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Marketing means of information dissemination as a tool of information warfare

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Abstract

This article considers the essence and features of marketing propaganda and forms of information warfare, its social, informational, organisational aspects, the role and nature of psychological operations, perception management. Particular attention is paid to the social and cultural consequences of marketing propaganda, information operations and wars. The purpose of the article is to analyse the common and distinctive features of propaganda, PR and information warfare.

Key words: marketing, propaganda, dissemination

JEL code: D40

Introduction

At the present stage of the development of civilization, information plays a key role in the functioning of public and state institutions and the life of each individual person. The most important difference in the development of civilization in the 21st century, of course, will be the process of increasing globalization of society. This is caused, first of all, by the globalization of the infosphere — the global information space, which in recent years has been rapidly transforming as a result of the development and spread of new information technologies (Nagy & Hajdu, 2021).

Informatisation is increasingly penetrating almost all spheres of society and radically changing the habitual way of life and activities of millions of people around the world. The modern world has entered a new stage of its development, which is manifested in the growth of technology and the renewal of the entire production process due to the globalization of the information environment. As a result, the modern world turns out to be a complexly organised system, a space of global information technologies and communications. Almost unlimited access to various kinds of information creates fundamentally new opportunities, unprecedented in the history of mankind, as well as new, previously unknown problems that change traditional stereotypes of behaviour and lifestyle.

Total informatisation has a huge potential for increasing labour productivity, the production of improved goods and services, a real improvement in the quality of life, but also creates new dangers and threats for social actors.

Information danger is manifested in many forms: the creation of virtual worlds that replace reality; manipulation of consciousness and behaviour of people; substitution of goals, values, one's way of life from the outside with imposed standards; distortion of information, etc. These processes are conditioned by the social aspects of the process of information interaction: people's attitude to information, the need for it and at the same time the inability to clearly distinguish between true and false, useful and useless.

The main methods of information dissemination in marketing are the means of communication: advertising and public relations. The main methods of influencing public opinion include propaganda, manipulation and information wars (Table 1).

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Table 1: Ways of disseminating information in marketing

TOOLS	USED BY
Propaganda	A totalitarian state
Communications	A democratic state
Public relations, advertising	Business
Information operations, psychological operations	Military

Propaganda (Latin *propago* - “I distribute”, literally - “to be distributed (faith)”, from is a form of communication aimed at disseminating facts, arguments, rumours and other information to influence public opinion in favor of a certain common cause or public position. Propaganda is usually repeated and disseminated through various media in order to shape the chosen outcome of public opinion [2]. It is a system of means that act on the subconscious of a person in order to subsequently manipulate his behaviour, impose certain stereotypes and encourage him to fulfil the wishes and orders of the manipulator; this is an effective game on the human psyche, the characteristics of his emotional state, knowledge or ignorance of phenomena and events, which is based on suggestion and suggestion of certain behavioural responses, often through appeals to a collective conscious person.

Propaganda is a systematic activity that involves the formation of the desired perception by the audience of the message provided to it, the manipulation of the process of thinking of the audience, nudging the direction of the behaviour of the audience in a direction that is beneficial to the propagandist.

It is worth noting that the term “propaganda” acquired a highly negative emotional connotation only due to the unprofessional activities of some journalists. Propaganda in its original emotional sense was neutral and also referred to marketing tools (Fig. 1).

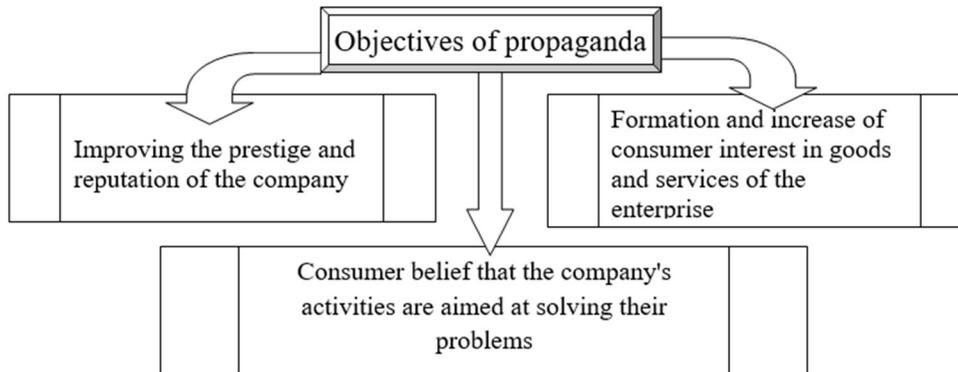


Figure 1 - Marketing goals of propaganda

Propaganda is divided into “black”, “grey” and “white”.

Black propaganda, which allows absolutely any distortion of reality to achieve goals, is fabricated false information (or just outright lies), the purpose of which is to provoke political, social, interethnic or interstate conflict. Black propaganda is most often used in the political sphere. War propaganda, that is, incitement to use armed force against another state or ethnic group, or inciting chauvinistic sentiments in support of aggression, is one of the areas of such activity.

In the marketing of goods and services, black propaganda is used by enterprises in dishonest and unethical competition. Thus, some companies are working to lower the rating of competitors and their products, disseminating deliberately false information about the quality of competing products or about the activities of enterprises and their owners.

Grey propaganda, which uses specially created sources or promotes material in certain independent media, is a message whose source and credibility are questionable. Simply put, in this case we are dealing with a half-truth or with its biased interpretation.

Finally, there is white propaganda, which does not allow distortion of facts for political purposes. Here the source of information is fully identified, and the information is accurate and accurate. The one reporting this information is trying in every possible way to look like "his boyfriend", but he does not publish information that is not beneficial to him.

Therefore, we can say that propaganda includes a wide range of messages - from truthful information to outright false disinformation. The propaganda goals are predetermined in favour of the communicator. At the same time, it is based on certain values and ideology. Black propaganda is a manipulative type of propaganda that masquerades as objective information through the manipulation of facts, using various psychological machinations that have a strong influence on the subconscious of people who do not feel that they are becoming objects of manipulation.

Propaganda uses the same methods (techniques) as advertising and public relations, each of which can be considered propaganda that promotes a commercial product or influences the perception of organisations, individuals or brands. In post-war usage, the word "propaganda" typically refers to the political or nationalist use of these methods or the promotion of a body of ideas, as the term has taken on a negative connotation. The phenomenon of rejection has been observed in politics due to the change of political marketing and other designations to "political propaganda".

Table 2 - Differences between propaganda and other ways of disseminating information

	Normal message (dissemination of information)	Propaganda	Manipulation	Advertising
Goal	Highlight the message to the podium	Call for action	Encourage, provoke action without pointing to it	Call or motivate (cause desire) to act (make a purchase)
Sphere	Wide	Socio-political	Mostly socio-political and interpersonal	Commercial
The structure of the message	1. Information 2. Evaluation of information	1. Information 2. Evaluation of information 3. Call. Contains an indication of what event is expected	1. Information 2. Evaluation of information 3. Motivation to action, without specifying what action is expected	1. Information 2. Evaluation of information 3. Call. Contains an indication of what event is expected or motivation (cause desire) to act (make a purchase)
The object to which the impact is directed	-	General	Specific; general	Specific
Audience	Specific Wide	Wide	Specific; wide	Specific
Means of influence	Sign systems; Verbal signs; Image	Media, tents, etc.	Media, gossip, rumours, adaptive tools (to influence the subthreshold level), special tools (religious texts, sermons, etc.)	Mass media; billboards, posters, direct mail, etc.

There is also a point of view according to which manipulation is gray or black propaganda. The concepts of gray and black are associated with the use of illegal or non-ethical technologies (this also applies to PR and technologies in politics). Poltorak writes that 'the

process of organising propaganda under different conditions can be carried out in the form of cooperation, so to speak, “white propaganda”, when they cooperate with public opinion, and individuals, under the influence of propaganda messages, voluntarily choose a course of action. Or in the form of manipulative propaganda influence (“black propaganda”), which differs from the previous ones in that the manipulator, influencing the consciousness of the individual, does not leave the last choice in determining the line of behaviour. In both cases, we are dealing with propaganda as an objective phenomenon’ (Poltorak 2010, 2, 203). The propaganda process involves the implementation of the following stages (Fig. 2):

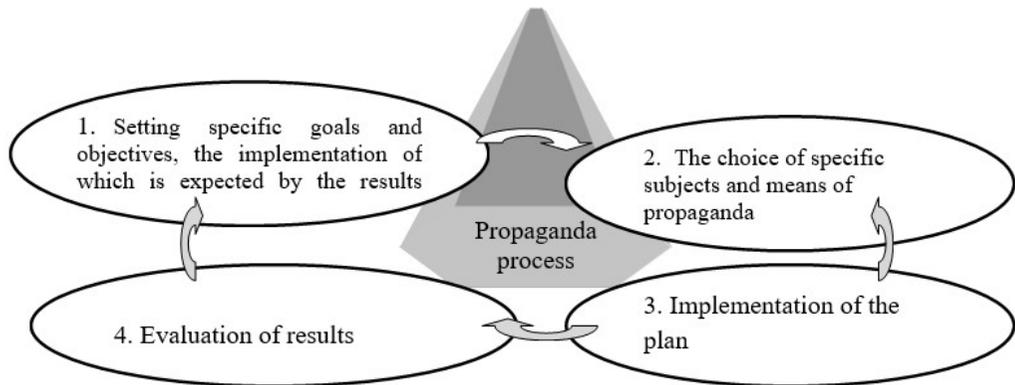


Figure 2 - Propaganda process

Information influences on the mass consciousness have always existed. Shamans and priests have also used them as technology when trying to “construct the future” in one direction or another.

The term psychological warfare was first used in 1920 by the British historian J.F.C. Fuller, who analysed the First World War. This term was adopted by the Americans, who date the actual use of this term to 1940. The corresponding English version of this term is political war. Interestingly, the modern term used by NATO, namely information operations, can be used in general in the absence of a hint of hostilities. This is the case, for example, with peacekeeping operations. However, according to analysts, in a peaceful situation it is even more difficult to apply psychological operations, because it is characterised by a rather dynamic change in the environment, while in the case of hostilities, it is relatively stable (Galician Economic Bulletin, 2014).

Definitions

There are many definitions of “information warfare”. In this regard, it is advisable to consider the most frequently used and highlight the features inherent in all interpretations of this phenomenon (Table 3).

Table 3. Definitions of “information warfare”

G. Pocheptsov	influence on the civilian population and (or) servicemen of another state by disseminating certain information. The term "information-psychological warfare" was borrowed from the dictionary of US military circles. The translation of this term ("information and psychological warfare") into English can sound both like "information conflict" and as "information, psychological warfare", depending on the context of a particular official document or scientific publication
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I. Zavadsky	purposeful actions initiated to achieve information superiority by damaging information, information processes and information systems of the enemy while protecting their own information, information processes and information systems
M. Gorkin, A. Mamontov	comprehensive, holistic strategy, due to the growing importance and value of information in matters of command, control, politics, economics and public life
V. Lisichkin	collecting compromising information on competitors and its systematic use
A. Chumikov	explicit and covert purposeful information actions of systems on each other in order to obtain a certain gain in the material sphere
S. Black	a new form of struggle between the parties, which uses special methods and means that affect the information environment of the enemy and protect their own in the interests of achieving the strategic goals of war

The main task of information wars is to manipulate the masses. This involves measures for propaganda influence on human consciousness. The purpose of such manipulation most often consists in introducing hostile, harmful ideas and views into the public and individual consciousness for disorientation and disinformation of the population.

Marketing technology enterprises in today's scientific and technological environment are weakening certain beliefs; intimidation of people by the image of the enemy; intimidating the enemy with their power; providing a sales market for their economy using the information war as a component of the competitive struggle.

An analysis of the definitions allows us to highlight those features that are always present in the conduct of an information war (Figure 3):

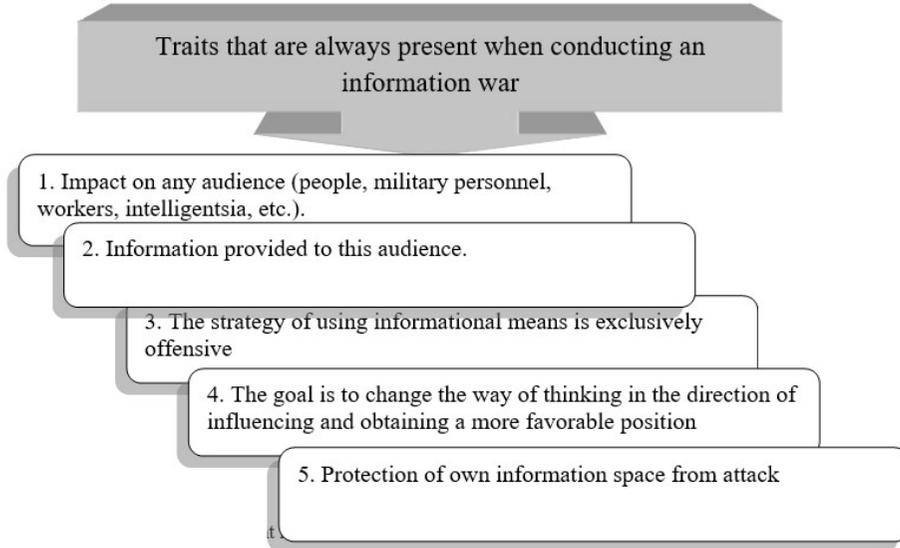


Figure 3 - Features inherent in the conduct of information warfare

Discussion

Information weapons are fundamentally different from all other means of warfare in that they can be used (and are already being waged) in undeclared and often invisible world wars, and

that the objects of influence of these weapons are, first of all, civil institutions of society and the state – economic, political, social, etc.

Information influence on the enemy has a number of features that distinguish it both from other forms of struggle and from communications in the field of information exchange. In contrast to the usual information impact, in the course of the information war, the object of influence is imposed with alien goals, aspirations, the achievement of which ultimately harms it. Facts are distorted or presented in such a way that it causes the behaviour of the enemy to be inadequate to the real state of affairs, as well as the imposition of an emotional perception of facts that are beneficial to the party that produces the water.

The concept of information wars is very close to the concept of manipulation of public opinion/manipulation of mass consciousness, that is, the suppression of the will of people and the programming of their behaviour. Manipulation is always carried out in secret, "manipulation" is not aware of its objectivity. Signs of hidden manipulation, among others, are emotionality, sensationalism and urgency, repetition, fragmentation of the whole factual picture, extraction from the context, "totalitarianism" ("reliable source") of the source of messages, confusion of information and opinion, cover by authority, activation of stereotypes, etc. An information war is precisely a war, that is, the violence of one subject of human history over another in order to achieve certain goals.

We may come across the definition of public relations as something that manipulates and deceives consumers. For example, '...from here PR, advertising, information wars arose as a means of resolving disputes between dominant groups ...', etc.

Public relations (PR) is a two-way flow of information: an organisation seeks to know the mood of the public and its expectations and grievances. They are assigned to a voluntary change in public sentiment by providing it with arguments that go in favour of the organisation. Unlike propaganda, public relations is not afraid of discussion, but encourages it. If a propagandist tries to control the flow of information by deliberately limiting information, or even providing false information and putting pressure on the media, then a public relations specialist is a kind of public advocate for his organisation, in whose arsenal there are arguments and counterarguments in defence and who honestly tries to prove, the actions of the organisation.

If the deep essence of PR is informing the public, its education and upbringing, then the specifics of marketing are the priority importance of research and market segmentation, the dominance of offensive methods of influencing market segments, including an anti-marketing strategy. PR has been carried out for years and decades. Marketing must prove its effectiveness in a limited time period: its actions are compressed in time, very energetic, even (within the law) aggressive. Publications prepared by a PR specialist, films and television films are not expected to have an immediate commercial return, because the goal here is different – to give the public positive information about a leader, company, institution. The communication "product" of a marketer on the political market should also bring quick profits - votes, support for the authorities in a referendum, etc. Marketing dangerously borders on propaganda and counter-propaganda. PR is produced in a more modest, more intelligent, civilised way.

The French researcher Ellul said most succinctly about the role of psychology in propaganda: psychology is designed to "catch a person in the network of propaganda." Propaganda allows distortion of figures and facts when it is in its interests, while PR is based on truthful information (Table 2). The identification of PR technologies with "dirty" mechanisms of influencing public opinion is caused, first of all, by the fact that the means of achieving their goals are very similar. In addition, some companies use public relations opportunities in bad faith. However, it is important to remember that the ultimate goals of these two activities are different. The activities of a public relations specialist are of an informational nature, and an information warfare specialist is offensive and manipulative (Table 4).

Table 4: Comparative characteristics of the information war and public relations

Comparable indicator	Information war	Public Relations
Interaction with the target audience	Offensive influence	Maintaining mutually beneficial communication
Goal	Changing the existing pattern of behaviour to gain an advantage over the other party and control its information space; based on rigid attitudes and aims to force people to accept (change) some point of view. At the same time, I am not at all interested in whether they want to change it	Establishing two-way communication between the company and its public based on truth, knowledge and full awareness. More lenient in nature and intended to invite people to use some information and then voluntarily accept (or reject) certain views, opinions and ideas
Technologies used	Manipulation of consciousness, concealment of information, oversaturation of information, substitution of facts	Informing the public, building a reputation, identifying the interests of audiences
The main components	Offensive information; target audience; protection against information attack; side of the aggressor (usually unknown)	Educational or motivational information; target audience; openness to information cooperation; company that disseminates information (almost always known)
Used tools and instruments	Mass media, rumours, Internet, speeches, books, brochures, events, rallies, mail, personal meetings, physical influence (any means aimed at changing the existing way of thinking)	Mass media, Internet, special events, speeches by speakers, personal meetings with clients, participation in professional meetings, sponsorship, Internet and others
Reliability of information	Assumes distortion of numbers and facts in their interests	Based on truthful information
Feedback	Aimed at unilaterally influencing an individual (rarely) or a group (often)	Mandatory component is the establishment of two-way communication, reception and accounting of the counter signal from the target audience

Information warfare and public relations are similar only at the stage of achieving goals, but the goals themselves are fundamentally different.

The media are not always and not necessarily the initiators or subjects of changes in the minds of individuals or social groups. By themselves, they can be neither an instrument of destruction, nor an instrument of creation and progress. Their positive or negative role is determined by what social forces and for what purpose they are used.

Conclusions

Information and technical confrontation are the most important aspects of the current information policy. In modern conditions, when there is a rapid growth in the pace of development of not only the mass media and communications, but also computer technology, automated control systems, electronic means of information exchange, and in particular, the international global information network of the Internet, fundamentally new techniques and methods for presenting information have appeared.

If we correctly understand the specifics of the information community in the context of the aggravation of global problems, then today we should move in a direction that leads to the

neutralisation of the formidable potential of information wars and civilisational catastrophes that arise and accumulate in the process of spontaneous development.

In my opinion, in modern conditions, a protracted information war is not beneficial to anyone except PR managers, journalists and media owners. The attacked enterprise spends a lot of money to restore its reputation in the eyes of consumers. In turn, the enterprise that makes the attack runs the risk of becoming overly carried away by the struggle.

However, a competent specialist may well take advantage of an information attack on a PR campaign and, as a result, instead of worsening the state of the enterprise, strengthen its image in the eyes of the public.

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