RUMOUR NEWS AND ITS FEATURES

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The magic of rumours and their background are discussed in the paper. The features of rumour news, which make them interesting to an individual who can fulfil his creativity here as a creator of information and potential of a transmitter, are revealed here. It is shown that joining information "enlargers" turns an individual into the hostage of the news interchange net because of two main reasons: firstly, because of difficulties to uphold moral discretion while conveying the news, and, secondly, because of the rumour's incompletion due to absence of a complete mechanism that makes it insatiable, requiring a new and ever "fresher" information. Factors impeding the individual's withdrawal from the rumour's space are analysed.

Introduction

Rumours as a form of informal interpersonal communication is quite a common phenomenon. Regardless of its insufficient validity, information received in such a way seems pretty attractive. It's no wonder that rumour news not only spread quickly, but also makes a large impact on an official certified information by stimulating accessibility and publicity. So even though a rumour has a bad reputation in society, it manages to attract attention of those who receive it. Moreover, it manages to attract them insomuch that they can forget the time, their environment and even their direct work.

Many researchers (Handelman 1986; Peckham 1972; Nkrpa 1977) point out that exactly for that matter the power of a rumour is dangerous to individuals and society. Regardless of that, rumour conveyors often endeavour to reveal themselves as the guardians of morality and order. Their buzzed rumours often have a destructive nature – they create chaos and contraposition (Cox 1970). First of all,

they destroy order, wipe off social barriers and stimulate rumour receivers to reject their social responsibilities. The individuals who are affected by a rumour (are mentioned in it) receive an undeserved obsessive society's attention, become outcasts, and the receivers of the rumour are on the alert to get even fresher and hotter news. Thus the rumour obsession is not only maintained, but even stimulated in society (Pomerantz 1984).

Yet thereby it is still not fully clear what is the main feature of *news of a rumour*, how it differs from news in general. Some researchers consider that the main feature of rumour news is the *shocking surprise of* its informational *content*; others consider – it is that *it can't be checked* (Goffman 1981). Therefore, it is important to try to distinguish the essential features of rumour news.

Such a detection, on the one part, would allow better understanding of the phenomenon of the rumour itself and the peculiarities of ru-

mour news; on the other part, that could help to understand better the roots of the power of attractiveness and influence of rumour news: how could that happen, that people get so involved in "the net of rumour interchange" that they may even forget the time, and ultimately – can they (is it possible) to struggle free with the strength of their own. So the **subject** of the investigation is the features of rumour news.

The **objective** of this work is to discover the features of rumour news which give it such an attractiveness and turn a partner of the rumour's cycle to the hostage of the net of the rumour news.

Rumour news and its features

Trying to answer the raised questions, first of all every one of us, who receives much information every day, has to ask ourselves: what captures our attention in the given news. It will emerge that not nearly its importance nor even its consequences but merely *novelty (rarity).* Much news just seems to be important. Without a context, in which the wish to learn the message is being waken and the possibility of emotional excitement to *find out* something that others don't know yet, the news is not yet the news (Goffman 1981). Every one of us with the true-life matters is able to cull from news and primarily those, which interest us the most.

Though there still exists the news which has nothing in common with our objectives. It "lives" by our side as much as other news which seems not to concern us. But we take notice to it once. After that we note that this news is associated with the second one and the later one, and we get keen to get to know the third one, etc. Thus the set of news involves us into the gulf of news, and insensibly our whole attention shifts towards one direction – to receiving even fresher news about the person of interest, his work, action or event, even if it would not be exactly confirmed (Labov 1980).

Thirst for information is met by various institutions (also by organizations and individuals) by giving an official well-founded information. Yet to many people, it seems incomplete, not overall, provided in an insufficiently accessible form. Besides, it looks "external", alien (because it is only offered as a final product to a supplier, who in turn wants not only to receive it, but also to know all the "producing" techniques, stages, to be if not the creator, then at least the witness of creation. So it's no wonder that from a well-founded information the eye turns to a rumour and to the news it supplies.

The question is why people want rumours so much and not any other sort of news which could be reasoned and certified.

It may be supposed that rumour news is not simple news, but is distinguished for its particular features. Consequently, the magic of a rumour is virtually the magic of particular news features, which appear very attractive to an individual who can fulfil his creativity here as the potency of "information creator and transmitter".

The point is that all news has the conclusion. Usually it's very clear, but mostly only to the person who provides it. However, there is always probability that it is not precise, full and complete. Therefore, no matter how hard the providers of an official information would try, their news will always be met with some sort of disbelief because it will seem that everything is just too easy, that something remains untold. Furthermore, after receiving one message it goes to another one, which often doesn't have anything in common with the previous one. Thus the presentation of information (news as an odd sort of "monads" *ipse sui*) to society meets some sort of "rejection". Here just the hour for a rumour strikes. Exactly a rumour allows an individual to feel important in the field of news interchange.

What features does rumour news have, which make it so attractive? Two substantial features described below could be distinguished.

Incompletion of rumour news and permanent "accession". *The first basic feature of rumour news is that it never seeks to answer a question in full.* In other words, it doesn't have the conclusion as the final and universally acceptable part. That is determined by the nature of a rumour itself because it is always "underway", i e permanently created. And this creation is not a closed but open process in which everyone who wants may participate. This incompleteness of rumour news and ongoing "accession" with a new information protects a rumour from categorical absoluteness which is more or less typical of "the news" given in an official way, and thus gives it attraction.

Continuity (serialness) of rumour news. The point is that rumour news (a story) always stands on the previous story. Besides, the transmitter of news is often specifically named (of course that belongs on a rumour's content and on the level of trust in the receiver of a rumour). (That was said by "X" and to him by "Y"… But you cannot tell anyone about it…). The conveyor retails rumour news in his own way, though he tries to retain the substantial elements. So in this way rumour serials are created. *The continuity (serialness) of narrative stories is the second typical feature of a rumour.*

Thereby a rumour limits these narrations in its particular way: you cannot overstep the framework of an accepted story's plot, you may just give some new "colours" to separate events by emphasizing the details of the story. Several people who retail a heard story may give several versions of its narration. Despite that all the versions would be *"about that".*

It's also true to say that it would be several series of the same film (several approaches of the same deed or action). That's exactly what a person longs for. Partly the popularity of TV serials among ordinary people can be explained by the fact that basically the same story is told from different angles. Exactly *this pleasure of "searching" for the truth attracts people*. They want not only to observe the process of "reading" but also to play up in it. That's exactly the opportunity given by a rumour.

Furthermore, one shouldn't forget that the spread of a rumour goes on in a verbal way, and the speech, as a psychologist M. Moerman notices, because of its psycho-physiological nature and effect on the person's psychical condition, is one of the biggest enjoyments which a human being experiences (Moerman 1973: 193–218). A rumour as a verbal act gives everyone an opportunity to experience this pleasure.

Thus the mentioned features of a rumour – *incompletion and continuity (serialness)* – secure interest in informal information and its transmission during interpersonal communication. They also give possibility for every individual to contribute to "accession" of news ant thus feel significant and important, avoiding personal responsibility for the validity of "the news" when he is just one of its numerous "creators". On the other hand, integration into the ranks of news "enlargers'" menaces the not inconsiderable danger to become the hostage of the net of rumour news interchange.

Detention in the net of news interchange

Everyone comes into a rumour with his own "sketched in" news by himself. But it's not that easy (if it is overall possible) to leave the net of rumour news interchange, because the presence in the rumour's space, even a temporary and episodic one, substantially ties individuals by turning them into particular hostages of the rumour.

The first important thing, which turns individuals to the rumour's hostages, is ***the difficulties to retain the moral discretion during the conveyance of information.*** They are determined by several reasons.

Firstly, a rumour at a social point is considered to be the action of bad reputation and, therefore, the individuals involved in the rumour process (in communication) act very warily and try not to pressurize the partner, but wait for him to join the conversation voluntarily. Thus they try to retain their discretion.

However, as practice shows, such an intercourse always has the price of its own as well. After all, a conveyed information always has a particular moral aspect.

In other words, an information about that other "third person who is absent here" is not just information, but it is special – it is confidential, speaks about things which are not publicized. But exactly these "unpublicized" things interest a collocutor most. In turn, this prompts the "news" conveyor to satisfy the collocutor's curiosity by complementing the "news" himself and this way making it more attractive. But such one's own complement always has a moral aspect. There is always a danger in conveying it, from the one side, not to retain the limits of information's moral security, on the other side, to emphasize the news' details by adding one's own interpretation and thus to overstep the limits of morality.

Secondly, a negative rumour's content from the point of view of morality prompts the conveyors of news to create stories with happy endings. Thus it's no wonder, that the same story retailed by several people may have different moral valuation. That new moral assessment of an action requires much more than just the change of particular details in the given story. Everyone, who listens to the story or news absorbs the whole given information like a sponge and waits for a reward for that – to hear about the "immoralities" of the other person, his immoral deeds, which are hidden from the eyes of others, and to feel more decent than he is (I'm not a person like he is). The rumour conveyor (creator) has to offer this reward for "the services of the sponge". In turn that prompts to change the plot of the story, to complement it with new details to retain the collocutor's attention. Naturally, it is hard to preserve morality in such a case.

Thirdly, all the surrounding people and events may get into the rumour's view and become its subject. First it's our friends, neighbours, colleagues and famous people who interest us. Their behaviour and actions are a wellspring for their calumniation. Thus a new information will inevitably be given over and over again, and their actions and events will be covered in an evernew light all over again. Naturally, the number of conveyors of the "news" will also multiply. Likewise the limits of the rumour's content will expand; evernew things, which satisfy our curiosity, will fall into it. It is understandable that in such a case it is difficult to retain discretion, and it is easy to step over the limits of morality. Hence, by becoming the transmitter of a rumour an individual becomes the morality hostage of the rumour information too.

Another important thing, which turns individuals into the hostages of a rumour, is the ***rumour's incompletion***. The point is that a rumour, in contrast to other forms of communication, seems not to have an internally complete mechanism. In other words, it has no definite terminative limit; it is always "supplemented" with ever fresher "news" and therefore it is voracious. Therefore, usually the end comes to a rumour only when it is ended just by the will of the person.

The question is: *could a rumour be depleted by itself*? Obviously could not. But a rumour may be "overheated" (its attractiveness and relevance may be reduced) by a conveyor himself. The point is that a rumour circulates under the law which could be expressed by the following formula:

$$C = (TI)^{\,v} - t,$$

where T – appropriate, opportune and necessary time to receive information; I – source of information; v – degree of interest in a rumour; t –receiver's individual taste, disposition, values, priorities, etc.

All the components mentioned in the formula have to be properly balanced. In other words, it would be hard to believe that a rumour will be fully accepted if the sources of information are suspicious, the time is not right and the receiver's disposition and tastes are not consid-

ered. It's also true to say that every rumour has its "consumer" who envisages his own interest and unfulfilled dreams in it. So it is important to find him and to "present" him with this dream. In turn the acceptance of the gift means showing gratefulness and undertaking an obligation. In the case of a rumour its acceptance means involving into the rumour game as a partner rather than an observer. It is true that the level of participation may be different.

"Everyone can see, but only few can attack", M. Machiavelli said. There are people who receive a rumour (from curiosity) but are loath to spread it; they are not "activists". Nevertheless, the receiver of information about "the third person" may be implicated into the rumour by necessity as its active member.

An individual, who transmits information about his neighbour to the third person, involves him into a conversation, which by necessity will be directed towards personalities and discussion about personal matters. Thus the conveyor and receiver of rumour information will appear. Then it will be difficult for both of them to withdraw from this situation.

One also could say: people always bring rumour information (a content for contemplation) themselves by joining communication. And of course they stay together – they "settle" in the rumour's space. The cycle of a rumour (conveyor – receiver – conveyor) turns them into the creators of a news story. That is exactly the reason, why it is hard to leave up to the end (the completion) of a rumour because every member of its cycle (does not want/is afraid to) is the first to leave the area of the rumour. This reluctance is related with three things.

Firstly, by leaving the rumour's cycle he decreases possibility to know "more" and in greater detail and satisfy his curiosity.

Secondly, by leaving the rumour's cycle he does not feel safe because in that case he might become the "third person" himself who will become the subject of discussion.

Thirdly, by leaving the rumour's cycle he also challenges the trivial practice of communication

where a rumour is its concurrent part. After rejecting it by necessity, there arises a danger of social isolation, and that is exactly what an individual is most afraid of.

So it is true to say that a rumour is a sort of a particular game, into which, on the one part, an individual involves himself by seeking to satisfy his curiosity, on the other part, he is involved by the practices and institutions of information transmission and receiving, which dominate in social surroundings and are determined to satisfy all our needs, including the need to know "more" and in greater detail. However, one way or another, we choose information ourselves. So we are responsible for our choice ourselves too.

Conclusions

1. There are two essential features which are specific of rumour news: firstly, it is the incompleteness and permanent "accession" of the news; secondly, the continuity (serialness) of rumour news. Namely these features look very attractive to an individual, who can realize himself, feel important and significant in the field of rumour news creation and transfer (interchange).

2. Joining the ranks of news' "fillers" turns an individual to the hostage of the net of rumour news interchange because of two main reasons: firstly, because of difficulties to retain moral discretion in conveying the news, secondly, because of the rumour's incompletion – the absence of an internally complete mechanism, what makes it voracious, requiring new and ever "fresher" information, and thus impeding the individual's withdrawal from the area of rumour news interchange.

3. Reluctance to leave the rumour's cycle is impeded by three factors. Firstly, by leaving the rumour's cycle, an individual decreases possibility to know "more" and in greater detail and satisfy his curiosity. Secondly, by

leaving the rumour's cycle, he does not feel safe because in that case he might become the "third person" who will become the subject of discussion. Thirdly, by leaving the rumour's cycle, he challenges the trivial practice of communication where a rumour is its concurrent part. After rejecting such a communication by necessity, there arises a danger of social isolation, and that is exactly what an individual is most afraid of.

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GANDO NAUJIENOS IR JŲ YPATUMAI

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Straipsnyje aptariama gando naujienų magija ir jos prielaidos. Atskleidžiamos gando naujienų ypatybės, kurios daro jas patrauklias individui, kuris gali realizuoti savo kaip informacijos kūrėjo ir perdavėjo kūrybiškumą. Parodoma, kad įsitraukimas į naujienų „papildytojų" gretas individą daro gando naujienų mainų tinklo įkaitu dėl dviejų esminių priežasčių: pirma, dėl moralinio diskretiškumo išsaugojimo sunkumų, perteikiant naujieną, ir, antra, dėl gando nebaigiamumo – vidujai užbaigto mechanizmo nebuvimo, kas daro jį nepasotinamą, reikalaujantį naujos ir vis šviežesnės informacijos. Nagrinėjamos aplinkybės, sunkinančios individo išėjimą iš gando naujienų mainų erdvės.