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IDENTIFICATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TRIGGERS IN THE INFORMATION SPACE BY MEANS OF DIGITAL INTELLIGENCE

Abstract. The article examines the problem of identifying psychological triggers in the information space under conditions of digitalization and hybrid information threats. It is substantiated that psychological triggers serve as a key instrument of manipulative influence, as they activate emotional and cognitive responses of the audience and contribute to the reduction of critical perception of information. It is determined that their use enables the formation of specific behavioral attitudes and influences decision-making processes in the digital environment.

The mechanisms of functioning of psychological triggers at linguistic, semantic, visual, and algorithmic levels are analyzed. Their relationship with cognitive biases and the specifics of digital platforms is established, which enhances the overall effect of manipulative influence. Particular attention is paid to the role of the digital environment, which ensures the rapid dissemination of information and amplifies the impact of triggers due to the scale and repetition of content.

The study substantiates the feasibility of applying an interdisciplinary approach to the identification of psychological triggers, which involves the integration of applied linguistic analysis tools with open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods. The potential of linguistic analysis for detecting markers of manipulative influence is revealed, as well as the role of OSINT in investigating information sources, content dissemination channels, digital traces, and audience reactions.

A comprehensive methodology for identifying psychological triggers is proposed, including stages of data collection and verification, linguistic and discourse analysis, trigger identification, determination of their functional purpose, and analysis of information dissemination in the digital environment. The practical significance of the results lies in improving information space monitoring, countering disinformation, and ensuring an adequate level of information security.

Keywords: psychological triggers, information space, manipulative influence, digital intelligence, OSINT, applied linguistic analysis, disinformation, information-psychological operations, social media, cognitive biases.

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ВИЯВЛЕННЯ ПСИХОЛОГІЧНИХ ТРИГЕРІВ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНОГО ПРОСТОРУ ЗАСОБАМИ ЦИФРОВОЇ РОЗВІДКИ

Анотація. У статті досліджено проблему виявлення психологічних тригерів в інформаційному просторі в умовах цифровізації та гібридних інформаційних загроз. Обґрунтовано, що психологічні тригери виступають ключовим інструментом маніпулятивного впливу, оскільки вони активують емоційно-когнітивні реакції аудиторії та сприяють зниженню рівня критичного сприйняття інформації. Визначено, що їх використання дозволяє формувати необхідні поведінкові установки та впливати на прийняття рішень користувачами в цифровому середовищі.

Проаналізовано механізми функціонування психологічних тригерів на лінгвістичному, семантичному, візуальному та алгоритмічному рівнях. Встановлено їх взаємозв’язок із когнітивними викривленнями та особливостями

функціонування цифрових платформ, що сприяє посиленню ефекту маніпулятивного впливу. Окрему увагу приділено ролі цифрового середовища, яке забезпечує швидке поширення інформації та підсилює вплив тригерів за рахунок масштабності та повторюваності контенту.

У роботі обґрунтовано доцільність застосування міждисциплінарного підходу до ідентифікації психологічних тригерів, що передбачає інтеграцію інструментарію прикладного лінгвістичного аналізу з методами цифрової розвідки на основі відкритих джерел (OSINT). Розкрито можливості лінгвістичного аналізу для виявлення мовних маркерів маніпулятивного впливу, а також визначено роль OSINT у дослідженні джерел інформації, каналів поширення контенту, цифрових слідів та реакцій аудиторії.

Запропоновано комплексну методологію виявлення психологічних тригерів, яка включає етапи збору та верифікації даних, лінгвістичного й дискурсивного аналізу, ідентифікації тригерів, визначення їх функціонального призначення, а також аналізу поширення інформації в цифровому середовищі. Практичне значення отриманих результатів полягає у підвищенні ефективності моніторингу інформаційного простору, протидії дезінформації та забезпеченні належного рівня інформаційної безпеки.

Ключові слова: психологічні тригери, інформаційний простір, маніпулятивний вплив, цифрова розвідка, OSINT, прикладний лінгвістичний аналіз, дезінформація, інформаційно-психологічні операції, соціальні мережі, когнітивні викривлення.

Statement of the Problem. The rapid digitalization of societal processes has resulted in a significant transformation of threats within the digital environment. In the contemporary globalized world, the Internet has evolved not only into a universal communication platform but also into a key channel for the dissemination of manipulative and harmful content. Under conditions of hybrid warfare, the information space effectively becomes a fully fledged arena of confrontation, where targeted influence on human consciousness acquires the characteristics of systematic information-psychological operations. Language serves as the principal instrument of such influence. Actors behind manipulative content deliberately employ specific linguistic constructions to activate cognitive triggers within the audience, including fear for one’s safety, a sense of urgency, and trust in pseudo-authoritative or seemingly credible sources. Such content is generated in accordance with established sociolinguistic models and is aimed at provoking rapid emotional responses among users while artificially lowering the level of critical thinking.

Given the exponential growth of information volumes online, the human factor remains the most vulnerable component, whereas traditional moderation algorithms and basic semantic filters demonstrate limited effectiveness in countering dynamic manipulative threats. This necessitates the adoption of advanced approaches to ensuring information security, particularly the integration of open-source intelligence

(OSINT) methods for the automated collection and monitoring of digital traces of malicious actors.

At the same time, the effectiveness of OSINT tools is significantly constrained in the absence of deep linguistic analysis. The extraction of technical metadata alone (such as IP addresses, publication timestamps, and inter-account connections) does not provide a comprehensive understanding without accounting for the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of content. This underscores the need for thorough scientific inquiry into the problem and the development of integrated algorithms that combine the technological capabilities of OSINT with methods of applied linguistics. Under such conditions, the identification of manipulative content should be viewed as a complex interdisciplinary task, requiring a transition from manual analysis to proactive, automated models for detecting information threats.

Literature Review. In contemporary scientific discourse, the problem of identifying psychological triggers within the information space is considered at the intersection of social communications, psychology, information security, and digital intelligence. Researchers increasingly emphasize that, under conditions of war, the information space functions not only as a channel for the transmission of messages, but also as an environment of purposeful emotional, cognitive, and behavioral influence on the audience, shaping users' perception and psychological responses within digital media environments [1].

The issue of emotional triggers in the Ukrainian media discourse of wartime is directly examined by T. Kovalova, Y. Tokar, and Y. Kolodych [2]. The authors demonstrate that a media text or its individual elements are capable of influencing the emotional state of the reader and may be used as instruments of manipulation. Within the framework of the study, descriptive and comparative methods, as well as content analysis, were applied, which made it possible to identify the types of emotional triggers in the messages of the Telegram channel "Kordon.Media." Of particular relevance to this research is the authors' conclusion that emotional triggers are most often localized in headlines, while their impact is reinforced by dramatic elements, antagonistic terminology, and audience reactions in the form of emojis – such as anger, outrage, crying, and support.

A separate line of research is associated with the study of information-psychological operations. S. Fedoniuk considers information-psychological operations as a complex combination of informational and psychological methods aimed at influencing consciousness, perception, psychological state, and behavior of target audiences [3]. The author emphasizes that modern information-psychological operations encompass propaganda, disinformation, psychological pressure, cyber interference, and other means of manipulating public opinion. The value of this work for the selected topic lies in the fact that it provides a theoretical basis for understanding psychological triggers as elements of broader information-psychological influences.

An important contribution to the study of manipulative influence in social networks has been made by I. Opirskyi and A. Oleksiuk [4]. The scholars classify the

main forms of digital manipulation, including fake news, clickbait headlines, visual manipulations, algorithmic promotion of content, "information capsules," bot networks, fake accounts, and groups of coordinated commentators. Particular attention is paid to cognitive biases, emotional influence, social proof, and source authority as factors contributing to the reduction of critical perception of information. The empirical results of the study confirm the vulnerability of youth audiences to emotionally colored content and the limited use of source verification tools.

The methodological basis for detecting such influences by means of digital intelligence is formed by contemporary studies on OSINT. The textbook "OSINT Open Source Intelligence. Tools and Methods" systematizes tools for working with open sources, including search engines, social networks, web archives, metadata, analysis of photo and video content, Telegram bots, artificial intelligence technologies, Python, visualization, and Maltego. Particular emphasis is placed on the practical application of OSINT for monitoring hybrid threats and disinformation. This provides grounds for considering digital intelligence not only as a tool for collecting factual data, but also as a means of identifying emotional and psychological markers of information influence [5].

Thus, the analysis of scientific sources indicates that the problem of psychological triggers in the information space has already been partially addressed within the framework of studies on media influence, information-psychological operations, manipulation in social networks, and OSINT analytics. At the same time, a comprehensive approach to identifying psychological triggers by means of digital intelligence remains insufficiently developed, particularly through the integration of content analysis, analysis of audience reactions, study of digital traces, source verification, and identification of recurring manipulative patterns. This determines the relevance of further research.

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive scientific substantiation and to develop an interdisciplinary methodology for identifying psychological triggers within the information space through the integration of applied linguistic analysis tools with open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods.

Presentation of the Main Material. The modern information space constitutes a complex socio-technical system within which information is not only transmitted but also interpreted, emotionally experienced, algorithmically amplified, and used to shape public sentiment. In the digital environment, communication increasingly acquires not a neutral but an influential character, as messages are constructed with due regard to the psychological characteristics of audience perception. For this reason, the problem of identifying psychological triggers becomes particularly relevant under conditions of hybrid warfare, information confrontation, the mass dissemination of disinformation, and the growing role of social networks as the primary source of news information.

Psychological triggers in the information space should be understood as specially organized semantic, linguistic, visual, or contextual elements of a message that are capable of activating emotional reactions, cognitive attitudes, and behavioral

impulses of the recipient. Their functioning is based on the fact that individuals do not always perceive information rationally and critically. In situations of uncertainty, danger, information overload, or emotional tension, audiences are more likely to respond not to the factual accuracy of a message, but to its emotional charge, symbolic significance, and consistency with pre-existing beliefs.

In this context, a psychological trigger performs the function of a specific "activator" of response. It may evoke fear, anger, compassion, anxiety, a sense of threat, outrage, distrust, mobilization, group solidarity, or hostility toward a particular subject. Of particular concern is the fact that such reactions often arise more rapidly than the mechanisms of critical reflection are activated. As a result, emotionally saturated content is more easily memorized, more actively disseminated, and may significantly influence the formation of public opinion.

The functioning of psychological triggers is associated with a number of cognitive mechanisms. First and foremost, this concerns confirmation bias, whereby a user tends to trust information that corresponds to their prior beliefs. Equally important is the illusory truth effect, according to which repeated exposure to a message increases the level of trust in it regardless of its factual accuracy. The availability heuristic leads to an overestimation of the significance of events that are presented in an emotionally vivid manner or frequently appear in the information space. Taken together, these mechanisms create favorable conditions for the dissemination of manipulative content.

Psychological triggers may be realized at different levels of an information message. At the linguistic level, they manifest through the use of emotionally colored vocabulary, categorical statements, hyperboles, rhetorical questions, imperative constructions, negative markers, and metaphors of threat or struggle. For example, words and constructions appealing to fear, loss, danger, betrayal, injustice, humiliation, or revenge can significantly enhance the impact of a message on the audience.

At the semantic level, psychological triggers are associated with the construction of specific oppositions: "us vs. them," "victim vs. aggressor," "truth vs. falsehood," "security vs. threat," "people vs. enemy," "order vs. chaos." Such oppositions simplify complex reality by reducing it to emotionally comprehensible schemes. This facilitates the perception of information but simultaneously creates the risk of manipulative distortion of events, when the audience is provided not with analytical explanation but with a ready-made emotional evaluation.

At the visual level, triggers may be implemented through images of destruction, injured individuals, military symbols, contrasting colors, aggressive typography, dramatic video fragments, or editing techniques. Visual content possesses particular persuasive power, as it is perceived faster than text and often forms the primary emotional reaction prior to acquaintance with the factual content of the message. In combination with short emotional headlines and calls for immediate dissemination, such content may become an instrument of mass emotional contagion.

Particular attention should be paid to the algorithmic level of the functioning of psychological triggers. Social networks and digital platforms are structured in such a

way that emotionally saturated content often receives more interactions, including comments, shares, reactions, and views. Algorithms oriented toward retaining user attention may further amplify such messages, providing them with wider reach. As a result, psychological triggers become not only an element of content but also a factor of digital visibility.

Within the framework of the proposed study, it is appropriate to distinguish several main groups of psychological triggers. The first group comprises fear and threat triggers, appealing to the basic need for security. They activate anxiety, expectations of danger, and distrust toward institutions or certain social groups. The second group includes anger and outrage triggers, aimed at mobilizing protest or aggressive reactions. The third group consists of compassion triggers, used to foster emotional solidarity or support for a particular position. The fourth group encompasses identity triggers, appealing to an individual's belonging to a national, social, professional, or value-based community. The fifth group includes distrust triggers, intended to undermine the legitimacy of specific sources, institutions, or actors.

Of particular importance for scientific analysis is not only the identification of the presence of a psychological trigger but also the determination of its functional purpose. The same linguistic or visual element may perform different functions depending on the context. For instance, an appeal to fear may be justified when warning the population about a real danger, but it may be manipulative if used to provoke panic, disorientation, or discredit a particular actor. Therefore, the key task of the researcher is not the mechanical identification of emotional vocabulary, but a comprehensive assessment of the context, source, purpose, audience, and consequences of the message.

In this regard, the integration of applied linguistic analysis with open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods is particularly promising. Applied linguistic analysis makes it possible to examine the internal structure of a message, including its vocabulary, syntax, tone, modality, evaluative characteristics, narrative construction, and argumentative schemes. OSINT, in turn, allows researchers to go beyond the text itself and investigate the origin of the message, channels of dissemination, temporal dynamics, network connections, digital traces, and audience reactions.

The linguistic component of the methodology involves the analysis of emotionally evaluative vocabulary, the frequency of key words, recurring frames, manipulative constructions, and discursive strategies. It is advisable to identify such features as categorical assertions, the absence of alternative viewpoints, the imposition of ready-made evaluations, the use of generalizations, appeals to "obviousness," the creation of urgency, the opposition of groups, and the emotional labeling of actors. These linguistic markers make it possible to determine whether a message is neutral in nature or aimed at the emotional programming of audience reactions.

Discursive analysis deepens this approach by enabling the identification not only of individual linguistic units but also of broader semantic structures, including narratives, frames, ideological constructs, images of the enemy, images of the victim,

and models of collective guilt or collective threat. It is at the discursive level that psychological triggers acquire a systemic character, as they are repeated across multiple messages and shape a stable perception of events.

The OSINT component of the methodology involves the collection and verification of information from open sources, including news media websites, social networks, Telegram channels, video platforms, forums, blogs, public registries, web archives, and other digital resources. Its significance lies in the fact that a psychological trigger is analyzed not in isolation, but as an element of a broader information campaign or communicative process. This makes it possible to determine whether a message represents an isolated instance of emotional expression or forms part of a coordinated information influence.

An important area of OSINT analysis is the identification of the source of content origin. This may involve analyzing primary sources, verifying the date of initial publication, comparing identical or similar messages across different platforms, examining links, usernames, metadata, and archived versions of web pages. Such an approach makes it possible to determine how a message entered the information space, which actors disseminated it, and whether its visibility was artificially amplified.

Equally important is the analysis of dissemination channels. Psychological triggers may vary in effectiveness depending on the platform. In Telegram, short emotional messages, channel anonymity, and rapid reposting play a key role. In Facebook, comments, groups, and personal trust networks are significant. On TikTok and YouTube, emotional influence is often enhanced through audiovisual means. On X and other microblogging platforms, short polarizing formulations, hashtags, and viral messages may be particularly effective. Therefore, the methodology for detecting triggers must take into account the specifics of each digital platform.

The analysis of audience reactions constitutes a separate and highly important stage of the study. Likes, shares, comments, emoji reactions, quotations, and the speed of content dissemination may serve as indicators of which psychological triggers have proven most effective. For example, the predominance of anger reactions may indicate the activation of a conflict frame, whereas the widespread dissemination of content without critical commentary may suggest a high level of trust in the source or emotional identification of the audience with the content.

At the same time, it is important to consider that audience reactions are not always organic. In the digital environment, engagement may be artificially amplified through bot networks, coordinated groups of commentators, or mass reposting. Therefore, OSINT analysis should include the identification of indicators of inauthentic activity, such as repetitive comments, synchronized dissemination, abnormal posting frequency, recurring formulations, newly created accounts, or unnatural network structures.

The proposed interdisciplinary methodology may be presented as a sequence of interrelated analytical stages. The first stage involves defining the object of monitoring, that is, a specific topic, information event, platform, or group of sources. The second

stage is the collection of data from open sources with the recording of time, source, message format, and key engagement indicators. The third stage is the initial verification of information, including the validation of content origin, source reliability, and the presence of duplications. The fourth stage involves the linguistic coding of messages based on the presence of emotional-evaluative, manipulative, and narrative markers.

The fifth stage consists in identifying the type of psychological trigger: fear, anger, compassion, distrust, sense of injustice, group identity, urgency, moral panic, or other emotional-cognitive reactions. The sixth stage involves determining the function of the trigger: mobilizing, demoralizing, polarizing, legitimizing, discrediting, panic-inducing, or consolidating.

The seventh stage includes the analysis of digital dissemination, covering sources, channels, temporal peaks, network connections, and possible signs of coordination. The eighth stage is the assessment of audience reaction and the level of content influence.

From a practical perspective, it is important to develop a system of criteria according to which content may be classified as containing psychological triggers. Such criteria include: the presence of emotionally saturated vocabulary; the use of categorical judgments; appeals to fear or hostility; the simplification of complex phenomena into binary oppositions; calls for immediate action or dissemination; the absence of verified sources; inconsistency between the headline and content; active use of visual shock; high dissemination speed; and the recurrence of identical messages across different sources.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that not every emotional message is manipulative. In wartime conditions, the emotionality of media discourse may be objectively determined by the nature of events. Therefore, the key criterion should not be the mere presence of emotion, but the manner of its use. Content should be considered manipulative when the emotional component is employed to distort reality, suppress critical thinking, impose a univocal interpretation, discredit without evidence, or provoke destructive reactions.

The integration of linguistic analysis and OSINT makes it possible to minimize the risk of subjectivity in research. Linguistic analysis allows for the identification of the means by which psychological influence is constructed, while OSINT enables verification of how this influence was disseminated, by whom it was supported, and what reactions it elicited. It is precisely the combination of content-based, contextual, and network analysis that ensures the comprehensiveness of the study of psychological triggers.

The predictive potential of such a methodology is also significant. The systematic identification of recurring triggers makes it possible to construct maps of information risks, identify topics most vulnerable to manipulation, detect audiences with heightened sensitivity to specific emotional influences, and forecast potential waves of disinformation. This has practical significance for information security,

strategic communications, media literacy, and countering information-psychological operations.

Thus, the identification of psychological triggers in the information space by means of digital intelligence should be considered as a comprehensive analytical procedure that integrates the analysis of content, source, channel, audience, and the digital dynamics of message dissemination. Such an approach makes it possible to move from a fragmented analysis of individual media texts to a systemic understanding of the mechanisms of information influence. It also provides a scientific foundation for the development of practical tools for the early detection of manipulative content, enhancement of citizens' information resilience, and the formation of effective mechanisms for protecting the state's information space.

Conclusions. The conducted study made it possible to generalize theoretical and applied approaches to the identification of psychological triggers in the modern information space and to confirm their decisive role in shaping manipulative influence in the digital environment.

It has been established that psychological triggers constitute a system-forming element of information influence, as they ensure the activation of emotional and cognitive responses of the audience and serve as a mechanism for transforming the perception of information. Their effectiveness is determined by the interaction between the content characteristics of a message, the cognitive features of the recipient, and the technological parameters of digital platforms.

Based on the conducted analysis, the expediency of applying an interdisciplinary approach to the study of psychological triggers has been substantiated, combining the tools of applied linguistics with open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods. The proposed methodology enables a transition from the fragmented analysis of individual messages to a systemic study of information flows, which is fundamentally important for identifying hidden mechanisms of manipulative influence.

It has been demonstrated that the integration of linguistic and OSINT analysis provides the possibility of simultaneously examining the content of information, its sources of origin, channels of dissemination, and audience reactions, which significantly increases the reliability and comprehensiveness of analytical results. Such an approach facilitates the identification not only of individual triggers but also of patterns of their use within the framework of information-psychological influence.

The obtained results have practical significance for improving systems of information space monitoring, developing tools for countering disinformation, and enhancing the level of information security. In particular, they may be applied in the activities of analytical units, law enforcement agencies, and educational institutions for the development of critical information analysis skills.

Prospects for further research are associated with the development of automated systems for detecting psychological triggers using artificial intelligence technologies, as well as with the deepening of the analysis of their impact across different types of digital platforms and information environments.

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