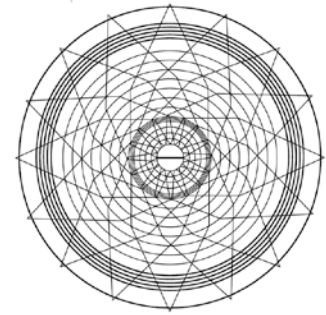


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Provocation in the System of Communicative Technologies



PROVOCATION IN THE SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract:

The following article presents a review of the methods and types of provocation as well as the spheres where provocation can be used as a tool of communication.

Authors give their opinion about the role and place of provocation in the system of communicative technologies and give different cases of various provocative actions, such as flashmob (including the description of one of the first actions of this kind in Moscow), cityteaser, ambient media, performance, scandal as well as provocative actions, speeches and texts in general.

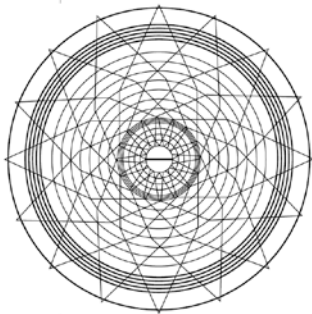
Authors analyse several types of provocators, paying attention to the role of media platforms and their provocative strategy. Two cases from media reality are described. The first case was a scandal with the “Kommersant” newspaper that published the photo of a bulletin with offensive words about Putin. The second case was a scandal with the Russian TV-Channel “Dozhd” (also known as “TV Rain”) that published a poll about the blockade of Leningrad.

More cases are about several provocative PR campaigns, such as classics of provocative advertising from “United Colors of Benetton”, Calvin Klein, Dolce & Gabbana, scandalous ads by SuitSupply, Ungaro and AgentProvocateur.

Authors give brief examples of provocative questions posed by journalists in the process of Russian political communications, including the examples of questions that were addressed to Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia.

Keywords: provocation, communication technologies, tools of provocation, media, political provocation

It is impossible to deny that such technology as provocation occupies a notable and important place in the complex of communicative influence technologies. Both



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when used in a common language and scientific discourse, this concept is quite saturated with notably expressed negative connotations.

Provocation [from the Latin *provocatio* – challenge] – 1. Incitement, motivating somebody (individuals, groups, organizations etc.) to some actions that would entail grave or ruinous consequences for them. A military provocation // Treacherous actions by covert agents with the aim of espionage and incitement of revolutionary organizations to such actions that would entail their weakening and rout. 2. Med. An artificial stimulation and amplification of some phenomena or disease symptoms. A malaria stroke provocation [from the Latin *provocatio* – challenge].

In one of not so many thorough works dedicated to the provocation problem, it's author, V.N. Stepanov, made an attempt to go beyond those traditional limits. According to his opinion, the “provocation” concept means a symbolic presentation (“demonstration”) of feelings, emotions or conditions really experienced or imitated by the speaker with the aim to instill the interlocutor with it, evoking in him a similar inner state which doesn't correspond to his actual state. [Stepanov 2008:10]. Consequently, says the author, a provocation in speech is such a symbolic vocal presentation of an inner state demonstrated by the speaker, which takes into account the partner's communicative expectations and exceeds those, presenting a multiple choice of frequently directly opposite interpretations as a single construct, due to its complex semantic structure and realization of indirect communication strategy. Provocation in social and mass communication uses the same psychological provocative symbolization, demonstration and translation mechanisms, aiming to instill in the interlocutor in the studio, and in the massive audience a desired psychological state, cognitive schemes of indirect messages, characteristic for indirect communication, and speech genres, same as during interpersonal communication, as the basic layer of communication in mass media conditions is interpersonal interaction. [Stepanov 2008:10].

This productive approach allows to raise a number of issues about technological features of provocation and to try finding answers to those.

Provocation sources

An overview of means used for provocation allows us to divide all the tools for this technology into three groups: provocative texts, provocative speech and provocative actions. Let us have a look at each.

Provocative actions

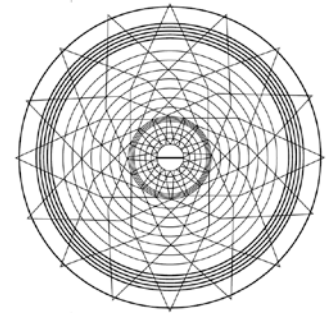
A textbook story of provocative actions can be considered the fire of Rome that occurred in 64 B.C. The emperor Nero, which, if we choose to believe one of the versions of this story, gave an order to set the city on fire, blamed the Christians in the end. That was the reason for anti-Christian persecutions in the Roman Empire.

30 of January 1933, Hitler achieved both the position of the head of coalition government and the chancellor of Germany. But the Nazis, by that moment, hand only

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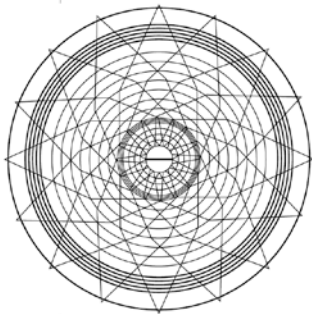
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32 percent in the Reichstag and just three ministers in the government. Evening, 27 of February – the Berlin firefighters' department was informed that the Reichstag building was burning. No matter how much effort was put into suppressing fire, the building was engulfed in a conflagration. Right after the incident, a statement came by Hitler blaming the communists for arson of the Reichstag. 28 of February, right after that statement, an emergency decree “for people’s and state protection” was issued and signed by the Reich president Paul Hindenburg. That decree was a prohibition on freedom of personality, meetings, unions, word, press, and severely limited the secrecy of correspondence and rights for private property. The German communist party was completely prohibited. During several days after the decree, around four thousand communists were arrested, along with several social-democratic and liberal groups’ leaders, including Reichstag deputies. The opposition press closure (the communist “Rote Fane” was closed even before the Reichstag arson) made it possible to bring the election campaign to its end successfully. The arson was a perfect reason to annul all the voices received by the communist party and transfer their mandates to the Nazi party.

Speaking on modern history examples, on the 6th of April 2009 there was a peaceful meeting of Moldavian opposition in Kishinev. Right after that, on the 7th of April, there was large unrest in the capital. The parliament building in the middle of the city was captured by the protestants. Some unknown people rose the European Union flag over the building, and above that – the flag of Romania. The ground floor of the building they set on fire. The opposition leaders condemned the actions of those unknown and called it a provocation, while commenting the accident. The Moldavian police service, meanwhile, didn’t act in response. Among actions taken it’s worth noting that, as the result of unrest mobile communication was disconnected in Kishinev, and several websites with information about that event were blocked. The then president of Moldavia issued a TV-message to the people that very evening, blaming the opposition leaders for an attempt of a coup. It turned out that during the protest action against falsifications during the parliamentary elections, the ranks of peaceful young protesters were infiltrated by hundreds of provocateurs, who managed to lead a part of the youngsters to aggressive actions and arson of several administrative buildings, despite appeal attempts from the opposition leaders. The election results were then annulled due to civil unrest.

In December 2010, mass riots on Manezhnaya Square in Moscow and several other cities of Russia were started by the fans. The then president Dmitriy Medvedev stated the need for a strict restraint and countering of any unsanctioned meetings and demonstrations. By the politician’s opinion, even pickets devoted to quite harmless or memorial events can unpredictably take radical direction, violating the rights and freedoms of the citizens and pose a threat to people’s life and security. “Such kind of unsanctioned events must be severely restrained, and, in case of participants’ refusal to submit to the authorities, they are subject to unconditional detention”, - stated Medvedev, while commenting the event.



One more variant worth noting as an example of provocative actions is a multitude of carnival-type events. This is about actions, meetings, demonstrations, during which some symbolic activities are organized, like the burning of an effigy etc.2

The major part of actions realized by the terrorists, in our opinion, must as well be classified as provocative actions.

Provocative speech

If we talk about provocative (sometimes called prevocational) speech, here we can pick out two types of such. The first type counts on provoking the addressee to make an action needed or already known to the provocateur. The second type provides for some information in response, either known or unknown to the provocateur (in the last case, it's being called "fishing out the data")

Speaking of the first type of speech, based on the opinion of N.V. Stepanov, there do exist special provocative speech genres that are designed to call other people to one or another action. The following can be considered as such: a confession, a complaint, a maxim, a performance, a demonstrative, a concern, an advice, a rebuke, a notation, a provocative question [Stepanov 2008:195].

As for the second type of provocative speech, it usually has interrogative construction. In Russian language, this brings up a certain specific.

1. Question by sense – question by form

A typical example of such a phrase: "What's the time?" Such question demands answer, is expressed in interrogative construction with a question mark in a written form. This first situation is the simplest of all.

2. Question by sense – statement by form

However, a question by sense can be expressed by an affirmative construction. A typical example of such phrase is: "Oh, I wish I knew where you were yesterday". Here we see a complex sentence with a dot in its end, according to the rules of Russian punctuation, and in its vocal form won't have interrogative intonation. There is no doubt that such sentence contains a semantic question, as during communication such constructions demand (i.e. provoke) an answer.

3. Statement by sense – question by form

The third variant includes phrases with affirmative sense expressed in interrogative form. A typical example of such a phrase: "Who doesn't like gorgeous women?" In Russian, it's an interrogative sentence, with a question mark in written form, and uses interrogative intonation of various strength in vocal speech. But such phrases are affirmations by sense, not needing an answer or already having obvious one, known beforehand. The sense of the phrase: "who doesn't like gorgeous women?" is the equivalent of the statement "Everyone likes gorgeous women". It's an example of syntactic synonymy (a synonymy in a text bigger than a combination of words)

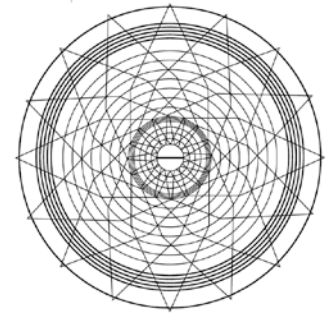
4. Other vocal tactics used for interlocutor provocation

1) Defining the limits of the discussed topic

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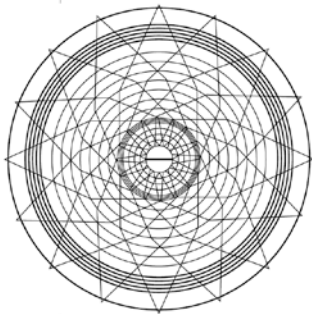
- 2) Proof of someone's benefits
- 3) Influence on several of the interlocutor's feelings, like: the feeling of duty, friendship, patriotism, nation, religious feelings, and also – envy, compassion, ambition, irritation etc.
- 4) Forming of some kind of bonds: sympathy, credence, solidarity, psychological addiction etc.
- 5) Bluff (demonstration of being well informed, often partially or entirely false). Bluff is one of the best types of provocation. A bluff, and it's important to note it, isn't similar to a lie: a man can express his point of view and all the same doubt its reliability. In household speech we can usually see such examples: to fish out information one declares to know something, spoken in a matter of course, without any trace of doubt in the provocateur's voice.
- 6) A compliment as a form of provocation. A lot of people tend to behave, in speech or otherwise, in a manner defined as "asking for a compliment". Both younger girls, grown-up women and even some men have a weakness for such form of provocation.

Provocative texts

One of the textbook examples of a fake both in Russia and worldwide are the so-called "Zion sages' protocols". The protocols are a classic example of a fake text, that was still used many time during world's history as a p[olitical provocation, for political needs. On the 18th of August 1921 "The Times", a well-known and respected English newspaper, was released with an editorial full on weighty evidence of the falsity of "The Zion sages' protocols", and was proved, that those "protocols" were nothing other than a rip-off from a XIX century pamphlet against emperor Napoleon the 3rd. The original pamphlet, in its turn, was called "a dialogue in hell between Montesquieu and Machiavelli".

Nonetheless, the "protocols" were still used to justify anti-Semite propaganda and Jewish "pogroms". In particular, it was Adolf Hitler who used it widely in his propaganda. To this day, "The protocols" are published in unthinkable editions and were sold for quite a long time in Moscow bookstores.

Provocative texts of different sizes and contents are quite frequently published by the Russian mass media. For instance, there's a known story when "Life News" published some info about a "Fair Russia" deputy Miheev. The report stated that the deputy had come to a costume wedding dressed "in a uniform of the fascist admiral Wilhelm Canaris". Wherein, Miheev was named by the author of the report as "a person known for his passion and adoration of the admiral". "When someone among the guests asked Miheev if it bothered him that he was dressed in a uniform of a fascist admiral, the deputy replied that Canaris had been executed by Hitler for supporting the Jews, and so he hadn't been a fascist, and quite the opposite – a venerable military commander", - was also added by the "Life News"/ According the



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politician himself, who fell prey to “Life News”, the publication could have appeared “to compromise “Fair Russia” right before parliamentary elections”.

But the “media as a provocateur” topic is so vast that it deserves a separate scientific article.

Here we'll just note that provocative texts are often the main point of interest in modern prose and pop poetry. Though in these spheres such concept is used in a positive sense.

Spheres of provocation

Political provocations

Political provocations mainly aim at forming negative reaction of the public opinion towards the rival of the person initializing the provocative communication. Among the methods of provocative communication we can note the following ways being used frequently:

- Committing unseemly acts posing as your political opponent
- Doing damage to his unknown opponents with the aim of provoking public sympathy

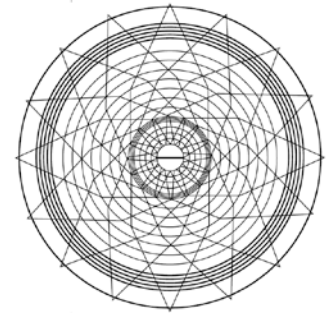
There are several well-known provocateurs in Russian public field: Sergey Nechaev, Georgy Gapon, Roman Malinovskiy, Evno Asef. Friedrich Engels wrote to Theodore Cuno on the 24th of January 1872: “Nechaev is either a Russian agent provocateur, or at least he acted like one”. That was in fact the historical uniqueness: not being one of the big scale revolutionists, he was the first among Russian “mutineers”, who armed himself with methods and techniques of political provocation, developed and used by the covert police, and used those widely in the revolutionary environment. Let us look at one mere fact of his biography: during his first escape abroad Nechaev wrote letters and anti-tsarian proclamations from Geneva to his friends in Russia, knowing precisely that personal correspondence is subject to perustration, and as a result a tacit supervision would be set for those who had received his proclamations, which would finally result in their arrest. Nechaev though it would be only to the benefit of the revolutionary labors: the quantity of those persecuted by the tsar's regime would grow; prison, penal servitude and exile had to temper them all and turn them into die-hard, uncompromising fighters, that will join the covert revolutionary organizations' ranks; their arrests and persecutions would provoke unrest and protests by the sympathizers, that in their turn will infest others with anti-government fever etc. Even for Bakunin, who never cared too much for his methods, it was a bit over the top.

Russian political scientist A. V. Gluhova indicates, that the purpose of provocation is “influencing your rival or opponent with the aim to make him commit an act you're condemning, and also become subject to different types of sanctions: moral condemnation, criminal prosecution, death etc.” She also points out that a provocation is “subject to risk”³. Meaning, that the victim of provocation consequences can be not only its organizer, but also people around who didn't take part in those actions.

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A. V. Gluhova highlights seven different types of goals which the provocateur might pursue: discredit an opponent, organizing of mass unlawful acts, compromising the authorities, gaining political advantages, imitation, promotion and stimulation of the current agenda by plots and topics needed by the provocateur. All those goals have more or less negative sense, with only the last one being judged by the author as seemingly harmless and even positive, meaning a “throw-in of uncomfortable topics”⁴ for the society. Here it’s especially worth noting that this goal can also be pursued in journalism practice: a provocation aiming at attracting the audience’s attention to a hot, yet overshadowed topic can really be justified by the benefits that public attraction to it will bring.

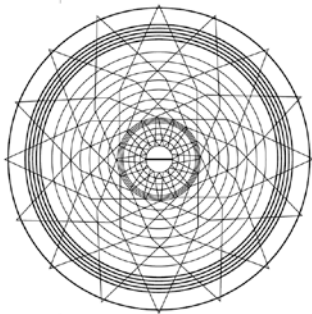
Modern scientists generally distinguish such concepts as “provocation” and “trolling” – the second term becoming widespread in late years due to internet communication consolidation. It can be argued, that trolling now is considered an extreme form of provocation, pursuing a well-defined goal: to annoy, to spring conflicts, provoke mutual accusations and insults. Trolling courses communication participants towards senseless demagoguery and squabbles. The subject of trolling (“the troll”) doesn’t have any morality, is often aggressive and does his work finding his interlocutor’s weak points [Akulich 2012: 47-50]. As the main point of trolling is usually considered the disruption of discussion, elimination of interlocutor’s feeling of trust. Fakes are a common tool for trolling [Donath Judith 2010:22]

Marketing, advertisement and PR

Provocative marketing is usually defined as a special type of events that differ significantly from standard advertising technologies, primarily by some uncommon solutions. Some experts are even inclined to distinguish provocative marketing as a particular type of advertising, complementing ATL and BTL-activities in cases when those are ineffective or impossible due to official prohibitions or legislation nuances.

Let us give an example of such marketing communication. In St. Petersburg, in front of The Gostiny Dvor, a huge black “Hummer” hit a passenger car and simply crushed it. All day long the “Hummer” stood on the crushed car. There was a writing on the hull of the “Hummer”:⁵ “Your Hummer – your rules!”, Which hit directly the hearts of the target audience – potential buyers of the brand. There was a crowd around it all day. People made photos of it with smartphones right from their cars, minibuses stopped, passers-by called their friends and told them in full excitement how they’d seen a “Hummer” crush a car. All city media told about the act, from “Business Petersburg” to “St. Petersburg Times”.

Unlike traditional advertising, provocative marketing doesn’t openly urge to buy a product, but instead acts with subterfuge. The goal of provocative marketing is to involve the audience in an intellectual game – “guess what does that mean”. To surprise and to shock is the aim of provocative advertisers. An incomprehensible writing or a street accident is instantly noticed by the passers-by, and they start discussing it. And when the “word of mouth” starts working in its full strength and gossip flows through all the city, all that’s left is to explain that strange even on the



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media. That's when it becomes clear which brand has been being promoted by provocative marketing. The main point is to not let the participants of the act understand – for a time – that all that is happening is provocative marketing.

There's no clarity defining the differences between “provocative marketing” and “guerilla marketing”⁵. Some specialists consider it to be the same, others state that these two systems have much in common, yet there are also significant differences. Both guerrilla and provocative methods are united by their intention to make precision strikes in specific places and groups, involving the audience in a kind of game, both entertaining and emotionally rich, during which the participants themselves become bearers of the information that must be spread.

The difference is that “guerilla marketing”'s goal is to shout out loud: “Cheap and cheerful!”, while provocative marketing events' main point is a successful act, and budgets can be multimillion.

Specialists distinguish several main types of provocative marketing.

Life placement technology suggests advertisement placing in living space traditionally not used as an advertisement carrier. For example, it can be a bench, a mirror, someone's head, the bottom of a swimming pool, tiled floor of a toilet etc. Life placement is mostly a concealed advertisement, not striking eyes, but pointing at “right” thoughts.

Ambient media is a wider concept, suggesting an open advertisement in rather unexpected places, like a company logo on a dirigible or is a form of a flowerbed.

City teaser is a “city provocations” technology. It uses the “teaser-revelation” scheme: “The teaser” is a provocation stage, when the brand is unknown to the wide audience. People become witnesses to unusual events, but don't understand their true meaning. “The revelation” is the next stage of the campaign, when the sense behind “strange events” in the city is revealed.

Performance is a modern form of “spontaneous” street theatre. Performance's goal is to attract the audience's attention, to involve it into mutual interaction with a concealed advertising contents. The “Sun InBev” company, while advertising the “Bag Bier” brand, staged an arrival of Bavarians that were looking for “Bag Bier” and vobla in different cities. An orchestra, German-speaking promoters and contests with a vobla as a prize attracted a lot of people.

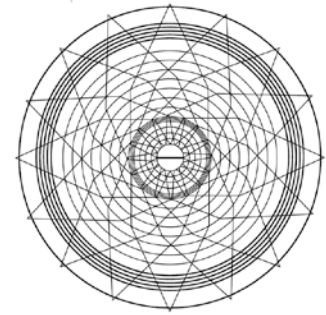
During fall in Rostov, on Krasnoarmeyskaya street. People could see lasses dressed in strict uniforms marching and dancing with plates where a phone number was written. Quite a lot of people were so much intrigued that they actually dialed the number and got to know about the advertising action of a plastic windows dealing company.

Flashmob (from English “shining in the crowd” or “instant crowd”) is one of the brightest forms of provocative marketing, sometimes considered a marketing tool on its own. The idea of a flashmob is that a group of people realizes a set of actions agreed beforehand in a set place. Like, for instance, in New York one and a half hundred people simultaneously declared their desire to buy a “love mat” in a furniture mall.

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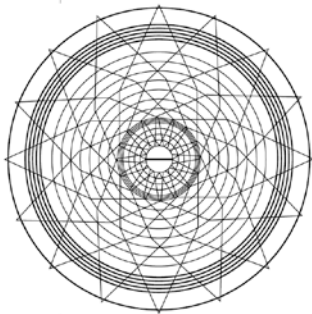


One of the first flashmob-styled acts in Russia was initiated by “R&IGroup” agency together with: Edipress-Conliga” Publishing house. The act was a part of a new women magazine “SamaYa” promotion campaign. For a week, many Moscow citizens became witnesses to a set of strange events in the Moscow subway. A lass appeared in one of the subway cars, totally immersed in reading a magazine with a bright-red cover with “SamaYa” logo on it. Of course, no one among the passengers paid any attention to it. With each stop, a new lass entered the subway car with a similar magazine...Soon, there were more such “readers” than just mere passengers. The lasses were reading with interesting, there was nothing in common between them except for those red covers in their hands. Following the main flashmob rule, they seemed not to notice other passengers with similar magazines surrounding them. Other passengers didn’t understand what was happening, got nervous, tried to look over the shoulder to see pages of a mysterious magazine... But suddenly, during one stop, all the lasses got out of the subway car following a thunderous “Take care, the doors are closing!” Three teams of eighteen “readers” each traveled all around the subway for several days, leaving passengers confused and amazed. The campaign coverage reached over 20000, that excluding friends and relatives, who the flashmob witnesses told detailed stories on “mass girl psychosis” in the subway.

No less popular is provocative marketing using “duckweeds”. For example, let us imagine the following situation: you stand in the middle of a pricy furniture or electronic appliances. Suddenly, a couple stops near you, starting to discuss, with big knowledge of the subject, all the possible merits of a specific model in front of you. Maybe it’s a coincidence. But maybe you’ve met “duckweeds”. Or there’s a different way: a man close to you tell someone by phone about “extremely low prices” on some or another merchandise. You can meet such “independent expert” both in a store and in the World Wide Web on a forum, or live on radio.

“A merry scandal” is a promotion technology based on a scandal, a shocking influence. A scandal is a fair way to attract attention of both potential audience and, in particular, the press. A well-planned and correctly-staged scandal allows to receive high response from the target audience while still keeping control over the situation. It’s not uncommon for reaching such goals to organize special trials or to rent... some elephants. There was a case when a man had opened a store in a small town where he sold different tableware. There weren’t many customers, and so the owner devised a gambit. He decided to perform an act “an elephant in a dish store”, so he had to rent an elephant to realize it. The animal was delivered to a certain address. Where it naturally did crush the significant part of the assortment. Due to the act, all local newspapers wrote about it. Which is not surprising – after all, you don’t see an elephant in a dish store on a daily basis. It’s interesting to note that there hadn’t been any no advertisement before that in the store, but the provocation worked, and buyers came for tableware.

Such kind of provocative marketing has two major downsides. First: it’s really hard to predict the final results of provocative marketing. There are just no reliable calculation parameters for such technologies’ effectiveness. Second: provocative



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marketing is effective as long as it is unique, if the people didn't meet anything similar before. Also, a provocation unmasked can do a lot of harm to both its organizers and the brand being promoted.

As for provocative technologies usage in traditional advertising, there's a nice overview of examples⁶ for such advertisement in an article by I. Urnova.

One of the pioneers in this exciting yet dangerous field was Calvin Klein company, which, in 1981 shot a still very young actress Brook Shields – only just 15 years old by then – in their commercials (meaning television advertising – to let you understand the scale). In those commercials the young actress stated playfully that there was nothing between her jeans and herself. From then on Calvin Klein follows a rule which is hard to argue with – “sex sells”.

One more among well-recognized masters of provocation can be rightfully considered an Italian company Benneton that earn its fame due to its outrageous and sometimes quite shockingly made reminders about modern society problems. For instance, one of their campaigns was composed of human hearts with writings "black", "yellow" and "white", or naked male hips with a print “HIV positive”. Benneton campaigns almost always hit their targets – and, as a result, it was impossible not to talk about them, as they highlighted flaws in modern society and life. By this, the company secured the image of a manufacturer “who cares”.

Now we can say, that scandalous photos of men's and women's genitalia, depicting a bloodied newborn with an uncut umbilical cord, a photo of a one-legged Afro-American and an obligatory Benneton logo have already become world advertisement classics.

The “Eldorado” company also distinguished itself on the Russian market in outrageous advertisement field. A banner depicting LG vacuum cleaner with an advertising slogan “well suck for penny” was remembered by almost everyone who had seen that. Now “Eldorado” uses only slight hints, but, counting the previous experience, a video clip with Vadim Galigin saying that one must be closer to her clients, together with an unbuttoned top button on a consultant-lassie's shirt look rather provocatively.

The “Euroset” showrooms pleased their visitors on the 1st of April: that very day cartoonists were working in each showroom promising anyone a free portrait if he was to posing half-naked.

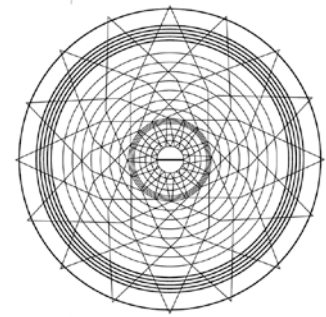
The Italian Dolce&Gabbana also made their mark on the list of provocateurs – in 2007 Stephen Clain shot for the fashion designers an advertisement of their new summer collection which was soon characterized as “fantasies about violation”. In the promo a topless young guy is holding a girl lying in front of him by her wrists (the girl herself is quite well dressed and made up). Around them stand silent observers – topless men with ideal bodies. The advertisement was quickly condemned, discarded and utterly prohibited – for using a feminine figure as an object, promoting violence and chauvinism – but the sales of that season for the Italian brand grew up 21%

“Suit Supply” also made their bet on chauvinism and women's objectification in 2010. And won with it – their series of promotional photos where women gave

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themselves without hesitation to men only just because of good suits they'd been wearing, was prohibited quite soon, but sales almost instantly grew almost several times. And also, by the rumors, more female buyers came, and that almost provoked public hysteria among feminist activists.

Some advertising campaigns managed to produce needed effect even without being released: for example, Ungaro poster in 2002, which depicted a woman pleasing herself, or a quite unreserved video clip by Agent Provocateur, where Kylie Minogue was starring. Both cases provoked huge scandals and were prohibited even before being officially released, but that didn't influence at all both brands' popularity, and Ungaro still managed it to the gloss, and not just anywhere but to American Vogue.

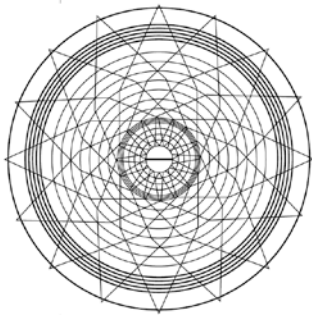
As for provocative PR, some interesting examples of such technologies are demonstrated in large quantities in a famous book "Ears weaving a donkey"

Media as a provocateur

Using provocative technologies in mass media is a distinct big topic for review. Here we should distinguish provocation as a method of fishing out data from provocation as an audience's interest-fueling resource. In respect of the first type, a demonstrative representative of such journalism can be considered Gunther Walraef. The name of this "fierce reporter" is well known in Germany and beyond. Being an anti-fascist writer, Walraef was quite loved in the USSR. In the 70-80s his reportages were frequently published in the "Literary Newspaper", the "Abroad" weekly, "Foreign Literature" magazine etc. Two books by Walraef are translated to Russian – "Undesired reportages" (1982) and "The reporter accuses" (1988)8.

Speaking on the second aspect, we can remember two illustrative examples. On the 12th of December 2011 and influential Russian magazine "Kommersant-Vlast" came out with a photo of a spoiled election bulletin on its cover. On the ballot form there was a veiled but easily recognizable swear word addressing Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia. The issue was devoted to falsifications during the State Duma elections that had passed recently. The day the issue was released to the newsstands of Moscow the outrageous magazine was sold out in just a few hours. But there were other consequences too. Alisher Usmanov, the owner of "Kommersant" Publishing House, called the deed by the editorial office a "minor hooliganism" and fired chief editor Maxim Kovalskiy and Andrey Galiev, CEO of the CJSC "Kommersant-Holding". On the kommersant.ru website, instead of the cover a message emerged: "During the release of number 49 of the "Vlast" magazine, inner procedures and rules of the "Kommersant" Publishing House, professional journalism standards and Russian legislation were violated. The direction of the Publishing House is sorry for that and offers their apologies to our readers and partners". The message was signed by the CEO of "Kommersant" Publishing House Demian Kudravtsev and chief-editor of the Publishing House Azer Mursaliev.

The fired Maxim Kovalskiy himself disagreed completely with the statement that he went over the line of professional journalism ethics: " We had a document in front



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of us – a bulletin photo – stating that there have been violations during elections. It was a bulletin from London, there was a cross put in a square opposite the “Apple” party and nothing opposite the other parties. By Russian legislation, the bulletin had to be accepted, no matter if there were any writings on it or not. ... The fact that something was written about Putin... It could be written about Mickey-Mouse. The important fact is not what has been written, but that it was invalidated, - explained he, using “The Figaro” newspaper as an example. – There’s a photo there: a man from Guadeloupe goes carrying a photo “F... Sarco”. And such photos are in agencies all over the world – any surname can be substituted there”.⁹

The vice-editor for Kovalskiy, Veronica Kutsillo supported him, stating: “I don’t consider it a provocation... It’s a quote”¹⁰. The editorial office’s position was supported by many colleagues from independent Russian editions, considering shifts inside the Publishing House a kind of repressions, pressure over the journalists and the so-called “crackdown”.

The other story is related to a poll conducted by “The Rain” TV channel on the eve of the 70th anniversary of looting of the Leningrad blockade, 26th of January 2014. During the “Amateur” show, the audience was offered a chance to vote “if it was worth it to leave Leningrad to the Nazis to save thousands of lives”. The question, duplicated on “The Rain’s” website and social media, rose a wave of protests and public disturbances, becoming the reason behind heated discussions. The poll was accessible not more than 20 minutes, and later deleted. The channel’s direction offered their apologies to everyone who had been insulted by the question, but they still couldn’t soften the effect. Not the smallest part was played by the oppositional, liberal politic stance of “The Rain”: for his opponents the poll became one more proof of the “lanti-Russian attitude” of the media’s editorial office. A lot of calls asking to close “The Rain” rose.

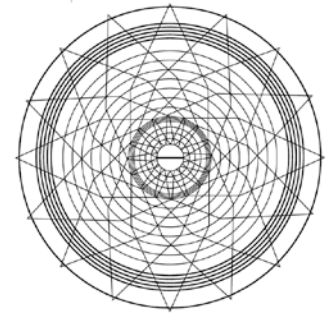
Even though the Russian Federation Presidential Human Rights Council and The Russian Journalists Union opposed the extrajudicial closure of the channel, the majority of cable and satellite TV operators unilaterally broke all contacts with “The Rain” (officially it was stated as patriotic position by the directorship of the operators, but, according to information from anonymous sources in the companies, there was pressure enacted by authorities on the directorships). Also, representatives of veteran public organizations filed claims for protection of honor and dignity against the editorial office of the channel to different courts, and the Prosecutors’ office and Federal Supervision Agency made several revisions to find out any possible violations of the law.

The media society’s reaction on the incident was also quite ambiguous. So, Elizaveta Surganova, a columnist for Lenta.ru, stated pointed out that the poll “ill-formulated and taken out of the context of the show”, which made it provocative¹¹. Also, the act of “The Rain” was criticized by the journalists of “Kommersant FM”, “Komsomolskaya Pravda” and other editions. Many State Duma deputies and another political figures also treated the poll pretty roughly. The deed of “The Rain” was characterized as “a crime” and “a sacrilege”.

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Meanwhile, “The Rain” representatives pointed out that their experience was not unique – such polls had been conducted in another Russian media. Even more, the editors and those who supported them, reminded, that a similar question had been raised twenty-five years ago by a famous Soviet writer and front-line soldier Victor Astafiev. The company that had risen against the channel was interpreting as an attempt to set scores with an opposition media, which had managed to enact several journalist investigations against the Russian authorities representatives.

Analyzing these, and another similar stories, a question should be risen about the limits of provocative practices usage. In our opinion, the only justified aims for provocative practice in journalism are:

- Protecting the people’s interests (an object is usually a person, a group of men or an organization):
- Bringing attention to an issue (object is mostly the audience, society or social institution)

For mass media provocation we must distinguish one more variety: an interviewer-journalist using provocative tactics on his interlocutor (the hero of the interview).

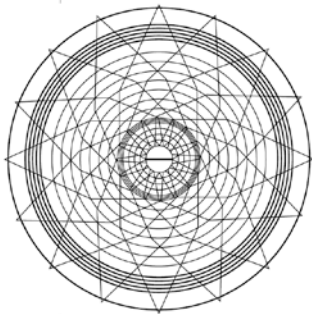
A vocal provocation when asking questions during a journalistic interview (“provocative questions”) is a much more researched topic for both linguistics¹² and journalism¹³. The publication authors, though claiming that such questions provoke conflict, are ethically ambiguous and subject to possible insincere answers, still point out that provocative tactics during interviews can urge a hero to self-disclosure, even to self-exposure, a.k.a. leading to the audience receiving more sincere and proven information. For example, Oxana Sergeevna Issers, a Russian philologist, describes a vocal provocation with the same characteristics as those given above for provocative media tactics: purposefulness, motivation, control by the subject of provocation. The goal set is either fishing out data that the interlocutor wouldn’t like to present willfully, or a general destabilization of his emotional condition.

Provocative tactics in interviews in analytical journalism aim to focus attention on an issue, to show possible contradictions, uncovering the reasons behind the problematic issue emerging. In portrait journalism the goal of vocal provocation is mainly to highlight the interlocutor’s personal qualities, features of his image, making a psychological portrait of the protagonist.

On a semantic level provocation is usually based on some key words or phrases which send the interlocutor and the audience back to some events in the past. Here we can distinguish either simple or rather complex structures.

A simple structure provocation tactic is a question to the interlocutor that instantly directs both him and the audience to some commonly-known facts, events or sayings that don’t need additional clarification. Here’s an example of such a question:

Journalist (J): Three-quarters of the country’s population don’t think they could count on a just trial. Among those who had to direct themselves to a court, 31% stated that the court representatives had been asking for bribes from them or hinted that. Do you think there’s something here to be proud of? (an interview with the Ukraine



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Foreign Secretary Pavel Klimkin in the show Conflict Zone, Deutsche Welle 07.10.201614)

Or:

Journalist (J): Do you understand that, even if you ever retire, the Russians will still be occupants for the Ukrainians? (Vladimir Putin's Big Press Conference, 23.12.201615)

The complex structure tactic can be realized in two ways. In the first case, a preliminary question is given to the interlocutor, so that he could give a predictable answer. Then the journalist ask the second, clarifying question, where the answer given before is subject to doubt or disproof:

Journalist (J): the MFA of Great Britain expressed you their high concern about this website [meaning the Ukrainian website "The Peacemaker" publishing personal data of foreign journalists working in DPR – Author] Why don't you do anything against those who violate the law in your country?

Pavel Klimkin (PK): We did, in fact, react. We stated that this was unacceptable...

J: Your Foreign Affairs Secretary... sees nothing bad in this website. Do you tell us that you've condemned it?

P.K.: No-no, he quite exactly stated that the publication was unacceptable within that point of view...

J: But the website still exists and the list is still accessible for everyone!

The second variant supposes that, during the first stage, some kind of situation is being described, or a source is being quoted (including the interlocutor himself), and the question itself is asked during the second stage:

Journalist: 71% of Ukrainians suppose the country is moving in a wrong direction. Being asked what could make them change their opinion, 46% answered "cancellation of deputies' and judges' immunity".

Pavel Klimkin: Yes, I also totally support this...

J: But why doesn't it happen then?

PK: Because we need a political consensus on that matter, and then it will be done...

J: So, you don't have a political consensus to move forward...

Vocal provocation feature is the need for an object to react immediately. The object himself can be in active position: he can both answer his interlocutor's question seriously or make a joke of it, leading it all to counterbalancing:

The Wall Street Journal Journalist: Is it possible that next year there will be presidential elections?

V. Putin: In which country? (laughter in the studio)

J: Do you understand that, even if you ever retire, the Russians will still be occupants for the Ukrainians?

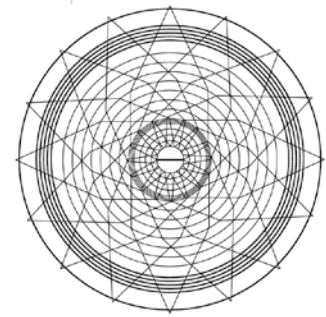
V.Putin: You know, it would be quite good if the Ukrainian army weren't itself considered an occupant in Donbass.

While expressing this position, we should make a reservation that, despite sometimes being considered an appropriate and useful tool in journalism, one should always remember about the destructive character of provocation. As important as

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might be those public interests protected by the journalist, provocative practice breeds aggression and conflicts in response. And so, it must be used only on extraordinary occasions, when other methods are ineffective, by any reason.

It seems that the issue of legal and ethical regulators for provocation usage must be brought up in a broader context, such as political and social.

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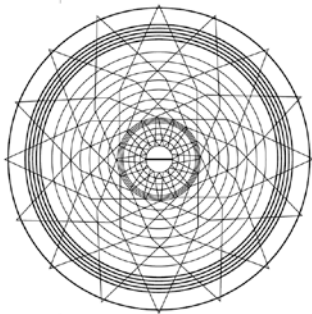
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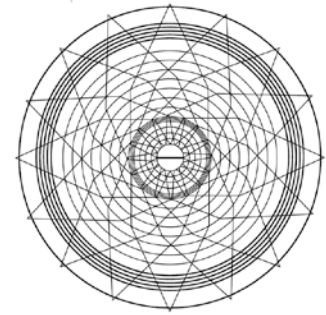
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ПРОВОКАЦИЯ В СИСТЕМЕ КОММУНИКАЦИОННЫХ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ

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Аннотация:

Нельзя отрицать, что в комплексе технологий коммуникативного воздействия важное и заметное место занимает такая технология, как провокация. И в обыденном словоупотреблении, и в научном дискурсе это понятие обычно насыщено отчетливо выраженными негативными коннотациями.

Авторы статьи анализируют это явление дают развернутое всестороннее описание данной коммуникационной технологии, касаясь таких тем, как ресурсы провокации, виды провокативной деятельности и сферы провокации. Отдельно рассматривается вопрос медиа в качестве провокатора, анализируются самые частые способы провокации со стороны журналистов.

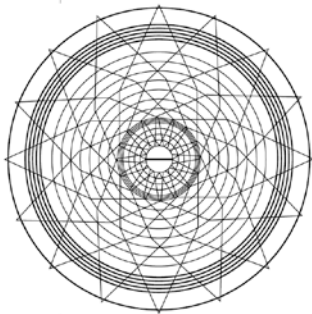
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Ключевые слова: провокация, коммуникационные технологии, медиа, провокатор, виды провокации

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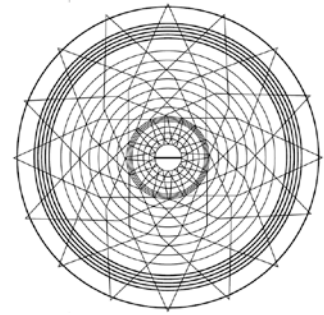
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