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Russian State TV Discovered Using Twitter Bots to Pose as Viewers

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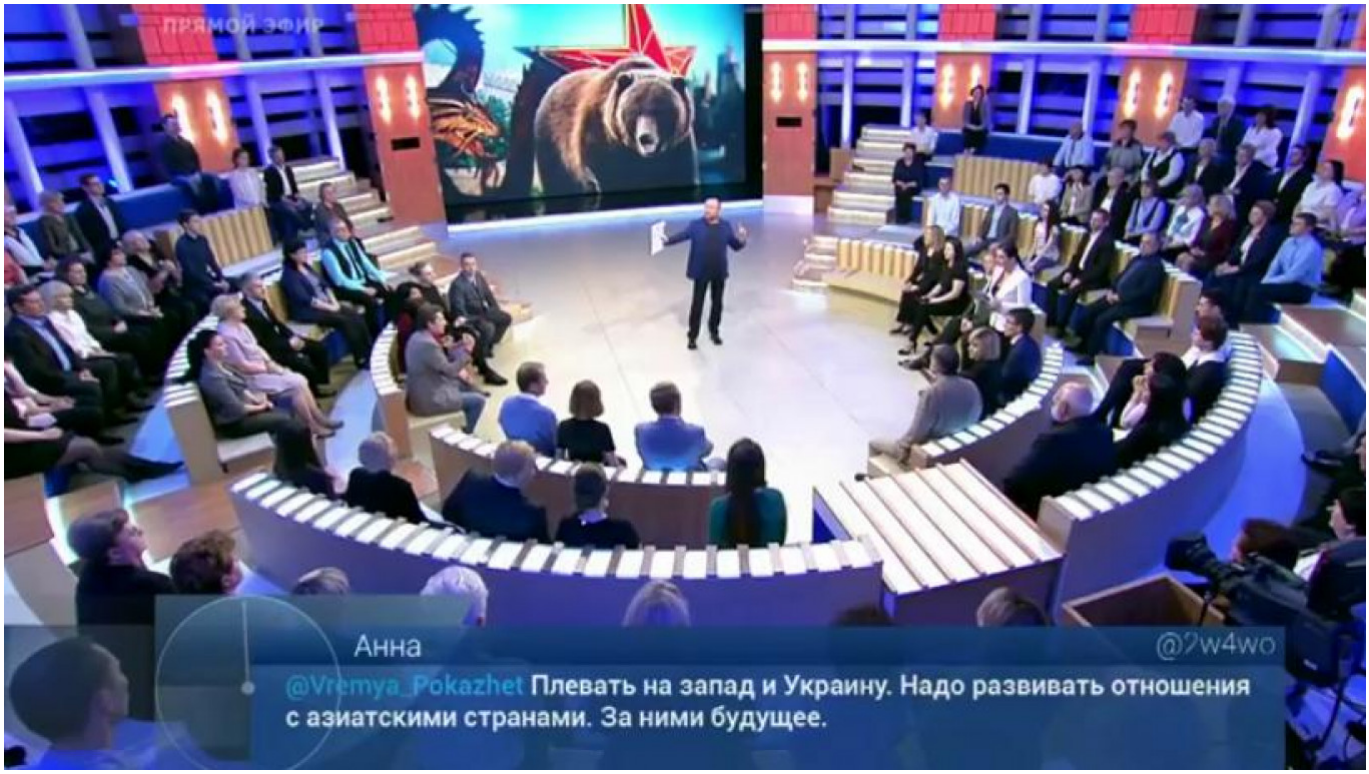

Vremya Pokazhet / YouTube

A Russian state television channels has been exposed using bots to pose as audience members on social media during its flagship news shows.

Channel One talk show "Vremya Pokazhet" launched its latest digital drive in June, promising viewers that their messages could be featured on screen if they tweeted during the show.

But an investigation by Russia's Vedomosti newspaper revealed many of the tweets which appeared during the show were produced by computer-run accounts referred to as bots.

Vedomosti scrutinized 40 Twitter accounts featured on the program on Friday, June 30. The outlet found that most had only been created in June and exclusively messaged the "Vremya Pokazhet" account, either complimenting the show's hosts or criticizing

guests.

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Reporters also scrutinized the first 100 followers of the “Vremya Pokazhet” Twitter account, which is followed by approximately 9,600 users.

They found that more than half were also likely to be bots: accounts which were registered less than a month ago with few followers and messages only tweeted directly at the show.

“Vremya Pokazhet” presenter Anatoly Kuzichev defended the show, telling Vedomosti that many of the show's fans had made accounts specifically to contact the program. He said that the show categorically did not use tweets generated by bots on air.

A spokesperson for Channel One told Vedomosti that the company would look into the situation, but stressed that, "using bots is by no means company policy."

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