

PROMOTION OF RUSSIAN SPORTS CONTENT ON ONLINE PLATFORMS FOR INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES IN THE FACE OF EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

Goal: Amid information globalization, the Internet has become the main platform for business. Most of the advertising budget of each business is spent on promoting the project on various international Internet platforms and social networks. The paper presents the results of research on the strategies for promoting sports content on online information platforms in view of the external constraints faced by Russian opinion leaders in 2022. The purpose of the study is to identify the most efficient promotion strategies to create recommendations for further PR strategies of the Myach Production communities.

Methods: The research material includes the information communities Myach Production, Comment.Show, and Krasava. The authors use the methods of comparative and content analysis of the communities to fulfill the research objectives. **Results:** The study identifies instruments to maintain and increase audience size and engagement, as well as to minimize possible losses due to the effects of sanctions from international platforms.

Conclusion: The authors offer recommendations for adjustments to the PR strategies of the Myach Production brand on the online platforms in use. The formulated recommendations can also be used by other brands producing sports information content with international audiences.

Keywords: PR; Internet; Social media; Social networks; Sports content; Opinion leaders.



PROMOÇÃO DE CONTEÚDOS DESPORTIVOS RUSSOS EM PLATAFORMAS EM LINHA PARA AUDIÊNCIAS INTERNACIONAIS FACE A CONSTRANGIMENTOS EXTERNOS

RESUMO

Objectivo: No meio da globalização da informação, a Internet tornou-se a principal plataforma de negócios. A maior parte do orçamento de publicidade de cada empresa é gasto na promoção do projecto em várias plataformas internacionais da Internet e redes sociais. O documento apresenta os resultados da investigação sobre as estratégias de promoção de conteúdos desportivos em plataformas de informação online, tendo em conta os constrangimentos externos enfrentados pelos líderes de opinião russos em 2022. O objectivo do estudo é identificar as estratégias de promoção mais eficientes para criar recomendações para outras estratégias de relações públicas das comunidades de produção de Myach. **Métodos:** O material de investigação inclui as comunidades de informação Myach Production, Comment.Show, e Krasava. Os autores utilizam os métodos de análise comparativa e de conteúdo das comunidades para cumprir os objectivos da investigação. **Resultados:** O estudo identifica instrumentos para manter e aumentar a dimensão e o envolvimento do público, bem como para minimizar possíveis perdas devido aos efeitos de sanções de plataformas internacionais. **Conclusão:** Os autores oferecem recomendações para ajustes às estratégias de relações públicas da marca Myach Production nas plataformas em linha em uso. As recomendações formuladas podem também ser utilizadas por outras marcas que produzem conteúdos de informação desportiva com audiências internacionais.

Palavras-chave: Relações públicas; Internet; Redes sociais; Redes sociais; Conteúdos desportivos; Formadores de opinião.

1 INTRODUCTION

Almost all spheres of human activity are now covered by the Internet. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the World Wide Web since it offers instant access to information resources and has no spatial or temporal limitations, which is an advantage for PR specialists. The global network is what can provide the public relations manager with a potential target audience openly (Karaulova, 2016). The accessibility, segmentation, and availability of unencumbered feedback allow the advertising professional to influence the potential target audience without hindrance, instilling in them certain standards of morality and values, types of behavior, needs, and commitment to particular goods/services (Bakhtin, 2017; Lichnyye Finansy, 2022).

Today, the Internet is not only a platform for knowledge, but also entertainment, providing a leisure function with social networks, messengers, video hosting platforms, online games, and various media resources. The Internet allows to transfer popular television series, programs, and shows to different platforms. In this situation, faced



with a state of choice, the 21st-century person favors online communication over other ways of transmitting and receiving information. For this reason, PR specialists widely use the World Wide Web in their arsenal, which allows them to not only work for a large number of real target audiences but also promptly respond to consumer needs and feedback (Black, 1998; Tansiri and Devahastin, 2019).

When analyzing the sports theme, it is important to account for the fact that in the era of globalization, through the use of not only traditional but modern ways of interaction with the audience, sport has grown from a regional phenomenon into an international one. Owing to online broadcasts among other things, online users gain access to topical content and the demand for high-quality expert information grows every year (Pochinin, 2017). The sports theme market is marked by several features that are often similar to the political market due to the profound manifestation of allegiance to a particular club, team, or signature colors. Fans easily get involved in discussions about their favorite club and engage in polemics with those who oppose them. All this would not have been possible without the development of Internet communications, which allow the transmission of relevant information regardless of geographic and temporal boundaries. The development of Internet technology has given rise to the phenomenon of information overload (Altukhov, 2013; Media Netology, 2017). Individuals have to isolate themselves from many different arrays conveying the same data. This is why online news and information publications have to use different promotional tools. In this way, they get the opportunity to stand out among their competitors (Babaeva et al., 2000; Popov, 2019).

The study pursues the goal of defining the effectiveness of the PR activities conducted by the sports communities Myach Production, Krasava, and Comment.Show on the online platforms they utilize.

2 METHODS

The empirical base for the study are materials from information communities Myach Production, Krasava, and Comment.Show on the VKontakte social network, the Telegram messenger, the Yandex.Zen platform, and on the YouTube video hosting website, as well as the internal statistics of these public pages.

The study employs a comparative analysis of the content posted by the information community Myach Production with that of the information communities Krasava and Comment.Show, which cover the same topics, in addition to content analysis of their

sections and user comments. These methods enable the study of technologies for the promotion of information communities on the Internet and the identification of the effectiveness of the PR activities conducted by the examined sports communities. The study extensively uses methods of analysis and synthesis, which serve as a basis for determining and describing the practice of application of PR technologies for the promotion of content in the sphere of sports.

The analysis of sports-themed online information platforms using the example of Myach Production, Comment.Show, and Krasava channels lays the basis for further research and has enabled the study of the following technologies of online community promotion:

1. Development of customized entertainment, educational, news, selling, and engaging content and its integration into the content plan on an ongoing basis;
2. Continuous posting of high-quality content that corresponds to the theme of the community;
3. Collaboration with other opinion leaders as a tool to build a targeted public among the users and subscribers of the online community;
4. The attraction of sponsors to the community in the face of bookmakers and sports retailers, which is one of the features of the sports community;
5. Increased advertising and production investments to build the capacity of the community.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study determines the effectiveness of PR measures of the sports communities Myach Production, Krasava, and Comment.Show on the YouTube and VKontakte platforms and in the Telegram messenger.

In terms of the time of presence on YouTube, Myach Production and Krasava stand out with 4.5 and 4 years, respectively. The creators of Comment.Show began using the platform later – on May 9, 2020. The leader among the selected channels by subscriber count is Krasava with 1,150,000 subscribers, closely followed by Myach Production, which crossed the mark of 1 million subscribers quite recently – on May 11, 2022. Comment.Show is noticeably lagging behind its opponents on this parameter with only 280,000 subscribers.

Also noteworthy is the number of videos posted and the timing of their publication: the Myach Production YouTube channel has 710 videos with an average of 157.8

videos per year. The authors of this information community are the most productive in creating sports content for all the considered channels. Next, the creators of the Comment.Show YouTube channel posted 285 videos in the two years of the channel's existence, the average number being 142.5 per year.

Considering the total number of views, the leader among the three designated channels by a wide margin is Myach Production with 311,390,892 views. The Krasava channel has a total of 121,229,334 views and Comment.Show has gotten 55,222,993 views. However, these data require clarification due to the varying number of videos on the channels. For this reason, we calculated the average number of views per video. Thus, Krasava has an average of 1,346,992 views for one video posted, Myach Production has 438,578, and Comment.Show – 193,665 views per video.

Proceeding from the above results, we can conclude that despite the significant time gaps in posting content, the Krasava channel remains demanded by its target audience, as its videos consistently get the most views. The creators of the other two channels adhere to a different strategy – by making more videos they compensate for the relatively small average reach with the total number of views.

Next, we consider the two indicators that account for engagement on the YouTube channels in the past 30 days – the number of views and the increase in subscribers. Myach Production is a clear leader in both indicators, having 6,728,000 views and 11,000 new subscribers in the last month. The Krasava channel received 2,390,000 views, yet lost 10,000 subscribers in these 30 days. This trend may be due to the debatable political statements voiced by the channel's creator. Finally, the Comment.Show YouTube channel received 1,302,000 views, but this did not increase the number of subscribers.

An important parameter in the promotion of a YouTube channel is the audience engagement rate (ER), which equals the sum of likes and comments divided by the number of subscribers and multiplied by a hundred percent. This indicator is not as decisive in ranking content on YouTube as it is on social media (VKontakte, TikTok, etc.). Nevertheless, it can give insight into the audience engagement of a particular blogger. The highest ER is demonstrated by the Krasava channel – 5.8%. Myach Production and Comment.Show are behind with 2.08% and 1.4%, respectively. These numbers prove the idea voiced by us earlier – the specified channel creators build their strategy around regular posting, achieving their results owing to a large number of videos. This demonstrates the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative parameters of the produced content.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the YouTube channels of Myach Production, Comment.Show, and Krasava

| Comparison parameters | Myach Production | Comment.Show | Krasava |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Time of presence on the platform | 4.5 years | 2 years | 4 years |
| 2. Number of subscribers | 1,010,000 | 280,000 | 1,150,000 |
| 3. Number of videos posted | 710 | 285 | 90 |
| 4. Average number of videos posted per year | 157.8 | 142.5 | 22.5 |
| 5. Total number of views | 311,390,892 | 55,222,993 | 121,229,334 |
| 6. Average number of views per video | 438,578 | 193,665 | 1,346,992 |
| 7. Number of views in the last 30 days | 6,728,000 | 1,302,000 | 2,390,000 |
| 8. Increase in subscribers in the last 30 days | 11,000 | 0 | -10,000 |
| 9. Audience engagement | 2.08% | 1.4% | 5.8% |

The considered information communities Myach Production, Comment.Show, and Krasava also have channels on Telegram. Importantly, the communities first started using Telegram at different times. Specifically, Myach Production created its channel on the messenger 4 years ago, 6 months after launching the YouTube channel, which speaks of the authors' desire to develop their presence on these platforms in parallel. In turn, Comment.Show launched its Telegram channel 1.5 years ago, also 6 months after appearing on the main platform – YouTube. Finally, Krasava developed its presence on Telegram only 7 months ago, 3.5 years after doing so on YouTube. This fact may indicate that for a long time, the creator did not expect to rely on the messenger, unlike the other two information communities considered.

In terms of the number of subscribers, the undisputed leader is Myach Production with 58,027 subscribers, followed by Comment.Show and Krasava with 25,638 and 14,591 subscribers, respectively. However, when the average reach of one publication is considered, the difference between Comment.Show and Krasava ceases to be that noticeable – 11,490 against 11,730 users, respectively. Nevertheless, Myach Production still confidently dominates by this parameter, as each of its publications reaches an average of 27,700 people.

An important factor to consider in the comparative analysis of the Telegram channels is audience ER: total and in the first 24 hours since publication. ER is calculated as the ratio of the average reach of one post to the number of subscribers to the channel multiplied by 100%. Note that this indicator may be higher than 100% due to views from outside the channel through reposts by other communities.

The highest subscriber ER among the examined Telegram channels is shown by Krasava with an average reach of 81% of its audience, although the community's ERR in the first 24 hours is only 44%. This pattern suggests that the channel's subscribers

are quite loyal to the creator and ready to read the publications almost to the end, but not all of them refresh the channel feed daily. Comment.Show has an ER of 65% while leading in terms of reach in the first 24 hours of publication – 45%. At the bottom of the three is Myach Production with a 48% ERR and a 33.9% reach on the first day.

The previously analyzed indicator is undoubtedly influenced by the number of publications generated by the creators of the considered information communities. Here the leaders are Myach Production and Comment.Show, which have a total of 3,541 and 1,017 posts, respectively. Given that the authors had entered the market at different times, we also looked into the average number of posts per year. Calculations show that the authors of Myach Production produce an average of 885.3 posts per year and Comment.Show publishes 678 posts in a year. In turn, the Krasava information community has published 142 posts in the 7 months of being on Telegram, which, if the current rate is maintained, would result in 243 publications in one year.

The results obtained point to the conclusion that the content authors of the Krasava Telegram channel do not prioritize the quantity of posts, which is also the case for the community's YouTube channel. The number of posts in the messenger is not that large, so readers read the channel almost entirely (81% ER in total), even when they do not have time to visit it on the day of the new post (44% ER in the first 24 hours). In contrast, the authors of the Myach Production and Comment.Show channels count on a large amount of content, which also affects their audience ER – there are a lot of publications, so not every user is ready to read 10-15 posts in a row if they have not visited the channel for several days.

Table 2. Comparative analysis of the Telegram channels of Myach Production, Comment.Show, and Krasava

| Comparison parameters | Myach Production | Comment.Show | Krasava |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|----------|
| 1. Time of presence on the platform | 4 years | 1.5 years | 7 months |
| 2. Number of subscribers | 58,027 | 25,638 | 14,591 |
| 3. Number of posts published | 3541 | 1017 | 142 |
| 4. Average number of posts published per year | 885.3 | 678 | 243 |
| 5. Average reach of one post | 27,700 | 11,490 | 11,730 |
| 6. Subscriber engagement | 48% | 65% | 81% |
| 7. Subscriber engagement в in the first 24 hours after publication | 39% | 45% | 44% |
| 8. Citation index | 33.86 | 55.83 | 5.28 |
| 9. Increase in subscribers in the last 30 days | 2,275 | 250 | -483 |

Owing to the blockage of many platforms, which is faced by Russian opinion leaders, VKontakte became the third most important platform for information communities.

Therefore, we have conducted a comparative analysis that more closely examines the presence of the studied opinion leaders on this social network.

The first parameter to note is the total number of subscribers. The leader in this indicator is the Krasava public page with 69,477 users, second place is taken by Myach Production with 47,905 users. Comment.Show lags far behind, with only 5,495 people subscribed to their VKontakte page. Of note is also the varying productivity of the communities. Same as on other platforms, Myach Production generates the most content – 486 posts a month. Next comes Comment.Show with 75 publications a month, and the last place is taken by the Krasava page, the activity of which is only 36 posts a month.

However, an indicator more important than the total subscriber count and the amount of content posted is the average reach of each post. In this regard, the definite leader is Krasava, showing an average reach of 29,700 users. Myach Production, on the other hand, has a modest range given the total number of subscribers – only 4,500 people, while Comment.Show consistently get 2,600 views with a much smaller subscriber base.

Since VKontakte has been on the market for quite a while, the network has accumulated a fair number of abandoned accounts that users have not logged in to for several years. With this in mind, we introduced a variable of "live" subscribers, denoting the number of audience members who regularly log in to their accounts and make some actions. The greatest share of the live audience is found in the subscriber base of Krasava – 88%, second comes Comment.Show with 81%, and the last of the three is Myach Production with a modest 72.6% of the total subscriber count.

However, when it comes to the dynamism and systematic development of the VKontakte page, in the first place is Myach Production with an audience increase of 497 people in the last 30 days. Comment.Show gained only 12 new subscribers in this time, while the VKontakte page of Krasava lost 324 people. That being noted, the same trends with respect to each information community are discovered on all the examined platforms, suggesting the presence of a certain pattern.

Next, we analyzed the audience of the aforementioned pages. Among the subscribers to Myach Production, 95.7% are male and only 4.3% are female. The main audience of this page is under 18 (around 27%), between 18 and 21 (around 21%), and from 21 to 24 (around 17%). Geographically, 70.1% of the users come from the Russian Federation, another 7% – from Ukraine, and 6.9% – from Kazakhstan. The audience of the Krasava page is 96.8% male and only 3.2% female. However, major

differences are found in the age of the audience – the main body of it is under 18 (about 19%) and 30-35 (about 18%) and approximately 14% are users aged 35-45, which shows a great share of adult audience of the public page. The geographical location of the users is predictable – 86.8% come from Russia, 3.9% – from Belarus, and only 1.5% – from Kazakhstan. Analysis of the audience of the Comment.Show page was impossible due to the low number of subscribers since services typically process and store the considered type of information on communities of 10,000 people and more.

Table 3. Comparative analysis of the VKontakte public pages of Myach Production, Comment.Show, and Krasava

| Comparison parameters | Myach Production | Comment.Show | Krasava |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------|
| 1. Number of subscribers | 47,905 | 5,495 | 69,477 |
| 2. Number of posts in the last 30 days | 486 | 75 | 36 |
| 3. Average reach of one post | 4,500 | 2,600 | 29,700 |
| 4. Live users | 72.6% | 81% | 88% |
| 5. Subscriber engagement | 0.31% | 1.06% | 0.79% |
| 6. Increase in subscribers in the last 30 days | 497 | 12 | -324 |

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the results, we propose the following notional recommendations as part of the promotion of the information community Myach Production:

1. Organization of contests to encourage users to subscribe to the YouTube channel and other platforms of the authors;
2. Development of presence on the Russian platforms VKontakte and Yandex.Zen to prevent the loss of a large share of the audience due to possible further blockage;
3. Creation of an account on the Boosty platform, which offers paid user subscriptions to compensate for the loss of monetization on YouTube;
4. More active work with negative feedback from users: removal and processing of obscene language, political messages, and encouragement and interaction with constructive criticism by channel authors;
5. Changes in the Interview-Podcast section to make the program more watchable: inviting heroes from outstanding news stories, increasing the running time of the videos, and considering inviting a separate host for the program.

Gradual and competent implementation of all the above recommendations for the promotion of the sports information community Myach Production on the Internet will increase the recognition of opinion leaders, raise the audience ER of the content, reach new platforms, improve the effectiveness of promotion technologies and the efficiency

of PR technologies, as well as give a foundation for further work to increase their recognition.

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