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Медіарецепція PR-діяльності у дискурсі британських та українських якісних видань: порівняльний аналіз

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Дану розвідку присвячено дослідженню актуальних змін, які відбуваються у галузі зв'язків із громадськістю. Актуальність роботи обумовлена тим, що у ній розглянуто основні світові тренди функціонування PR на сучасному етапі, даний досвід екстрапольовано на українські реалії. А з огляду на те, що для нашої країни визначальним наразі є процес інтеграції у світовий економічний та культурний простір, розвиток галузі зв'язків із громадськістю у всіх сферах діяльності країни та злагоджений механізм взаємодії із системою засобів масової інформації є пріоритетним. Визначено особливості розвитку зв'язків із громадськістю під впливом сучасних технологій та в умовах нових медіа, здійснено аналіз змін у професіограмі PR-менеджера. Застосування методу контент-аналізу якісних британських та українських газет дозволило виявити найпоширеніші стереотипні уявлення про зв'язки із громадськістю як напрям та професію в Британії та в Україні. Новизна роботи полягає у застосуванні компаративістських практик, які, шляхом виокремлення стереотипів, дозволили продемонструвати відмінності у модальності медіарецепції іноземними та вітчизняними ЗМІ публік рілейшнз як соціально-комунікаційної технології. Доведено, що медіарецепція професійної діяльності фахівця із зв'язків із громадськістю має здебільшого негативне забарвлення, що зумовлено прагматичними орієнтирами означеної галузі. Однак у британських ЗМІ наразі підвищується тенденція до зображення PR як «агента змін» передусім соціальних, підкреслено високий рівень напруженості роботи фахівців. Натомість в українських якісних ЗМІ зв'язки з громадськістю продовжують розглядатися як певна маніпулятивна технологія або лише інструмент публіситі.

Ключові слова: зв'язки з громадськістю, контент-аналіз, нові медіа, репутація, стереотип, публіситі.

1. Introduction

Problem statement. Even though public relations in Ukraine is a highly demanded communication industry today, and almost all government agencies, large and medium-sized organizations have public relations departments or PR consultants, public relations have not yet reached the appropriate level of institutionalization. PR-activities in Ukraine are mostly non-systemic and non-linear, the communication process is characterized by one-way flow and low level of feedback, public relations are more like informing ones, often reduced to advertising function, identified with manipulative technologies for creating popularity. PR activities are usually short-term ones, often performing a press-intermediary activity aimed at a one-time effect, rather than building long-term, trusting relationships with the audience.

Due to their professional characteristics, the profession of public relations specialist is often echoed by myths and is perceived stereotypically. These representations require correction and educational work, since the qualitative PR in

the classical sense is aimed at creating harmonious interaction between the groups of people, and eliminates confrontational attitudes of the public at the state level, promotes democratic development of society, namely the establishment of a dialogue between the authorities and people and the solving complex political and public issues. That is why it is important to investigate the mediation of the professional features of public relations specialists' job in the British and Ukrainian quality media. It is interesting to ask how different the mediation of the profession of PR specialists depends on various national models.

An important aspect of studying of the professional characteristics of a PR specialist is their interaction with media representatives as a channel for disseminating information. Development of the new technologies and the process of changing the habits of consumption of the information by modern audiences influence the nature of interaction between these professional groups greatly. That's why it seems important to study media reception of the relationship of these two professional groups.

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Latest research works and publications analysis. Within the research, the works of the following scholars are analyzed: Jacquie L'Etang (the transformational aspect of public relations), Slawomir Gawronski (assessment of changes between public relation managers and journalists), Johanna Fawkes (the understanding of the role of PR within society and the analysis of the PR area in the UK), E. D. Zamani, G. M. Giaglis, & A. E. Kasimati (the influence of the online social media on the current functioning of the PR industry), etc.

Purpose of the paper. The scientific paper aims to investigate professional features of the of the PR manager's work and the nature of their interaction with the representatives of the media in the media discourse of the British and Ukrainian quality newspapers.

Research object. Media reception of the public relations institute in the British and Ukrainian society.

Research methods. A descriptive method has been used to investigate the latest trends in the functioning of public relations, the impact of new media on the development of PR as an industry at the current stage, and the study of the interaction of PR specialists and media representatives.

Content analysis method, which belongs to quantitative and qualitative research methods has been used to identify the widespread stereotypical perceptions of the PR institute and the profession of public relations specialist, as well as their interaction with the media in the British and Ukrainian press.

In order to investigate the items mentioned above, in the British media "The Guardian" newspaper has been chosen, and the public political weekly newspaper "The Mirror of the Week" ("Dzerkalo Tyzhnya") for Ukraine. The period between 2013 and 2018 is chosen as a chronological framework of the research. The search for stereotypes has been carried out with the help of search lines on the websites of the newspapers by the keywords "PR" and "public relations" by relevance and by date.

The stereotypes, found in the process of search, are classified and analyzed using common scientific methods of analysis and synthesis. The qualitative component of the content analysis helps get a semantic interpretation of the text and outline the meaning of some concepts.

The method of comparative analysis allows us to compare the media perception of the public relations institute and the profession of public relations specialist in various national discourses: British, American and Ukrainian. Media reception of the American PR specialists compared to the British ones has been understood, and the role and perception of the Institute of Public Relations in the quality press of Great Britain and Ukraine have been described.

2. Results

Having examined the historical, sociological and cultural aspects of public relations, Jacquie L'Etang tends to define it as a "discipline in transformation" [1]. Slawomir Gawronski emphasizes the fact that PR techniques and practices "seldom fit into any standards" and describes effective PR specialists as those "who

sneaks away from classical rules of public relations" [2]. To Gawronski's point of view, such unpredictable nature of public relations activities influences the process of interaction of the managers with the media. The scholar claims that PR people "are not sure what they are going to do tomorrow" and "all standard, routine PR procedures may stop working with time and may not bring expected results they had brought before" [2].

According to the study conducted by Johanna Fawkes, public relations is often "misunderstood, due to its hybridity, complexity and competitive perspectives within the field of scholarship" [3, p. 159]. The author presents a controversial view of other scholars on public relations, claiming that PR is regarded as either "monolithic and utterly toxic" or "a key force in the democratic process and a contributor to a social good" [Ibid]. In the academical discourse there is a growing tendency to talk about PR not only in the context of a management discipline functions, but also as a "driver of promotional culture" [Ibid]. J. Fawkes explains that the image of public relations as an area of communications may have some "pejorative connotations" [3, 160], due to the fact that some practitioners tend to confuse PR and advertising techniques, although PR is a much "looser term" [Ibid, p. 160] that can be related to a broader field of communication practices.

J. Fawkes overlooks the condition of PR industry in Britain, estimating it as the one which has experienced a "considerable growth" within the past ten years [Ibid, p. 160], being the point of contact between the Government of the UK and the citizens, as well as maintaining communication of the UK with other European countries [Ibid]. There are also some remarkable changes to the industry due to the aspects of fast changing world of digital communications that have influenced some shifts in the business approach, that is "increasing outsourcing of communication from central to agency-based suppliers" [Ibid].

Melissa Aronczyk et al. investigate public relations as a part of the promotional culture in the context of the relationship of the organization with its stakeholders. The scholar highlights the idea of promotional techniques not only as an act of "exchange", that is the attempt to sell the product, but also as a social phenomenon, which is "deeply entwined with complex changes in social, economic and political circumstances, in media systems and in cultural beliefs and norms" [4, p. 139].

The development of communication technologies has had a significant impact on the recent functioning of the public relations area. In particular, the increasing popularity of social networking sites has led to a situation when, from one hand, companies use social networks to create a strong image and to maintain contact with key audiences and they become a must, because time and people are demanding it. In such a case PR specialists must incorporate SMM strategies into their work and this can be quite a positive experience, helping the company to gain recognition.

On the other hand, new media put at risk the company's image as the audience can easily make their complaint public and things that "may be considered as harmful information can easily backfire" [5, p. 33]. People don't have to speak to the journalist to share their negative emotions about something, they only have to create a post on the company's page, or even on their own and in the last case the company won't even get to know about this. Such things can easily give negative connotations to the company's reputation.

According to Katy Foster from the Public Relations Consultants Association's (PRCA) "PR is all about reputation building and in current times social media is a huge part of that" (An expert guide to getting a job in PR, *The Guardian*, 18.05.2015).

Regarding the fact that modern audience doesn't necessarily need the media to get some information about the company from it and can directly contact the web-site of the organization or visit its social networking site, the relationship between journalists and public relations managers have changes over some period.

The problem of interaction between public relations managers and journalists was largely investigated by the Polish scholar S. Gawronski, who finds the "standardization" of this process rather difficult and sometimes even "limited" due to the number of "variables" and "differentiating factors", but he is still sure about the possibility to find out about the "changes" and "unchanged" things that define the mutual relationship of these two groups at present [2].

Gawronski points out the "lack of symmetry" [2] in the relationship between PR people and journalists, which can be explained by the fact that the result of their cooperation, that is the news or some other piece of writing, is produced by the media and that is what empowers them to have the dominating role in the process of interaction. However, the scholar admits that "the cooperation between journalists and managers should be based on partnership and should be balanced between the importance of both of these professions" [2], that is to say these two groups of professionals are "dependent" [Gawronski] on each other, as PR managers seek the opportunity to build trusty relationship with the audience via the media and the journalists are constantly in search of information. In reality, there is a gap in understanding between these two professional groups, since managers are aimed to "promote the image of their company", while the journalists "try to defend the independence of the media and resist any kind of influence or pressure concerning the content of their message to be published in the media" [2]. The author admits that such kind of disbalanced view at mutual perception still takes place, even though both areas have a "clear identity of ethical codes, that both professions have worked out over the years of their evolution and mutual cooperation" [2].

According to Gawronski, new trends in the functioning of media today can influence the development of the

public relation managers and journalists' relationship. There are changes in the way new communication tools are used, a changing profile of media recipients as more and more people read information on the Internet, free of charge and often straight from the company's pages in the social networks or website, and the last thing is that as a result of changing mass media themselves, as the area that is constantly changing to fit audience's interests and tastes.

Media representation of public relations as an area in the media discourse of "The Guardian" has got quite a positive modality. The area is described as the one that is under the process of transformation: from "a purveyor of greenwash" to "an agent for change" (Using PR as an agent for change in corporate sustainability, *The Guardian*, 30.01.2013). Negative connotations that describe the role of PR in the society, such as "cover up", "gloss up reputations" and "managing reputation or winning favour for past acts of philanthropy" are opposed to the positive ones: for example, "building trust", "effecting change", "sustainability", "transparency", "real action and change", "engendering positive future change", "accelerating progress on key sustainability issues", "a more dynamic role for PR" and "power of PR as an accelerator of change" (Using PR as an agent for change in corporate sustainability, *The Guardian*, 30.01.2013).

Lottie O'Connor, the author from The Guardian, made an attempt to describe PR as an industry, warning that may often be mistaken, while in reality the job is more demanding than it may seem at the first sight: "The PR industry might have a reputation as one long party, but there's a lot more to a career in communications than champagne and lunches" (An expert guide to getting a job in PR, *The Guardian*, 18.05.2015)

The aspects of the mediatization of the PR manager's profession in "The Guardian" can be described by the following expected features that undercover its image as a whole: "always know what is newsworthy" (Stop saying yes: the best PRs push back, *The Guardian*, 20.03.2015), "adaptable", "able to write for different audiences", "aware of appropriate tones, messaging and mediums", "imaginative", "able to persuade people", "able to get your point quickly", "deeply immersed in the news", "hungry for information" (this is about reading news), "understanding of current affairs and the wider world" (An expert guide to getting a job in PR, *The Guardian*, 18.05.2015).

One of the key professional traits, depicted by "The Guardian" is "creativity", even when the specialist is in the process of getting a job, for example, Sam Holl, a client service director at Kindred Agency calls it a "milestone" and in the article, dedicated to the strategy of how to get the job in PR, shares an example about sending CVs to their company: "We had a great example of someone a couple of years ago who sent us their CV in the style of an old-fashioned telegram. It was very good – we picked up the phone straight away" (An expert guide to getting a job in PR, *The Guardian*, 18.05.2015).

Taking into consideration media perception of the relationship between public relations managers and journalists in the discourse of *The Guardian*, it's important to pay some attention to the difference in the national features of PR industry in some countries, particularly, attitudes towards British and American PR specialists.

British PR specialists are described as “bombastic”, “jokey”, “honest” and “self-loathing” (I work in PR – and we're all terrible people, *The Guardian*, 09.09.2015). What is more, it was mentioned in the article that when journalists ask not to disturb them, “they'd mostly apologize and never do it again” (I work in PR – and we're all terrible people, *The Guardian*, 09.09.2015).

Comparing to the British, America's PR managers are described in a not very favorable way: “unfortunate likeness to a fanatical religion: a monomaniacal echo chamber of bloated self-importance and self-righteous froth”, “an elaborate farce of empty self-importance that borders on the religious”, “PR people describe themselves in grandiose terms bordering on black magic” (I work in PR – and we're all terrible people, *The Guardian*, 09.09.2015).

Mutual perception of the journalists and PR managers is described in *The Guardian* with the help of such stereotypical constructions as “quasi-camaraderie” and “oppositional, saccharine reporter-PR relationship”, which can be explained by the fact that both sides benefit from this process: “both sides accepted our job's end game was to get words printed in a magazine” (I work in PR – and we're all terrible people, *The Guardian*, 09.09.2015). The nature of their interaction gets a negative meaning: “spam and pester writers”, “passive-aggressive emails”, “office back-chat” (I work in PR – and we're all terrible people, *The Guardian*, 09.09.2015).

The analysis of the content of the British press (“*The Guardian*”) reflects the theoretical issues of the interaction between journalists and public relations managers, since some of the statements made by S. Gawronski find their confirmation within the context of what is said by the practitioners of public relations: “It's been said before, but PR is an earned media. Us PRs are at the mercy of journalists. We know about constructing valuable relationships, but the best relationships are constructed through mutual respect. It almost goes without saying that you need to respect journalists' deadlines and send assets in the right format, but the clever PR will negotiate within the journalist's request to their advantage. For example, a journalist is looking for statistics around a particular topic, if you don't have the figures to help, then why not pitch your client to do a follow-up piece after its been published? Or send them some sound bites from your client in light of the piece. This not only constructs a valuable relationship but demonstrates your commitment to the piece, hence gaining respect from the journalist” (Stop saying yes: the best PRs push back, *The Guardian*, 20.03.2015).

In comparison to British and American practices, media reception of public relations in Ukrainian quality

newspaper “*Dzerkalo Tyzhnya*” (“*Mirror of the Week*”) is of a completely different character. PR in Ukraine is largely accepted as a manipulation or a publicity tool in the context of some political issues, mainly connected with military, social or infrastructure topics.

For example, the initiatives of Ukraine to release hostages were called a “PR-action” (ORLO abandoned the Skype conference on the release of hostages, *Mirror of the Week*, 26.12.2018) or another political interpretation: “when everybody is “for sale”, then any ideas can be discarded as a cheap PR” (Revolution in Ukraine was the reflection of Europe - American Interest, *Mirror of the Week*, 16.01.2018).

Another example relates to the new project of the Ukrainian Railway Company, which is called a “PR-action” starting from the title of the article: “Boryspil Express: PR and corruption” and is associated in the text with “corruption scheme”, “criminal case” and “ghost firms” (Boryspil Express: PR and corruption, *Mirror of the Week*, 08.08.2018).

Public relations are considered as something utterly unserious in the Ukrainian media discourse, something that will never really work. For instance, in the article about the process of renaming Dnipropetrovsk region, public relations were opposed to the “result” (“We need not a PR, but a result”), that is a completion of the decommunization process (Poroshenko suggested renaming Dnipropetrovsk region into Dniprovsk one, *Mirror of the week*, 21.11.2018). The next article, related to this subject is dedicated to the cultural theme: “not only PR ambitions, but also real results of international co-creation and promotion of Ukrainian art at home and around the world (“National” issue: to the theaters and to the Cabinet of Ministers, *Mirror of the Week*, 09.07.2018)

Public relations are also regarded as manipulative practice during the realization of social activities: “baby-boxes, which are generally given to the parents when they are leaving maternity hospital: “this idea looked more and more strange every day. And what began as an ill-advised PR, is now already completely dragging on a big scam” (Reva explained how the municipal nanny service will work, November 12, 2018).

Among the positive examples of the use of public relations in the Ukrainian media discourse there are materials dedicated to the functioning of the largest museum complex, Lviv National Gallery of Art named after Boris Voznycky, where public relations department has become “a good PR mediator between museum and visitors, friendship established, fixed by Facebook, journalists and other media” (Taras Vozniak: “We lay the roads of Pinzel to Europe”, *Mirror of the Week*, 12.10.2018) and some pieces of personal information about celebrities “pregnant stars make this intrigue, advertisement, PR, until the last hiding who is the father of a child” (Crumb of the sky on earth, *Mirror of the Week*, 10.12.2018).

3. Discussion

The study can have a significant impact on the establishment of the Institute of Public Relations in Ukraine, as it points out to the productive models of the Institute of PR in Western practice, the key aspects of the professional identity of the PR manager, and their functional responsibilities in the process of interaction with the media.

As a result of the use of the comparative approach to the media reception of public relations in the discourse of British and Ukrainian quality newspapers, the following issues that are under discussion, were identified. In particular, the understanding of the contradictory nature of public relations as the only technology of forming the image or a productive factor that can cause changes in the society.

The problematic aspect of the coverage of the PR experience is the use of local negative examples in the discourse, which are broadcast on the representations of the PR Institute as a whole.

Obtained results give an idea of the mass-media image of the PR Institute in the British and Ukrainian editions. They allow determining the problems of the functioning of this professional industry in different national realities.

Prospects for further research are associated with the subsequent monitoring of a wider empirical basis, namely, with the expansion of the range of quality newspapers within the framework of national press systems defined earlier.

4. Conclusion

The processes of globalization and European integration that are happening in Ukraine today determine the need to create conditions for raising the level of institutionalization of public relations not only as a discipline, but also for practical activities, in order to establish trusty relationships between audiences at the state and commercial levels. Western models of public relations, implemented and incorporated into the public administration system and the private sector, can be the source of knowledge for Ukraine on how to communicate with inner and outer audiences.

The image of public relations institute in the British media is currently changing from “a purveyor of greenwash” to “an agent for change”. British public relations area is estimated positively while American one is regarded quite negatively. In the British media discourse the relationship between public relation managers and journalists are defined as “quasi-camaraderie” and “oppositional, saccharine reporter-PR relationship”, which corresponds to the theoretical statements of the scholars, who investigated this process. Ukrainian public relations industry is described as an area of production of “cheap” PR technologies and a manipulative publicity tool. The only positive or neutral connotation can be given to

some cultural topics or news from the lives of famous people.

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Гаркавенко Ю. С. Медиарецепция ПР-деятельности в дискурсе британских и украинских качественных изданий: сравнительный анализ

Данная статья посвящена исследованию актуальных изменений, которые происходят в области связей с общественностью. Актуальность работы обусловлена тем, что в ней рассмотрены основные мировые тренды функционирования PR на современном этапе, данный опыт экстраполирован на украинские реалии. А учитывая то, что для нашей страны определяющим сейчас является процесс интеграции в мировое экономическое и культурное пространство, развитие отрасли связей с общественностью во всех сферах деятельности страны и слаженный механизм взаимодействия с системой средств массовой информации является приоритетным. Определены особенности развития связей с общественностью под влиянием современных технологий и в условиях новых медиа, осуществлен анализ изменений в профессиограмме ПР-менеджера. Применение метода контент-анализа качественных британских и украинских газет позволило выявить наиболее распространенные стереотипные представления о связях с общественностью как направлении и профессия в Великобритании и в Украине. Новизна работы заключается в применении компаративистских практик, которые, путем выделения стереотипов, позволили продемонстрировать различия в модальности медиарепрезентации иностранными и отечественными СМИ публик рилейшнз как социально-коммуникационной технологии. Доказано, что медиарецепция профессиональной деятельности специалиста по связям с общественностью имеет преимущественно негативную окраску, что обусловлено прагматическими ориентирами обозначенной области. Однако в британских СМИ повышается тенденция к изображению PR как «агента перемен» прежде всего социальных, подчеркнут высокий уровень напряженности работы специалистов. Зато в украинских качественных СМИ связи с общественностью продолжают рассматриваться как определенная манипулятивная технология или только инструмент публицити.

***Ключевые слова:** связи с общественностью; контент-анализ; новые медиа; репутация; стереотип; публицити.*

Garkavenko Y. Media reception of PR activities in the discourse of British and Ukrainian quality newspapers: comparative analysis

The article is dedicated to the study of the recent changes that are currently taking place in the field of public relations and the transformation of the interaction process of the PR Institute with the media. The actuality of the work can be explained by the fact that the main world trends of the functioning of PR at the present stage are examined and this experience is extrapolated to Ukrainian realities. And considering the fact that the process of integration into the world economic and cultural space is crucial for our country, the development of the public relations field in all spheres of the country's activity and the coordinated mechanism of interaction with the media system are a priority. The main features of the development of public relations under the influence of modern technologies and in the conditions of new media were determined, the analysis of changes in PR-manager's profile was made. The use of the content analysis method in the process of investigation of high quality British and Ukrainian newspapers has revealed the most common stereotypes of public relations as an area and profession in Britain and Ukraine. The novelty of the study is to apply comparative practices, which on the base of the distinguished stereotypes allowed to demonstrate some differences in the modality of media representations made by foreign and domestic media outlets as social and communication technology. It has been proved that the media reception of the public relations specialist's professional activity is mostly negative in color, due to the pragmatic orientations of the industry. However, in the British media, the trend towards the image of PR as the "agent of change", especially social ones, is highlighted, high level of work of specialists is emphasized. Instead, in Ukrainian high-quality mass media, public relations continue to be viewed as a kind of manipulative technology or just a publicity tool.

***Keywords:** journalism; mass media; public relations; content analysis; new media; reputation; stereotyp; publicity.*



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