

## Information wars in the post-Soviet media: infodemic and means of its neutralizing

*Guerras de información en los medios postsoviéticos: infodemia y medios para neutralizarla*

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## Abstract

Means of neutralizing the negative impact of information wars provide for an active state policy in relation to operational monitoring of the media space in close cooperation with all forms of media, the business industry and non-governmental organizations. The modern combination ensures essentially commercial advertising product with the quality and efficiency of the media product. The purpose of the research is to analyze the impact of information wars in the post-Soviet media space and a set of tools to neutralize the manipulative effects of infodemic on the society. The research focuses on the concepts of "infodemic", "information war" and their modern transformations. In order to determine the theoretical basis of the work, inductive and deductive methods of analysis have been used; the method of interdisciplinary research has been involved for identifying the genesis, principles of structuring and specific characteristics of infodemic as a form of informational influence of a manipulative nature. A comprehensive approach is used in the research methodology. The author's BNA-analysis made it possible to determine the nature of information influences and the effectiveness of socially valuable performance as a measure to counteract information influences and a training method. It has been found that the interaction of different media and social communications: PR, advertising and journalism, makes it possible to increase the impact of information waves on society; infodemic is an example of such an intense impact. The problem of determining the algorithm, nature and means of combating information intrusions of a negative nature is the basis of the presented scientific studies. A number of means of counteracting the negative impact of infodemic and other information wars on the audience have been identified. A set of anti-infodemic means and an algorithm for their usage have also been presented. Means of counteracting infodemic involve the linguodidactic component of media education.

**Key words:** Infodemic, Manipulative Influence, Information War, Meme, Fact-Checking.

## Resumen

Los medios para neutralizar el impacto negativo de las guerras de la información proporcionan una política estatal activa en relación con el monitoreo operativo del espacio mediático en estrecha cooperación con todas las formas de medios, la industria empresarial y las organizaciones no gubernamentales. La combinación moderna asegura un producto publicitario esencialmente comercial con la calidad y eficiencia del producto de los medios. El propósito de la investigación es analizar el impacto de las guerras de la información en el espacio mediático postsoviético y un conjunto de herramientas para neutralizar los efectos manipuladores de la infodemia en la sociedad. La investigación se centra en los conceptos de "infodemia", "guerra de la información" y sus transformaciones modernas. Para determinar la base teórica del trabajo se han utilizado métodos de análisis inductivos y deductivos; El método de investigación interdisciplinar se ha involucrado para identificar la génesis, los principios de estructuración y las características específicas de la infodemia como forma de influencia informativa de carácter manipulador. Se utiliza un enfoque integral en la metodología de investigación. El análisis BNA del autor hizo posible determinar la naturaleza de las influencias de la información y la efectividad del desempeño socialmente valioso como una medida para contrarrestar las influencias de la información y un método de entrenamiento. Se ha encontrado que la interacción de diferentes medios y comunicaciones sociales: PR, publicidad y periodismo, permite incrementar el impacto de las ondas de información en la sociedad; infodemic es un ejemplo de impacto tan intenso. El problema de determinar el algoritmo, la naturaleza y los medios para combatir las intrusiones de información de carácter negativo es la base de los estudios científicos presentados. Se han identificado varios medios para contrarrestar el impacto negativo de la infodemia y otras guerras de información en la audiencia. También se ha presentado un conjunto de medios antiinfodemicos y un algoritmo para su uso. Los medios para contrarrestar la infodemia involucran el componente lingüodidáctico de la educación en medios.

**Palabras clave:** Infodemia, Influencia manipuladora, Guerra de información, Meme, Verificación de hechos.



## Introduction

Our digitalized world has brought many changes, and one of them is the emergence of a new type of information campaign and a special type of professionals working to create content in public space. Participants in new information flows are not always journalists in the classical sense of the word. Consequently, new standards are being born in the modern world of new technologies. Journalism has ceased to be a monopoly and thanks to social networks, new technologies of influencing the mass consciousness, everyone can start broadcasting their messages – that is, to influence public opinion, to be an active participant in information wars. It is the consideration of infodemic as a product of modern media space that makes the conducted study relevant.

Infodemic, picked up and disseminated by powerful media channels with the involvement of universal media groups, can be a reason to escalate and create panic (US Department of State, 2020).

Herewith, it should be noted that manipulative influences can be negative or positive for the audience to which the expansion is carried out. The intention of the impact depends on the goals of the communicators and on the level of their professionalism and talent. This is the plane of social networks, where new types of media tools operate. Traditional media, the PR industry and the quality of journalism will be measured by the extent to which it has managed to reduce the impact of propagandic technologies on the media information function. Therefore, the academic paper investigates not only the negative effects of the pandemic, but also considers the modern scientific forms of neutralization of negative effects and mood of panic.

The purpose of the research is to analyze the impact of information wars in the post-Soviet media space and a set of tools to neutralize the manipulative effects of infodemic on the society. The research focuses on the concepts of “infodemic”, “information war” and their modern transformations.

The objectives of the academic paper are as follows:

- to investigate how the media space was transformed under the influence of information wars in the post-Soviet space;
- to describe the technologies that have emerged and are used due to the joint opportunities of advertising, media and PR;
- to consider the influence of memes and positive performances as tools of information wars, as well

as a number of techniques such as “manipulated enemy”, “fake wave”;

- to identify the basic means of counteracting infodemic.

## Literature Review

A number of post-Soviet countries are today undisputed leaders in the study of problems related to the production and dissemination of misinformation (Zolotuhin, 2020). These countries have been living in a condition of information wars for a very long time. The rest of the world is facing this problem. The focus of modern research has been the problem of information security (Pocheptsov, 2017; Starkova, 2018; Zarocostas, 2020).

Infodemic is the original term that Eysenbach (2002) introduced and gave it a positive meaning. Infodemiology was nominated as a sphere of research activities. The ways of introduction of propaganda of a healthy way of life and forms of agitation against SARS (Kim, Huang & Emery, 2016),

Then, this term has undergone significant changes. It was transformed to define the concept of "infodemic" as an information epidemic, in the context of information warfare. It is characterized by the spread of inaccurate or deliberately incorrect information through the media and social networks. A pandemic of the new coronavirus COVID-19 was announced in March 2020 (Zarocostas, 2020), but the infodemic began in early 2020.

In February, the US State Department announced the significant role of the Russian Federation in spreading false information about the coronavirus. These statements were supported by the European Union in March. In August, a specialized unit of the US State Department issued a report entitled “Pillars of Russia’s Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem” (US Department of State, 2020). It is pointed to the existence of a Russian information front against Ukraine. Popova (2020) and Zolotuhin (2020) analyzed data on the Kremlin's interference in the Russian elections, the usage of the media and other media in the interests of the government in the context of the spread of COVID-19.

Infodemic is considered from different positions. There is a problem of unreliable, incomplete and biased coverage of public events in modern journalism. Gillmor (2004) studies access to online media, media-active audiences and competition to the online professional information producers that are forced to compete with witnesses of events, a media agent as a subject of information production.



This subject creates an unpredictable field of influence on the media.

The theory of the social field in the sphere of television (and the media in general) describes the symbolic struggle of media, government and public agents to recognize their activities by the social world in order to change the social context (Dawkins, 2006). Pocheptsov (2017) analyzed the specifics of the development of Ukrainian media through the prism of the concept of information wars. The researcher noted that entering someone else's information space can occur through communication options: event, message, event + message, event that is equal to message (as in the case of terrorism, when such an event is stronger than any message about it). By disseminating information, reporting the phenomenon of reality as an event, the media form the interest of society, but this event is not always a truthful fact of reality. It can be a constructed information or provocation that is created for manipulative purposes. The author also studied memes as a tool for counteracting and spreading infodemic. The researcher studies the "memetic war", based on an article from "Wikipedia" and a small development of Major Prosser and mistaken in spelling the name. The original source (Prosser, 2006) was written as part of a master's degree at the School of Advanced Warfighting Marine Corps University and at the beginning contains a warning that is only the author's personal opinion. Pavlyuk (2019) also studied memes in mass media representations of the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war and referred to Prosser (2006).

Let's talk about the means of conducting information wars. Modern universal media have proven to be extremely effective tools for spreading misinformation and fakes of all types. Such influences become more effective, as there are universal complexes of interaction between advertising and journalism, PR and media resources in the modern media field.

Research in this field is devoted to the interaction of advertising and journalism (Shandra & Seely, 2019), journalism and PR, the role of electronic media and social networks (Gillmor, 2004; Hristov, 2019). There are also many developments in the interpenetration and potential of advertising production, journalism and PR (Popovych et al., 2020). At the same time, information wars in the post-Soviet media space are becoming a mass phenomenon that is constantly transforming, acquiring new features and characteristics. Therefore, the study of the manipulative effects of infodemic on modern society and the development

of a set of means to neutralize them remains relevant; it is open for further research.

## Methods

The study of manipulative influences and information wars that are possible due to modern transformations in the media space is based on a comprehensive approach that takes into account the multifaceted nature of modern media, the relationship with rational, emotional and axiological guidelines of society; it is a priority one in the methodology of the study conducted. Inductive and deductive methods are used to work with theoretical material; the method of interdisciplinary research is used for infodemic as a powerful form of information war.

The basic methods of investigating the changes of media space in the conditions of infodemic are as follows: descriptive (inventory of units for the analysis (memes) and the description of component techniques of manipulation in media) and structural ones – they are used to representing information war as a holistic functional structure, where the elements are correlated with each other. Social, cultural and political dimensions are considered.

In the analysis of memes, a component analysis has been used in this academic paper, with the help of which the main components of meaning, basic genre and thematic features have been identified, and generalization has been carried out within the framework of conceptual categories.

The study combines the author's method and the qualitative method (focus group method). The step-by-step survey (4 stages) was conducted for the organized focus groups, as well as a discussion was held, the attitude of the group members and the perception of the issues of the media industry were determined. Such an approach involved the use of comparative operations of the survey results, with the help of which the influence of the use of methods for neutralizing infodemic on the quality of education of media students was revealed.

Data were collected through a questionnaire, which involved the participants' choice of a particular public event, selection of media materials and answers to open-ended questions about media reports of each of the temporal stages. During the educational process, students attended public events, selected media texts for the event and answered the questionnaire. These answers were evaluated as control tasks in the learning process. The detailed course of the process by individual stages and the



content of the questionnaires are presented in the annex.

The data obtained at each stage were summarized and analyzed using the author's method of BNA-analysis. It is a comparative analysis of publications on a particular public event according to the stage of its implementation, namely: announcement (before-message), broadcast, or on-the-spot report (now-message) and post-release (after-message). As a result of the analysis, it becomes possible to find out whether the coverage of a public event in the media is organic or it represents an information (advertising, PR) campaign artificially planned by the organizers.

The materials for the analysis include texts of various genres and styles, published in social media networks, YouTube channels, electronic media, television, radio, periodicals, etc. These texts are used for conducting analysis by study groups, questionnaires, as well as determining the level and extent of the use of fakes in media texts on social networks.

### Results

The impact of information wars on the life of modern people is global. Infodemic and information waves will remain in the media space for a long time. Mankind now lives in a new media field, where information wars will continue at all levels of communication. So, it is necessary to learn to resist effectively such influences. Our health and peaceful development of society depends on it.

#### *Information War in the Post-Soviet Mass Media*

A large field opens up with numerous opportunities; people can create a high-quality media product. It is not a privilege for a separate caste or institutions in the modern world, but also the work of social groups, states, media holdings, etc. That is, the creation of media content is a common field of activity, where there is no purely journalism, advertising or "pure" PR. Accordingly, there is an interaction between all these tools - the media, with their ability to operate with information, influence the activities of PR professionals and motivate them to transform their information policy, and both use advertising techniques, influences.

It is the combination of the possibilities of advertising journalism and the PR platform that makes it possible to operate manipulative technologies, the result of which is revealed in successful political campaigns, information waves. Infodemic is the apex of such activity. This is not an exception, but rather a logical continuation of military actions in the medical field.

The technology of conducting media campaigns is by nature complex, multi-layered and long-lasting. Infodemic is one of the consequences and at the same time catalysts of such an alloy of commerce, media and work with society. It has become part of information wars that are irreparably damaged and inhibit the further development of civilization.

A huge wave of infodemic intensified public journalism in Eastern Europe in 2020. For example, Ukrainian activists have published many materials that confirm the systematic actions of the Russian authorities regarding manipulation in the information environment. The most famous among them was the Surkov Leaks investigation, the analysis of the dump of the mail of Vladislav Surkov who is the aide to the President of the Russian Federation. The primary source is the publication on 25.10.2016 on the site InformNapalm. It should also be noted a study conducted in 2019 for The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) is the world's oldest independent think tank on international defense and security.

The authenticity of Surkov Leaks materials has been confirmed by many researchers. Analysis of the materials of the working correspondence of Kremlin political technologists shows that manipulative technologies in the Russian media sphere are regularly used by the Russian authorities. For example, Kremlin technologists have identified it as risky if the quarantine notification comes from the authorities and have decided that it should be done by doctors. The dump shows how they first planned to spread the message through Dr. Leonid Roshal and then reported on the task. This is also confirmed by open sources.

An analysis of the Kremlin official's correspondence shows how the authorities in Russia are mobilizing the population to vote on changes to the Constitution: theses, headlines, agitation, managed enemies and many other domestic policy instruments. An interesting technique is "manipulated enemies", which is constantly used in top talk shows on the leading central TV channels of the Russian Federation.

Kremlin political technologists plan to set up a group of speakers to demonstrate that they oppose changes to the Constitution and with whom the average person does not want to show solidarity. This trick is called "manipulated enemies". This technique is very dangerous. It increases the level of tension in society, forms hatred for certain social groups.



One of the methods of preventing negative influences is a constant and systematic campaign on media education.

*Memes as a Feature of Infodemic*

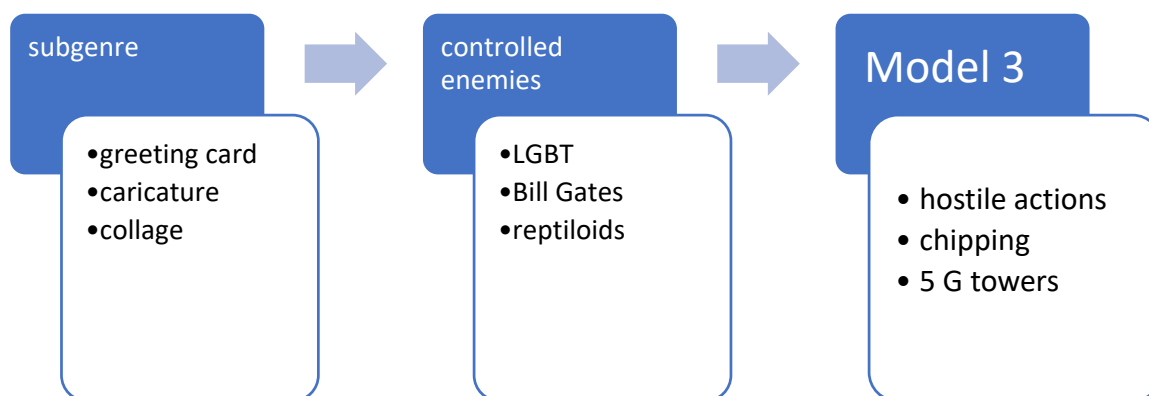
Researchers in the media sphere reveal many facts of misinformation from the authoritarian regimes of the post-Soviet space. This misinformation is aimed at users within such countries and neighboring states. The meme is becoming part of the information war in the post-Soviet space; it should be in the center of attention of researchers, teachers, journalists - generally active citizens. For instance, Texty.org.ua provides the results of its monitoring by every week, which deals with data journalism. One of the highlighted topics from January 20, 2020 until today, dictated by infodemic, is the coronavirus. Memes are a full and effective element of coronavirus infodemic. In everyday language the term is used to refer to audiovisual content - images or videos - which, due to its humor or relevance, is copied and quickly distributed by Internet users.

In the post-Soviet information space, memes serve as special units for storing and transmitting information similar to biological genes. Memes are individual elements of culture or behavioral systems that are transmitted from person to person in non-genetic ways (Oxford English and Spanish Dictionary, n. d.). It should be noted that the peculiarities and the very process of highlighting the topics of disinformation makes it possible to believe that the "coronavirus" is fully consistent with the definition of the meme.

Defects and threats of incessant informatization contribute to the spread of conspiracy theories. Unfortunately, they are distributed not only by users and professional media, but also by scientists. In the works of Ukrainian researchers, "memo wars" now appear as an abstract but total threat. Memes are considered in one line with the news, but separately from other elements of culture (music, literature, etc.), although, they are formally similar to anecdotes/jokes. They are a kind of modern folklore. The main disadvantage of entertaining audiovisual content is the formation of loyalty to the interpretation of the raised topics. At the same time, it is hardly possible to predict the coverage of harmful effects and the ways of their application, which does not allow such a "weapon" to become totally reliable.

During March and June 2020 more than 200 examples of audiovisual content were analyzed. The vast majority of this content is Russian, which is still the language of everyday communication in the eastern part of Ukraine. Even a simple analysis shows that the memes are often humorous interpretations of Russian disinformation, partly introduced by the world's media. For example, it is a conspiratorial interpretation of B. Gates' activities in the fight against the spread of COVID-19.

This content reflects a completely Russian context: it seems to "light up" the citizens of the Moscow region with "homosexuality" from the satellite (Figure 1). Pro-European societies in Eastern Europe are officially tolerant to LGBT people. Consequently, this topic is a less relevant for them.



**Figure 1.** A series of memes concerning the topic of infodemic

Against the background of salute and "reptiloids" we can see congratulations on "Chipping Day" - a vivid allusion to Victory Day, which in other post-Soviet countries has a completely different visual code.

Based on the analysis of 200 meme units, typical genres and topics of posts are presented. They are a



direct part of the information war and should be analyzed and presented in training courses on media education and literacy.

*Positive performance, news and their transformations*

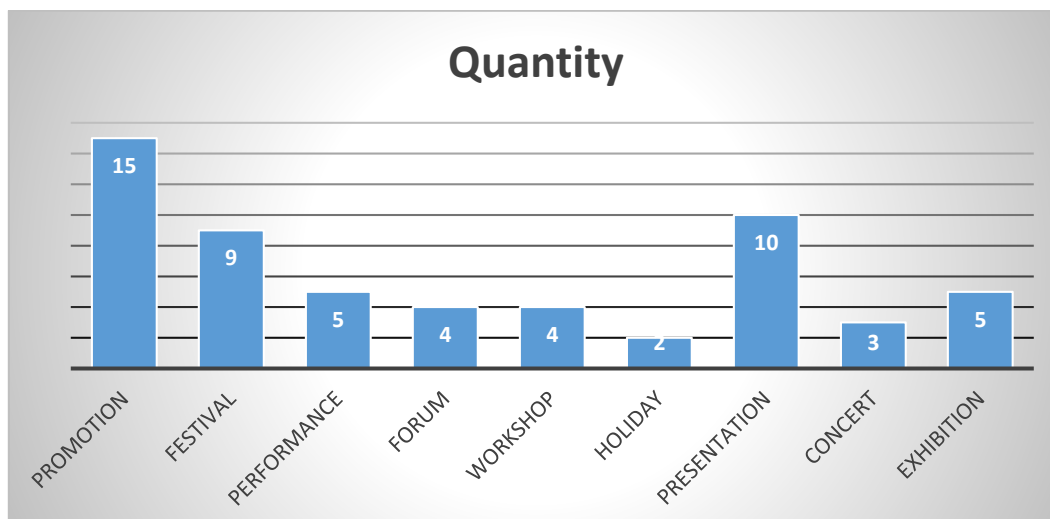
A survey was conducted at the universities of Ukraine (Kharkiv) during 2017-2019 and the following specific features of the development of the discourse of certain cultural public events in the Ukrainian context were identified:

- 1) informing about a public event in the media is initiated by its organizers and it is not one-time, but not always systemic;
- 2) other media retransmit the messages of the organizers in the process of unfolding the discourse of a public event. As a result, there may be transformations of the meaning of the message of the public event;
- 3) it is obvious that symbolic interaction as a specific format of the key message of a public event is created by senders for the purpose of making news feed.
- 4) scenarios of symbolic interaction as a specific format of communication of a public event. It contributes to the emotional perception of the value proposition of a public event;
- 5) emotional reactions of the public are perceived by media agents as facts that confirm the importance of a public event for society.

The survey was conducted as part of the educational process among bachelor's and master's students majoring in Journalism (Ukraine, Kharkiv) during 2017-2019 (105 people).

127 media presentations on 57 public events on cultural issues, published in online media, including holidays, exhibitions, presentations, promotions, etc., were also analyzed. An experiment was also conducted on the included observation of the development of the discourse of a public event in the media. As part of the included observation, in order to verify the author's methodology, a public event was initiated - a flash mob "Hearing cannot be seen" - a social promotion in order to draw attention to people with hearing impairment. The flash mob became part of the "Inclusion ON" festival, which was held in Kharkiv in September 2019. The organizers of the event prepared a press release for the media, in which they invited to witness a flash mob on learning sign language with the participation of people with hearing impairments. This interested media professionals. Thus, the flash mob proposed by the initiators met all 12 criteria of the news and became a public event. Comparison of media data at different stages of development of the discourse of a public event makes it possible to determine the information drive to which the media responded.

As we can see from Figure 2, the media preferred "Promotions" most of all. A characteristic feature of most publications was also the emotional presentation of the material. In such situation the possible distortion of information occurs due to emotional load as a part of the symbolic interaction. 95 respondents were involved in the experiment, which was grouped into 3 groups (1 group - 30 3rd year bachelor's students; 2nd group - 35 4th year students; 3rd group - 30 1st year master's students). Correct and complete answers were credited. Positive and negative assessments of respondents' texts and events were presented separately.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of performances by formats and genres

At the initial stage, a preliminary survey was conducted and material was selected for the first stage. This task involves the analysis of the announcement of the event, and participants performed control tasks (answered the questionnaire) (see Table 1).

In the second stage, after attending the event chosen by the participants, the respondents had to work with the text of the report and show the result (see Table 2).

At the final of the experiment, the respondents conducted an analysis and evaluated the press release-summary (see Table 3).

**Table 1.** The results of the respondents with the announcement

Group number	1 question	2 question	3 question	Assessment	
				Positive	Negative
1 group	80 %	76 %	70 %	58 %	42%
2 group	75 %	82 %	79 %	74 %	26 %
3 group	83 %	68 %	74 %	52 %	48 %

**Table 2.** The results of the analysis by the respondents of the report

Group number	1 question	2 question	3 question	Assessment	
				Positive	Negative
1 group	81 %	77%	72%	63 %	37%
2 group	76% %	86 %	80 %	75 %	25 %
3 group	84 %	73 %	79 %	60 %	40 %

**Table 3.** Release analysis

Group number	1 question	2 question	3 question	Assessment	
				Positive	Negative
1 group	84 %	83%	77%	73 %	27%
2 group	80 %	88 %	83 %	80 %	20 %
3 group	88 %	80 %	80 %	68 %	32 %

According to the results of the experiment, we observe an increase in productivity and a positive assessment of media texts and public performances. Comparing the results of stages 1 and 2, we observe an increase in the number of correct answers in the first group by 3% (on average); it has been revealed

at stages 1 and 3 that the number of correct answers increased in group 1 - by 6% (on average), group 2 - by 4% (on average), group 3 - 8%. This method of presenting the material proved to be the most effective for master's students.





Positive perception of events increased in all groups. 1 group: 5% (1-2 stage) - 10% (2-3 stage) - a total of 15%; 2 group: at 5% (1-2 stage) - at 5% (2-3 stage) - a total of 10%; 3 group: at 8% (1-2 stage) - at 8% (2-3 stage) - a total of 16%. With the course of training, the positive perception of the public event and accompanying media texts increased.

Analyzing the results of the experiment above, it can be argued that immersion in textual analysis of events of artistic public and positive nature contributes to the creation of quality materials; it stimulates a positive assessment of events immersed in the media space. This is one of the means of forming positive mass media, which is devoid of traumatic negativity.

### *How to Counteract Infodemic*

Countermeasures in the context of information wars are carried out both at the macro level and at the state and national levels. Global companies (Facebook, Google, Amazon, Uber, etc.), which have profits from online communications, are stepping up their opposition by involving fact-checking organizations. For example, there are Vox Chek, StopFake, Dezinfomonitor and others in Ukraine. Representatives of government agencies are also involved in cooperation with commercial companies.

We present a number of steps to combat infodemic being based on the above and a number of studies in the field of media and information wars:

1. The presence of a starting point, a checkpoint where testing or verification of new information is

taken place, options for its submission, checking them until they flow through information channels.

2. Testing of viral advertising, memes and different versions of visual and audiovisual messages for the possibility of "viral" spreading. It should be done quickly, before their spread on social networks and media.

3. Quick counter-production. The government and companies must promptly respond to a hostile attack in the information space when detecting fake information. If the disinformation campaign is detected in time, has not spread, then it is necessary to make a convincing message ad refutation. These can be reports, videos, pictures and memes. If you wait too long, then the fake message will disperse and the counteraction will be ineffective.

A detailed algorithm for the anti-information analysis is shown in Figure 3.

Step 1. Monitor the media, even hostile media;

Step 2. Check the source of information and its main content;

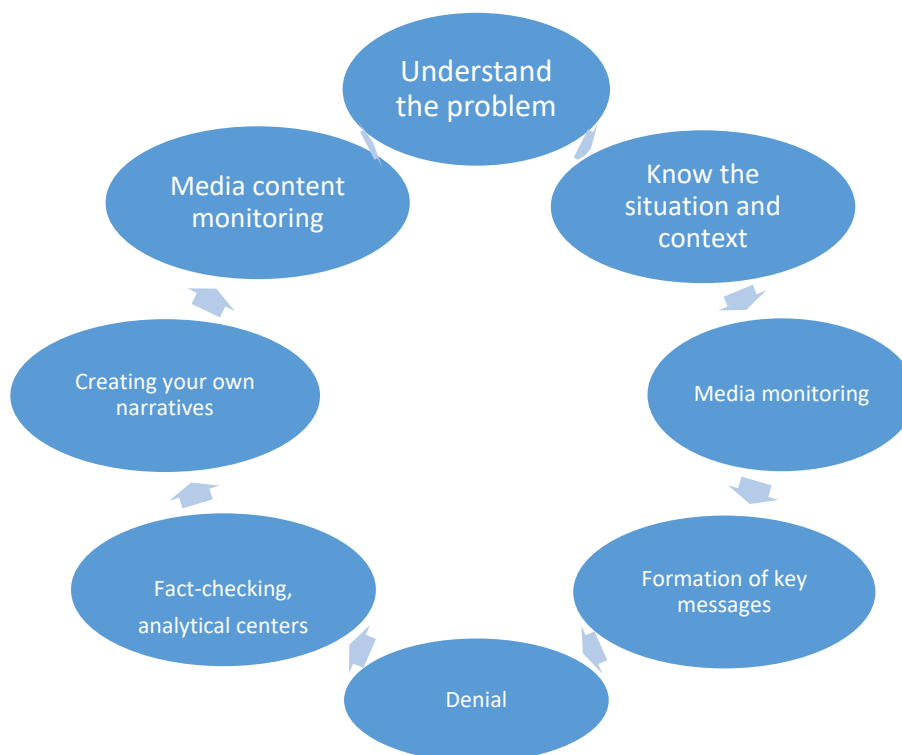
Step 3. Actively communicate in the information space and foresee threats. Have the lead position in conveying key messages;

Step 4. Denial. It is necessary to address to the authors, the editors who publish fakes. The media, which values its own reputation, denies the reports;

Step 5. Cooperation with fact-check institutions, mass media, analytical centers;

Step 6. Joint and system counterattack. Create your own narratives that oppose fakes.

Appealing to sources of information is also an effective measure to counter infodemic.



**Figure 3.** The system of tools and methods of counteracting infodemic

### Discussion

Zolotuhin (2020) defines infodemic as the process of disseminating manipulative, deliberately false, unverified information about the coronavirus. The conducted research allows expanding the concept of infodemic, forasmuch as information about a viral pandemic is a tool for information war due to the lack of information immunity developed by the society worldwide. As a result, WHO General Director T. A. Gebreesus introduced the term "infodemic". He was supported by the European Parliament in April 2020 and the fight against information wars was entrusted to the Parliamentary Research Service and the East StratCom task force (ESTF). Global recognition of the impact of infodemic on the society leads to measures to neutralize it, to understand its essence.

One of the important factors in the spread of information war is the dependent state of the media in the post-Soviet space (Hristov, 2019). Media workers are vulnerable. When announcing new narratives, new information, the media depend on personal connections - customers of media content (politicians, media owners, organizers of communication campaigns); tools - from established frames, tools for presenting and perceiving information that journalists are accustomed to using. It is also necessary to take into account the social pressure of ratings, authors of facts, public opinion, etc. Thus, information can be a tool of influence by

the authors of the media space; consequently, finding out the truth of the information presented is an important action in the modern field of communication. That is why the factors of media education should include acquaintance with fact-checking technologies. At the same time, we can state that the onslaught of infodemic has intensified journalism in the post-Soviet space, especially given the systematic actions of the Russian government to manipulate the information environment.

The didactic component (Prosiannyk, 2020) in the scientific, educational, and social spheres contributes to the increase of the analytical approach to information from the media space and its critical perception. If we compare this approach with the conclusions of our study, the results of working with students prove a positive trend in the assessment of media and work with texts. The maximum avoidance of manipulative contexts is the didactic basis that forms a healthy media field.

Misinformation has a detrimental effect on a large part of the society and the health of the population. Consequently, Zinenko (2018) demonstrates the key role that scientists play as disseminators of factual and reliable information, and emphasize the importance of critical thinking as a way to reduce susceptibility to misinformation. While generally agreeing with this view, we believe that further research should explore how digital media and literacy interventions can influence the way the information is received, processed and exchanged,



and how it can be used to improve resilience to misinformation at the societal level.

Gillmor (2004) and Pavlyuk (2019) find a lot of misinformation produced in the post-Soviet space, aimed at users within such states and neighboring countries. In fact, the analysis of the media space of post-Soviet countries in the study proves the presence of a large flow of fakes, information intrusions that also use meme models, managed experts, fake information of various kinds. At the same time, we believe that in the post-Soviet space, the meme is the most important part of the information war, which requires an in-depth research. After all, thanks to audiovisual content, its humor, it is quickly spread by Internet users and is popular among young people. The conducted analysis shows that memes are often interpretations of Russian misinformation, partly voiced by the world's media.

Hristov (2019) noted the significant impact of the methods of work of advertisers and PR representatives used in modern European journalism. The commercialization of the post-Soviet media space is combined with ideological guidelines and state policy. That is why PR uses more and more different approaches to reaching the audience. At the moment, these are the own channels of companies and their satellites, states and parties, and so on. Agreeing with this view, we note that there is the opportunity to create quality content. And those who do their job well, no matter what profession is formally mentioned in diplomas and licenses, will win.

### Conclusion

A sign of society's readiness for living in the conditions of a digitalized space is its ability to resist the influence of information waves and infodemic. This is, on the one hand, openness to the perception of new ideas, technologies and information, and on the other - the search for effective ways to comprehend and analyze information.

Information wars are also made possible by advertising, PR and journalism that have a combination of opportunities and tools to influence. Trends in the development of media in the context of information wars show that the media are increasingly in need of quality content. Otherwise, it is difficult to stay on top in the space of social networks and will probably continue to create them themselves.

The study has analyzed 127 media presentations on 57 public events on cultural issues, published in online media, including holidays, exhibitions,

presentations, promotions, actions and others. The results of the survey showed that the most popular in the media news are promotions (15), and the least popular are the holiday (2) and the concert (3).

The experiment that is described in the study proved that the effect of a public event is determined by a symbolic interaction specially designed by the initiators and gives rise to an info feed with a positive meaning. Thus, the inclusion of performances and positive events in the news stream is one of the means of counteracting infodemic through a positive effect. Consequently, this has determined the novelty of our study.

The practical significance of the experiment is determined by the obtained results, due to which there is an increase in productivity and positive evaluation of media texts and public performances from the beginning (lower results of positive assessment) to the final stage (higher positive assessments). The experiment showed that this method of presenting the material turned out to be the most effective for master's students. Also, the positive perception of events increased in all focus groups. It is observed that the positive perception of the public event and accompanying media texts increased during the training.

The active tools for "infecting" the information space with fake, negative and manipulative information during the onset of infodemic are as follows: memes, groups of experts, "manipulated enemies", information stuffing. The analysis of 200 meme units in social networks of Ukraine helped identify the following models: manipulated enemies (Bill Gates, reptilians, LGBT); threats (5G towers, chipping, and coronavirus). Greeting card, caricature, collage are the most popular among subgenres. It is advisable to constantly study, classify and analyze the main models of memes and their transformations, which will determine the prospects for counteracting the impact of information wars.

The experience of confronting information wars in the post-Soviet countries shows that the work is in the field of positive and socially significant PR. The involvement of fact-checking and analytical agencies, the usage of viral means and the full potential of the media is very important nowadays. The means of counteracting infodemic are as follows: monitoring the media, even hostile media; verifying the sources of information and its main content; communication in the information space and threat prediction; superiority in conveying key messages; refutation of reports from the media that value their own reputation; involvement of fact check and analytical centers; system counterattack; creating your own narratives. The process of



developing a set of methods for countering bots, fake and foreign emissions - components of information wars is under way through the joint efforts of world business, public, human rights organizations and states.

An important component of counteracting infodemic, manipulative influences of the mass media is public events that have an educational effect. The didactic influence of media education should act constantly and increase the number of listeners.

Further, prospects for investigating information wars and means of counteracting them include constant monitoring of the state of the post-Soviet media space, identification of the system of influences and manipulation. A promising area of media pedagogy is the constant development of didactic methods that will be effective in combating manipulation in a professional media environment.

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