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ORDINARY PEOPLE IN MEDIA: NOWADAYS PORTRAIT AND DIGITAL PERSPECTIVE.

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
	The authors presented results of the research project "Media discourses on material and ethnic gaps. A comparative study in St Petersburg and Stockholm". By the content analysis, focus groups and expert interviews methods they have revealed that there is an evident risk to lose substantial matters in traditional media, namely reflection of everyday life which is represented in the common persons' lives. On the contrary, a review of network initiative projects showed that they create a powerful alternative to mainstream media channels not only at the level of technologies, but at the level of the vital people' interests. Network projects develop the "people-to-people" model of communication in the new media environment which gains the audience support.

Introduction:-
General overview:-
Special study of the ordinary people in contemporary media did not become a popular research directory. The authors of few monographic works on this subject emphasize: "It becomes clear that while the participation of ordinary people is continually claimed as the benefit to be realized from each development, their actual participation becomes less and less the focus of investigation and research …" (Turner, 2010, p. 5). From the sociological perspective, the ordinary (common) man in media theme is closely connected with the understanding of everyday life as a central focus in social science, according to A. Giddens (Giddens and Sutton, 2013). In the field of communication and media, experts are concerned about the reliability of the current social reality presentation. So, S. Moores (2000) detects relative problem situations in broadcasting. In turn, the psychological analysis of communications shows that media portrayals of major groups of the population appeared to be distorted social mirrors (Harris, 2004, p. 55). Correspondingly, the media construct the illusion of everyday reality: "within play 'realities' are suspended in favour of fantasies, since the rules of play are not those of ordinary everyday life" (Silverstone, 1994, p. 169). Digital epoch in communications makes this contradiction more and more sharp and complicated. British thinker R. Silverstone has expressed an essence of the occurred changes in an intellectual metaphor while named a modern civilization the Mediapolis: "We have become dependent on the media for the conduct of everyday life ... It is quite clear that the media are not, cannot be, everything ... My argument presumes all this. But it also insists on the significance of the media for our orientation in the world ... in ways unimaginable before the electronic age" (Silverstone, 2007, pp. 5-6). Later, this metaphor has been developed in other relevant projects. For instance, the notable interdisciplinary workshop "Mediapolis: media practices and the political spaces of cities" was organized by the Department of Geography at the Open University (UK). At the St Petersburg State University a multiaspect program of the Mediapolis study was realized (Korkonosenko, 2012); erasing technological, functional and mental borders between traditional "writer" and "reader" is one of the central ideas of the project.

There are few problem questions in this connection. How much a new "reader" is satisfied with the current practice of the media while his searching for own daily life? Is it possible for him to find an adequate picture of himself? Whether different social strata gain equal opportunities for representation and self-presentation in the media, or not gain? In the case of negative answers, our contemporary most likely will leave the traditional media territory for digital nets, as a consumer and self-presenter. From another side, it means that nowadays journalism is unable to provide real publicness in society on the base of technological power, typological diversity, and adequate comprehension of its own public duty (Pöttker, 2010, p. 354).

Methods and procedures:-
Our article in based on the "Media discourses on material and ethnic gaps. A comparative study in St Petersburg and Stockholm" project (financed by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies, Sweden). The aim of the article is to discover the state of affairs with ordinary people in media and, therefore to get answers on questions mentioned above. For this purpose a set of empirical methods has been used. The content analysis method was applied for studying texts of regional newspapers and TV. In St Petersburg, sampling included: newspapers: a) Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosty; b) Vecherniy Peterburg; c) Moy rayon - St Petersburg, Centre; TV-channels): a) Rossia-SPb: "Vesti" & "Civil Society" programs; b) 100 TV: "Latest News" & "Reflection of the day" programs; c) NTV-SPb: "Today in St Petersburg" program; d) Fifth Channel: "Open Studio" program. Periods for study in 2013 consisted of 5 weeks, by date/month: 28/1-3/2 (pilot study), 25/2-3/3, 18-24/3, 8-14/4, 13-19/5. All editorial news were registered in a sample, but only relevant ones were described; relevance means presence of common/exceptional people in the item and regional character of events). The researchers used a specially worked out recording coding scheme into a computer system with software data processing.

Another empirical method was expert in-depth interview by the standard guide, of 1.5 – 2 hours duration. In Russia, the list of expert includes 9 persons responsible for the regional news in the media studied (newspapers and TV channels), as well as deputies of the regional Legislative Assembly and media researchers. In parallel 4 focus groups (6 persons per a group at least) were organized: low/middle educated people, high educated people, ethnic immigrants – permanent residents of St Petersburg, and poor native Russians.

Theoretical and methodical bases and also final statistical data processing have been developed and coordinated in alliance with Swedish partners Cecilia von Feilitzen and Peter Petrov from Södertörn University. Then, empirical procedures were done in Sweden by the same schemes. In this article we focus on the Russian results of the project in the perspective research aspect, with small inclusions of Swedish data.

Results & discussion:-
Common and non-common persons in media: frequency of presence:-
Questions and technique of empirical research assumed a preliminary definition of criteria on which common people differ from "non-common", or exclusive. The research group did not define specially attributes of the common person, but operated on a principle by contradiction, that is agreed about exclusive persons, namely: experts, politicians, high officials from the city council, significant criminals, celebrities, etc. Thus, for a basis the criterion of a social status was taken; for us the common person is the one who is not included in the "non-common" group.

The content analysis statistics of Russian TV news and newspapers (especially) showed that on a frequency of participation common persons visibly lose to non-common persons (Table 1).

Table 1:- Presence of persons in media.

Media	Country	Number of relevant excerpts	Presence of persons	
			Common persons / %	Non-common persons / %
TV	Russia	537	420 / 78	470 / 86
	Sweden	251	215 / 86	83 / 33
Newspapers	Russia	658	223 / 34	511 / 68
	Sweden	435	381 / 88	112 / 26

In Sweden, the proportions looked differ. Other comparative researches of the Russian and Scandinavian press executed by their original techniques, show similar results. For example, it concerns to studying national newspapers

Rossiiskaya gazeta and Norwegian Aftenposten. Among heroes of Rossiiskaya gazeta 65% were known personalities, 20% representatives of middle class and 15% ordinary, usual people. In Aftenposten elite and widely known people made 40% whereas the rest part was presented by simple citizens and middle class (Kudinova, 2015, p. 198). Such a difference may be explained by specific mental attitudes rooted in Russian social customs. Additionally, Nordic nations differ from other Western cultures on the population's attitude to non-common persons. Swedish researcher of the celebrities' characteristic parameters writes about this in soft formulations: "Celebrities are distanced from the general audience. Maybe less so in Sweden than in the US or the UK" (Rübsamen, 2011, p. 98). No doubt, in comparison with Russia the difference is much bigger, and not only in a case of celebrities but in relation to all officials and other kinds of "nachalstvo". One of experts described in detail this national-cultural characteristic of Russians: "In a mass perception the authorities begin from the one who manages regional administration. Obviously they are people who make decisions and can affect something. The chief of a housing office – he is also authorities for the citizens because they depend on him".

It is possible to assume also, that the representation of common people is directly connected with priorities in subjects of media description. There are such topics which to greater degree stimulate journalists for dialogue with ordinary citizens; on the contrary, the certain topics are aimed at interlocutor from among the officials, outstanding experts, famous artists, etc.

54 topics have been included in the content analysis program. A little bit different proportions have been generated on TV and in newspapers though general tendencies also may be seen. The leading group included Culture, in different dimensions (6%/15%), Crime and accidents (11%/5%), City planning and infrastructure (4%/8%), Reports about or with celebrities (4%/2%), Civic activities (4%/4%), Legislation (4%/3%), Child care and family issues (4%/1%), Traffic (3%/4%), and Living conditions (4/4). As it seems, only Child care & family issues and Living conditions give an appropriate platform for media dialogue with ordinary people. At the same time, the thematic rearguard was clearly visible. Such themes never appeared or occurred rarely: Development assistance issues (0%/0%), Terrorism (1%/0%), Pornography (0%/0%), HIV/Aids (0%/0%), et al. Also Corruption (popular theme in a political rhetoric) took rather small place in a media discourse (3%/1%) which to a certain extent was an unexpected result. For our aspect of analysis it is especially important that some meaningful representations of the everyday life didn't gain corresponding attention: Homeless persons, Youth, Elderly people, Handicap in the Social groups section; Interior decoration & home furnishing, Food & cooking, Travels & tourism, Consumer issues in the Consumption section, etc.

There are bases for a conclusion that attention to citizens' conditions does not prevail. Some kinds of events usually are being described with prevailing participation of officials and/or in a form of report on business discussion in this or that administrative organization. Correspondingly, crimes demand a policemen' presence, city planning is a subject for the city planning committee, renovation and interpretation of legislation is a sphere of the Legislative Assembly's competence, and similar. It is hardly possible to wait ordinary man presence within these media contexts.

Similar empirical observations can provoke generalizations at a theoretical level. So, the Estonian researcher of a press ascertains, that journalists "have ceased to write about simple people, pages of newspapers are full of stars and criminals. As a matter of fact, today somewhat takes place … the phenomenon of 'asociality of the press'... Asociality means that the press has concentrated on its own interests, values, and life experience" (Titov, 2012, pp. 29-30).

Ordinary person portraying:-
It is impossible to deny, that in Russia, simple people appear on TV and on newspapers' pages. In which colors? There was a small share of critical (negative) attitudes to common people in Russian media, both on TV and in the print press (10% and 11%), in comparison with positive (44% and 44%) and neutral (55% and 40%) characteristics. The positive image of the concrete ordinary town dweller appeared, when he acted in a role of a victim (for example, in the conflict with officials and household service), and journalists acted in his protection. It is a typical situation for the coverage of conflicts in the sphere of public service of apartment houses. So, in Vecherniy Peterburg which regularly describes such situations, the share of positive characteristics was especially great (27% in contrast with 3% in Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosty where the given problem was being reflected "without people"). For TV, usual man inclusion is frequently a required professional task. Television news quite often use the social foreshortening method i.e., reflection of a situation from the "simple" person's side.

Thus, media not only inform on citizens' critical life situations, but also support them, morally on the minimal level and organizationally on the highest one. Undoubtedly, such actions raise a trust of the population in the mass media and to some extent promote strengthening of civil communications in the city community.

At the same time in the display of the simple person in problem circumstances there are stereotypic decisions which are visible both in subjects and in forms of broadcasting. For example, the image of the elderly person habitually is being formed through a prism of a complex of social problems: low pensions, no needed medicines, loneliness, and deficiency of social service. Contrarily, themes of employment of old persons, their inclusiveness in society are extremely seldom considered. One of experts told about this during in-depth interview: "It is somehow strange to write that some grandmother lives well. All elderly people live badly. The mass media create certain stereotypes".

In current years the disabled people clearly show themselves as the independent socialized group which do not requires a pity but demands the certain conditions for realization of opportunities. In opinion of one of the experts: "We need something that would inspire people for life. I very often come to any families and I listen to them: they do not make exploits, they simply live, simply normally think".

On similar trajectory answers of focus groups' participants run, when they estimated quality of publication of the positive facts from a daily life:

I do not have a hero, with whom I associate myself; I mean that simple people have a positive potentiality, but we do not know this, because such a press does not reach us.

The idea of responsibility for personal destiny and surrounding life was reflected in the stories on Petersburgers whom may be told about "The right man in the right place". In the gallery of simple people's images there were also portraits of such citizens whose singular destiny and bright personal individuality attracted high interest of the audience.

There are no doubts in social and humanistic value of such stories. However, there is a question on motives the pressmen are guided by. Their motivations are not pure altruistic, of course, but can be rather pragmatic and based on commercial interests of the media. This idea was present in the statements of the project experts: "When I was responsible for the 'Destiny of the person' section in the newspaper, every week I was to bring an article about a simple person. In the newspaper there may be an article about the yard cleaner if he became the witness of a crime, or if he made cleanup of the Red Square while some presidents were walking there, or if he has won one million in a lottery". Other project experts (TV reporters) have described a highly pragmatic basis in their choosing heroes: "If you wish to be ostensibly truthful, you should have simple people and should have people from the authorities who work for the common people. To make advances to the population, simple people should appear".

The told reflects a constant necessity of "hunting" for viewers ("to make advances to the population"), and images of simple people are considered as tools for solution of the certain business problems. There are no motives for truthful dialogue with ordinary citizens (public duty, sincere interest to the person, and the like). Experts paid attention to typical usage of simple people in political or other corporate interests: "Unfortunately, even when someone speaks on behalf of simple people, their voices are used for political purposes i.e., there is no interest to what they really think".

For people such an imitation is not a secret. Participants of focus groups precisely diagnosed inclination of the media to falsity:
❖ It is necessary to make a distinction, whether people receive an opportunity to inform about their position, or they are used as inclusions between the pictures.
❖ In TV studio ostensibly any audience sits. They invite whom? The same people in the role of crowd paid by the movie company.
❖ Thus, on the one hand, both researchers, and functionaries of the media industry, and the public realize the necessity of the simple people displaying. On the other hand, occurrence of these people in news is determined by some role characteristics, which are specific for the media. But in any case, the choice of a role belongs to the editorial staffs, and they are responsible for this.

Ordinary people in digital media perspective:-

Thus, our analysis revealed evident gaps in the content niche which is closest to people everyday interests and needs. Such results also coincide with the other audience surveys. In Russia, TV spectators mark a wide range of topics that are rarely touched in the media. By results of the poll, the audience does not have enough materials on the people's rights (41%), representations of the ordinary people's points of view (35.4%), corruption and crime investigations (19.5%) (Fomicheva, 2010, p. 168). These requests of the population are in poor agreement with the position of researchers who doubt that their compatriots "regardless of age, gender or anything else, are always desperate to know anything about the most minor public figures … there is a powerful belief in the appeal of celebrity" (Brockington, 2015, p. 393).

The demand on information on people's social needs forms the basis for deepening individualization of the media product consumption. Back in 2007, experts noted that consumers increasingly prefer to receive "customized" content according to their individual interests that is "fragments of newspapers or television programs at once and from many sources, rather than extract the needed information from the entire issues" (Mazo, 2007). Fragmentary consumption gives people freedom of choice. Moreover, they acquire real opportunity to be presented in media and thus to overcome public inequality. Civil society needs a lot of Web 2.0 sites, which should play an important role in forming user-generated content. These practices are of particular interest as examples of social activism dynamics, as a new type of media, and as a resource for media humanization because they develop horizontal (people-to-people) links.

Some prominent civil projects developed earlier and used by both traditional and new media as an impact instrument for the promotion of ideas and values in society. So, in October 2010, the Internet site www.juvenaljustice.ru began fighting for the rights of parents and families. The parents' resistance has resulted in the protests against the juvenile justice system as a symbol of an alien social practice. The new discourse has identified the transformation of public opinion in respect to foreign adoption: 38% with a negative attitude in 2010 and 75% in 2012 (Russian children, 2010; "The Law", 2013). Today, the content related to environmental issues, people's rights protection, violations in the sphere of housing and communal services and etc. is actively promoted in the Web (Blue bucket society, http://sineevedro.ru/; Bloggers against trash, http://www.bloggerprotiv.ru/; Zoopatrol, http://petonik.com/; RosZHKH, http://roszkh.ru/).

Civil projects have different functions: crowd sourcing (Help map, http://russian-fires.ru/; Caring people community, http://nepofigizm.ru/), crowd funding (Together, http://together.ru/; A single thread from everyone, http://smipon.ru/), initiatives (**Yopolis,** http://yopolis.ru/; Democtator, http://democrator.ru), or complaints (Rosyama, http://rosyama.ru/; My territory, http://www.streetjournal.org/). Systematization of such projects is one of the steps along the way of the scientific understanding of media phenomenon (Frolova, 2016).

Many impressive examples appeared which demonstrate interest in innovative media practices focused on audience needs and bringing concrete, practically effective results. Of particular note is "Hothouse of social technologies" (http://te-st.ru/) as a public education project, aimed at developing cooperation between the non-profit sector and IT-specialists, established in 2012 on the base of the Agency for Social Information (ASI). The team included journalists, web-developers, authors of civil projects, as well as those who regularly take part in the charity work. The project is aimed at the dissemination of information on existing practices, the best ideas and really useful tools. National cross-media project on the social businessmen in Russia should also be mentioned. The project "Lifework" started in December 2015, on the eve of the Year of Russian Cinema; it consists of a series of inspiring short films - stories of social entrepreneurs in our country, narrated in the first person (http://www.delo.life/). The activity of information portal "These things" (http://takiedela.ru/) of the charity foundation "Help" is also a significant experience. The project team has made a statement important for the net journalism development: "We want to become the success stories project. We will make every effort to every story and the problem described by us would be resolved successfully. We are fed up with the situation where journalists use people's disasters for their own benefit and bring no good by their publication" (We develop).

Perspectives:-

The situation presented in the study has a number of options for the development, based on the professional journalists' position, media channels' policy, and economic factors of the media functioning. We can expect further media division in accordance with the real concern of common people issues. We can also assume a growing media

interest in the common man during the election campaign as it usually happens; there is also a possibility that content monetization will compete human and citizen approach to the topics of coverage.

Conclusions:-

Empirical examination showed that focus groups participants' and experts' opinions coincide (or are close) in many problem points relative to reflection of the contemporaries in the media. Media content and its estimations from different sides demonstrate that the preference is given to the topics, facts and images which are far from the everyday life of the majority of people. Focus groups participants do not support such a strategy and aren't satisfied with it. From their evaluation and corresponding content analysis data, the conclusion may be done about the risk to lose substantial matters in traditional media, namely reflection of everyday life as an essential characteristic of journalism. On the contrary, a review of network initiative projects shows that they form a powerful alternative to mainstream channels with their conservative professional ideology. Apparently, we can expect further expansion of network resources in the struggle for audience.

Acknowledgments:-

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