GR in the university brand-communications system

GR в Системе Бренд-Коммуникаций Университета
GR EN EL SISTEMA DE COMUNICACIONES DE MARCA UNIVERSITARIO

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Abstract

During the study, the authors monitored the media to reveal quantitative and qualitative indicators of Russian universities' media activities in 2015-2017 on the basis of data from Medialogia (mlg.ru) and Public.ru (public.ru) resources. The analysis of the most actively used newsbreaks in the media practice of these universities and their typology is based on the expert method. The conducted study points to a pronounced trend in universities' media activities of demonstrating in the media space those characteristics that correspond to the criteria, on which major stakeholders assess their activities.

Keywords: university brand-communications system, government relations (GR), public accreditation of university, newsbreak, media activities of university.

Resumen

Durante el estudio, los autores monitorearon los medios para revelar indicadores cuantitativos y cualitativos de las actividades de los medios de las universidades rusas en 2015-2017 sobre la base de los datos de los recursos de Medialogia (mlg.ru) y Public.ru (public.ru). El análisis de las noticias de uso más activo en la práctica mediática de estas universidades y su tipología se basa en el método experto. El estudio realizado apunta a una tendencia pronunciada en las actividades de los medios de comunicación de las universidades de demostrar en el espacio de los medios aquellas características que corresponden a los criterios, sobre las cuales las principales partes interesadas evalúan sus actividades.

Palabras claves: sistema de comunicación de marca de la universidad, relaciones con el gobierno (GR), acreditación pública de la universidad, noticias, actividades mediáticas de la universidad.

Аннотация

Целью исследования является оценка бренд-коммуникаций ведущих вузов России в медиапространстве с точки зрения их направленности на определенные группы заинтересованных сторон (органы власти, рейтинговые агентства, СМИ, работодателями, научные фонды и грантодатели, потенциальные студентами, преподаватели и др.). В ходе исследования проведен

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мониторинг СМИ для выявления количественных и качественных показателей медиаактивности российских вузов за 2015- 2017 гг. на основании данных ресурсов Медиалогия (mlg.ru) и Public.ru (public.ru). В основе анализа наиболее активно используемых в медиапрактике этих вузов информационных поводов и их типологии лежит экспертный метод. Проведенное исследование указывают на выраженный в медиаактивности вузов тренд демонстрирования в медиапространстве характеристик, соответствующих критериям оценки их деятельности со стороны значимых для них стейкхолдеров. Доминирующую роль в информационной политике ряда вузов сегодня играет соответствие деятельности вуза государственным критериями оценки качества образовательного процесса. Информационные материалы, предназначенные для других заинтересованных общественных групп, также отслеживаются при использовании соответствующих информационных поводов. В статье исследуются количественные и качественные параметры медиаактивности ряда российских вузов, выявляются наиболее распространенные типологические группы информационных поводов, исследуется практика их использования различными вузами. Авторами проведен анализ практики использования определенной группы информационных поводов вузами для выстраивания отношений со стейкхолдерами вузов, прежде всего - с органами власти. Выявлены и обоснованы теоретико-методологические предпосылки построения медиаактивности вузов России при учете доминирующей роли государства в процессе оценки качества образования и в аспекте существенной роли GR в системе бренд-коммуникаций вуза в РФ сегодня.

Ключевые слова: бренд-коммуникации вуза, Government Relations (GR), общественная аккредитация вуза, государственная аккредитация вуза, информационный повод, медиаактивность вуза.

1. Introduction

The vector of development at Russian higher education institutions currently depends on a system of complicated and sometimes conflicting requests. Universities find themselves involved in social processes and relations that impose some restrictions on them. When doing so, universities become more responsible to a lot of education-interested public institutions, with positions of each of them implicitly containing their own criteria of quality education assessment (Smorgunov & Timofeyeva, 2012).

The state imposes structured requirements on a higher education institution. They are set forth in statutory documents which regulate both the content and the format of educational processes in the country's higher education institutions. The requirement that a higher education institution should comply with state criteria for the assessment of education quality is a must (Mintusov & Filatova, 2013; Fedyunin, 2017; Lipina et al., 2017).
Furthermore, as the interests of all public groups have not yet been agreed upon, the priority is just the compliance with state requirements. The execution of other orders, e.g. social and educational, or research, all the more the interests of employers, goes in line with state requirements. A higher education institution has limited possibilities for redirecting resources for systemic interaction, communication with other groups (e.g. employers, businesses, etc.), and for this reason, this type of communication is sporadic. As part of this interaction, an order made to execute one or another request can only be of specific fragmental nature. And a higher education institution can execute this request when it meets state standards and the state offers incentives for its execution.

So, a higher education institution has to carry out activities between two fires. On the one hand, there are actual, but informal requirements imposed by public groups and, on the other hand, there are official, legitimate and mandatory requirements imposed by the state (Shokhin, 2011). The society's non-structured requests, however, have the form of a paid order (university entrants and parents, indirectly employers, etc.) and make a substantial contribution to making a higher education institution financially supported. The state's structured requirements also have budget support. This hierarchy of priorities is extrapolated, in the authors' view, to the university brand-communications system. A university's media communications can be analyzed adequately, all the more since the society's mediatization has shifted communications among participants of the education services market and relevant processes of state regulation to the media space.

2. Methods

The methodological basis of studying a higher education institution's targeted media communications, in this case, is a concept of

stakeholders. While pursuing this approach, a university's information policy can be considered in terms of its focus on specific groups of the interested parties and can be assessed whether information transmitted by the university is adequate to expectations of specific stakeholders.

As part of this concept, it is possible to efficiently study a university's media communications with various stakeholders (rating agencies, the media, employers, scientific foundations and grant givers, and with the potential ones, including foreign students and lecturers, etc.). The state represented by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, leaders and specialists at federal, regional and municipal education management institutions, other state and ministerial organizations, as well as federal, regional and municipal committees and commissions are a university's significant stakeholders (Mintusov & Filatova, 2013; Neretina & Makarets, 2013).

3. Results and discussions

Table 1 clearly shows a rating of the universities under review by the number of publications for the period.

Table 1. Quantitative indicators of universities' media activities from july 1, 2015 through june 30, 2017*

Rating based on the total number of publications	University	Medialogia, number of publications	Public.ru, number of publications	Total publications
1	Higher School of Economics	206,216	4,497	210,713
2	Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration	137,177	7,441	144,618
3	Moscow State Institute of International Relations	103,223	5,854	109,077
4	Saint Petersburg State University	83,619	2,720	86,339
5	Kazan Federal University	55,216	2,477	57,693
6	Plekhanov Russian University of Economics	43,268	2,309	45,577
7	Bauman Moscow State Technical University	30,768	859	31,627
8	MISIS	27,409	1,501	28,910

*The table was compiled by the authors on the basis of data from Medialogia and Public.ru portals.

Table 2 was compiled on the basis of data from Medialogia only, with detailed quantitative and qualitative analytical data on universities.

Table 2 Quantitative and qualitative indicators of universities' media activities from july 1, 2015 through june 30, 2017*

University	Medialogia, number of publications	Key role	Media Index	Negative	Positive
Higher School of Economics	206,216	47,406	689,073.22	536	12,617
Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration	137,177	37,602	565,882.30	1,052	42,820
Moscow State Institute of International Relations	103,223	25,205	275,253.69	1,630	7,887
Saint Petersburg State University	83,619	18,651	205,442,93	970	10,111
Kazan Federal University	55,216	19,923	153,883.35	757	9,958
Plekhanov Russian University of Economics	43,268	13,482	125,980.12	327	5,202
Bauman Moscow State Technical University	30,768	6,477	55,367.14	530	4,119
MISIS	27,409	9,654	88,436.63	97	6,971

*The table was compiled by the authors on the basis of Medialogia data.

A conclusion can be drawn from Table 1 that a large number of publications increases a university's chance to raise the qualitative content in the media that impacts the university's general image in the information space. However, while comparing the Higher School of Economics and MISIS by Medialogia qualitative parameters, the authors understand that the higher intensity of universities' media activities does not result in proportionally higher efficiency of media relations.

As Table 3 shows, all universities, to a certain extent, cover topics that are important for successful communication with public authorities, but virtually each of them is focused on definite news.

Table 3. Aggregate data on various types of newsbreaks used by universities in the first half of 2017*

Universities	University's rating position	Scientific achievements	Expert position	High-status guests and events	Socially important projects
Plekhanov Russian University of Economics	3	3	9	12	3
Higher School of Economics	7	1	14	3	5
Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration	3	5	16	4	2
Kazan Federal University	4	13	4	3	6

Saint Petersburg State University	4	8	4	7	7
Moscow State Institute of International Relations	4	4	5	9	8
Bauman Moscow State Technical University	5	7	5	6	7
MISIS	4	20	2	2	2
Total	34	61	59	46	40

*The table was compiled by the authors based on monitoring data from selected media publications during the first six months of 2017.

A university's participation in various educational ratings or improved rating positions

The participation in ratings of various levels has become a special area of a university's activities. It should be noted that efficiency assessment criteria at universities substantially differ in diverse national and international ratings. However, the topic of a university's participation in one or another rating, if it allows naming it among a number of top-level universities of the world or a country, is capable of showing a positive trend in a university's position and is heavily used by universities as a newsbreak.

Scientific and technical achievements of a university, its professors and lecturers, research workers and students.

Newsbreaks of this type are those which universities use most often. In this regard, leaders are MISIS and Kazan Federal University.

It is fair to note that it is difficult to differentiate such newsbreaks as "scientific achievements" and "expert opinion" for "non-technical" universities, Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics and Moscow State Institute of International Relations because information on research conducted in the premises of universities is most often published as comments by a university's expert on social and economic problems.

Demonstration of the expert position of a university and its employees in separate industries, the expert status in a publicly important sector.

This format of information presentation also seeks leadership among references to universities. The most diverse genres are used for this purpose, ranging from interviews with university employees as experts in some topics to the publication of expert opinions by some high-status experts and university representatives among them on a specific topic. Using this type of newsbreaks, media leaders are the Higher School of Economics and Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

Visits paid to a university by outstanding Russia and foreign public figures and scientists, or participation of the university's representatives together with high-ranking officials in important international and national events.

This type of newsbreaks was increasingly used at Plekhanov Russian University of Economics and Moscow State Institute of International Relations. Technologically, no concerted efforts need to be taken to make this piece of news a highlight because the status of a visitor draws media attention in advance, so a university comes into focus. Specifically, a visit paid by Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Higher School of Economics and his conversation with its rector were broadly covered in the media in quite a favorable format for the School (3 out of 30 publications). Similarly, the media also covered a visit paid by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to Kazan Federal University (6 out of 30 publications).

Demonstration of a university's activities in launching or executing socially important projects.

Virtually all higher education institutions under review are remarkably aggressive in this direction. The monitoring of their websites

showed that all higher education institutions, regularly and intensively, organize or take part in many cultural, sporting, scientific, educational, volunteering, on the whole, in socially important events at various levels. But often higher education institutions find it difficult to fully cover events of this kind in the media, while the federal media seldom provides coverage of such events. This newsbreak is not on top, virtually being at the end of the media activity rating.

4. Conclusions

Nowadays state accreditation plays a leading role when assessing the quality of a university's education, while the public position is not self-sufficient or legitimate. Similarly, GR communications play a dominating role in a university's brand-communications system, as underscored by a positive trend in universities' media activities and a dominating share of information that meets the state's criteria of assessing the quality of education.

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