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ROLE OF AN ENTERTAINMENT-HUMOROUS TALK SHOW IN THE POLITICAL COMMUNICATION (“VANO’S SHOW”)

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ABSTRACT

Since the 20th century popularity of the talk show has been rising and is taking its place in the television network. Key determinant of its popularity is offering of entertainment and conversation to the audience, mainly entertainment via conversation (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994).

Proceeding from popularity of a Talk Show it becomes more interesting for politicians for the purpose of representing of themselves as well as introducing of political processes in desirable terms. Accordingly, a role of the entertainment-humorous talk-show is increasing in political communication.

The stated article is targeted at researching and analyzing, on the instance of a definite talk show, of a place of politics in humor and at researching of sympathies or antipathies carried by it in relation to definite actors or parties. Accent is made on a phenomenon of an anchorman of the talk show and his guests, their attitudes and forms of communication.

The discussed empiric field is supported with theoretic grounds which enable us to analyze received results. By discussing of practical examples on the basis of theoretic grounds this article contains results which prove significance of the role of entertainment-humorous talk shows in the political communication.

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Recently mass media represents a main platform for providing of valuable political communication. Moreover, during significant political events television becomes a center of attention (Toogod & Lloyd, 2015), when we can see whether there is a definite political underlying basis for functionality of media and whether it is applied as a purposeful mechanism in political communication or not.

Accordingly, TV channels broadcast a specific political process, with selected line of sight and accents (editorial policy) according with their own purposes.

All of the aforesaid confirms changeability of mass media’s functions: after the recreational function had created a new system of relations with viewers, integration into the network led to transforming of entertainment into one of the key demands of the society, it is waiting the same from

media. Talk show becomes more popular that is conditioned by offering of entertainment and conversation to the audience, mainly entertainment via conversation.

The Late-night Entertainment Talk-Show has been formed as one of the sub-genres of the Talk Show. Its popularization increased in 1960-1970s thanks to the anchorman John Carson deservedly who, in 1980s, was replaced by David Letterman when the Talk Show was supplemented with a new, diversified manner, particularly it combined news, entertainment and monologues of a comedic genre. According to the format, in the beginning of the Talk-Show the anchor-man acquaints us with news from comedic viewpoint using verbal, non-verbal and visual means (Timberg, 2002, p. 137). In the contemporary broadcasting media one of the examples of the same sub-genre may be represented by the Georgian “Vano’s Show” which in 2021-2022 was broadcasted by the TV Company “Mtavari Arkhi”. It falls into the humorous genre, and was shown on the screen on Fridays, at 10.00 p.m anchored by Vano Javakhishvili. With the account of the Talk Show’s history it is noteworthy that initially it was broadcasted by “Rustavi 2”, and after changing of owners of the channel transferred to “Mtavari Arkhi”. Since then (since 2023) viewers enjoy the program on air of the “TV Pirveli”.

Aim of the stated article is to research and to analyze a role of humoristic talk shows in political communication. Accordingly, it has the following tasks:

- To research an opportunity of representation of politicians in the talk shows.
- To analyze political sympathies/ antipathies towards concrete individuals and parties.

The article contains monitoring of the television media in the period of 2021-2022 that has been analyzed by a method of qualitative content analysis. The stated is applied for detailed and systematic analysis of TV talk shows that enables revealing of definite trends.

While making qualitative content analysis, in our case, methods of thematic and structural analysis are rather focal. The first one makes an accent on the text content, mainly on what is said. The thematic analysis is useful for revealing of general characteristic features of different cases, mainly it is used for revealing of a similar topic among narrated histories. As for the structural analysis, it is focused on analyzing of manner of sharing of the news. Topic and content are still substantial; however, they make room for the form of transmission, - which strategies are used by media in persuading of the audience (Tsuladze, 2020). Accordingly, both of them are very significant for the article represented by us.

Actually, since the period of rising of interest towards talk shows, a desire of politicians to represent themselves in this genre has been increasing step-by-step. Accordingly, entertainment and humor/ satire sustainably occupied its place in many media systems of the world. However, on top of improving of the social mood, it obtained a lever to have an impact on auditorial views as the humorous talk-shows assimilated a political discourse which became their integral part (Postman, 2005) that was sourced by, for instance Richard Nixon’s interview with Jack Paar. Conversation turned to be successful, however, sometimes later, Nixon lost television debates with Kennedy. As a result of this, an issue of restoration of his image was included into agenda; besides, very soon a track record of failures was supplemented by losing of elections of the Governor of California. Repeatedly, he appeared in the “Night Show with Jack Parker”, but in the role unexpected for viewers, - as a pianist, together with a musician’s spouse. According to the anchorman, they were accompanied by 15 specially selected representatives of the Democratic Party who supported the guest musically. We can say that it was the time when the politician managed to represent himself from a different view and to make a bold statement on involving into the political struggle (Whitfield, 1985, pp. 114-132).

Politicians are frequent visitors of the “Vano’s Show”; historically, it was always broadcasted by the oppositional channels and its visitors, majorly, were oppositional politicians or the individuals with publicly known political preferences.

Respectively, a talk show has an essential role in the process of formation of political communication and political message boxes, particularly while floating of an oppositional narrative, for instance representing of the “National Movement” and Mikheil Saakashvili.

In the Talk Show the stated party is represented as a key political powerhouse which traced a path to all other politicians, but finally betrayed it and moved to other parties.

„Vano’s Show” pays a great attention on representing of a personality of Mikheil Saakashvili where its main integral part includes comparing of him with the recent government and constant efforts of the anchorman Vano Javakhishvili to demonstrate superiority of the former leader. One of the distinguished examples of the stated is the quotation of the anchorman: “The third President and the first

intrigant Mikheil Saakashvili has obtained the vaccines. Misha told us that he had millions of vaccines in surplus and is ready to donate it to the country which is ready to deal with him. Why were you surprised when I represented him as an intrigante? It is because he ruined a corruptive plan being organized for months regarding vaccination just in five minutes.” Generally, in the post-pandemic period Vano Javakhishvili, via his Talk Show, frequently criticized the Government due to bad management of Covid pandemics, and unsuccessful vaccination process. In addition to it, he continued his narrative in relation to the third President: “There is no need, do not interfere, let them make money at the cost of one’s life. Do not interfere, who is asking you, stay in your Ukraine, we successfully die here, we do not need either the state built by you, or our nation saved by you.”

By using this and other examples, Vano Javakhishvili constantly tries to formulate a kind of opinion that the acting Government, “Georgian Dream” is ignored and demonstrated as weak. In his opinion the government did not manage to provide its population with vaccines and refused to receive the aid proposed by Mikheil Saakashvili who, that time was taking much more care over his state remotely.

One of the new seasons was launched with a visit of the anchorman to Kyiv and making interview with the third President. Their dialogue was rather familiar, friendly and unofficial (on first name terms). There are several key topics distinguished in the stated interview: recalling of fame of the Saakashvili’s period; vilification of the recent government; economic regress; falsification of elections and discussion of current processes which are accurately reflected in the general political narrative carried through the talk show.

On top of all a major topic is returning of Mikheil Saakashvili to Georgia. Proceeding from the fact that the issue was represented in the manner enabling everyone to know about a visit of the former President, he made posts (statements) from different cities “built by him” (Batumi, Tbilisi, Anaklia...), while the government persuaded us that he had been in Truskavets that time.

Finally, the Glovo’s courier found the ex-President faster than the government. Such narrative is targeted at underscoring of the government’s weakness and vulnerability of the state.

Besides, in frames of the Talk Show, negative, cynical and offensive statements towards the founder of the Party “Georgian Dream”, Bidzina Ivanishvili, and the Prime Minister, Irakli Gharibashvili, are noted in the anchorman’s monologues as well as in the guest’s monologues.

Bidzina Ivanishvili, prior to leaving the politics, published a detailed letter which Vano Javakhishvili cynically names as the “Testament”, and solely Ivanishvili – as the “Father of the Nation”, the “Heavensent Man”, the “Headman”, the „Bread-winner”.

Besides, the showman summarizes political activity of Ivanishvili: “Suspending of the Anaklia’s Port – is the first, collapse of the Economics – is the second, a Gavrilov’s arrival – is the third, counting in Russian language as he considers that Russia is exactly the country of his charity,” – says the anchorman.

Here, we should not forget a context of the issue. “Mtavari Arkhi” since the date of its incorporation, and earlier “Rustavi 2” on its TV air usually reports about pro-Russian orientation of Bidzina Ivanishvili. Their communication is solely based on it; thus, we can say that the program “Vano’s Show” repeats the channel’s policy in relation to the government. In reviewing of this issue humorous sketches, cubes and musical clips created on different issues actively spread in the “Vano’s Show” are very important. All of them are connected with the politics and current processes. Here, we may face prototypes of different politicians which are created in relation to humorists, for instance Irakli Gharibashvili, Bidzina Ivanishvili, Salome Zurabishvili and Mikheil Saakashvili.

Such humorous sketches are represented by imitated news where you will listen only to Ivanishvili’s praising. Here, founder of the Party is shown in the role of Stalin where his devoted servant, - a prototype of Irakli Gharibashvili provides him with information about plebeians, mainly about ordinary people. They perceive population as a poor, incapable, low layer and insult democracy. It is the way how the “Vano’s Show” describes the government of the country, top-ranking officers and their activity.

In the program of the Talk Show’s format a key role is assigned to a phenomenon of the anchorman. For instance, in 1963 Jack Paar was replaced by John Carson who was characterized by ordinary image and a skill of creation of a friendly environment in the program. He was very careful while joking on political issues, avoided brusque statements; on his opinion the stated might have a negative impact on his popularity and could lead to losing of viewers. He considered that his key task

as of the anchorman as well as of the Talk Show was entertainment of the viewer but not reporting news, and accordingly his humor did not cause offence to politicians. His effort to maintain a balance between satiric humor and offensive, hoarse jokes turned to be productive. (Miller, 2003) It is explained by the fact that political humor may have an ambiguous purpose: the first one – reaching of solidarity towards definite issues and the second one – to satirize, to caricature politicians and political parties (Hmielowski, Holbert, & Lee, 2011, p.100). However, it should be noted that in choosing a target of each of them the Talk Show preserves its key skill, - to deliver a political content to the audience with new nuances as, this time, it is perceived lighter and more carefree in comparison with news.

Accordingly, Talk Shows became a new level of relations with electors and a completely new space for creation of an emotional link with them (Holbert, 2005, pp. 436-453). It is the main reason of why one of the means of personification of politicians is their hosting in entertainment talk-shows. On the emotional level, we would like to separate two methods of representation of individual superiority and personification of politicians:

- To make an accent on individual features, individualism and capabilities of politicians instead of their political positions;
- To foreground private life, family, origin, experience of politicians (Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanlyer, 2012).

Mainly, in the pre-election period we will meet foregrounding of persons of politicians, especially when they take a part in elections.

In October of 2021 self-governance elections were conducted in Georgia. The “Vano’s Show” hosted the Mayor’s candidates of different towns and cities representing opposition.

We can say that accents are similar in relation with all guests: extreme poverty in the precinct, unemployment, improper state of infrastructure, nihilism in population, inactivity of the Government and regress of the country. In those elections the Tbilisi Mayor’s Candidate for the second term was represented by Kakha Kaladze from the “Georgian Dream” and by the Chairman of the “National Movement” Nika Melia - from the United Opposition. Vano Javakhishvili satirizes the presentation conducted by the “Georgian Dream” where Kakha Kaladze was represented, as on the opinion of the anchorman they appeared in Mtatsminda, not against the musical background of a well-known hit “Tbiliso” but of a well-known Russian song “Victory’s Day” („День Победы»), and simultaneously he warns the population to think thoroughly about their choice as “Milan made him leave the country after his contribution in winning of the League in 9 years, but in our case, he had repaired infrastructure of Vake, but back to front.” Against this background the “Vano’s Show” hosted Nika Melia, his father and his underage son where he was represented as a favorite candidate of the population ready to lead the country in correct direction. Anzor Melia characterized Nika as a loving son and attentive father who that time had to take care over the city. During the whole monologue the anchorman was expressing respect and veneration to him, he represented his guest as the only one right-minded power who brought Europeans into the country and created a 43% barrier. In the Talk-Show conducted prior to the second tour of elections Vano Javakhishvili finished his monologue with the following quotation: “Ones often advise to tick any number except for “41”. As for me, who is a beacon of democracy I will never ask you to do this; on the contrary I will recommend you to go to elections and if you like that your fridge is empty – tick “41”; if you like that the petrol price exceeds three lari – tick “41”; if you like considering that a free word will not exist in your country – tick “41”; if you like that you are listened and recorded in your bedroom – tick “41”; if you want your country to be a part of Russia, - tick “41”; if you want your country finally ruined – tick “41” as the 41” and the “Georgian Dream” are the best in making this!” Finally, in representation of elections in the “Vano’s Show” the anchorman’s opinion and position on definite political issues are vivid that has an impact on the cycle of the whole Talk-Show.

If initially, media, by implementation of the function of entertainment was aimed at attracting of the audience, playing of a kind of therapeutic role, emotional discharge, in contemporary epoch, a function of recreation is oriented on the social-political life. Media added a new burden to entertainment and humor, that in some cases, transformed into signs characteristic for the recreational function. For instance:

- Tabooed / rude topics.
- Sensation – scandal topics.
- Thematic division or distribution of the issues not by their thematic significance, but by rate.

In the “Vano’s Show” you will often meet a context based on sensation and insolence, that, in its turn, contains scandals and has more “yellow color”. For instance, a dispute of the Regulatory Commission with the TV Channel “Mtavari Arkhi” which is connected with a cadre approximated to genitals of the Deputy Minister of Finance Vano Machavariani from the Parliament’s Session which was covered by one of the footages of the news program. This fact was recognized as insolent by the Regulatory Commission. Viewers could see that disputable cadre several times in the “Vano’s Show”. On the first hand, the cadre was scandal as it became a subject of dispute, and, on another hand, abusive and sensitive for a concrete individual. The cadre was accompanied by the anchorman’s comment: “Had we recorded any particular? We report absolute all facts. Here, we can see a real attitude of the government to the state.”

An effort of creation of a sensational nature in the “Vano’s Show” is vivid that is often reflected in insolence. For instance, the anchorman alludes the TV “Imedi” as an air of the ‘Political Pornography’. He gives the following assessment to the Prime-Minister at one of the Government’s Meetings: “Gharibashvili was sitting as if he had been a bride; it looked like a situation when all people around understood what had happened in the previous night, and all gazed after the bride’s behavior, but did not pretend that they had noticed anything.” We face replication of insolence not only in his monologues but in sketches and dialogues with guests as well. One of such cases happened in the interview with Eliso Kiladze. She told a dirty joke about a “Collective member of the “Georgian Dream” which really had a place with one of the Parliamentarians. “Once a member of the “Georgian Dream” entered the restaurant and got acquainted with a cute girl, he took her to the hotel, spent time with her, but unsuccessfully. Then, he told to the amazed girl that everything was Saakashvili’s fault. When the girl got interested why it was Saakashvili’s fault, the politician answered that he could not accuse Brezhnev in it, as in that period he had no any problem. Thus, on top of all they accuse Saakashvili even in their impotence,” - stated the guest.

It is noteworthy that Vano Javakhishvili uses such dirty jokes as if bundled in humor exactly for assessment of political events and insulting of concrete forces. For instance, the anchorman narrated the history cooked up by himself to underline “bad behavior” and “otiosity” of the Government just after the following statement of Gharibashvili “Georgia will have the highest development growth in Europe in the next five years”. Vano Javakhishvili addresses to viewers: “Imagine a man of 75 years old who voted for the “Georgian Dream” in 2012. Promises of that year had not been fulfilled but he was told that the next 2 years would be better. Unfortunately, they turned to be worse. After reaching the age of 77, the man was told that the fourth year will be fantastic. After reaching of 79 years the next promise covered additional five years, and following that that man was waking with the only belief that the government has fulfilled its promise. Now that man is 84 years old, Gharibashvili talks about the same five years, mainly that when his age reaches 89 years Georgia will have the highest economic growth. Now, please be so kind and tell me who can say, better than that man, where Gharibashvili should take his economic growth. It’s just a history of one man. That’s all”.

To summarize the article, we should state that the program “Vano’s Show” is completely absorbed with purposeful, specific political narrative which clearly expresses political sympathies and antipathies. The Talk Show makes viewers feel exactly who are favorite politicians, friendly guests, like-minded persons, hostile political camps and who are satirized, ignored politicians liked or disliked by the anchorman. Vano Javakhishvili laughs at and makes viewers laughing at all political events happening in the country that, in any case, becomes a subject of interest. Here, you will not see a different opinion, or a similar humor to all politicians. He, vividly, repeats rhetoric of the oppositional party, mainly “National Movement”, and fulfills a function of support, carrying of interest and advocacy in their political communication.

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