of the audience towards a TV channel. Thus, sporadic TV programs isolated by topic and genre cannot guarantee that television successfully performs its cultural and educational mission.

Today's TV programs, especially in Russian, are monotonous and repeat each other, replicating ungrammatical speech and low participants' vocabulary (Mirgorodskaya, 2012). Authors of such projects do not consider increased demands of the audience, which is not satisfied with show presenters' skills, styles, and forms of communication with the audience (Dobrosklopekaiia, 2008; Sveshana, 1989; Perevalov, 2003). Therefore, Kazakhstan TV channels need to reboot editorial concepts by increasing social issues that educate viewers and enrich their knowledge.

The analysis of television channels' programs showed the validity of our statements. For discussion purposes, we divided the content under study from June to July 2020 into four groups, i.e., informational, social, educational, and entertainment. For clarity, findings are given in Table 1.

Table 1. The content structure of Kazakhstan TV channels

TV channel	Content			
	Entertainment	Informational	Educational	Social
Qazaqstan	64%	11%	9%	16%
Khabar	61%	12%	8%	19%
Khabar24	0%	54%	8%	38%
Channel 1 Eurasia	79%	11%	3%	7%
31 Channel	88%	7%	2%	3%
Astana TV	84%	9%	3%	4%
KTK	88%	9%	1%	2%

Analysis of the results' shows that the broadcasting concepts approved by TV channels do not perform cultural, educational, and social functions on a sufficient scale. Television programs hardly touch upon pressing public issues; they are monotonous in genre and presentation style. Inefficient airtime scheduling is another severe disadvantage of TV channels. In primetime, they only schedule entertainment and light show projects. The in-depth content with social, cultural, and educational components is shown after midnight when most viewers do not watch TV. Cultural and educational contents are forced out of the best airtime. Viewer surveys and analysis of posts on social media related to the television show that Kazakhstan viewers want television to enrich their lives and make it possible for them to see the world in a new way (Berezin, 2011; Nikolaeva, 2012).

In primetime, main Kazakhstan TV channels schedule entertainment show projects to attract advertisers. We can see the information order's inefficient placement at the expense of budget funds in ratings of TV channels composed by TNS Central Asia. Such inefficiency manifests itself in many aspects, including the social block of expenditures in various countries' budgets (Sabatini, Ventura, Yamamura, & Zamparelli, 2017; Makreshanska-Mladenovska & Petrevski, 2017; Watanabe, Miyake & Yasuoka, 2018). The data on audience reach and the daily average of TV channels (Table 2-3).

Table 2. Monthly TV audience reaches PPM panel

TVChannel	Reach (%)
KTK	69.17
Channel 1 Eurasia	65.77
31 Channel	64.39
NTK	58.52
Seventh channel	54.61
MIR	53.31
Astana TV	50.90
Khabar	47.38
Qazaqstan	43.05
Khabar24	41.51
Almaty TV	40.87
STV	37.26
Qazsport	34.90

(Kazakhstan Region, for cities with population >100,000, audience age 6+)

Source: TNS Central Asia

Table3. Average daily percentage of TV channels per month PPM panel

TVChannel	Shr%
Channel 1 Eurasia	21.29
KTK	16.48
31 Channel	10.31
NTK	9.68
MIR	7.85
Astana TV	7.80
Qazaqstan	6.07
Seventh channel	4.15
Balapan	3.25
Almaty TV	2.15
Khabar	2.15
Qazsport	2.07
Khabar24	1.41

(Kazakhstan Region, for cities with population >100,000, audience age 6+)

Source: TNS Central Asia

As mentioned above, the data show that the following TV channels are the most popular among the population: Channel 1 Eurasia, AstanaTV, 31 Channel, and KTK. These TV channels fill over 80% of their airtime with entertainment programs. The mentioned TV channels are commercial; their activities do not depend on the amount of government funding. They independently develop their program policies. They are not subject to legislative enforcement norms in the field of production of cultural and educational content. However, TV channels might assume such obligations within corporate social responsibility (Halkosand Skouloudis, 2016; Metaxas, 2016).

In other examined cases, we noticed the following pattern. Kazakhstan TV channels that are 100% funded by the national government (Qazaqstan, Khabar, and Khabar24) have low ratings. We might explain this because producers do not consider the audience's views and do not pay due attention to the quality of television products and

television broadcasting's cultural and educational mission. Perhaps they also underestimate the intellectual level of viewers, or TV channel managers lack some career-related skills. The more taxpayers' money TV channel receives the lower ratings of the products they have. They resort to entertainment content (convenient music show programs, comedy genre, or light humor). Accordingly, the quantity and quality of social and educational content is decline, while government-funded TV channels are obliged to produce such content. Unfortunately, Kazakhstan TV channels Qazaqstan, Khabar, and Khabar24 show that they emphasize the entertainment genre.

Therefore, we believe that national TV channels Qazaqstan, Khabar, and Khabar24 should update and approve their development strategies regarding technological transformation with such priority tasks as preserving and developing cultural values. The social infrastructure needs to become a priority in technological development (Vlasov, Berdyugina & Krivoshein, 2018). And we need to take this into account. Authorities do not control the efficiency of the allocated taxpayers' money. This results when most TV channels are not interested in creating and showing high-quality cultural and educational programs in prime time (Yessenbekova, 2020).

Kazakhstan authorities try to attach decisive importance to the development of the television market to consider the national specifics related to the population's perception of technological innovations. On the part of the society, there is the demand for rebooting of national consciousness and memory through mass media (Yessenbekova, 2018b). Today, with the appearance of state-of-the-art IT solutions, mass media have become more and dramatically accessible. Owing to television and other media's interactivity, they are engaged to address spiritual and cultural challenges in society. They seriously influence society; they seriously influence public opinion (Pobereznikova, 2004; Bonner-Smeyukha, 2007; Erzanukaeva, 2009). The following measures might improve the situation in the television environment in Kazakhstan:

- Change of socio-cultural markers: authorities, together with the society, need to update and reboot the socio-cultural strategy of their behavior. It should consider the growing threat of a loss of national values and principal spiritual orientations.
- Nationwide TV channels should develop and approve their development strategies in terms of technological transformation, where preservation and development of cultural and spiritual values are top priority tasks.
- It is necessary to encourage television programs' subject coverage, a larger part of positive messages, and appropriate presentation of negative information. This set of tasks might be solved with the government order and better monitoring system and control mechanism over its practical use.
- Regular research and diagnostics of audience demands.

Conclusion

The influence of mass media on the audience has remained yet a research subject. The role of television in this process has become a relevant subject for discussion. The analysis carried out makes it possible to summarize that Kazakhstan television has not yet established the system to perform cultural, educational, and social functions. Today's viewers in Kazakhstan are more prepared; they have high demands and requirements. However, TV channels fill more than 80% of their airtime with entertainment programs. Television programs hardly touch upon pressing public issues; they are monotonous in genre and presentation style. Inefficient airtime scheduling is another severe disadvantage of TV channels. In primetime, there are only entertainment and light show projects. This is not in line with public demand. Authorities do not control the efficiency of the allocated taxpayers' money. This results when most TV channels are not interested in creating and showing high-quality cultural and educational programs in prime time.

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