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The Evolution of PR and Advertising Services in Uzbekistan's Digital Sphere

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Abstract. This article examines the impact of the Internet on the organization of public relations. The indicators of access and use of the Internet in Uzbekistan, which search engines are preferred and used by these Internet users, the share of users of social networks in posting various PR and advertising materials on the Internet, and the amount of follow-up of these PR or advertisements by users were analyzed. In the conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for placing PR and advertising materials on the Internet for specialists in this field, as well as various opinions about the quality of the materials to be placed, are placed in order of effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Today, Internet users, in the process of searching for the information they need from search engines, can see various advertising materials from these search engines in the list of search results. Advertising materials of this type are widely distributed not only in search engines, but also in the entire world of internet media, including such advertising materials in the case of the Republic of Uzbekistan, mainly in social networks. Also, in the economically and socially developed countries of the world, PR, that is, the system of public relations, is also creating a foundation for the development of their companies by widely promoting the above-mentioned advertising materials. Therefore, influencing the public, getting them to have a certain positive opinion about their company or products, and gaining their support - this remains an activity related to the establishment of coordinated and effective activities in existing systems in all IT areas.

The last decade has seen significant growth in social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Weixin/WeChat and others. These platforms complement various types of social networks such as blogs, microblogging, photo sharing platforms, social games, chat applications, and professional and business networks. Social media is vibrant and dynamic, with new products being invented every day.

As of the first quarter of 2023, the number of Internet users in Uzbekistan reached 76.6% of the permanent population, which indicates 26 million Uzbek citizens accessing the Internet. 30.08% of citizens used Instagram as a social network. Sites like Pinterest and YouTube were among the most popular social networks in Uzbekistan.

As of 2022, the United States has the third largest social media audience in the world (after China and India), with a social media penetration rate of 90% and is home to hundreds of millions of media consumers [1]. Given the enormous proliferation of social media as a communication platform, it seems that public relations will develop a variety of social media theories to stimulate research ideas and practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Online public relations (Online PR) began back in the mid-1990s with the advent of the Internet and the growing popularity of leading organizations' websites. The World Wide Web has opened up new opportunities for direct two-way communication between organizations and the public, and researchers have begun to explore the characteristics and potential of online communication. First came Web 1.0 elements such as email, chat, online surveys and contact forms, and later also Web 2.0 elements with great potential for dialogic communication and building public relations (OPR) [2].

The authors' work [3] explored qualitative content analysis that used framing theory to examine how gender and diversity have been framed over the past decade in contemporary public relations industry publications. The results showed that diversity is most often highlighted in a single issue or column and not considered across all publications. Most articles about various populations refer primarily to Hispanics or Latinos, and blacks or African Americans. Diversity is defined as difference: journey or process, language issue, responsibility, inclusion, transformation of workplace culture, improvement of the profession, resource intensity, power, need for justification and impact on the bottom line.

According to the authors of the article [4], social networks may represent the greatest social innovation/revolution in the history of communications, fundamentally changing the way people communicate, as well as the practices of public relations, journalism, advertising, marketing and business. Social media makes use of dozens of theories and concepts, including dialogue, interaction, identification, social presence, uses and gratifications, the spoken human voice, and many others. However, in the context of social media and public relations, it is common to import and apply other theories and concepts rather than explore and refine the unique features and capabilities of social media itself. The authors argue that social networks represent a new communication paradigm, and they explored the problem of building a theory of social networks for public relations by identifying features of social networks that have been identified by existing research as fundamental to understanding social networks, and ultimately developing a theory (s) social media for public relations.

Based on the research of the authors of the article [5], it can be said that social networks (SN) have become a key working channel in the field of public relations (PR) and have prompted PR scholars to learn more about the value of SN. The study authors used a systematic review to examine the authorship, themes, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks presented in SN-related PR research during the period 2010–2020. A total of 575 articles from nine peer-reviewed PR-focused journals were selected and analyzed. The results provide insight into SN research in PR and help explore future directions for SN research, including diverse SN platforms, big data, ethical issues, and the use of SN during epidemic periods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PR on the Internet is, as a rule, a set of online activities aimed at evaluating, supporting and changing the information environment around a company or organization on the Internet, which is an integral part of a general PR campaign. A well-thought-out and well-executed PR activity on the Internet can be compared to an offline PR activity in terms of the results achieved. At the same time, the costs of an online campaign are usually lower than the costs of offline events.

Contextual advertising allows you to choose which ads to show you, based on information collected about the user by the site or even the browser. Therefore, a person tends to pay more attention to such advertising because it is more suitable to his real needs, and the company that implements the advertising campaign gets a sample of the target audience, which also increases the effectiveness of the entire advertising campaign.

The process of researching the organization of public relations (PR) requires the preliminary formation of ideas about the use of the Internet by the population, studying the popularity of social networks, thematic forums, events, facts and places with which the developed PR promotion scheme will actually work. To analyze the Internet segment of Uzbekistan, we will use static data from the Datareportal website [6].

It is interesting to note that all data published in the Datareportal on Internet use by the population of Uzbekistan used qualitative research methods, such as analysis of existing studies, deductive thematic analysis of case studies and semi-structured interviews, as well as thematic analysis of user comments. Since we are in the early stages of building PR management in Uzbekistan, it is not surprising that most researchers have used qualitative research methods, since the use of these methods allows for a broader perspective to be taken when examining the underlying assumptions and practices used by organizations and the public to communicate on social networks.



FIGURE 1. Internet users over time in Uzbekistan (January, 2023).

As can be seen from Fig. 1 [6], PR can also be organized in the Internet segment of our country. The chart shows that almost 26.7 million of the population uses the Internet. This indicator is a very good audience for PR management.

To obtain a positive image of an organization or its products, to attract an audience and achieve business goals, search engines are of great importance. Because, usually, Internet users always look for their needs for some goods or services on search sites. Search advertising, also known as position auction, allows advertisers to submit bids for specific keywords to online publishers to ensure their ads appear prominently in search results. Online publishers use a combination of submissions and ad relevance to rank ads. Search advertising is considered one of the most effective forms of online advertising because it is close to the user's purchasing decision and matches the user's stated information needs. Therefore, studying the use of search engines is of particular importance. Figure 2 [6] shows exactly which search engines are used in Uzbekistan. According to statistics, it seems that for promotion you need to use Google search services. Here we need to add that users of mobile devices with the Android operating system by default use services from Google. According to this specialist in PR management and web developers of the organization, they can guide the promotion of just such popular search services.

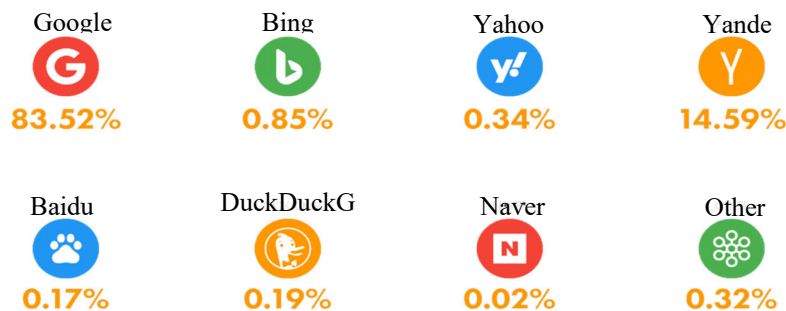


FIGURE 2. Share of search Engines referrals Uzbekistan.

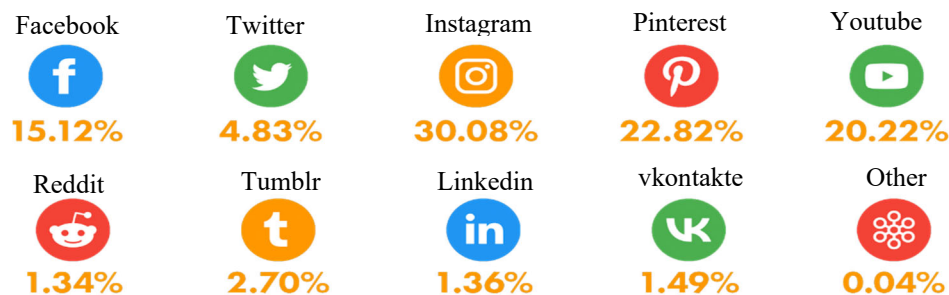


FIGURE 3. Web traffic's referrals from Social media Uzbekistan.

A recent study by the authors [7] defined social media accessibility as characteristics of various social media channels that can promote dialogic orientations of organizations and facilitate relationship building. A major benefit of using a social media accessibility approach in public relations research is that it considers how social media use is shaped by the properties of platforms, participants, and context. Based on this concept, future research should take into account the share of use of popular social networks in Uzbekistan (Fig. 3) [6]. According to statistics, our Internet users mainly enjoy the popularity of social networks designed for video content, such as Instagram, Youtube and others.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to present a research gap in public relations research: market analysis, structures and segments that could be proposed as a powerful tool of social media in the field of public relations.

To obtain a positive image of an organization or its products, promotion methods have been studied and the Internet space has been proposed as the main object of study. Based on the analysis of static data, we can say that to promote a company, it is necessary to take into account the statistics of search queries, as well as the filming of various videos to advertise products and post them on social networks.

Here you can easily monitor the reaction of the audience and change it according to your wishes in the future. However, statistics show that the Internet has been developing rapidly lately, and this has a direct impact on PR activities. Trends, formats and social networks change almost daily. networks trade off in popularity or change the rules of the game on their platform. However, the basic tools presented in this article will remain effective and consistent for a long time.

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