

**PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS OF STEREOTYPE  
DEVELOPMENT ON TELEVISION (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE  
EUROPEAN MIGRATION CRISIS OF 2015-2016).**

Albina R. Shakurova<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This article discusses some mechanisms for the stereotype development on television. It is known that television has much more opportunities and ways of conveying the meaning, and its impact on the audience is more effective than that of the print media. This, in turn, leads to large volumes and depth of representation of various cognitive signs of a stereotype, and a high degree of impact on the television audience. We have used the content analysis to study the news programs of Russian channels "Pervyi Kanal", "Rossiya 24", "NTV". This article presents only some of the conclusions drawn by us. In particular, we drew attention to the fact that the stereotype fixation occurs due to the accumulation of a large volume of certain information. And a stereotype change requires that this information contrasts sharply with the already existing stereotypes. We have traced

whether such processes are taking place on Russian television on the example of the European migration crisis. In our opinion, the Russian television has not accumulated sharply contrasting information for the period under study. However, we noticed that information about migrants contained stereotyped settings. At the same time, the cognitive, affective and behavioral components were clearly distinguished in the stereotypes, and the information itself was given dynamically and cyclically.

**Keywords:** stereotype, stereotype transformation, television, migration crisis, Europe

**Introduction**

The scale and one-stage nature of the migration crisis of 2015-2016 in Europe caused an ambiguous reaction in the world. Some people perceive it as the beginning of the end of European

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<sup>1</sup> Kazan Federal University

civilization. For others, the situation with migrants was the result of inefficiency of European institutions and organizational structures created to regulate migration flows, a symbol of the "managed migration" policy failure. In our opinion, the emerging situation is the cumulative effect of interaction of a number of factors, such as the global economic crisis; deepening of social inequalities in many countries; consequences of military conflicts and civil wars, destabilization of these countries, etc. Modern migrants, unlike their predecessors, operate on the basis of information in the mass media, as well as formal and informal information networks of ethnic diasporas that have arisen due to the spread of the Internet and mobile communications.

Stereotypes about life in Europe largely determine the direction of refugee migration. On the other hand, self-awareness of the Europeans, stereotypes about the Middle East in the European environment determined the beginning and development of the crisis. It was this crisis that served as a catalyst for the development and, possibly, the transformation of the Russians' views on Europe. As a result, we can trace the

interdependence of social phenomena and stereotypes, which in turn is strengthened through the mass media and, in particular, television [1].

A television stereotype is a concept not established in the modern science. However, the role of television in the stereotype development is difficult to overestimate. Often a stereotype is perceived as a negative phenomenon in the media discourse. A.A. Kashchuk notes that the aspirations of the message sender cause a certain reaction in the audience that corresponds to the norms of behavior of a certain socio-cultural community - a sure sign of manipulation. At the same time he also notes the need of television to connect visual images with easily identifiable objects due to the dynamic nature of modern media, the need to transmit the news "here and now" [2].

The stereotypes do arise and develop to save mental efforts. The everyday processing of information about the world around us would be an impossible task even without stereotypes. Thus, it is necessary to allocate positive aspects in the stereotypes, their development and mechanisms of functioning, not focusing

only on understanding stereotypes as manipulation or inertness of thinking.

Based on this, the development of stereotypes related to the contemporary migration crisis in Europe seems to us an actual and significant object of study. Despite the relatively clear timeframe for the phenomenon under study, the study results are of interest for understanding the stereotype functioning in general. At the same time, our attention is directed to the psychological mechanisms of this stereotype development.

### **Materials and methods**

In October 2016, a symposium "*Refugees and Migrants, the inconvenient truths – Journalism against bias and stereotypes*", dedicated to the work of various mass media in connection with the migration crisis, was held in Brussels. The discussions included issues of mass media participation in the creation and development of stereotyped images of migrants and refugees, the ability of mass media to work outside propaganda. However, there was also the issue of using mass media to create a positive

image of the migrants and refugees. Therefore, the issues of propaganda and dissemination of certain information through the mass media remain open and acute. However, we will focus on the stereotypes and mechanisms of their development. From this point of view, the symposium is interesting to us as a platform that determines the chronological framework of the crisis of migration to Europe from the countries of the Middle East.

Thus, this framework is quite clear - 2015-2016. Certainly, both earlier and later one can find references to migrants in Europe in Russian and foreign mass media. However, it is this period that is a transitional and turning point in many ways.

The empirical base of our research is the news broadcasts of Russian TV channels - "Pervyi Kanal" (83), "Rossiya 24" (49), "NTV" (62) - for the period. The sample was made from the archives of TV channels with the help of the tag search "Europe", "migration crisis", "refugees".

For the analysis, we used content analysis and qualitative analysis of the video sequence. The analysis units for the content analysis were chosen

based on psycholinguistic features of the stereotype functioning. The parameters of qualitative analysis were the features of the work of correspondents with the interviewees, the selected and broadcast appearance and behavior of migrants and Europeans.

### **Results and discussion**

In a number of works the stereotype is represented in the interconnection of three components: cognitive (content), affective (sensory assessment of the behavioral setting) and behavioral (characterizing a person's readiness for a certain interaction with the stereotype object). It should also be noted that the stereotype formation has objective psychophysiological grounds associated with the functioning features of brain structures. The basis of the ideas about stereotype of the Russian physiological school was represented by the brain ability to fix the same and cyclic changes in the environment and, accordingly, to respond to these changes, namely to integrate the private structures, mechanisms, processes into a complex behavioral setting - a stereotype - under the influence of the dominant parameter [3]. Accordingly, the

repeatability, cyclicity of information, reliance on the most common stereotypes is important for the qualitative analysis of news programs in our study. The cyclicity, repeatability just refers to the specifics of television media with the constant development of methods of working with the information and the audience [4].

It is known that television has much more opportunities and ways of conveying the meaning, and its impact on the audience is more effective than that of the print media. This, in turn, leads to large volumes and depth of representation of various cognitive signs of a stereotype, and a high degree of impact on the television audience [5]. The affective aspect of the stereotype is always culturally conditioned, since, expressing the feelings of the individual, his system of values, it is always correlated with the group feelings, assessments and group actions.

We found out that there is a definite relationship between the sex of the correspondent and his interviewee, which confirms the already existing studies on this topic [6]. It is characteristic that the bulk of the interview was taken from men, both

Europeans and migrants. The Europeans were mainly represented by middle-aged and middle class men. Among the migrants, the interviews were taken mostly by young men. There were only a couple of interviews taken from older migrants. The European women responded quite calmly to the need to talk about migrants, expressed different points of view. The religious ceremonies of Catholics were not shown in the reports; they included only the opinion of Europeans on this topic in connection with the Christmas celebration. And the ceremonies of Muslims fell into the reports: praying men, religious symbols, discussion of the difficulty of following the canons of Islam in conditions of migrant settlements. However, mostly men were shown.

In the aftermath of the New Year's events in Cologne (January 1-2, 2016), the main leitmotif is a sense of danger in the interview with Europeans (from the report of "Vesti" program dated January 25, 2016): "They want women. I'm afraid of walking here in the evening". And this fear is justified. The Greek men already say in another report dated February 21, 2016: "... for migrants, the local girls are prostitutes.

And it is normal how an eastern woman dresses". Clothes and features of the traditional image of women in European and Middle Eastern cultures have caused both the events in Cologne, and the subsequent offenses made by migrants throughout Europe. The cases of violence against underage girls in Britain and Germany, about which there was practically no specific information in the Russian news programs, were strongly resonated. However, this topic was raised in the interviews with Europeans [7]. The image of modern migrant changes the existing ideas about their native country, which is reinforced by the news from these places. Within two years, the history of wars in the Middle East has been reinterpreted on the screen. And although the wars and conflicts are only prerequisites and, in a sense, the background of the crisis in the context of our topic - the migration crisis - the news from hot spots has a significant impact on the perception of the problem under investigation. This is the very affective reinforcement of stereotypes, which facilitates their fixation. Here is the blurring of the boundaries of such concepts as "migrant image", "refugee image", as well as the close connection

between images of the countries left with the migrant behavior in a new country [8].

The topic of migration crisis is closely linked to the internal European relations and problems. And if the old stereotypes about migrants in the Russian media field are more likely to be fixed than changed, then the stereotypes about Europe have undergone some transformation. Some of them were grotesquely emphasized, for example, by the familiar words as "old Europe", "common European future", "European values" in a new context, or by the capacious comments of the EU summit in Bratislava in September 2016: "...After all, how could this look if, in the current circumstances, the steamer with the leaders of the European Union unexpectedly sat down on the strand...". The visual accompaniment is no less vivid. For example, one can see how the heads of the EU are preparing for a group photo in the words "One future - 27 opinions" in the frame. Some of the stereotypes remained "in their places". For example, commenting on the reaction of a particular European leader, diplomat or politician, the Russian journalists remember to mention his

nationality (not a European, but an Italian or a Frenchman). The often like also to highlight the nationality with intonation. Thus, describing the person, and his position, and his reactions. Reflection of the European countries themselves also undergoes a change. For example, Germany is traditionally perceived by Russians as a very reliable, clear, measured country. However, we have been demonstrating the changes for 2 years through the main person of this state - Mrs. A. Merkel. It is significant that virtually no reporting on migrants cannot do without a mention of her and her policies.

### **Conclusions**

In the news reports examined, the reliance on existing stereotypes and the presence of a hidden or explicit evaluation of the representative of migrants were carried out through repeated repetition of his nationality, demonstration of his traditions. This is typical for both "Pervyi Kanal", and for "NTV" and "Rossiya 24". At the same time, the evaluation does not have a negative connotation. Thus, we can say that during the time period under study,

there was no fixation of any new attitude or a stereotype about migrants. Although the existing stereotypes were reinforced. Since there are no effects of assimilation and contrast in the way the news about migrants was presented. Rather, they fix "old" stereotypes related to religion and gender relations. The stereotype fixity is related to the polarization of knowledge: the stronger the evaluation is, the more categorical, clearer it is, and vice versa.

In this situation, one of the features of stereotyped behavior was manifested: even if a person remembers the information contradicting the existing stereotype (the fact that the European values imply a certain attitude towards women, and the fact that women in Europe behave differently than Eastern women), this does not mean that he will change his stereotypes. The nature of stereotypes is that they retain their strength when confronted with evidence that refutes them (attempts to explain these features of gender relations through the distribution of leaflets in public places, reading special courses by the European authorities). This phenomenon is also called the "stability effect". It consists in the following: when the perceived situation differs from an

already existing stereotype, it is formed new subcategories or subtypes that enable us to maintain a common stereotype. At the same time, the content and understanding of the stereotype is corrected: it is not suitable for all elements of this category.

A number of researchers, paying attention to the stability of stereotypes, note that the refuting information is regarded as an exception confirming the rule [9]. However, practice shows that the stereotypes respond to new information, especially to the dramatic events [10]. In the Russian media, the attitude towards migrants in Europe does not have a clear position - negative or positive. Despite the emotional saturation of information about migrants, dramatic events within two years of migration crisis, in our opinion, there was not accumulated enough amount of disproving information available to the stereotypes about migrants or Europe had by the Russian viewer.

### **Summary**

The diversity of heterogeneous digital information, a large number of scientific publications and mass media

materials on migration issues does not yet enable us to identify and study the development trends of both the migration crisis issue and those issues that accompany it, for example, the development of stereotypes about migrants and their host. The adaptation of migrants is a long process, the first positive results of which can appear only in 2-3 years, and serious changes require tens of years. It is characteristic that the European mass media (for example, EuroNews) are already making some efforts in this direction. In addition, most of the characteristics of forced migration continue to be poorly understood, which also causes the urgency of studying the migration processes [11, 12].

Highlighting three components in the stereotype - content, sensory evaluation and behavioral response - we see that television includes only the first two of them and refers to the third component. And the psychophysiological aspect of stereotype formation serves more as a mechanism for fixing a stereotypical setting.

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