

# RUSSIAN CORPORATE MEDIA ON THE INTERNET: TRANSFORMATION OF THE METHODS OF WORK WITH THE AUDIENCE

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## ABSTRACT

The article describes the practice of exploration the Internet space by Russian corporate media, and transformation the methods of working with the audience. The corporate media of six organizations, representing different types of activities (education, industry, car sales), in two Russian regions (the Republic of Tatarstan and the Samara region) were investigated. Through the example of these sources, the authors of the article have revealed, that their editors try to use the Internet space, focusing on the technological component of reporting the information about the organization to each person – by creation and maintaining the official website of the organization, groups on social networks, virtual communication in messengers. Web services, aimed at working with the audience, in order to maximize the presentation of the enterprise in a modern multimedia format, were given for comparison. Using the methods of contentive and structural analysis of the resource base of studied corporate media, the authors of the article have found that each media has its own network communication platforms, but they have different methods for attraction and holding the audience's attention. Also, the transformation of the functions of modern corporate media was revealed. Now, the most important functions are the following: management, informative, image-building, ideological, advertising and reference functions. Using the expert survey of corporate media editors, thirteen types of attraction and holding the audience's attention on various electronic resources of organizations were identified. In addition, it was defined the presence/absence of each of them for every type of media. The main conclusion is the following: currently, there is a transformation of the functions of corporate media, which, in order to be closer to the audience and increase its number, should regularly apply the techniques, typical for mass media, with the purpose to attract and hold the attention of the audience.

**Keywords:** corporate media, audience, journalism, enterprise, objectivity, attraction and holding the audience's attention, visualization of content.

## 1.INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the article is to identify and to study the transformation of the methods of working with the audience in Russian corporate media on the Internet.

The authors of this article use the definition of the term "corporate media", given by D.A. Murzin: "it is a printed (maybe electronic) publication, containing news, useful information, or the position of the organization on a particular topic. It is designed primarily for an internal audience, which is familiar with the "context" of the organization's life, where the reader spends a significant part of his life. Therefore, this media publishes the articles, in which the reader, his colleagues or acquaintances can be mentioned. So, the large amounts of information and "comprehensive" coverage of some topics, as well as the attention to "details" are justified in such publications" (2005) [1].

According to the researcher Yu. V. Chemyakin, the editors and employees of corporate media do not hide their corporate identity in cases of self-positioning, although there is a tendency to change the typological orientation of these publications to popular, socio-political, specialized, industry or business media (2016) [2]. Many modern corporate media are the followers of mass-circulation newspapers of the Soviet period. Now, the author of corporate media has the same tasks, as the correspondents in the Soviet era — propaganda of ideology, motivation to improve quality and increase production. At the same time, both the specifics of work and working conditions have changed, as writes the researcher of corporate press A.E. Bogachev (2016) [3].

The corporate press is one of the rapidly developing types in the modern Russian media space. Currently, not only all large holdings and enterprises have their publications, but also many representatives of medium-sized businesses and educational institutions. Along with the development, there is a transformation of this type of media. The nature of the work of its employees is also changing. As a rule, corporate publications are created on the initiative and with the support of management, and are intended for people, who are involved in the corporation. Distribution of media in the Global Network allows to make them international, because now they can be read anywhere in the world. We think that the corporate press is a tool of management, using which it is possible to raise the status of the organization, to create a certain corporate culture, positive image of the enterprise, to inform the organization's employees about something, etc.

On the one hand, corporate media is a mass media, but on the other hand they cannot be called such, because according to the Law of the Russian Federation "On Mass Media", the journalist should always be objective. The publication, which reflects only the position of the company's management on all issues, cannot be mass media. On the other hand, the corporate press is a tool of PR sphere, because the company's interaction with the audience is a feature of public relation.

The further development of information and communication technologies forces corporate media to change. Currently, their content is presented not only in its traditional form (printed, television and radio texts), but multimedia technologies are also widely introduced. The corporate press now exists in several variants: online, versions on different platforms, placement of content on social networks, etc. Today, a corporate media employee should be able not only to write texts, but also to create photo and video materials.

According to the Russian Association of Communication Directors and Corporate Publishing, 47.2% of companies use both print and digital media; 26.3% have only printed version; 19.4% work only in electronic format (2016) [4].

The formats and functions of modern corporate media are also transforming. This leads to the fact, that it is necessary to change the approaches in the work with the audience. The corporate press audience is narrowly targeted. According to I.P.

Romashova, “these may be the professionals in one field (the partners of the corporation) or potential consumers (for example, car enthusiasts), while the general public is of little interest for the company” (2015) [5].

The results of our study complement the findings of D.A. Murzin (2005) [1], Yu.V. Chemyakin (2016) [2], A.Yu. Gorcheva (2008) [6], B. Sanders (2017) [7], D.K. Thusu (2009) [8], R. Dizazzo (2012) [9], (2017) [10] in the field of studies of the Russian practice of functioning of modern corporate media. In addition, the data obtained can be included in programs of training and professional development of journalists, editors and media managers, at universities, special courses or professional educational seminars, as additional cases of studying the quality and effectiveness of modern corporate media, and their role in creation of positive image of one or another organization.

## 2.MATERIALS AND METHODS

*The empirical basis of the study* was corporate media and their electronic resources (sites, groups and channels on social networks), related to six different organizations. To obtain more accurate results of the analysis, we used the corporate media of the enterprises with various forms of ownership and organization of activities, located in such media-saturated regions of Russia as the Republic of Tatarstan and Samara Region:

- *university media*: we compared the activities of the student television channel “UNIVER TV” (Kazan (Volga) Federal University) with the work of the press service of Kazan National Research Technical University named after A.N. Tupolev - KAI (Kazan);

- *press of industrial enterprises*: we compared the corporate press of PJSC “TATNEFT” (the Republic of Tatarstan) with the similar type of media of PJSC “Togliattyazot” (Samara Region);

- *corporate press of organizations, providing car sales services*: we compared the activities of press service of “KAN AUTO Group of Companies”, and its competitor - the chain of car dealerships “TransTechService” (Kazan).

All represented groups of corporate press have different goals, objectives and functions. They exist in various formats and are designed for different audiences.

The study was carried out in 2017-2018.

The methods of working with the audience in corporate media (university, industrial, automobile segments) were revealed and studied in the article for the first time. Web services, aimed at dealing with the audience, in order to maximize the presentation of the enterprise in a modern multimedia format, are given in comparison.

We conducted a study, based on the following *methods*:

- comprehensive analysis of the corporate media content (including their official sites, groups and channels on social networks);

- structural analysis of the resource base of corporate media;

- comparative analysis of the methods of working with the audience, used in corporate media, which formed the empirical basis of this study;

- expert survey of the editors, who formed the empirical base of corporate media research, with the aim of clarifying their positions, regarding the understanding of the tasks and functions of modern corporate media, as well as the application of methods of working with the audience in media, led by them.

### 3.RESULTS

1. The corporate press is, first of all, the instrument of public relations and formation of public opinion about the activities of an organization. Having all the characteristics, corporate media is only partly a mass media. Today, all large enterprises have corporate media. After the analysis of corporate press, the author found out, that corporate media in the modern context often work on the principle of a mixed type of publication. They work for business partners, employees and customers. So, in the editorial offices of corporate media there are the employees without specialized journalistic education - PR specialists, who have their own vision on how to present information. There is a shortage of qualified personnel, having a notion about the work of a journalist and the specifics of editorial activity. All surveyed representatives of corporate media believe that corporate media is only partial journalism. Thus, there is a violation of value: journalism is transformed into journalism with a focus on PR. Professional journalists strive to serve the interests of the audience, presenting new information. PR specialists, as a rule, try to close the information from media, acting in the interests of the enterprise's management. This suggests that some corporate media provide biased information in a one-way fashion and do not take into account its relevance.

There is also a tendency to give up the newspapers in electronic format and the desire to use the Intranet, because it allows to involve the greater number of readers and expands the boundaries of possible presentation and distribution of content. It is possible that in the future, corporate media will fully operate on the Internet, choosing convenience, multi-functionality and multimedia.

2. Currently, it is necessary to correct the list of functions. Having analyzed the functions of corporate press, presented by the researchers of this type of media, we propose to arrange them, depending on the degree of significance and effectiveness in modern media practice: the function of management, informative, image-building, ideological, advertising and reference, educational and entertaining. Many employees of corporate media work on the principle of praising their company in the interests of management, while neglecting the objectivity of their positions.

Further development of information and communication technologies allows some authors of corporate publications to work more effectively with the so-called freelance editorial group, whose members are the employees of the enterprise; to improve the quality of the company's products and services; to influence the behaviour of the audience through the negative and truthful information, distributed in publications, designed exclusively for the internal audience, without the involvement of bystanders. In the future, this may lead to a tendency to disseminate objective information. Freelance employees and corporate media authors will gradually come to the conclusion that, as they said during the survey of experts, this approach is effective from the point of view of covering the organization's activities.

3. As a result of expert surveys, the respondents (editors, who formed the empirical base of corporate media research) confirmed, that their editorial staff not always consisted of professional journalists. More often than not, these are PR-service employees — graduates of humanitarian departments, whose responsibilities include the creation of corporate media. With the further development of digitalization process, the presentation of information has changed, and that has led to an increase in the responsibilities of these people. The information, published on the website or in social

networks, should be visually presented, interactive and brief, so that the audience can perceive it faster. Currently, corporate media employees are not only working on the content of print publications, but they also create content for social networks, the organization's website or its Intranet portal (the communication space on the organization's website, intended only for the organization's employees and closed to ordinary website visitors).

As a result of expert interviews, the methods of attraction of the audience's attention, which are currently used in corporate media, were summarized and analyzed. Now, corporate media editors try to write short texts and to visualize them. We believe that the method of attraction of the audience's attention, using visualization, operates under the following principle: the more beautiful and brighter is the illustration or photo, the more loyal is the reader to the text. It seems that if the visual content is poor and uninformative, then the reader will not pay attention to a post on social networks, or a text in a newspaper or magazine. However, the use of visual text, in our opinion, is unlikely to lead to the fact that the editorial staff of corporate media will soon give up on literal text.

We believe that the audience flow will increase if corporate media authors create texts or videos about popular media personalities, organize and conduct social events and contests with prizes, attractive to readers, on social networks. That is, at present, the methods of advertising and marketing activities are more effective in corporate media, than journalism. But this practice may change.

4. In current times, journalism and PR are practically integral whole in the corporate media, studied by us. Having analyzed the methods of attraction of the audience's attention, used in the corporate media under study, the authors of the article defined the following:

- 1) the use of social networks, site, Intranet portal for publication of various messages by the employees of the organization, intended for their colleagues;
- 2) publication of informative texts, useful for audience;
- 3) the use of any form of visualization of published information;
- 4) articles about employees: personnel changes, praise, motivation, interviews with top managers or company management, congratulations on various holidays;
- 5) honesty to readers;
- 6) publication of important news about the company, using the attractive captions;
- 7) live (usually text) broadcast of the event on the enterprise's site;
- 8) the use of interactivity with the audience (contests, surveys, the possibility of commenting or evaluating the publication);
- 9) media content with famous and popular people;
- 10) following youth trends: for example, the use of memes in the enterprise's groups on social networks;
- 11) involvement of "outside" authors (who don't work at the enterprise); they are often chosen from among professional journalists;
- 12) regularly provision of information to the audience about social benefits and social policy of the enterprise;
- 13) articles about the hobbies of employees, life outside work, sports, healthy lifestyle. These topics can also attract the attention of the audience.

The use of electronic information transfer channels allows corporate media to exist in new formats. Social networks, sites, and intranet portals are currently important



for them. This helps to reach a wider audience. Corporate media editions have more opportunities to influence the audience through interactive content, illustrations, photos, live broadcasts on social networks. This will allow them to create effective content in the future, in order to maximize the audience engagement.

5. The use of the Internet has influenced the methods of working with the audience of corporate media. The development of digitalization will gradually lead to the transformation of the current methods of attraction of new readers, and holding the interest of existing ones. The further studies will show how it will be.

#### **4.CONCLUSION**

Exploring the Internet space, the employees of corporate media, studied by us, change their work from a narrow-profile (the articles about the life of the enterprise, intended for its employees and the members of their families) to popularization of the activities of “their” organization in the country, and in the world as a whole - among Russian-speaking Internet audience. There is a transformation of the functions of corporate media, which, in order to be closer to the audience and to increase its number, should regularly apply the techniques, typical for mass media, with the aim to attract and to hold the attention of the audience.

#### **5.DISCUSSION**

The results of our study supplement the findings of J. Sawyer (2018) [11] and L. Artz, Y.R. Kamalipour (2012) [12] with the modern Russian practice of corporate media functioning in two Russian regions (the Republic of Tatarstan and the Samara region). These authors studied corporate media of different countries from the position of the quality of image formation of certain organizations, and occasionally considered this type of media as journalism. The results of our study indicate that, while exploring the Internet space, corporate media editors use the techniques, typical for journalism, in order to attract the attention of the audience.

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