

THE PRACTICE OF USING ENTERTAINMENT PROPAGANDA (BY THE EXAMPLE OF USING VIDEO COMMERCIALS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC)

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The complex epidemiological situation in Russia and the world changed not only the conditions and practices of doing business, but also became a catalyst for the development of the latest communication technologies. During lockdown players from different market segments were forced to compete in a new environment, where they faced a wide range of challenges.

In crisis situations, it is important to know and monitor market trends, competitors' actions and consumer sentiments in turn to readily adapt operational processes, communicative strategic and tactical solutions to rapidly evolving external environment. Therefore, companies will be able to maintain their market position and publicity capital.

The 2020s and 2021st crisis demonstrated that it is not only state-owned companies and organizations that create social reality and interpret events in a certain way, using entertainment propaganda, but also large commercial brands. The study is based on the hypothesis that commercials of the companies and organizations under study contain components of propaganda.

In our research, we understand entertainment propaganda to mean non-violent presentation of arguments, facts or views in an entertaining form with the aim of manipulating the public consciousness and forming the 'right' public opinion.

The object of the study is advertising videos of well-known commercial brands and government organizations released before, during and after the research event

The empirical object of the study were advertisements of widely-known brands such as McDonald's, Delivery Club and Citymobil and state organizations — Health Department of Moscow and Stopcoronavirus.ru — in the selected periods of time.

The purpose of the study is to follow the dynamics of changes in advertising of brands and state organizations before, during and after the lockdown in Russia.

The objectives of the study:

1. to characterize the tonality of selected videos in each of the specified periods;
2. to compare advertising campaigns of commercial brands and public organizations;
3. to identify elements of entertainment propaganda during the lockdown in Russia;
4. to review trends and tendencies of communication of the considered brands with the audience during the periods under consideration.

Content analysis with structural and content-based elements is used as a research method.

The observed event is the coronavirus pandemic. The starting point is the end of January 2020s, two months before and after the study period.

The object of this research is represented by commercials of popular brands and government organizations, released before, during and after the research event such as the peak of the coronavirus pandemic (the lockdown). *The exact study periods are presented below:*

1. The first period (before the lockdown) is January 22nd, 2020 - March 22nd, 2020;
2. The second period (during the lockdown) is March 23rd, 2020 - May 23rd, 2020;
3. The third period (after the lockdown) is May 24th, 2020 - July 24th, 2020.

Videos released by three widely known brands from different fields and two state organizations, operating in a healthcare sector, were chosen for the study.

The results of the study are presented in the form of a table. It showing data on the period, the name of company or organization, the main topic, the date of release, the tonality, propaganda methods and promotional tools and words-markers that reflect the main idea of the video and carry a certain message.

In the analysis on the content of the second period of time it is possible to highlight the topics related to the Covid-19 pandemic: anti-virus measures, virus, health, stay at home, hygiene (hand washing) and donation. The themes of the videos of other periods are much more diverse and numerous such as special offers, new products and etc.

What is more, the videos, released during the lockdown in Russia, were allocated a variety of propaganda such as use of experts, providing factual information, use of evaluation words, word combinations, metaphor, speech tactics (pronouns 'we' and 'our') and visual elements.

In the result of the study the article analyses the following methods of propaganda — distraction, simple solution of complex problems, sense of belonging, substitution of concepts, analogy, effect of presence, creation of problem or threat.

For ease of reference, the following notation keys are used in the tables:

Period:

The first period - P-1;

The second period - P-2;

The third period - P-3;

Subject:

Anti-virus measures - AM;

Virus - V;

Health - H;

Stay at home - SH;

Hand washing - HW;

Donation - D;

Propaganda tools:

Use of experts (doctors) - 1;

Dealing with statements, facts - 2;

The use of evaluation words, word combinations - 3;

Use of metaphor - 4;

Use of speech tactics - 5;

Use of visual elements - 6.

Key of publication:

Positive - P;

Positive with elements of criticism - PC;

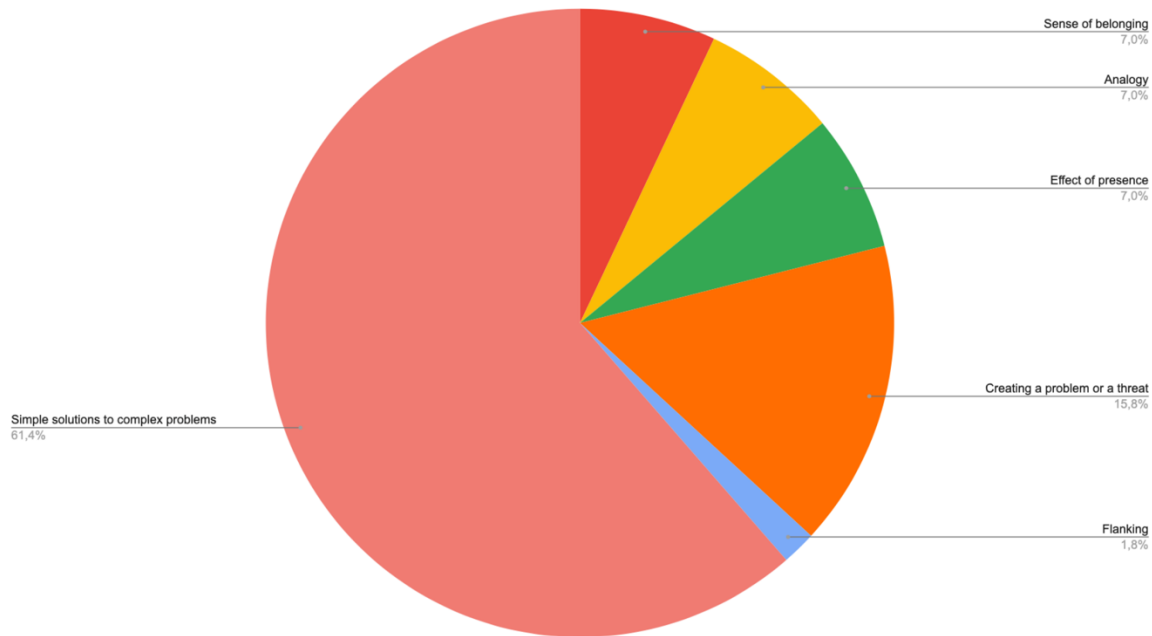
Neutral - N;

Rather a critical review - CR;

Exceptionally critical consideration - CC.

Based on the results of the structural content analysis (Diag. 1), it was found that the most common method of propaganda was to demonstrate simple solutions to complex problems (61,4 per cent). The second most common method is to create a problem or a threat (15,8 per cent). The use of sense of belonging, analogies and the effect of presence, accounting for 7 per cent respectively. Flanking is the least used method (1,8 per cent).

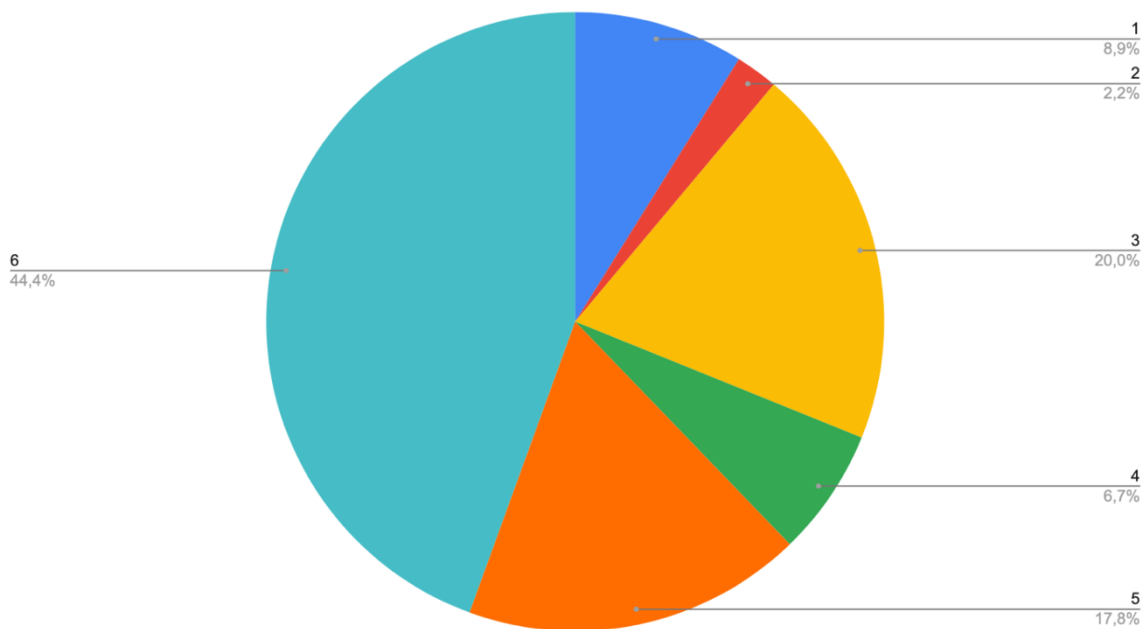
Propaganda Methods



Diag. 1

It is immediately evident that the most commonly used propaganda tool (Diag. 2) is №6, accounting for 44,4 per cent, meanwhile the percentage of the third tool is at 20 per cent, tool №5 and №1 account for 17,8 per cent 8,9 per cent respectively. The second least used method is №4 accounts for 6,7 per cent, being approximately four times higher than the least common tool №2.

Propaganda Tools



Diag. 2

Thus, commercials of the companies and organizations differ greatly in their goals and, above all, in their messages. However, in hard times like pandemics, everyone has the same goal, and the commercials of big companies and government organizations had the same idea, and they broadcasted the same kind of messages. So, well-known brands, which typically promote their products and services, have started to release the same themes and key videos as government health organizations that are not engaged in commercial activities, involved in promoting healthy-lifestyle and improve health promotion

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way advertising is used. Many companies have withdrawn from the market or suspended commercial activity because of the pandemic, while for others the crisis has become an opportunity for development and adaptation. Commercials, which were released during the lockdown by some major companies, played a significant role in promoting anti-virus measures and, moreover, allowed brands to maintain and increase the loyalty of the audience.

To conclude, during the lockdown, the advertisements had the same agenda and the same messages broadcast by both commercial brands and state organizations. The hypothesis of the study has been confirmed. It is also worth noting that some brands (such as McDonald's) did not publish any promotional videos during the lockdown, focusing only on the coronavirus.