THE ROLE OF SOCIO-COMMUNICATIVE TOOLS IN POPULARIZATION OF SPORTS

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Abstract. The article analyses the role of social communication in popularizing mass sports among young people and in the contemporary Ukrainian society, formation of the young people's positive attitudes to physical culture and sports with the help of modern communicative technologies. The author highlights features of the socio-communicative tools, their impact on the young people with the view of forming their stable interest in sports and offers public communication and advertising as the major tools.

Keywords*:* public communication, communication technologies, young people, advertising, socialization, sport, physical culture.

Urgency of the Research

In the age of information, the role and importance of communication are changing dramatically and science is starting thorough studies of the impact of information due to the fact that information has become the main product and means of influence on culture and the society, especially mass consciousness.

At present, the young people's values are actively passing into the information sphere. Accordingly, return of the young people to recreational practices is impossible without using media in their popularization. Thus, formation of stable interest of the target audience in sports requires provision of the information impact on them.

Analysis of Research and Publications

Modern researchers deal with particularities of media culture development and interaction of sports and media. The most significant for our research are works by V. Zvereva, P. Chayalo, Yu. Sazonova, M. Volova, Ye. Voityk, S. Ostroverkh, O. Sadovnyk and others. Foreign researchers (G. Digel, R. Boyel, D. Row, D. Stead) also pay attention to problems of interaction of sports and modern communication technologies.

The increased number of works deal with use of information and communication technologies in education. In Ukraine this issue is highlighted by V. Yu. Bykov, Ya.V. Bulakhova, O. M. Bondarenko, V. F. Zabolotnyi, G. O. Kozlakova, O. A. Mishchenko, O. P. Pinchuk, O. V. Shestopal and others.

N. I. Zrazhevska, G. G. Pocheptsov, B. M. Yuskiv, V. P. Konetska and others studied individual aspects of various techniques of impacting the audience from organization of the communicative space, creation of visual patterns, myths on down to political, crisis technologies as well as reality construction and mediation technologies.

Popularization of physical culture practices was to a certain degree touched upon in the course of studying issues of theory and practice of organizing physical culture and mass

participation work with young people (I. Andrukhiv, M. Bayanivska, A. Bondar, A. Vinnichuk, Yu. Zhdanovych, V. Zolochevskyi, A. Kukhta, M. Pantiuk, A. Piven and others) as well as socio-pedagogic and organizational aspects of propagating mass physical culture and sports, advertising recreation services and physical education (V. Babalych, P. Vinogradov, A. Zhdanova, Ye. Kulinkovych, A. Leontieva, V. Osynchuk, T. Susykova, N. Tarasiuk and others). However, the majority of researchers pay insufficient attention to use of public communication and deal mainly with communication in the educational sphere.

In spite of the above studies, connections of sports with mass media have not been adequately considered. In particular, issues of transformation of sports under the impact of information communications, complication and extension of their interconnections still remain beyond scientific consideration. Thus, the comprehensive scientific study of functional and typological features of the socio-communicative tools of sport practice popularization is gaining significance.

The research objective is to substantiate selection of the socio-communicative tools in the course of popularizing physical culture and sports which are to increase physical activities in the society.

Material presentation

It has been repeatedly noted that a mass society is characterized by social and moral automation of individuals. Nowadays, millions of people are actively intercommunicating. Thus, mass involvement determines the atmosphere of the epoch, impacts social institutions and people's daily behavior, including physical culture.

According to N. A. Zrazhevska, social technology is a system of interconnected and mutually conditioned methods, techniques and procedures designed to introduce changes, transformation of an object, and reach concrete final results. It contains diagnostic, forming and evaluative components and focuses on solving certain social problems *(Zrazhevska, 2010:7)*. Practical application of the general methodology of social technologies in popularization of physical culture and sports provides implementation of the synthetic approach. In our opinion, transition from traditional methods to flexible technologies in the social sphere determines the near-term prospects of the social practice development.

So, popularization of physical culture and sports is impossible without the socio-psychological and information support. Underestimation of this process can cause negative effects. Hence, there arises the necessity of applying socio-information tools.

Rapid development of information and communication technologies has resulted in significant transformations of functional models, the very essence of the mass media structure, the character of their intercommunication with various spheres of the social life and, in particular, with sports.

Due to its characteristics, information is able to solve such social tasks as creation of the general "view of the world" and the "view of a separate community". Information is inseparably connected with such notions as "information process", "information field", "communication", "communicator", "space", "element", "structure", "channel", "language", "character", "algorithm", "message", "text", "interface", "infogenesis" etc. *(Bogomolova, 1991:12)*. Information transfer technologies possess certain significance, however, "technologies in themselves do not produce negative or positive results. The point is who, how and what for uses them. An important task is to change a person's consciousness, his/her system of values, norms, rules and behavioral traditions, his/her attitude to nature and other

people. Accordingly, sustainable development is a result of fundamental transformation of all social structures and those of consciousness, though this process in its turn cannot exist without the impact and application of accumulated technical means and scientific knowledge" *(Demchenko, 2011:67).*

Analysis of investigations and publications allows the conclusion that PR-technology is the most important socio-communicative toolkit of nowadays.

The main task of PR is to help build confidence in a healthy lifestyle as a real form of prolongation of productive (active) life. The ultimate task of PR is to help the society gain harmony and mutual understanding not forcing but offering values of a healthy lifestyle and making them part of everyday practices.

Modern sports are a kind of a product that requires marketing and PR. H. Pocheptsov states that the task of PR is to place an object properly and at the proper time. Here, PR is not incorrect information and, as a rule, is successful. Falsehood cannot be followed endlessly. None of PR procedures can defeat reality. So, what PR features can be revealed in the sphere of sports? K. Butterick fairly believes that PR functions as part of management and allows identification of the key audience of sports organizations and their interrelation. In other words, sports PR enables correct determination of the target audience and establishment of relations with it.

Among over 6 000 definitions of PR we choose the one suggested by scholars of the American Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education: "Public relations is a management function that establishes and maintains two-way, mutual relationships and communications between an organization and its publics; facilitates settlement of various problems and tasks; helps the management of an organization to be aware of the public opinions and to timely respond to them; determines and focuses on the main management task – to serve the public interests; helps the management to be ready for any changes and make efficient use of them playing a role of "a system of early warning" about dangers, helps to manage unfavourable trends; uses research and open communication based on ethic norms as principles of activities" *(Wright, 1960).* This definition is best suited for PR of the sports sphere where, due to its specific character (first of all, work with fans) management of communication in everything from the face-to-face one with fans to post-communication (paraphernalia etc.) is important. As mentioned above, PR procedures cannot change objective reality but can facilitate and optimize communication.

Sports have a specific character. Popularity is not possible without high achievements. Sports do not leave people indifferent but make them feel excited, happy, disappointed and even talk to their TV. This is a unique mixture of spectacles. Advertising makes especially successful use of the emotional component of sports. According to rules of any game there are difficulties to be overcome, rivals to be defeated and there is a victory to be won. Fans and spectators get the opportunity to enjoy and feel involved into a team game, this feature being actively used by advertising.

As a rule, sports (football, basketball) clubs are a kind of a brand that attracts fans. But this brand does not emerge spontaneously; it is the result of hundreds of professionals' work. A sports brand can only be developed and efficiently maintained on the basis of fans' likes and preferences. Sponsors also join the process of creating positive reputations. It should be noted that fans' and sponsors' attitudes to victories and defeats of their teams. The former "will treat achievements and failures of their favourire sportsmen with attention and concern in any case", the latter "are only interested in wins as this allows them to maintain their own reputation" *(Pozdnyshev, Voronova, 2003:7).* In its turn, a brand is a warranty of success not

only in business but also in sports. Advertising helps create and then maintain the reputation of both a sports club and a sportsman, form their positive image.

The term "new media" emerged in the late XX century and since that it has been used to identify e-publications and new forms of communication between content creators and consumers. Also, it differentiates new media which have appeared during development of digital, network technologies and communications from mainstream media. "Now the network acts as a new means of mass communication along with the press, radio and TV and performs corresponding functions in the society" *(Hryshyna, Rybakova, 2014:89)*. The future of sports PR belongs to these new media. That is why news, analysis and research Internet-media have been attracting investigators' attention. According to M. Yatsymirska, worlds of telecommunication, computers and media are gradually interpenetrating and integrating into one great space of teleinformation, until recently these worlds have been completely autonomous. There is a notion of the access to the world of information in media studies meaning a stationary and mobile phone format, computers, data transmission, access to cable television and the Internet *(Yatsymirska, 2006:250)*. New media make an integral part of the information society infrastructure and enhance it. This aspect is dealt with in *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society* by M. Castells *(Kastels, 2004:147)* where the author reveals the essence of this phenomenon and notes that the Internet has become a habitual tool and a cause of profound changes in communication, economy and culture.

Information on various devices and platforms provides more choice and access to it at the most convenient time. At present, among the great quantity of information sources people can choose those that meet their requirements in the best possible way. S Kvit points out that the Internet enables a great number of services otherwise impossible or quite difficult for a consumer *(Kvit, 2008:155)*. This means that obtaining any information is becoming very convenient as one does not have to wait for a newscast at a certain time on TV or a newspaper. Need for information is satisfied instantly by new media and in the form a person wants it to be: "the postindustrial society has its own symbol - a computer, its medium, its prevailing resource – information" *(Liashchenko, 2013:119)*. At present in the USA, where new digital technologies are being introduced at an especially fast pace, there are singled out several types of media consumers. Jeff Moriarty, Vice President of The Boston Globe, says, "One we called print engaged: print engaged readers favored a format and an approach that was similar to the newspaper. They liked hierarchical decisions by editors. These account for about 20 percent of their readers. The next biggest category was what we called online and mobile engaged: these were users who some people call news surveillance who tended to use a circuit of sites to find what they are looking for on any given day. They're very digitally savvy. There is some willingness to pay for content online. Print engaged audience had the most willingness toy for the right content and the right experience. The last group…which was casual. Casual readers are not willing to pay for content necessarily. They're heavy users of social media. They are real snackers of content, they come in and out." *(New media already turned to be new, 2013)*. In general, as we see, media are switching from printed to digital ones and exist in phones, tablets and other new devices appearing almost every day (e.g. e-book readers have become obsolete the fastest of all other gadgets being outcompeted by the tablet).

As for sports, there exist three concrete objectives – directions of strategic work of sports organizations: "sports results – number of fans (corporate and public) - revenue" *(Lefever, 2012:8)*. For instance, football clubs that benefited from ticket and paraphernalia

sales, TV rights, sponsor support in the past start working with new media.

In sports there can be singled out three main target groups – sponsors, fans and mass media – that underlie wellbeing of a sports organization or a sportsman. Correct positioning of a sports brand and maintaining its reputation are only possible with consideration of fans' and sponsors' advantages. This aim can be achieved through active collaboration with mass media. Thus, a brand is an integral factor of success in business, a promise to meet requirements of consumers (fans) who have two desires in sport – achievement of the best results by their favourite team and entertainment and pastime *(Savchenko, 2011)*.

Sponsors are interested in a good reputation of those sponsored, this enabling a company's positive image. The ideal spectator is a fan loyal to a sportsman or a club, his/her behavior depends on the favourite team's or sportsman's results and thus is more or less predictable. It is fans that bring in great part of profits to competition organizers in Europe as they buy tickets, subscribe for broadcasts and club TV channels, buy fan paraphernalia. In return, they want to have a spectacle; the more impressive it is, the more fans it will attract and consequently the more money they will spend. It is obvious that attracting fans' attention is only half the way, it should be maintained. Earlier, it was achieved through press materials, visibility in media, but now football clubs work actively in the Internet environment. Only after winning their own spectators sports clubs can work on attracting sponsors. That is why sports clubs should look for resources to attract more fans; "necessary financial resources come from the modern media sports complex developed in the European countries in the 1970s and the 1980s and acquired its current form in the1990s" *(Helland, 2007:105)*. There is a direct link here: sports (football, basketball) clubs get major benefits from sales of tickets, TV rights and club paraphernalia. That is why it is important to form and correctly position a sports brand focusing on fans and create a required reputation focusing on sponsors. This can be achieved in close collaboration with mass media.

As for modern media, it should be noted that a theme-focused website, which does not require considerable costs at that, is an excellent tool for work with fans. On the whole, Internet sites can be divided into several groups, or "levels".

At the initial level websites are one-page virtual business cards (or landing pages) and contain basic information on users' activities. The amount of the information on these sites is rather small, they are created mainly for advertising purposes and fix the user's online footprint.

An Internet portal is a more serious level. The amount of information on these sites is considerably greater, feedback and group communication (forums, chatrooms etc.) play a more significant role. Websites with portal elements are a unique source of information designed for various groups of users. They are mainly group communication channels. Thus, these sites are at a higher level of development as they contain a wide range of universal information, are targeted at mass communication and include a number of additional services. Due to this, their creation and maintenance require more financial and organizational efforts.

Sites of large clubs contain abundance of specialized information for fans. These sites are a main means of informing on club news. Besides, their forums are always active in discussing news, rumors and match results. The progress is not standing still, internet technologies are developing and so are the sports teams' websites.

Conclusions

The performed study of the role of modern socio-cultural technologies has resulted in characterization of the most influential tools of popularizing sports among the young people and the society on the whole. The modern information space is not always able to use propagating as a separate form of information activities. Hence, among other means of work with a broad audience PR is becoming an actual and logical development of propagating.

The suggested tools are not so much a social technology; they are the mechanism of its implementation in conditions of the modern media-information society. Efficiency and importance of their use is considerable and conditioned by the necessity for physical culture and sports to correspond to information impacts of other (harmful to health) social practices and processes.

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