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## **RITUALIZATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMUNICATIONS IN POSTMODERN SOCIETY: THEORETICAL ASPECT**

The article **objective** is to theoretically substantiate the preconditions and consequences of the ritualization of public relations communications in a postmodern society.

**Research methodology.** In order to achieve the objective of the research, the following methods are used: descriptive, analysis and synthesis method, systematization and generalization to discern the main scientific approaches to the study of ritual as a social and communicative phenomenon to identify parameters for ritual and PR communication; comparative and historical method is implied to determine the regularities of genesis and interaction of ritual and PR communication in public space; structural and functional method is applied to identify the functions of ritual in public relations communications under conditions of postmodern society.

**Results.** One of the prerequisites for ritualization of public relations communications is the genetic kinship of ritual and PR through their entrenchment in public space. PR technologies effectively exploit the potential of ritual as a means of structuring reality, and ritualization in postmodern PR communications becomes one of the mechanisms of creating simulated hyper reality. The negative consequences of ritualization in public relations are formalization and dumbing down of communication processes, which lead to loss of public confidence and can have a negative impact on the quality of society development. At the same time, under conditions of information environment saturation, the effectiveness of PR enhances the ritual communication techniques: reducing the level of critical perception through the appeal to the primary structures of archetype, preponderance of the non-verbal component over the verbal one, showmanship and periodicity of exposure.

**Novelty.** The novelty of the research lies in the substantiation of theoretical bases, including the preconditions and consequences of ritualization of communications of public relations in post-modern society.

**The practical significance** of the research is in the possibility of implementation of theoretical concepts of the article in a field of research in the different spheres of social communications, such as public relations.

**Key words:** ritual, ritualization, social communications, postmodern, public relations, myth.

### **I. Introduction**

Ritualization is a general trend in the development of social communications in postmodern society. In the conditions of transformation of values and loss of semantic priorities, as well as total simulacriation (J. Baudrillard) of all spheres of social activity that are characteristic of postmodernism, the ritual loses its sacred meaning, becoming a technology of mass influence. Understanding the mechanisms and consequences of this influence is one of the urgent tasks of researchers of public relations, because PR has a key role in establishing dialogue in society.

In the multidisciplinary field of ritualistic studies formed the idea of ritual as a socio-communicative phenomenon that «acts as a conductor of ideas, values, giving people's behavior organization, order and consolidation» [12, p. 58]. Due to such capabilities, the ritual or its elements are part of many PR technologies' arsenal.

The issue of ritual is reflected in the studies of researchers of political PR and propaganda (A. Bashuk, O. Zaslavska, Yu. Malovana, O. Osypova, D. Pavlov, H. Pocheptsov, N. Khoma, O. Sheihal, S. Shomova), corporate PR (V. Klimov), as well as media (N. Bachurina, I. Yerofieieva, M. Petrushkevych, A. Chernykh, O. Yuferieva) and advertising (L. Khavkina). However, to intensify and deepen research in this promising direction, it is necessary to form a proper theoretical and methodological basis, taking into account all the achievements of multidisciplinary ritualistic studies and in accordance with the challenges of modern social development.

## II. Research objective and methods

The article objective is to theoretically substantiate the preconditions and consequences of the ritualization of public relations communications in a postmodern society.

To achieve the research objective, the following methods were used: descriptive, analysis and synthesis, systematization and generalization – to determine the main scientific approaches to the study of ritual as a socio-communicative phenomenon, establishing identification parameters of ritual and PR communication; comparative-historical method – to identify patterns of genesis and interaction of ritual and PR communication in public space; structural-functional one – to clarify the functions of ritual in the communications of public relations in the postmodern era.

## III. Results

As a subject of study, the ritual is traditionally of interest to anthropologists, ethologists, culturologists, philosophers, as well as sociologists, psychologists, linguists. Their research has laid the foundation for ritualistic studies and has interdisciplinary methodological potential.

It is worth noting that the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon of ritual causing the polydisciplinarity of its studies, at the same time prevented the emergence of its generally accepted comprehensive definition. In the classical sense, ritual is «a means of cultivation and a form of expression of religious and mythological consciousness» [13, p. 6]. In anthropology, the ritual is interpreted more broadly: as any formal actions according to the established pattern, which express the general or social meaning through a symbol [11, p. 317].

Representatives of sociological science significantly influenced the formation of a socio-communicative approach to understanding ritual and rituality. In their interpretation, the ritual appears, first of all, as a «regulator of social relations» [13, p. 4], the strength of which influence is conditioned by the use of the possibilities of symbolism for the representation and transportation of meaning.

The inclusion of the ritual issues in the research discourse of social communications today is impossible without taking into account the concept of communication as a ritual proposed by the American researcher James Carey (1975). Ritual communication, according to the author, is not so much an act of information transfer, as a public manifestation of support for public beliefs [19, p. 15]. In contrast to the traditional transmission model of communication, in which information is disseminated for the purpose of influence and control [19, p. 12], the task of ritual communication is «to develop and maintain an orderly, meaningful cultural world...» [19, p. 15], in particular through the translation of images based on existing symbols and associations in the cultural space. This determines the ritual communication's inherent spectacularity, which also compensates for its relative «uninformativeness». In particular, J. Carey emphasizes the expressiveness of ritual communication, its focus on the manifestation of aspirations and feelings, on the inner satisfaction of the participants. It is due to participation in the ritual the individual is identified as a member of a certain community [19, p. 12].

The attributive characteristics of ritual communication outlined by J. Carey (appeal to feelings, use of images-symbols, elements of spectacularity, contribution to identification of participants) are actualized in PR practice in order to influence public opinion in favor of the customer.

The basis for the interaction of ritual communication and communication of public relations is their genetic kinship due to rootedness in public space. It is the archaic ritual that scholars consider to be the historical origins of the formation of publicity [9, p. 84]. There is also every reason to consider the rituals of archaic society as a protoform of PR, as pointed out, for example, Russian researcher M. Shyshkina: «Throughout all human history, the sphere of public communication has functioned as a sphere where practices originated and implemented, which today can be considered as predecessors and prototypes of public relations, ... and then the practices of public relations itself were implemented» [18, p. 74].

PR historians state that public relations of the rulers of the Ancient World, the Middle Ages and the New Age was carried out through numerous forms of ritual communication, but the direct identification of archaic rituals with modern PR technologies is considered incorrect [10, p. 49]. Indeed, ritual communication is based on sacred knowledge and, of course, is not instrumental [17, p. 35], in contrast to PR, which has an applied nature and uses the techniques of ritual communication in favor of the involved subject-customer.

The comparison of ritual and PR communication is of interest in the perspective of their attitude to the myth. The myth represents itself in the ritual and is cultivated through it. In the myth, a human from the very beginning sought to generalize and organize own ideas about the world around, and with the help of rituals tried to make this world manageable.

As for public relations, scholars have recognized: «this phenomenon is already mythological one in its nature and the tasks it sets itself» [2, p. 225]. This activity is also based on the natural human desire for harmony, so with the help of appropriate technologies, in particular, mutual understanding is achieved between the subject and his/her target audience. To do this, new social myths are created as options for interpreting real events [2, p. 228]. The justification for the myth-making of PR can be considered the formulated by one of its founders A. Lee the task «to encourage people to believe that corporate governance pursues a sincere goal to gain their trust» [cit. ex 19, p. 105]. PR rituals are a means of symbolic representation of myths created by PR technologists.

The functions of the ritual are in some way correlated with the goals and functions of PR, thus enabling the application of ritualization techniques in the practice of public relations.

One of the first scholars, described functions of ritual in society, was the eminent French sociologist E. Durkheim; he included to them socialization (preparation of the individual for life in society, cultivation of the necessary qualities); integration (renewal and consolidation of group unity); reproduction (renewal and maintenance of traditions, norms, values of the group); psychotherapy (creating conditions for psychological comfort of social life, especially in crisis situations) [1, p. 30–32]. All these functions can be correlated not only with some functions, but also with the goals of public relations, because it is understood that the implementation of functions ensures the achievement of goals.

In that way, the functions of socialization and reproduction performed by the ritual correlate with the PR function of adaptation (according to M. Shyshkina's classification). Its essence «consists in the acquisition by an individual of social properties and qualities, assimilation of social norms» [18, p. 105]. With the integration function of the ritual correlate such functions of PR as the formation of social communities and social mobilization, which «are realized latently as an additional or side PR effect» [18, p. 47].

Performing by ritual communication within the public relations psychotherapeutic function makes it possible to achieve such inherent PR goals as: harmonization of relations between the organization and the public (S. Black, E. Bernays, O. Kryvonosov); creating an effective system of communication between the subject and his/her environment or the public (T. Hunt and J. Grunig, M. Shyshkina). Psychotherapeutic, «anti-crisis» function of the ritual as a function of «a special means of overcoming critical situations by establishing role and interpersonal relations» [15, p. 54] is especially relevant for corporate PR.

Finally, the comparison of the goals of ritual and PR communication gives grounds to draw conclusions about the nature of their relations in the process of PR subject positioning. If PR is a communication that is carried out between social subjects in order to achieve mutual understanding through the identification of common ideas or common interests, then ritual communication is a public manifestation of support for social beliefs [19, p. 15]. If the purpose of public relations is to harmonize the relations between the subject/organization and the public, than the ritual serves as a means, a tool by which «social relations are balanced, conflicts are resolved» [8, p. 85].

«Ritualization of the public sphere» [3, p. 34] is one of the mechanisms of creating a simulative hyperreality, which replaces the true reality with signs of reality, or simulacra (J. Baudrillard [4, pp. 37–38]). PR technologists take an active part in these processes, giving ordinary events the status of significant ones, creating images that have little in common with their carriers, and so on.

Ancient people created rituals in order to organize the chaos of their reality, but in the conditions of postmodern transitivity, a human no less needs certainty and orderliness of existence. However, ritualization in the context of simulacrazation creates a seeming order, so most likely it should be considered as a manipulative technology. Ritual in the PR communications of postmodern society loses its sacred meaning, it already not so much symbolizes the involvement of people in socio-cultural life, as imitates it, or becomes its simulacrum. As the Ukrainian researcher H. Nivnia rightly remarks, «ritual remains a ritual, as long as it is performed in connection with the sacred and the exchange of significant socio-cultural meanings... ritual action, during which there is no movement of socio-cultural meanings, should be regarded as ritualized behavior» [14, p. 74]. For this reason, in relation to PR, it is more appropriate to apply the very concept of ritualization, and the attempts of some authors to consider PR technologies «as a certain sacred knowledge», to associate modern PR specialists with ancient shamans [4, p. 20] we consider incorrect. As a kind of modern social rituals, PR ritual acts as a mechanism of social/group integration, introduction of PR myths and their support in the mass consciousness, harmonization of relations between the PR subject and his/her target audience.

In the conditions of postmodern uncertainty and simulacrazation of public life, subjects to maintain or improve their social status attach more importance to the formal features of ritual action than to its meaning-creating potential. One of the consequences of this is the consolidation in the everyday consciousness of the negative connotative meaning of the «ritual» word, when it is assumed that it is «only a formal procedure, ie the values and meanings attributed to the ritual action are not really the values and meanings of the individual performing the ritual» [7, p. 164].

Similarly, the formalization of ritual in PR practices together with the loss of socially significant content leads to negative effects. For example, the depletion of the nature of corporate communications due to their excessive ritualization can cause team members to lose initiative and motivation for self-improvement in favor of the organization, which is one of the goals of corporate culture and corporate PR.

The negative consequences of ritualization in public relations communications are distraction from important information by focusing on external effects, as well as formalization and primitivization of communication processes, which can lead to loss of audience trust and thus negatively affect the quality of social development.

But, despite the outlined dangers, ritualization has significant prospects in postmodern PR communications. In the conditions of information space saturation, growth of contacts' number, and also fierce competition of public relations with advertising and propaganda, «efficiency is put in direct dependence

on dramatic and aesthetic properties of the message» [16]. Due to this, the communication possibilities of the ritual are actualized, the demand for its inherent methods of influence grows. In particular, with the help of ritualization one of the most effective ways of «**capturing the audience**» is realized – the **focus on professional activation of the archetypal unconscious**» [6, p. 406], which has a strong influence on the emotions and subconscious of a human, helping the transmitted information to overcome the barriers of critical thinking. The lack of rational argumentation, the predominance of the nonverbal component over the verbal one, and the spectacularity inherent in the ritual make it possible to attract the audience's attention in the conditions of information overload.

The periodicity inherent in the ritual, which corresponds to professional methods of activity and allows to duplicate PR information repeatedly, to reproduce it in a new form as various measures (messages) for long-term, systematic influence on public opinion, acquires instrumental significance in PR practice.

#### IV. Conclusions

The conducted study made it possible to formulate the following *conclusions*.

One of the prerequisites for the ritualization of public relations communications is the genetic kinship of ritual and PR due to their rootedness in public space. In PR technologies, the potential of ritual is effectively used as a means of structuring reality, and in postmodern PR communications, ritualization becomes one of the mechanisms for creating simulative hyperreality. The negative consequences of ritualization in public relations are the formalization and primitivization of communication processes, which lead to a loss of public trust and can negatively affect the quality of social development. At the same time, in conditions of information space saturation, the effectiveness of PR is enhanced by techniques inherent in ritual communication: reducing the level of critical perception through appeal to the primary structures of the archetype, the predominance of nonverbal over verbal, spectacularity, frequency of influence.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of introducing the theoretical provisions of the article into the research field of various social and communication spheres, in particular public relations.

Prospects for further study of the stated problem we see in a detailed study of the ritual communication techniques used in the practice of public relations.

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**Мантуло Н. Б. Ритуалізація комунікацій паблік рилейшенз у суспільстві постмодерну: теоретичний аспект**

**Мета статті** – теоретично обґрунтувати передумови та наслідки ритуалізації комунікацій паблік рилейшенз у суспільстві постмодерну.

**Методологія дослідження.** Для реалізації мети дослідження застосовано такі методи: описовий, аналізу й синтезу, систематизації та узагальнення – для визначення основних наукових

підходів до вивчення ритуалу як соціально-комунікативного феномену, встановлення ідентифікаційних параметрів ритуальної та PR-комунікації; порівняльно-історичний – для виявлення закономірностей генезису й взаємодії ритуальної та PR-комунікації в публічному просторі; структурно-функціональний – для з'ясування функцій ритуалу в комунікаціях паблік рилейшенз в умовах постмодерну.

**Результати.** Однією з передумов ритуалізації комунікацій паблік рилейшенз є генетична спорідненість ритуалу та PR через їх укоріненість у публічному просторі. У технологіях PR ефективно використовують потенціал ритуалу як засобу структурування реальності, а в PR-комунікаціях постмодерного часу ритуалізація стає одним із механізмів створення симулятивної гіперреальності. Негативними наслідками ритуалізації в паблік рилейшенз є формалізація та примітивізація комунікаційних процесів, що призводять до втрати довіри громадськості й можуть негативно позначатися на якості суспільного розвитку. Водночас в умовах насиченості інформаційного простору ефективність PR посилюють притаманні ритуальній комунікації прийоми: зниження рівня критичності сприйняття через апеляцію до первинних структур архетипового, переважання невербального компонента над вербальним, видовищність, періодичність впливу.

**Новизна.** Новизна дослідження полягає в обґрунтуванні теоретичних засад, зокрема передумов і наслідків ритуалізації комунікацій паблік рилейшенз у суспільстві постмодерну.

**Практичне значення** дослідження полягає в можливості впровадження сформульованих у статті теоретичних положень у дослідницьке поле різних соціальнокомунікаційних сфер, зокрема паблік рилейшенз.

**Ключові слова:** ритуал, ритуалізація, соціальні комунікації, постмодерн, паблік рилейшенз, міф.

**Мантуло Н. Б. Ритуализация коммуникаций паблик рилейшенз в обществе постмодерна: теоретический аспект**

**Цель статьи** – теоретически обосновать предпосылки и последствия ритуализации коммуникаций паблик рилейшенз в обществе постмодерна.

**Методология исследования.** Для реализации цели исследования были применены такие методы: описательный, анализа и синтеза, систематизации и обобщения – при определении основных научных подходов к изучению ритуала как социально-коммуникативного феномена, установлении идентификационных параметров ритуальной и PR-коммуникации; сравнительно-исторический – при определении закономерностей генезиса и взаимодействия ритуальной и PR-коммуникации в публичном пространстве; структурно-функциональный – для выяснения функций ритуала в коммуникациях паблик рилейшенз в условиях постмодерна.

**Результаты.** Одной из предпосылок ритуализации коммуникаций паблик рилейшенз является генетическое родство ритуала и PR через их укорененность в публичном пространстве. В технологиях PR эффективно используется потенциал ритуала как средства структурирования реальности, а в PR-коммуникациях постмодерного времени ритуализация становится одним из механизмов создания симулятивной гиперреальности. Негативными последствиями ритуализации в паблік рилейшенз являются формализация и примитивизация коммуникационных процессов, что приводит к утрате доверия общественности и может негативно влиять на качество общественного развития. В то же время, в условиях насыщенности информационного пространства эффективность PR усиливают собственные ритуальной коммуникации приемы: снижение уровня критичности восприятия через апелляцию к первичным структурам архетипического, преобладание невербального компонента над вербальным, зрелищность, периодичность воздействия.

**Новизна.** Новизна исследования заключается в обосновании теоретических основ, в частности предпосылок и следствий ритуализации коммуникаций паблік рилейшенз в обществе постмодерна.

**Практическое значение** исследования заключается в возможности внедрения сформулированных в статье теоретических положений в исследовательское поле разных социально-коммуникационных сфер, в частности паблік рилейшенз.

**Ключевые слова:** ритуал, ритуализация, социальные коммуникации, постмодерн, паблік рилейшенз, миф.