МЕНЕДЖМЕНТ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ

ETHICAL ISSUES OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN MODERN RUSSIA

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Modern society experiences an information explosion that results in the formation of powerful communication flows and it changes society, business and people. The Russian reality is especially risky because of mental and cultural factors shaping its national uniqueness. Large amount of Internet information and communication using manipulative technologies create problems of ethics, social responsibility of data and businesses. There remains an insufficient degree of implementation of ethical principles in corporate and professional communication of Russia. The authors using methodological approaches: systemic, deontological and ethic-axiological held a theoretical and empirical studies of massive informational flows related to social responsibility of Russian business, commercial advertising, corporate and professional ethics in Russia, taking into account public interests. Unethical technologies of astroturfing, trolling, bots, manipulation, lies and deception have been studied. The authors concluded that the process of ethical regulation in the sphere of business communication needs urgent optimization in modern Russia.

Key words: social responsibility of business, communication, ethics, astroturfing, trolling.

Introduction

The "digital revolution" that has taken place in the world over the last decade has brought to life many social phenomena, and their consequences require a multifaceted comprehension, first of all from the socio-psychological and sociocultural risks' point of view. The Russian reality is especially risky because of the mental and cultural factors that determine its national uniqueness.

Modern society is difficult to imagine without a huge amount of information and communication. For the last decade we have experienced an information explosion that promotes the formation of powerful multiform communications' flows changing society, business and people. The software and technical possibilities of information exchange on the Internet intensify interpersonal and business communications and it leads to development of new forms of communication. However, being in many ways positive, the information and communication processes are accompanied by an increase in the number of new problems, including ethical ones.

The object of our research was large information and communication flows in social networks that generate problems of corporate and professional ethics. The subject of the research is ethical issues in Russian business communication. The aim of the study was the analysis of data sets (big data) that affect society via the numerous communication channels and the definition of ways to solve ethical problems. A special place in this context is occupied with questions of ethics in the policy of social business

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and commercial advertising's responsibility because businesses use manipulative technologies admitted from the standpoint of common law but violate ethical requirements ones. The relevance of these issues is connected with the still insufficient observance of the ethic principles in corporate and professional communications in Russia.

Degree of problem's elaboration

In Russian practice the problem of the influence of large data sets on the ethical aspects of communication has been the subject of many scientific works (Apressyan, Bizyaeva, Gordova, Guseinov, Karlova, Topolev, Yarovoi). However, the system of ethical business communications' regulation in the cyberspace of modern Russia obviously undeveloped.

Studying the databases, the authors of the article mainly use the following research methods: retrospective and situational analysis, content analysis, analysis of statistical data and documents, interviews. The empirical base of the study was a lot of documents, articles, reviews, advertising materials, events, placed in Internet resources and other means of mass communication.

Methodology

The authors, using such methodological approaches as systemic, deontological and ethico-axiological, conducted a theoretical and empirical study of extended corpuses of information resources from the standpoint of social responsibility of data, the social responsibility of Russian business, commercial advertising, corporate and professional ethics in Russia, and the consideration of public interests.

The methodology of the system approach (Andreeva, Bertalanfi, Tikhomirova, Chamkin, Yudin) allowed us to consider the phenomenon which clause studied as an integral, complex and multidimensional dynamic system. In our case we determine the system as a set of interconnected elements arranged in a certain way, forming an integral unity – business communication. Within the framework of the system approach, we have analyzed information flows on the Internet as a global communication channel, the impact of databases on public opinion, the ethics of technology, and their dependence on the functioning of the communication system. The main principles of the systems approach are: integrity, structure, hierarchy, interrelation and interdependence of the system and environment, emergence. They allowed us to analyze the system thoroughly the mechanism how databases influence business communication and generate of ethical problems. This helps to reveal the multiform relations inside the studying process, to research the connection with the external environment and the impact of objective and subjective factors on the tone, purpose and strategy of communication, and finally to define a circle of influence on ethical processes.

The deontological approach (Kant, Apressyan, Gordova, Huseynov, Karlova) to the analysis of ethical problems in business communications is the starting point in assessing the categories of due, ideal, universal, normative. It is based on the principles of moral duty; interrelation of duty, good, conscience, justice as the highest values; responsibility for business communications; good faith advertising and information campaigns; forming a positive public opinion; exclusion of prohibited technologies (Semenova, 2008). The deontological approach allowed us to study a set of principles and norms of corporate debt, morality and social responsibility of business as advantage over society and the state, stakeholders and the target audience.

The ethical-axiological approach (Drucker, Levin, Shain, Yarovoi) reveals the problem of values in business communications and raises the need to explore it more deeply. Basic principles are studied social responsibility of databases; openness and transparency in interpersonal and business communications; honesty and decency in business communications. With the help of these principles, the phenomena of astroturfing, trolling, bots, manipulation, lies and deception are studied. The ethical-axiological approach allows to evaluate the influence of information files on communication in business on the basis of comparing the actual and the desired, the existing and the due. It allows to determine the development strategy and tactics that solve ethical problems in business, to ensure the correspondence of communication to the most important values.

Results and discussion

The results of the research showed that with the development of social networks, not only mass communication was strengthened, but there was also the possibility of mass mystification. Internet resources are a favorable environment for corporate lobbyists, viral marketers, astroturfers, trolls. On the Internet space, Russian public opinion has been artificially formed with the help of astroturfing. Using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, VKontakte, YouTube and other social networks, astroturfers manipulate the public consciousness with the help of dummy melt-accounts, software and special technologies, "enslaving" it and channeling it in the right direction. Fabricated mass mailings, provocations, rumors and slander, the launch of mass information on the existence of fictional groups with a certain agenda, the transformation of constructive discussions on topical issues in a meaningless squabble, custom publications, designed as independent opinions of individuals or "experts" – all this testifies that the representatives'

behavior of various kinds of business is unethical. Such methods are used to displace the public opinion on web forums, to organize fake Internet campaigns. For each post or comment posted on social networks and on the most popular forums participants receive a reward.

An interview with one of the organizers of astroturfing confirmed the facts above that is difficult to prove. He gave an example that his agency bought users' feedbacks for a small amount of money (https://vk.com/topic-78331192_32333696). There are sites that offer similar services (http://marketposting.ru). Thus, fake users and fake reviews form a positive image of business and increase sales against ethical principles and norms.

As part of astroturfing trolling is a way of commenting or submitting information in a rough and joking tone. A professional commercial troll is most often a trained person whose identity is either unknown, or about it is falsified and completely invented. Internet trolls are engaged in posting blog posts, comments on posts, on forums with the purpose to provoke. He interferes with the discussion or insults his participants. One of the tasks of such a "specialist" is to eliminate competitors. The more people are involved in specific discussions with trolls or puppets, the more they think that they really say useful things and believe it. At the same time, the manipulator, pulling at the virtual strings, sends dozens of messages from different accounts.

The launching of a promo tape for Lada Kalina by AVTOVAZ with the slogan "Lada Kalina – My Car" could be an example of trolling. A little later a trolling group "AntiVAz" injected a set of defaming posts negatively affecting the image of the Russian automotive industry. They launched an anti-slogan to this car brand with indecent text accompanied by a huge number of demotivators on this topic and actively disseminated fake stories. This significantly spoiled the image of the company AVTOVAZ and fixed the title of a bad manufacturer.

An example of falsified information can be called customized negative articles about competitors. In this case, we can talk about the responsibility of the media publishing false material. Not so long ago in the Instagram network the famous beauty blogger (http://instagram.com/darya_kholodnykh) published a negative review about the work of Moscow beauty salon, in which one of the "visitors" told about poor sanitation conditions, unprofessionalism of the workers and their aggression. It greatly influenced the target audience's opinion about this beauty salon, the percentage of visiting the salon fell sharply. In fact, the arguments given in the response turned out to be a lie, and the salon could prove it, but the public opinion remained steadfast. As the conflict was taking place in the Instagram Stories where photos did not remain more than 24 hours in the tape but it was impossible to present any charges afterwards. All posts of the salon were also removed due to numerous comments where the customers of the salon wrote that would not use its services after such a blogger statement.

Attacks by bloggers were observed in the project "Bread estate" project (http://instagram.com/hlebnaya_usadba). The project leaders told that it was necessary to delete deliberately false comments and to place several posts about product in order to avoid destroying of the company image. It was a blogger who wrote about the corporate deception of buyers – allegedly in the store bread from the package issued as freshly baked.

There are examples where bloggers introduce a low-quality product as a good one in their posts ordered by business structures. An employee of one of the business structures told how they paid bloggers to write about the high quality of toy cars from China, although in fact there was much evidence on the network that the products were fake (https://vybormam.com/overview/igrushki/konstruktor-bunchems-banchems-original-vs-poddelka).

1. In the Russian practice of Internet communications, there are bots services for cheating subscribers, which serves the interests of small and medium-sized businesses. An example of substandard cheating bots can serve such groups (https://vk.com/howtomedia1; https://vk.com/igrushki_schenyachij_patrul), where almost three thousand subscribers and only 2–3 "I like" ("likes") under the post. There are bots that conduct a massive flood attack on groups of competitors, on their website or forum, where they go through the same type of messages from different accounts. A bot is a computer whose owner may not even suspect that it is the link between the attacking site and the site. Through this computer a signal is broadcast that the server loads and the server stops responding to user requests and fails. For example, hackers recently arranged a large-scale attack on "Interfax" with the help of bots and as a result the site was put out of order. Thus the credibility of this site was undermined and after the bot attack the clickability and attendance decreased by 20% within two months. The organizers of such actions were guided by logic – if a site can be hacked it means that you can place unchecked information on it.

Unethical behavior in business communications we can see in manipulative advertising technologies as an analogue of hidden, dishonest, unethical advertising, where manipulation is considered to be an implicit influence on the behavior of other people (pressure, influence, zombification, dulling).

In the context of thinking about the problem of ethics in modern advertising we should notice such a rapidly spreading type of communication as "native" advertising. This is outwardly low-key advertising disguised as a regular information article. If it is created skillfully and corresponds to the style of the site on which it is located the fact of its advertising message remains practically unnoticed to

the potential consumer. Such an article may contain opinions of various experts on certain goods, services or projects, while the opinion of the "right" expert who gives preference to the advertised product, service or project is unobtrusively highlighted. Native advertising is very effective in promoting the products of beauty and film industry. It is located on different places like LiveJournal, well-known bloggers' sites. Advertising in social networks like Instagram and Facebook is its whole direction. Marketing managers have already understood the high potential of native advertising, since it has a much better chance of being perceived on the mobile Internet where conventional types of advertising irritate users by occupying most of the screen if it is not blocked. Nowadays native advertising is recognized by experts in marketing as one of the most effective ways to influence the consciousness of a person without his consent.

And this is precisely the fact that raises doubts about the ethics of such advertising that goes to the obvious deception. From the ethical point of view it seems to us that advertising that positions itself as advertising can be lawful. It means advertising should remain in the legal field, seek the most effective moves like playful or aesthetic ones, be capable of causing a man to admire his creative decisions but never degrading a person, not try to influence one's subconscious.

It seems to us that unethical advertising is a kind of reflection of the ethical problems of the commercial organization that spreads it ignoring its social responsibility to society.

Are there any ways to solve ethic problems of business communications in the digital environment? We consider that a concept of social responsibility of databases and mechanisms for the development of corporate and professional ethics in business communications should be developed by the state, society and businesses. Another problem is the low level of Russia's integration into the intercultural information space (Krivonosov, 2013). We hope that the Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Russian Federation for 2017-2030 (http://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/71570570/#ixzz4h2ZrLcMf) will improve the situation with information and communication technologies. The Internet resources user should have the ability to analyze information independently, avoid provocations, identify, and recognize astroturfing, trolling, bots and other unethical technologies.

Conclusions

The authors came to the conclusion that the axiological basis of information is necessary in interpersonal and business communication. This is especially important in the modern digital environment where large data sets are present and there are many opportunities for manipulation and provocation. The research showed that the principles of ethics are ignored. It indicates the dehumanizing nature of this part of Russian "big data".

According to the results of the research it can be assumed that the high intensity of information and communication activities which makes it possible to manipulate information on-line becomes a brake on the implementation of social responsibility of business in off-line in itself. It is the main reason why Russian companies enjoy the lowest confidence in the world and Russia is last at the social responsibility of business according to the European Institute of Management.

The identified problems can be managed by using such tools as systematic moral and moral work with the population, legal methods of struggle (compete in compliance with legislation), information response (identification, exposure, clarification, refutation), integrated social programs.

A critical analysis of ethical issues in business communications in modern Russia has shown the need to optimize the process of ethical regulation and improve ethical codes. Nowadays the concept of social responsibility of data as well as the social policy of business in Russia has not been formed yet.

Ignoring ethical norms and principles can lead to serious political, image and financial consequences not only for business, but for the society as a whole.

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