

<https://doi.org/10.36818/2071-4653-2020-5-5>

UDC 339.138:658.8:004:738.5

JEL A12, A13, A14, M31

**T. S. Shevchenko**

*Ph.D. in Social Communications, Lecturer of the Department*

*of marketing and international management of the Oles Honchar*

*Dnipro National University, Dnipro, Ukraine*

*e-mail: shev.tatyana.s@gmail.com*

*ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9647-3595>*

## **IMPERFECTION IN THE MARKETING RESEARCH SYSTEM IN MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS**

*The article describes the imperfections of the marketing research system in media organizations in the aspect of studying the media needs of the audience. The problematic aspects of studying the information needs of the media audience have been identified. Thus, we have determined that the imperfection of the system of media research of the audience in Ukraine is revealed in such aspects. Practically high-quality media researches are not carried out (or are not carried out properly). In most cases, they are replaced by quantitative media research, which does not provide information about the information needs of the target audience of the media. The imperfection is presented in the lack of feedback from media recipients and media producers, which can be established, in particular, by systematically studying the opinion of consumers of media content about the information received. The implementation of such a practice can enable mass media marketers to find out which media products can attract the audience's attention, get an assessment of the existing media content, and understand which media products to produce in the future.*

**Keywords:** *marketing research of media audience, media needs, mediametry.*

### **Шевченко Т. С. НЕДОСКОНАЛІСТЬ СИСТЕМИ МАРКЕТИНГОВИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ У МЕДІАОРГАНІЗАЦІЯХ**

*Описана специфіка маркетингових досліджень, що проводяться в організаціях мас-медіа. Виокремлено проблему недосконалості системи маркетингових досліджень у медіа-бізнесі в аспекті вивчення медіа-потреб аудиторії. Виявлено проблемні аспекти вивчення інформаційних потреб медіа-аудиторії. Розглянувши основні методики медіа-досліджень аудиторії та їхні недоліки серед різних видів ЗМІ, можемо зауважити на головній недосконалості системи – відсутності необхідних медіа-досліджень. Адже певною мірою кожен вид ЗМІ використовує ті чи інші інструменти для отримання даних про аудиторію, але висока вартість спеціальних ретельних досліджень та інші аспекти не дозволяють ЗМІ повною мірою вивчати інформаційні потреби аудиторії, орієнтуватися в її інтересах і запитах. Можемо констатувати, що для ЗМІ, зокрема українських, багато чого про медіа-аудиторію досі є невідомим, вони не мають чіткого уявлення про певні важливі параметри медіа-аудиторії. Найбільший інформаційний вакуум спостерігається у дослідженнях мотиваційної сфери вибору аудиторією каналів масової інформації, де повинне мати місце різнобічне вивчення оціночних суджень медіа-аудиторії, її інтересів, настрою, побажань. Найбільше недосконалість системи медіа-досліджень проявляється на телебаченні, де різноманітні методи якісних досліджень ігноруються і замінюються лише рейтинговими. Ці медіа-вимірювання належать до кількісних медіа-досліджень. Попри істотні переваги інтернету як сприятливого середовища для проведення медіа-досліджень аудиторії, виокремлено низку недоліків, що ускладнюють збирання надійної інформації. Визначено, що недосконалість системи медіа-досліджень аудиторії в Україні виявляється в низці аспектів. Практично не проводяться (або проводяться не належним чином) якісні медіа-дослідження. У більшості випадків їх замінюють кількісними медіа-дослідженнями, які не дають інформації про інформаційні потреби цільової аудиторії мас-медіа. Недосконалість проявляється у відсутності зворотного зв'язку медіа-реципієнтів і медіа-продукцентів, який може бути налагоджений, зокрема шляхом систематичного вивчення думки споживачів медіа-контенту щодо отриманої інформації. Запровадження такої практики може дати можливість маркетологам мас-медіа дізнатися, якими саме медіа-продуктами можна привернути увагу аудиторії, отримати її оцінку щодо вже існуючого медіа-контенту, зрозуміти, які медіа-продукти виробляти надалі.*

**Ключові слова:** *маркетингові дослідження медіа-аудиторії, медіа-потреби, медіаметрія.*

**Problem statement.** Marketing research in mass media organizations has its own specifics, both in terms of setting problems, goals and objectives, and in the use of specific tools. However, the constant criticism of mass media products by experts and the media audience itself raises doubts about the perfection of the system of marketing research in the media business.

**Analysis of recent research.** Studies that describe specific techniques used in media audience marketing research constitute the broadest group [1-2; 6; 9-10]. A number of scientific papers are devoted to evidence of the need and importance of organizing such research for the media [4-5]. Researchers also offer a critical analysis of the

tools and techniques used by the media to find out about their audience [7-9]. This problem, in our opinion, is the most interesting and not sufficiently studied.

**Paper objective.** Therefore, the purpose of our study is to identify in various aspects of the imperfections of marketing research for the media.

**Major research findings.** In mass media organizations, media products are media content and its consumers are readers, viewers, listeners, users, i.e. the target audience of these media products. Therefore, according to the rules of marketing, it is necessary to find out what content attracts the target audience, what media needs has the target audience, what assessment of the TA provides to the

available media products, and so on. As the principle of commercial mass media is to sell advertisers the attention of the target audience, the need to study the media interests of target audience becomes even more obvious. Mass media marketers need to know exactly what content can attract the audience's attention.

It should be noted that the constant participation of the media audience in mass media communication, establishing feedback with it, implementing the function of the forum – is not only a tool to ensure pluralism, but also an effective means of clarifying the mood, interests, needs and wishes of the audience for which, first of all, the media are called to exist. At least it is difficult to deny that «the mass media is a socially important and public organization by its nature» [9, p. 133].

The idea that the media should research different data about their audience is supported by a large group of researchers. This activity is called a separate term – media research.

The areas in which media researches are usually conducted are determined by the structure of the communication process: the author of the message, content, communication channel, audience, social effects. The issue of media research is also different. The broadest direction is the research of the mass media audience; they are divided into quantitative and qualitative.

It should be noted that many Ukrainian media do not properly provide insight into this analysis (press, radio, Internet – as a communication field where the integration and convergence of different media forms take place), and the media (television) under the research entirely do not conduct quality media research of the audiences. This is primarily due to the high cost of the most effective methods and, unfortunately, the reluctance of media executives to order a qualitative analysis of the media needs of the audience, focusing only on the data of quantitative media research (ratings). In addition, these studies of the «portrait of the media consumer» leave unanswered the question: what determines the behavior of the media audience and the motivation to appeal to certain media content, whether the media in commercialization performs its main function – to meet the media needs of the audience?

Qualitative media research that reveals the ability of media content to satisfy the needs and preferences of various social subjects and the «representation of these interests in the content» is often ignored by media organizations [1; 4; 10]. As rightly noted by S. M. Kvit while characterizing the relevant situation in the Ukrainian media space: «Until now, media research in Ukraine is quite sporadic and often unprofessional» [5].

Qualitative media researches involve identifying indicators of the audience's attitude to the media, among which I. D. Fomicheva identifies «motives of people's appeals to media channels, certain parts of their content; needs; preferences; ideas about the functions of different channels and the media in general (attitudes); assessment (values) of content and its parts, leading and other characters on the pages, on the airwaves, on the TV screen, as well as by comparing different channels of information; tastes; wishes» [10].

It can be seen that many indicators are taken into account to identify the interests of the media audience. Whereas, for example, modern Ukrainian commercial audiovisual media in the most cases in order to clarify the media needs of the audience check only the presence or absence of its interest in a particular media product through

the identification of the concepts of time – attention – interest. By measuring the time that the audience spends on consumption (of a specific media product or media), according to media practitioners, it is possible to understand how much attention the audience pays to media materials, and this, in turn, should indicate interest in content. At the same time, such an aspect as finding out the reason for the audience's attention to a certain media product is ignored. Rating data (quantitative research) answer the questions «What did viewers watch?», but do not answer the questions «Why did viewers watch it?», «What exactly attracts or distracts viewers in a particular media product?» and «Which moments of a certain media product are highly valued, and which are not liked at all?» [10, pp. 69, 76]. The audience may be less interested in the topic being covered than in other less important aspects, such as impressing the presenter, or the habit or ability to consume media products in a specific period of time, and so on. Thus, measuring the time spent on media consumption by the audience, do an impression of the high-quality media research and does not provide information about the media needs of information recipients.

Qualitative media research that helps to learn about «thoughts and expectations, facts and circumstances of people's lives» is a rather complex process that requires the use of sociological and psychological methods and approaches [10]. However, we are forced to state that modern Ukrainian commercial mass media do not use these methods, and in most cases they try to not organize the feedback, independently choosing topics for coverage.

The mass media space of the Internet in general has the maximum possibilities for «establishing remote synchronous or almost synchronous feedback in the form of receiving a response to their messages or a request for information through the same Internet channel» [2]. The Ukrainian media mostly try to organize a feedback channel, allowing the audience to leave comments on the media site or on the social media pages of a particular media product (site or blog of a series, movie, show). The important question remains whether the media, by giving the audience the opportunity to express themselves, do not ignore the comments, really analyze and listen to the opinions expressed by the audience in this form. Also from the point of view of sociology, this method of finding out the opinion of the audience is not correct due to the anonymity of the respondents. After all, this does not make it possible to determine the socio-demographic portrait of commentators and find out which of them belongs to the target audience of a particular media product.

The main disadvantage of the media research system in the press can still be called a rather low initiative of the editors to conduct advanced thorough research. In most cases, decisions about coverage of certain topics are made intuitively, there is a «constant guessing of what their audience needs, and media research is seen as nothing more than an attempt to test the harmony with the algebra» [6, p. 76].

The greatest imperfection of the media research system is appearing on television, where various methods of qualitative research are ignored and replaced only by ratings. As noted above, these media measurements are quantitative media researches. The mechanism of their implementation is that on the television of households that were included in the sample, special devices are installed – people-meters or TV meters. These electronic counters record the amount and time of viewing certain television channels or programs. It should be noted that in the process

of obtaining information about the number of televisions that were turned on at a particular time on a particular channel, the question remains unanswered – why did each of the viewers choose to watch this program. After all, the reason may be not only interest in the topic. Many subsidiary motives can influence the choice of the viewer, and therefore, the rating approach can no longer be considered exhaustive for the audience's media research.

It is not necessary to be guided by data of quantitative media research also because of such controversial aspects:

- in mediometry there are no ways to measure out-of-home audience behavior (out-of-home consumption of television information);
- the reliability of information is reduced due to «panel tiredness». For panel studies, the sample composition is constant, formed over a long period of time. If after 1-2 years its rotation does not take place (replacement of the panel composition), then there is a «panel tiredness», i.e. a certain behavior of those respondents who have long been involved in the measurement;
- there is a fairly conventional understanding of what can be considered a television viewing. I. D. Fomicheva notes that «the people-meter registers the switching on of the television, not the actual presence, and even more so the viewer's attention» [10, p. 60]. The researcher emphasizes the ambiguity of the question, «how to distinguish the work (switching on) of the means of transmitting information from the activity of the user?» [10, p. 62]. Mediometry does not allow to state precisely that the viewer, having turned on a certain channel, «came into contact with the real message», paid attention to it [10, p. 113];
- it is also considered conditional to include in the amount of viewers those who are delayed on a certain channel for at least 5 minutes, while the rating of the switched on channel includes the entire 15-minute slots, the airview is usually divided into. The imperfection of mediometry is revealed in the fact that one viewer in 15 minutes can be counted among the viewers of three channels [10, pp. 42-43];
- «the nature of the sample survey is such that the results obtained only with a certain degree of probability reflect what is actually in the general population, no matter how carefully the sample is calculated and implemented». However, in the absence of the best optimal methods, sample studies have to be believed in [10, pp. 18, 19, 32, 42, 43, 59, 60-62, 85, 90, 92, 94, 113].

For television, such research in Ukraine has for a long time been conducted by the international company «Gfk Ukraine» commissioned by the «Industrial Television Committee» (ITC – Ukrainian professional association of leading television channels, media agencies and advertisers). During the work of «Gfk Ukraine», it received many critical remarks and complaints from representatives of the Ukrainian media industry. There were concerns about the degree of transparency of «Gfk Ukraine's» measurements. Media practitioners insisted on conducting a professional examination of the company's activities. Therefore, after the great scandal [3; 7-8] in 2014, the Industrial Television Committee selected another research company to measure TV ratings, «Nielsen».

The fact that ITC does not trust «Gfk Ukraine» already raises suspicions about the reliability of the ratings provided by the company for a long time. So, we have reason to say that the information of «Gfk Ukraine» about «What exactly did viewers watch?» may not be true.

However, as in the case of traditional mass media, the method of calculating the quantitative media research of the online media raises many claims, in particular that the frequency of visits to the online media cannot be taken as an indicator of its influence. Recording only the fact of visiting the site of a particular media provides us very limited information. Comments from the user on the reasons for visiting a particular website are necessary. Therefore, the most complex studies of the motives for accessing online media can be difficult to determine only due to the interactive nature of the Web [2].

There is a trend that only those journalists who want feedback from their audiences offline use a variety of online interactive features. Unfortunately, not many journalists are aware of the importance of receiving a reaction from the recipient. Only a few ones see some sense in using interactivity with the media audience, which can control the content through their inquiries, evaluations, participate in its formation, offering the necessary coverage and discussion of the problem, exchange views with other users, etc. [2]. Of course, one cannot count on the complete interchangeability of roles in the process of mass media communication, however, the Internet allows to regulate the «degree of rigidity of polarization» [2, p. 91].

Despite the significant advantages of the Internet as a favorable environment for media research of the audience, communicators identify a number of shortcomings that complicate the collection of reliable information. Among such I. D. Fomicheva names the following barriers for conducting online surveys:

- «despite the technical convenience, the counters on the sites cannot help to establish real connections between researchers and users;
- some methods of surveys on the Web, such as filling in self-download questionnaires, require users to have quite serious computer skills;
- those who collect information, with rare exceptions (self-uploading questionnaires), cannot control the process of filling in the questionnaires and, if necessary, help the respondent;
- the volume of questionnaires on the Internet is limited, because there is nobody who supports the recipient's interest in questions and answers to them;
- the technique of reading information through the browser may not work, because the user is able to disable a certain function;
- in the Web it is impossible to fully comply with the confidentiality of the survey, as technically it is possible to achieve user identification through data from the browser;
- Response Rate, i.e. the number of completed questionnaires in online surveys in relation to the number of users is as low as in traditional offline correspondence surveys. In addition, a significant proportion of respondents do not reach the end of the questionnaire;
- serious efforts are needed to attract users' attention. The usual problems of achieving representativeness of the composition of those who responded to the composition of all visitors, the faithfulness of their answers;

- researchers note another difficulty: fuzzy work of providers and poor communication, which can lead to losses in information when receiving completed questionnaires» [2, p. 133].

**Conclusions.** Thus, considering the main methods of media research of the audience and their shortcomings among different types of media, we can see the main imperfection of the media research system – the lack of necessary media research. After all, to some extent each type of media uses certain tools to obtain information about the audience, however, the high cost of special careful research and other aspects do not allow the media to study the information needs of the audience to the full extent, to focus on its interests and needs.

We can state that for the media, in particular Ukrainian, much about the media audience is still unknown; they do not have a clear idea of certain important parameters of the media audience. The greatest information vacuum is observed in studies of the motivational sphere of the audience's choice of media channels, where there should be a comprehensive study of the evaluative judgments of the media audience, its interests, moods, desires. Characteristic of the Ukrainian media industry is the uncertainty about the need to study «various instance of the internal, subjective attitude of the audience to the media», there is not even a proper theoretical basis in «setting goals, choosing indicators or obtaining techniques» [10, p. 302]. The development of a thorough theoretical level of quality media research is blocked by the inability to obtain initial data (media companies are not interested in performing complex media research audiences at a low price) for the advanced analysis of competent researchers interested in it [10].

Thus, we have determined that the imperfection of the system of media research of the audience in Ukraine is revealed in such aspects. Practically high-quality media researches are not carried out (or are not carried out properly). In most cases, they are replaced by quantitative media research, which does not provide information about the information needs of the target audience of the media. The imperfection is presented in the lack of feedback from media recipients and media producers, which can be established, in particular, by systematically studying the opinion of consumers of media content about the information received. The implementation of such a practice can enable mass media marketers to find out which media products can attract the audience's attention, get an assessment of the existing media content, and understand which media products to produce in the future.

### References

1. Kiev Media Week. Televideniye i biznes, geniy i zlodeystvo [Television and business, genius and villainy] (2011, 16 Sep). *Mediananny*: Website. Retrieved from <http://mediananny.com/reportazhi/16632> [in Russian].
2. Lukina, M. M. (Ed.) (2010). *Internet-SMI: teoriya i praktika [Internet media: theory and practice]*. Moscow: Aspekt Press. [in Russian].
3. ИТК расколосья: Nielsen budet izmeryat' telereytingi [ITC split: Nielsen will measure TV ratings] (2013, Mar 05). *Mediananny*: Website. Retrieved from <http://mediananny.com/raznoe/22722> [in Russian].
4. Ivanov, V. F. (2003). *Sotsiologhiya masovoyi komunikatsiyi [Sociology of mass communication]*: Manual. Cherkasy. [in Ukrainian].

5. Kvit, S. M. (2008). *Masovi komunikatsiyi [Mass communications]*: Textbook. Kyiv. [in Ukrainian].
6. Kolesnichenko, A. V. (2006). Chto govoryat i chego ne dogovarivayut reytingi (na primere issledovaniy pechatnykh SMI Germanii [What the ratings say and what they don't agree on (on the example of German print media research)]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 10: Zhurnalistika – Bulletin of Moscow University. Series 10: Journalism*, 4, pp. 65-81. [in Russian].
7. Samyy bol'shoy teleskandal v Ukraine: reytingi fal'sifitsiruyut, vzbuzhdno ugovnoye delo [The biggest TV scandal in Ukraine: ratings are falsified, a criminal case has been initiated] (2012, Jun 07). *Mediananny*: Website. Retrieved from <http://mediananny.com/raznoe/19262> [in Russian].
8. Telereytingami v Ukraine manipuliruyut [TV ratings in Ukraine are manipulated] (2012, Jun 07). *Glavred*: Website. Retrieved from <http://glavred.info/archive/2012/06/07/150944-12.htm> [in Russian].
9. Fomicheva, I. D. (2004). *Industriya reytingov: Vvedeniye v mediametriyu [Rating Industry: An Introduction to Media Metrics]*: Manual. Moscow: Aspect Press. [in Russian].
10. Fomicheva, I. D. (2007). *Sotsiologhiya SMI [Sociology of media]*: Manual. Moscow: Aspect Press. [in Russian].

### List of used sources

1. KievMediaWeek. Телевидение и бизнес, гений и злодейство. *Медіаняня*: сайт. 16.09.2011. URL: <http://mediananny.com/reportazhi/16632>
2. *Интернет-СМИ: теория и практика*: учеб. пособие для студентов вузов / ред. М. М. Лукина. Москва: Аспект Пресс, 2010. 348 с.
3. ИТК расколосья: Nielsen будет измерять телерејтинги. *Медіаняня*: сайт. 05.03.2013. URL: <http://mediananny.com/raznoe/22722>
4. Іванов В. Ф. *Соціологія масової комунікації*: навч. посіб. Черкаси, 2003. 193 с.
5. Квіт С. М. *Масові комунікації*: підручник. Київ, 2008. 206 с.
6. Колесніченко А. В. Что говорят и чего не договаривают рейтинги (на примере исследований печатных СМИ Германии). *Вестник Московского университета. Серия 10: Журналистика*. 2006. № 4. С. 65-81.
7. Самый большой телескандал в Украине: рейтинги фальсифицируют, возбуждено уголовное дело. *Медіаняня*: сайт. 07.06.2012. URL: <http://mediananny.com/raznoe/19262>
8. Телерејтингами в Украине манипулируют. *Главред*: сайт. 07.06.2012. URL: <http://glavred.info/archive/2012/06/07/150944-12.htm>
9. Фомичева И. Д. *Индустрия рейтингов: Введение в медиаметрию*: учеб. пособ. для студентов вузов. Москва: Аспект Пресс, 2004. 155 с.
10. Фомичева И. Д. *Социология СМИ*: учеб. пособие для студентов вузов. Москва: Аспект Пресс, 2007. 335 с.

Надійшло 20.10.2020 р.