

Russia's National Projects As An Image Problem Of Management

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Abstract. The authors investigated the content of the most influential Russian socio-political federal media of various political orientations (having more than 100 thousand readers), VK groups, Twitter messages on national projects and constantly updated digital information channels (government sites, social networks accounts and instant messengers).

Analysis of media, social media and contemporary digital platforms demonstrates a monotony in providing information on national projects to the population, the predominant use of government representatives as newsmakers, repeated information guides from government press releases in regional media, and, as a result, minimal public interest in the topic of national projects, and low involvement of target audiences in discourse.

The efforts of the authorities in terms of promoting national projects were also investigated: the choice of TASS as the driving force for creating the image of national projects among the population, the creation of new media resources and the use of existing media (social networks and regional media) for promotion. Meanwhile, all government projects are distinguished by unidirectional communication and do not involve the addressee in the creation or discussion of content.

To answer the question about the successes and problems of information promotion of national projects, the authors turned both to robotic tools for assessing discourse and to the analysis of personal expert assessments of professionals in the

media sphere. The study as a whole revealed the coincidence of expert assessments and the results of media measurements: both in terms of problematic image zones of national projects and the non-equivalence of national projects in terms of public image.

The following recommendations were made: approaching the information support of national projects to the regional socio-political agenda, involving the population of a specific territory in the implementation of a national project by creating initiative groups and holding actions, maximum access to information in digital formats of the progress of projects and the development of funds, refining the target audiences of each project and working with the promotion of specific national projects to narrow target audiences, branding and image certification of the results of national projects.

The authors suggest not only an increase in the number of people involved and the conversion of the discourse of national projects into an increase in confidence in the authorities but also, first of all, an increase in the economic effect of their implementation.

Keywords: national projects, media discourse, management, image, power

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Field of the issue

Today, national projects are considered the main vector of the country's development. All indications of significant discourses claim that the country generally relies on project management, project thinking and project education.

The extraordinary frequency of the word 'project' is noticeable in the tags of media resources, and in scientific and pedagogical discourses it is illustrated by hundreds of articles in the last three years using this word in headings. Project offices, project models and project teams are being set up all over the place.

The national projects formulated in the early 10s were in some way a response to the population's nostalgia for large-scale, ambitious plans of power and aspiration for the future, so characteristic of the Soviet era and so lacking in the crisis of the 1990s.

However, polls show that the population is not aware not only of the content of projects but also of their existence in general. The Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) poll (February 2019) regarding national projects affected 1,600 people in 80 regions. The results presented by V. Fedorov, CEO of the center, showed that less than half of the respondents (41%) heard the phrase 'national projects', and only 2% of the respondents know well what it means. The best aware of national projects are people aged 45-59, and the worst are young people aged 18-24. 62% of the respondents answered that they would like to receive information about the implementation of national projects. Every tenth person (10%) is not interested in the topic of national projects, and 41% answered that they had not seen information about these projects at all. Among the 12 leading projects in awareness are

healthcare (25%), entrepreneurship (23%), education and the environment (22%), and roads and demography (21%)¹.

According to the results of the analytical center 'National Agency for Financial Research' (NAFI), respondents more often heard about the national projects in healthcare (26%) and education (20%), less often about the programs in housing and urban environment (16%), demography (16%), ecology (14%), culture (12%), small and medium enterprises and support for individual entrepreneurial initiatives (11%), and science (11%). Russians are the worst aware of the national projects for safe and high-quality roads (10%), digital economy (8%), labor productivity and employment support (5%), comprehensive plan for modernization and expansion of trunk infrastructure (4 %), international cooperation and export (2%)².

In the past two years, the efforts of the authorities are seen in the information promotion of national projects. Thus, in April 2019, the information portal 'The Future of Russia. National Projects' was presented, operated by TASS. Great hopes were pinned on this new resource which is addressed (according to the plan of TASS) not only to journalists but also to the general public. The presentation announced that the portal will be part of a "comprehensive plan that includes media coverage in all formats and on all platforms"³.

At the end of 2019 (after six months of its work) the portal, summarizing the progress of projects with the help of experts, was forced to voice the fact that the implementation of some projects was "stalled", and the projects "have so far insignificantly affected the economy" of the country⁴.

In addition, the image problems of the authorities in the context of the implementation of national projects are noticeable even at the most superficial acquaintance with the media discourse: a search using any news aggregators from the general online media content (not only registered media) gives the word '[money] distribution' as the most frequent word associated with the word 'national project'.

The massive mistrust in the use of funds is also illustrated by popular memes on national projects, the leading concepts of which are 'money', 'failure' and 'deception'⁵.

Thus, the relevance of the present study is associated with the need to identify problem areas of information support for national projects and develop recommendations from the authorities on

¹ VTsIOM: Russians know little about national projects // Agency for Strategic Initiatives – 21.06.2019 [Electronic resource] – URL: <https://www.asi.org.ru/news/2019/06/21/vtsiom-natsproekty> (accessed 18.04.2020).

² The All-Russian NAFI survey was conducted in May-June 2019. 1600 people were interviewed in 150 settlements in 50 regions of Russia. Age 18 and over. The statistical error does not exceed 3.4%

³ Information portal 'The Future of Russia'. TASS website April 6, 2019 [Electronic resource] <https://tass.ru/nacionalnye-proekty/6302894> (accessed 30.07.2020)

⁴ First results: what the starting year for the implementation of national projects gave the economy. Information portal 'The Future of Russia' [Electronic resource] <https://futuresrussia.gov.ru/nacionalnye-proekty/odin-iz-sesti-cto-dal-ekonomike-rossii-pervyj-god-realizacii-nacproektov> (accessed 30.07.2020)

⁵ Search by words: memes on national projects. Mail.ru [Electronic resource] – URL: <https://clck.ru/NSWGf> (accessed 05.05.2020).

information and organizational actions to form a positive attitude of the population towards national projects which are designed to improve the political and social situation in the country.

Theoretical basis for the study of problem areas of information and organizational actions of the authorities in the implementation of national projects

The research is based on the synthesis of communicative and statistical approaches. The communicative approach allowed focusing on the communicative components of the implementation of national projects and singling out the discourse on national projects, consisting of thematic media discourse and expert survey initiated discourse. At the same time, content analysis of media discourse with the help of robotic tools allowed supplementing the interpretation of the discourse with statistical data and digital indicators. The authors of the study also drew statistical data on the attitude of the population towards national projects from the most modern available polls and studies.

The scientific basis of the research was publications on the study of media discourses and their influence on the political agenda and society, and the scientific understanding of the image of the project activities of the Russian government, and first of all, of the first results of modern national projects.

As for the communication technologies of promoting (in media formats) certain projects, topics and values, for the present study it is relevant to demonstrate effective communication strategies of ecologists, namely, cross-platform and the network principle of communication [Kaminskaya, Pomiguyev. Nazarova, 2019]. The Grassroots principle with its focus on the mass character of political participation is in demand as an organizational principle for the implementation of national projects in the regions as well [Djupe, Kimberly H. Conger, 2012; Matthew T. Huber, 2016]. At the same time, the mass character in the modern communicative situation is increasingly associated with different communicative approaches to target audiences which today are very different in terms of communication habits and requests.

Considering the space of social networks primarily as a communicative space of young people, O.A. Zmazneva notes that the leading trend of this type of communication "which has no beginning or end and is, in fact, the feed of messages in social networks" is visual metaphors created using memes, gifs or pictures [Zmazneva, 2018: 18]. S.A. Shomova speaks of the importance of using (in promotion) such popular forms of communication as memes, especially among young people, and points out that "it is already impossible not to talk today <...> about the possibility of using mediamemes in political communications related to influencing the behavioral stereotypes of the audience" [Shomova, 2019: 252].

Speaking directly about the course and results of national projects, it is notable that in the modern scientific Russian discourse they are represented by no more than a dozen publications, some

of which are an analysis of the progress of a specific project in a specific area [Reutov, Polozkov, 2020; Golubtsov, Nishchenko, Fedorov, 2020]. Such publications analyze interesting practices in the implementation of national projects but do not present a general picture of their perception even in specific regions.

Not taking into account the publications on financial performance, only a few 2020 studies can be addressed in accordance with the topic. S.K. Udalykh, analyzing the content of the projects, lists their systemic shortcomings which, according to the author, are associated with management processes and planning stages. In particular, the author criticizes the methodology for calculating target indicators for years (2019-2024) which "assumes only a gradual simple quantitative increase in each of them at almost the same rate (i.e, automatically equal growth rates are provided without justification)" [Udalykh, 2020: 230].

However, despite criticism of approaches and image management risks, scientists pin their hopes on project management which allows "ensuring the concentration and rational use of limited resources (financial, investment, human, managerial, etc.)" [Kozhevnikov, 2020: 69].

The authors of the present research also regarded publications on information support of project activities. Despite numerous scientific studies related to the image promotion of various projects, there is still no established comprehensive definition of information support for project activities in world science.

F. Seitel (albeit at the level of one enterprise) in his work 'Modern public relations' gives the most complete definition of the term: "a certain management function that helps establish or maintain interaction during communication, understanding, perception and cooperation between the enterprise and the most interested groups of people; which includes problem management; helps the company's management learn about the state of society and effectively and promptly respond to its changes; which serves as an early warning and trend forecasting system; uses scientific research data, communication technologies and high ethical principles as its main tools" [Seitel, 2020: 10].

Researchers are exploring ways and suggesting various models of information support for project activities. For example, the model by L.V. Shalaeva [Shalaeva, 2019] consists in information support of innovative projects with the help of strategic management reporting, the scientific discussion on which has intensified in recent years in world science. In this model, reporting is divided into stages, including 1) external and internal conditions for implementation 2) indicators of implementation efficiency 3) deviation from target settings 4) strategic analysis of trends, risk factors, deviations 5) strategy adjustment. This, according to the author, allows structuring and generalizing information. In fact, the target audience of such information is a pool of experts, yet the authors of the present research believe that the model, with a certain adaptation, is also suitable for informing the general public about national projects.

D.V. Chizhov considers the project approach as positive in terms of promoting the party brand, calling it "the most striking example of the activity component of the image of the political party <...> United Russia" [Chizhov, 2016: 326].

From the point of view of the image component of national projects, of great interest is the Information and Analytical Bulletin of the Institute of Sociology of the Federal Research Sociological Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences (No. 2, 2019), entirely devoted to the study of the attitude of the population to the work of authorities. The publication, in particular, contains the results of a study of feedback on the implementation of national projects in several regions. I.A. Saveliev, based on an analysis of the sites of the regional authorities, notes that although the information on national projects is scattered, since October 2019 the sites contain public opinion regarding implementation. These websites contain several windows for collecting feedback from the population, which, however, do not always work [Saveliev, 2019].

Summarizing the results of research on information support of project activities, the following main components of this process can be distinguished:

- free access to information;
- creating informational reasons;
- tracking and responding to feedback from target audiences.

Researchers of successes and failures of information support for various kinds of project activities associate the biggest problems with the incorrect definition of the target audience and the communication channel. These moments are especially problematic in the communication of the authorities with the population.

Thus, the study of information support for project activities and the effects of the perception of the course of projects lie in the plane of sociology, political science and communication science. Notably, there was no comprehensive consideration of the risks and opportunities for promoting national projects in media discourse, as well as of the political and social effects of the information efforts of the authorities in the Russian context.

The present study is intended to identify an important research problem, namely the problematic moments and successful efforts to promote national projects in information, and the image of national projects today. The authors, with their recommendations, also hope to contribute to improving the implementation of national projects, primarily in terms of their image component.

Research methodology and technique

Considering that the media component of promoting national projects has been identified as the most important, the authors focused primarily on the study of the country's media field. At the same time, qualitative and quantitative research methods were combined, namely:

- 1) discourse analysis;
- 2) content analysis, comparison and measurement of ratings;
- 3) qualimetric synthetic measurements, aggregated BigData metrics in the media, the Internet, social networks, and synthesis/analysis.
- 4) expert interviews.

At the first stage of the study, discourse analysis was carried out as a recognized method of media linguistics of the discourse of 'national projects' in the leading Russian media. The authors used the approach of T. van Dyck (Van Dyck T., 2013) traditionally demanded by the Russian scientific school of media linguistics to discourse as a complex communicative event. This approach is fundamental for the combination of linguistic (keywords, evaluative vocabulary, stylistic techniques) and extralinguistic factors (news feed, newsmaker, socio-political context of the event). When analyzing media texts, their genre (news, analytical article) was taken into account, since in T. van Dyck's discourse approach, genres are important as derivatives of the social roles and intentions of the creators of the text. This approach to discourse analysis is justified in relation to the digital environment of modern communication [R.H. Jones, A. Chik, C.A. Hafner, 2015].

For discourse analysis by tags national projects, the authors selected publications on the implementation of specific national projects or general information on the decisions of the authorities on them (more than 500 texts were considered in detail). The requests were made from federal media, traditionally included in the top 10 according to Medialogia and belonging to different segments of the country's political spectrum (Kommersant, Vedomosti, Novaya Gazeta, Ekho Moskv), as well as from socio-political regional media and from social networks VK, Facebook, and on the Yandex.Zen and Telegram platforms.

At the second stage, the media measurements toolkit was used, which allows building statistical indicators of assessing the image components of national projects. First of all, the construction of the assessment was formed according to the following sources:

- 1) assessment of Internet activity and audience reaction. The assessment is based on Yandex1 and Google2 metrics, as well as Brand Analytics, BrandSpotter and similar systems. Analytical programs with different accentuation and focus automatically determine the sentiment of mentions with an accuracy of 85-90%, and machine-learning algorithms categorize messages, identify trends in the media field, mood, aggression, etc. The search queries statistics were also assessed;

- 2) media measurements in SCAN-Interfax, Medialogia, etc. The study was carried out both in aggregate across Russia and in the regional context (selectively for subjects of the federation – federal districts). Measurement of tone and effectiveness for various national projects was carried out by groups, (for example, by social block, human capital, economic growth, etc.) Frequency of mentioning

(positive or negative context) of curators, leaders and administrators of national projects in articles on national projects was taken into account.

3) monitoring social media in terms of audience reaction using analytical services (by segments and audience categories: youth, pensioners, interest groups, etc.) to the implementation of national projects on VK, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Telegram, Youtube, LiveJournal, etc. Notably, the simplest systems provide simplified sets of ratings such as a list of mentions, likes, etc.; more complex ones allow automatically determining their tone – negative, neutral or positive.

The period when the data was received is from January 2019 to August 2020.

At the third stage, an expert interview was conducted, with 10 experts participating during July 2020. Among them were six editors and journalists of social and political media (authors of media publications on national projects), one representative of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation (media commission), two teachers of the Faculty of Media Communications of the university, two representatives of the ideological bloc of the parties United Russia and Yabloko; four of the experts hold PhD degrees. The experts were asked to evaluate the national projects from the point of view of their content and image components in the context of their presence in the media space and to suggest ways and opportunities for their further promotion.

Discourse of national projects: quantitative and qualitative measurement results

Content analysis and discourse analysis of media resources in the digital environment shows that newsmakers are most often high-ranking officials, and the genre of publications is mainly news about the development of funds, forums and appointments, and changes in power. Thus, the proximity of the content of national projects to the real needs of the local population is extremely low.

Table 1 summarizes the results of the discourse analysis of the leading media.

Table 1. Results of discourse analysis of leading media (discourse of national projects).

Media	Prevailing genres	Sections	Newsmakers	Discourse keywords
Ekho Moskvyy	blogs, broadcasts	dissenting opinion	politicians, social activists, experts	failure, corruption
Novaya Gazeta	plots, columns in relation to plans and results on the example of specific regions; forecasts	plots	directors of enterprises, heads of non-profit organizations, social activists	poverty, violations, deadlock, officials

Kommersant	news	newsfeed	results, indicators, control	results, indicators, control
Vedomosti	news	economics	press releases, officials, executives / owners of large businesses	funds/money/expenses; results/mechanisms/methods; problem/solution

Source: compiled by the authors

The authors of the present research looked through all the publications for the selected period where the word combination national project appears. However, national project becomes a thematic dominant only in a few dozen publications of each media; these are presented to their target audiences in the context of a certain editorial policy.

Thus, the leitmotiv of the publications of the oppositional Novaya Gazeta (NG) is doubts about the implementation of national projects and the authorities' failures in the implementation of specific plans; the genre of publications of this discourse is designated by the word plots. This genre, non-existent in the theory of journalism, denotes different texts here – comics, long reads and remarks from experts. Experts-economists and political scientists are most often the authors of columns in the corresponding section. Keywords are reflected primarily in the title complexes: To Putin, out in the sticks. Direct line and the country have reached an impasse; The budget came together at the seams: IFF participants argued without optimism upon ways to get the Russian economy out of the deadlock. Since the main principle of the discourse of national projects in NG is to compare the plans of the authorities with their actual implementation and forecasts, the latter are presented in the headlines and are disappointing for any target audience: They will not be taking money away from big business but will offer to share it, and in much larger amounts; Why a new national project can lead to the collapse of Russian academic thought; National projects will prevent a recession, but this will not help citizens' incomes.

In Ekho Moskv, the discourse of national projects is presented mainly by evaluative texts from the first person – political scientists, economists and journalists: in the dissenting opinion section, the authors raise questions about the progress of national projects and answer those questions themselves. Question-and-answer constructions (most often with rhetorical questions) and keywords are presented in the following characteristic headings: National projects as a mirror of the failure of Putin's policy; Who's screwing up there?; Raiding. Corruption. Lawlessness. What are the authorities congratulating us

on?; Maxim Shevchenko: Beyond the framework of theft, they have no opportunity to master the money; What other facts are needed to show the inability of the executive branch? When will the sky turn blue over Krasnoyarsk? Criticism of the authorities and national projects proceeds from the intention of rejecting the ability of the authorities to achieve their goals.

In Vedomosti, almost all publications about national projects are made in the news genre (in most cases, according to the canvas of press releases) and are located under the heading 'Economics'. The topic of this news content is reflected by the leading concept in it – money (expenses, spending, resources), as well as the assessment of national projects from the point of view of management – mechanisms, measures, methods, results, problem, solution. Figures or concepts of management are present in almost all of the titles of the discourse: ASI proposed Mishustin a number of measures to support employment and incomes of Russians; Garbage operators will receive 20% of their revenue from the budget; Sakhalin authorities have decided to spend 21 billion rubles on a giant cultural center; The state fails to attract private investment in the national project 'Ecology'. Interestingly, Vedomosti also uses the regional agenda, building news about the regions according to the same template – where and how much funds were received/used/planned. The active use of press releases in content is marked by the heading 'Press Release', the second most frequent after 'Economy' in informing about national projects.

In Kommersant, the discourse of national projects includes more than 1000 media texts per year; the following quantitatively prevail: the national projects Roads (508 publications), Education (424), Healthcare (327), Ecology (250), Digital Economy (204) and Science (131). Such a vast total number of publications in comparison with other federal media is explained by the online media from the publishing house in the regions or supplements to other media (Kommersant – Krasnodar – Yaroslavl, etc.), and publications on the progress of national projects are often duplicated. The genre and thematic approach is the same as in Vlast; however, the media texts are distinguished by a greater stylistic variety, and the headings are metaphorical and contain puns. Kommersant's national projects discourse is expanded by readers' comments which are dominated by doubt about the fulfillment of tasks and the implementation of projects and irony about the results. The keywords here are the words results, indicators, control.

In general, the content analysis of Russian media (including large regional projects) shows that newsmakers are most often high-ranking officials, and their genre is mainly news about the use of funds, forums and appointments, and changes in power. Thus, the proximity of the content of national projects to the real needs of the local population is extremely low.

At the same time, the efforts of the authorities should be noted in promoting media projects and organizing their own target media platforms.

1. TASS is the operator of the new created information Portal 'The Future of Russia. National Projects' (<https://futurerussia.gov.ru/>). Its positive aspect, undoubtedly, is simple and understandable infographics, as well as visualization of not only statistical indicators but also of people personally responsible for the implementation of national projects.

2. The first YouTube videoblog Time, ahead! comes out every Sunday (with rare exceptions) since 2012 (<https://www.youtube.com/user/ShkolaFaberlic>); it is dedicated to the achievements of modern Russia and uses modern visualization trends and new multimedia technologies. A positive agenda, so uncharacteristic for the media, is presented here; nevertheless, the resource has a good audience indicator (213 thousand subscribers). It rightly declares that "other media do not like to pay attention to positive news." The authors of the video blog explain that the media "do not like good news" by the fact that it is "difficult to sell", and "the audience has been taught to consume negative news". Indeed, the discourse of positive changes, all the more information about the daily routine: salaries, roads, kindergartens and schools, as well as factories, airplanes, nuclear-powered ships, is both perceived and created with greater difficulties than horrors about cataclysms and corruption.

3. The site of Rossiyskaya Gazeta presents news of the implementation of national projects in the regions (<https://rg.ru/sujet/6234/>). The idea of promoting national projects non-stop and involving the regional agenda turns out to be the most productive; however, another problem arises here: the federal media do not welcome the regional agenda, and the implementation of national projects is precisely the specific kilometers of local roads, specific clinics and urgent care centers in a conditional Ust-Gorod.

4. Especially noteworthy is the approach of the Telegram channel 'May decree'@maydecree (more than 10 thousand subscribers): it is run by the editorial office of the media (May decree Network edition founded by the eponymous interregional public organization) and is regularly updated⁶. However, first of all, the content is published on Telegram, and then within 1-2 weeks, only the key news from the amount published on Telegrams gets to the site (3-5 news per week). The approach to the information agenda regarding national projects in this resource can be called the 'request approach'. Most of the publications are related to the control of the implementation of national projects on the ground, created as a result of requests to regional authorities, ministries and departments⁷. Considering that the requests of journalists for the implementation of national projects are, in fact, professionally expressed requests of society, such media approach can be called productive and meets modern trends in information support.

⁶ May Decree [Electronic resource] <https://майскийуказ.пф/> (accessed 25.08.2020).

⁷ May Decree [Electronic resource]. Publication of responses from ministries and departments to journalists' inquiries. <https://майскийуказ.пф/news/otvet-direktora-ano-institut-razvitiya-interneta-antona-klyuchkina/> (accessed 05.05.2020).

Нами представлены данные по 12 проектам, что связано с тем, что упоминаемость нацпроекта «Комплексный план модернизации и расширения магистральной инфраструктуры» находится на незначительном уровне, и его заметность в СМИ оказалась мало информативной.

It should be noted that, with all their positive aspects, all of the above large-scale media projects created under the auspices of the authorities are characterized by one-way communication and by no involvement of direct user in discussion and by no participation in content creation.

The robotic research method gave the results below. Fig. 1 presents quantitative data characterizing the mention of national projects (NP) in the Russian media in January 1, 2019 to August 16, 2020. It is clearly presented which specific national projects and accents in covering their implementation are of interest to the public, and how successful the responsible persons are in creating the image of these projects.

The presented data is on 12 projects due to the fact that the mention of the national project ‘Comprehensive plan for the modernization and expansion of the main infrastructure’ is insignificant level, and its visibility in the media was not very informative.

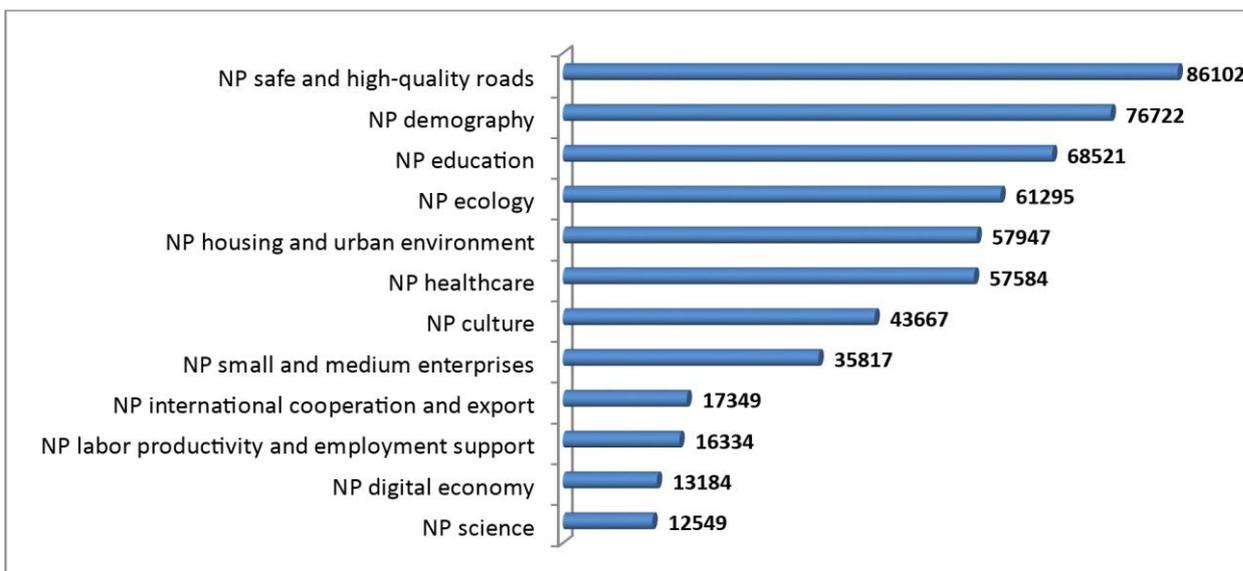


Fig 1. Publication activity in the Russian language media regarding the implementation of national projects in 1.01.2019-16.08.2020.

Calculated by the authors using SCAN-Interfax

Figures 2 and 3 show the dynamics of publications in the Russian language media for the period of NP execution. The columns correspond to the overall dynamics for NP. The graphs record the dynamics for 12 specific NP.

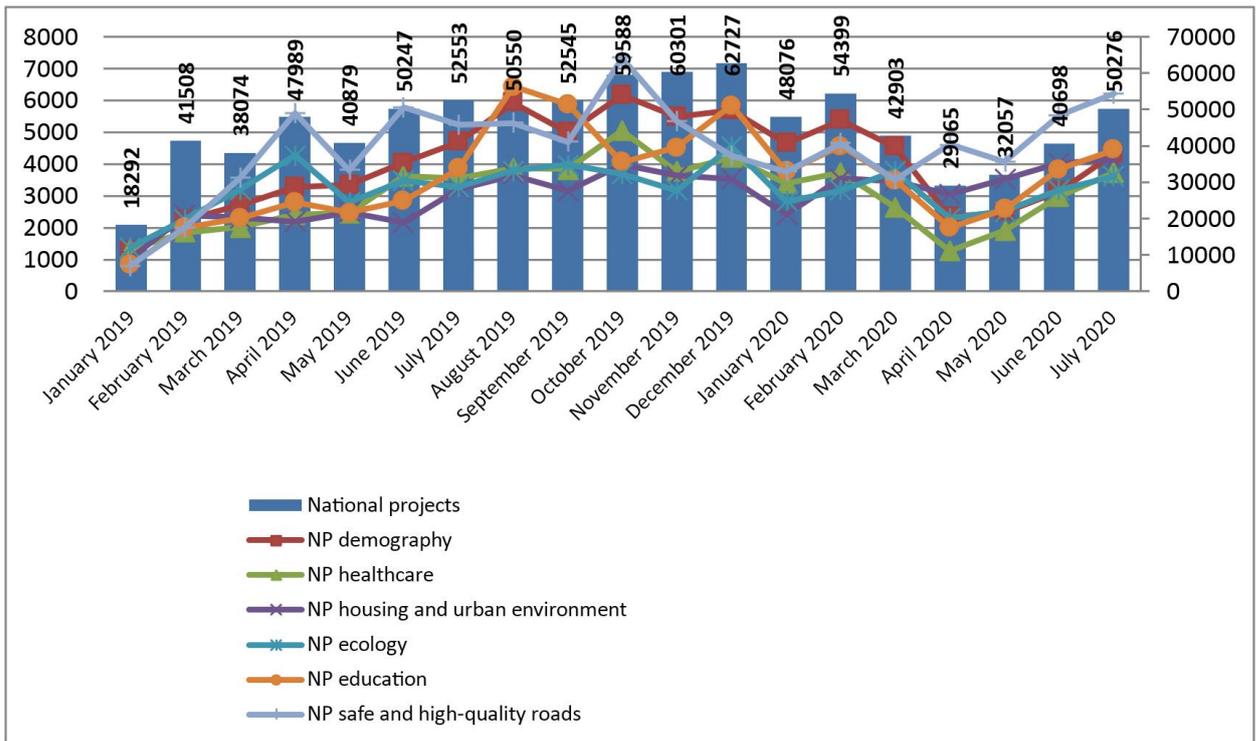


Fig. 2. Dynamics of publications on the six most mentioned NP in the context of their implementation, the number of publications.

Calculated by the authors using SCAN-Interfax

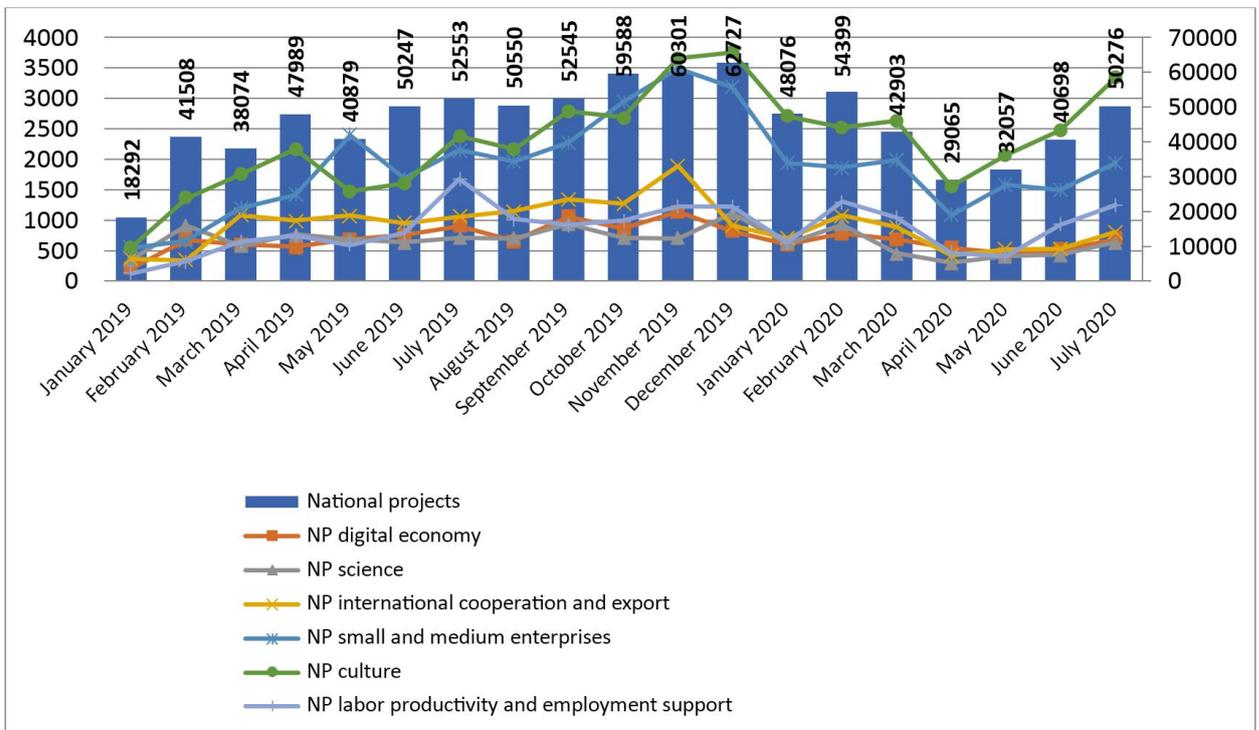


Fig. 3. Dynamics of publications on the six least mentioned NP in the context of their implementation, the number of publications.

Calculated by the authors using SCAN-Interfax

Table 2 shows the results of measuring the mentioning of media persons in connection with NP and their implementation in the Russian media in 2020. Of interest is the frequency of these mentions on specific national projects. Attention is drawn to the fact that the leaders of the Russian regions are most visible in the media, while federal ministers and other officials are represented only by Prime Minister M. Mishustin (in third place).

Person	Position	mentions	Average percentage of mentions for 12 NP
Putin Vladimir Vladimirovich	President of the RF	12	26.1
Nikitin Gleb Sergeevich	Governor of Nizhny Novgorod Oblast	12	4.0
Mishustin Mikhail Vladimirovich	Prime Minister of Government of RF	12	1.8
Azarov Dmitriy Igorevich	Governor of Samara Oblast	12	1.7
Morozov Sergey Ivanovich	Governor of Ulyanovsk Oblast	12	1.5
Komarova Natalya Vladimirovna	Governor of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug–Yugra	12	0.8
Dyumin Aleksey Gennadyevich	Acting Governor of Tula Oblast	11	0.8
Medvedev Dmitriy Anatolyevich	Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the RF	11	0.8
Ostrovskiy Aleksey Vladimirovich	Governor of Smolensk Oblast	10	1.0
Minnikhanov Rustam Nurgaliyevich	President of the Republic of Tatarstan	10	0.9
Kondratyev Veniamin Ivanovich	Governor of Krasnodar Territory	10	0.8
Teksler Aleksey Leonidovich	Governor of Chelyabinsk Oblast	10	0.7
Golubev Vasiliy Yuryevich	Governor of Rostov Oblast	10	0.7
Artamonov Igor Georgiyevich	Head of Administration of Lipetsk Oblast	10	0.6
Kuyvashev Yevgeniy Vladimirovich	Governor of Sverdlovsk Oblast	10	0.6
Nikolayev Aysen Sergeyeovich	Head of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	10	0.6

Person	Position	mentions	Average percentage of mentions for 12 NP
Rudenyā Igor Mikhailovich	Governor of Tver Oblast	9	3.0
Bocharov Andrey Ivanovich	Governor of Volgograd Oblast	9	0.6
Brechalov Aleksandr Vladimirovich	Head of the Udmurt Republic	9	0.5
Khabirov Radiy Faritovich	Head of the Republic of Bashkortostan	9	0.5
Travnikov Andrey Alexandrovich	Governor of Novosibirsk Oblast	8	0.9
Shapsha Vladislav Valerievich	Acting Governor of Kaluga Oblast	8	0.4
Vasiliev Igor Vladimirovich	Governor of Kirov Oblast	7	0.6

Table 2. Frequency of mentioning of media persons in connection with NP and their implementation in the Russian media in 2020. Calculated by the authors using SCAN-Interfax

Below are the results of an expert survey where all the experts noted two main problems of national projects – the problem of their content and the problem of tools for informing about them.

It must be said that the national projects were assessed by experts as unequal in both the problematic aspects they declared. From the point of view of the content, the national projects ‘Demography’ and ‘Science’ received the greatest criticism, primarily due to the inconsistency of the declared goals with the planned results: it is impossible to increase the birth rate, and even more so, improve the country's human capital by distributing money⁸; what should be achieved under the ‘Science’ project was unclear – a certain number of articles and/or a place in the ratings. In this regard, Soviet projects on being the first to explore space or to create an atomic bomb seemed more clearly defined.

⁸ Interestingly, this is consistent with the opinion of political scientist, Ph.D. Ekaterina Shulman that material incentives cannot solve demographic problems, since a decrease in births is associated with a replacement of values by material aid (lecture ‘Children in the past? What to do to preserve the institute of marriage?’) [Electronic resource] – URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wudcRSJBNsc> (accessed 05.08.2020).

‘Safe and High-Quality Roads’ was almost unanimously named the most successful project. Alexander Malkevich (President of the Foundation for the Protection of National Values, First Deputy Chairman of the Media Commission of the RF, Cand. Polit. Sci., Associate Professor) believes things are good with the promotion and perception by the population only of this particular NP because for this promotion Rosavtodor and the Ministry of Transport organized a whole separate institution⁹ with professional personnel turning the situation around – they traveled a lot around the country and worked in the field; also an interactive map of the implementation of the national project was created.¹⁰ According to Malkevich, all the rest of the promotion is officials talking about national projects on the ground, failing the image component because they do not know how to tell interesting and exciting stories, and often just do not want to. In fact, only the figures of the utilized billions are provided to the population. Indeed, it is not very correct for each ministry to create a structure for each national project. A decision was made on a single operator represented by TASS, but it is not yet clear what KPI should be set for it, because efficiency criteria should be at the forefront. The main risks Malkevich sees in promoting national projects are that people do not understand what exactly is behind the money that officials from the regions are fighting to get.

Ruslana Stegura, a reporter for the Internet edition Kn51 (Monchegorsk, Murmansk Obast) also noted the problem of newsmakers at national projects: usually, journalists are told about them on the air by local authorities, often in the bureaucratic language. Stegura encountered a similar situation: the press secretary of the local administration simply did not know that the repair work was being carried out according to the national project. A similar story happened with a doctor in one of the hospitals which received new equipment.

Yevgeny Yanin, Head of the Directorate for the Development of Electronic Mass Media agrees with the above: the national projects do not clearly define the goals; the only exception is the ‘Safe and High-Quality Roads’ Project. Its name is self-explanatory; largely because of this, the project is one of the most recognizable among the audience.

National projects themselves are very large-scale and cover many areas; therefore, they are vague as a topic for journalists. For example, the ‘Healthcare’ project encompasses hospitals, polyclinics, high technologies in medicine, and urgent care centers, and also helps optimize the appointment with a doctor or arrange the supply of medicines. On such scale, the media find it difficult to explain to the viewer the essence of this project, why it is needed, and most importantly, what it will lead to. Because of this, the audience does not form an associative array ‘National project – new hospital’ or ‘National

⁹ Informavtodor is the first full-cycle enterprise in the Russian Federation in the field of mass communications and information support in the road sector. Leading specialized communications company in Russia in the field of transport information: <http://информавтодор.пф/> (accessed 05.08.2020).

¹⁰ Informavtodor [Electronic resource] http://информавтодор.пф/news/news-rosavtodor/13601/?sphrase_id=12161 (accessed 05.08.2020).

project – renovation of the museum’. Over the past few years, the viewer realized there are some national projects but does not fully grasp what specific results they lead to.

Svetlana Lebedeva, editor of the city newspaper Novgorod, Chairman of the Regional Union of Journalists of Russia, positively assesses two projects from the point of view of organizational support and perception of the population, ‘Safe and High-Quality Roads’ and ‘Urban environment’. She believes it important that at the stage of discussing the list of road sites that are supposed to be included in the work plan, residents submit proposals through the network of departments-centers at the place of residence (mini-city halls) and through their deputies. Information on the results of a road condition survey and on the consideration of these issues at the city commission for road safety is constantly being circulated. The next stage – the budget approval (on 3 levels for these purposes) and the determination of the final list of objects for repairs – is also widely covered. Holding auctions and selecting contractors follows, then direct execution, discussed with the participation of the public and covered from all sides. The situation is the same with the renovation of courtyards included in the program and the development of parks and squares. Public councils are created at each park, people are actively involved, and if something is wrong, they react. Only with the participation of the public, plans are adopted for the development of a park for the next season.

APEC expert Alexei Gromsky believes that problems in the coverage of the ‘Safe and High-Quality Roads’ national project are connected with the results of competitions, when, for example, the losing side submits a complaint to the Antimonopoly Service, and the start of the project is delayed, which irritates the population. In this regard, the policy of informing is to change in terms of no rush in announcing the results of tenders and competitions. At the same time, it is possible to give the initiative group the right to veto reducing the cost of work on the competition and unjustified dumping in order to win.

Interestingly, the experts proposed their own definitions of the concept of national project, and some of the modern national projects did not fall under it. For example, Sergei Brutman, board member of the Media Association of the North-West, editor of the independent Novgorodskaya Gazeta, noted there are questions about the wording and the number of these national projects. A national project is something that has a tangible result for the majority of the country's population, achievable by exerting all its forces. At the same time, the national project should increase the country's capitalization. In the USSR, there were large-scale and ambitious projects with tangible results for the population, some met with enthusiasm and even carried out (for example, the resettlement of communal apartments by building Khrushchev houses).

In general, references to the USSR and comparisons of national projects with the Soviet past are a characteristic motive of the respondents' narratives, regardless of their age. Ph.D., Associate Professor, journalist Dmitry Astashkin pointed to the nostalgia of society after the crises of the 1990s

and 2008 for the ambitious plans of the authorities and large-scale projects: industrialization of the country and collectivization can be called projects from the Soviet past; even the vague project 'Catch up with and overtake America' was more understandable to the people than, for example, the national project 'Demography' in terms of what specific goal it pursues and how it can be realized through the efforts of the entire people. Astashkin believes this is just a primitive distribution of money and benefits to those who have children, and it does not make a significant contribution to the creation of quality human capital.

Thus, it can be concluded there is consistency in the results of the expert survey concerning the specific situation with national projects with content analysis and discourse analysis of media, as well as the conclusions of scientists who studied the image and organizational components of project activities, its risks and features of information support.

The experts also proposed ideas for the information promotion of national projects and, as a result, for improving their image component:

1. The population perceives all projects as their own when they 'land' on the territory of their residence. Local authorities and journalists should 'scale' projects for the region and fit them into regional specifics;
2. 'Image branding' of projects (for example, it is necessary to mark with plates or inscriptions objects under construction/renovation, purchased equipment, etc., and it should be clearly defined which national project funds paid for it);
3. Change of the informing paradigm, and above all, change of officials-newsmakers to the leaders of the regions involved in solving problems under the national project;
4. Public control and transparency in spending money on national projects in specific territories.

Pandemic and adjustments in the discourse of national projects. The pandemic made its own adjustments to the media discourse on national projects: most publications were associated with their possible disruption or sequestration¹¹. Typical headlines were: Coronavirus began hitting national projects, Strategic retreat, etc.

The media industry is considered one of the most affected by the pandemic: numerous (especially paper) media lost their subscriptions and had to urgently switch to digital formats or even shut down altogether. However, the pandemic allowed citizen journalism and single authors (who, in the conditions of self-publication, created their channels on new media platforms, primarily on Yandex. Zen, Telegram, TikTok where the author's project is often a full-fledged media with its news feed) to

¹¹ Komrakov A. National projects are threatened with reformatting. // *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. April 9, 2020 [Electronic resource] https://yandex.ru/turbo/s/ng.ru/economics/2020-04-09/1_7840_projects.html; Strategic retreat // *Lenta.ru*. [Electronic resource] <https://svpressa.ru/economy/article/269553/>; <https://lenta.ru/articles/2020/07/22/sroki/> (accessed 1.08.2020).

become more active. The business took advantage of new media platforms for marketing efforts during the pandemic. For the image promotion of the project activities of the authorities, solidarity with such authors could lead to interesting results. Notably, during this time the Yandex. Zen group 'The future of Russia. National Projects' created by TASS (the official operator of promoting national projects) has gained only more than two thousand subscribers. The content of the group is no different from the content of the eponymous site (an abundance of figures of spent money and comments from officials) and is not adapted to the features of the platform. Meanwhile, crowdfunding efforts in new media formats could lead to tangible image results: promotion through personal accounts of popular bloggers and attracting influencers and opinion leaders to content creation.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that such platforms give rise to mythologization and demonization of national projects – these are presented as a form of the world conspiracy. For example, one author writes: "With this article I urge you and everyone to read about the digital educational environment in the national project 'Education' which is being implemented now. Yes, we are not told about this in the media, many do not even suspect what is happening now and what all this can lead to, because this is not beneficial to the large 'players'" of our world. My husband is a lawyer and due to our professional connections, we know a little more than most, so I am writing about this, I want as many ordinary people to know it as possible"¹².

Notably, the authorities did not take full advantage of the information opportunities that arose during the pandemic. Opinion leaders were not involved in digital formats to voice the official agenda and fight fake information; there were practically no new digital projects, and there was no activation of power on digital platforms.

In addition, there was lack of the government's contribution to reducing the 'digital divide' and the 'intergenerational gap' which the pandemic only exacerbated, as well as lack of the contribution to the necessary increase in media literacy of the population in extreme situations.

Thus, the pandemic inflicted further image losses on the large-scale plans of the authorities in general and national projects in particular, and its media capabilities were poorly used in management.

Ideas for improving the organizational and information support of national projects and their possible political effects.

The main idea of improving the information and organizational support of national projects today is associated, firstly, with the use of specialized resources in social media, specialized media and new media platforms, and, second, with the involvement of target audiences (primarily young people) in the creation of content. It also seems promising to create a unified information resource that would use

¹² Author's anonymous channel 'Life on a Free Topic'. Yandex. Zen [Electronic resource] <https://zen.yandex.ru/media/id/5d9329abd7859b00b1182ad8/seichas-realizuiutsia-mnogo-milliardnye-nacionalnye-proekty-o-kotoryh-mnogie-daje-ne-znaiut-5eb6367ff2aa0073ed976eb5> (accessed 1.08.2020).

Bigdata technologies to analyze the progress of national projects and represent this data in convenient infographics.

An important place, in particular, should be occupied by the analysis of the results of the previous wave of projects. This kind of transparency would be the best form of promotion for a now distrustful audience. A big risk in information promotion is a return to the Soviet methodology and the rhetoric of the 'five-year plans'.

Below are instrumental solutions for information support of national projects, which are focused on the three most important categories of the population:

- experts (scientists, social activists);
- journalists;
- active users of social networks (these are, first of all, young people; communicative leaders will emerge from them in the near future).

As for communication technologies, the following seem effective:

- maximum approximation of the information support of national projects to the regional socio-political agenda, the involvement of the population of a particular territory in the implementation of a national project by creating initiative groups and holding actions, maximum access to information on the progress of projects and the development of funds for experts in digital formats;

- implementation of cross-media discourse associated not only with accounts on various digital media platforms but also with initiating discussion of problems through the media, attracting experts and newsmakers in shaping the media agenda of national projects. Special attention should be given to social networks and new media platforms (Telegram, Yandex. Zen, Tiktok, etc.) attracting media leaders to cooperation in the form of influencers. Such multi-channel approach will allow segmenting the promotion of projects to a target audience interested in them, as well as involving the audience (mainly young people) in complicity (at least at the media level). Notably, the general recommendations for the work of the authorities in social networks were developed back in 2014¹³, however, they did not become widespread in the Russian management practice. In addition, research on the openness and activity of authorities in social networks is often associated with quantitative indicators, which does not correspond to the concept of open dialogue¹⁴;

- medium-term targeted media policy: identifying narrow channels of communication for target audiences interested in the implementation of a specific national project and informing them about it (for example, Postnauka channel for scientists, national project 'Science' for publics of scientists on

¹³ OECD publishing, Arthur Mickoleit, 2014, https://www.ospi.es/export/sites/ospi/documents/documentos/Social_Media_use_by_Governments.pdf (accessed: 1.08.2020).

¹⁴ In 2017, 'Polity' commissioned by the Russian Association for Public Relations Committee for Digital Communications, conducted a study that assessed the number of subscribers, the frequency of posting and a quantitative assessment of audience engagement.

Facebook). Thus, the target audiences of each project will be clarified and work with the promotion of specific national projects through the use of interested target audiences will be effectuated;

- the use of storytelling as a relatively new communication technology for Russian journalism and advertising for presenting information in an accessible and attractive form. Against the background of preoccupation with Internet technologies and a shift in communication emphasis towards virtual reality, storytelling returns the lost 'luxury of human communication' and gives a feeling of personal communication outside the framework of digital technologies. Using the technique of fascinating storytelling which corresponds to the characteristics of the human psyche and to personal and social needs, it is necessary to build the history of the national project or its separate direction around the character, or a collision; the story must have a plot, conflict, overcoming and moral;

- creation of viral commercials where not the brand itself is highlighted but the story containing it. The creation of numerous Stories shows that the popularity of 'fast' content continues to grow; now agencies are creating special departments for working with Stories. More than 150 million stories are published daily on Instagram and 3 million on Facebook (Instagram Internal Data. Jason Hsiao's 2019 Social Media Week NY Presentation);

- the use of popular video formats in social networks, such as live broadcasts (streams), moreover, in a vertical format adapted for mobile phones. This is an effective way to tell the audience the information directly from the project implementer or blogger in real time with a sense of presence. In 2019, the relevance of podcasts especially increased, brands began to use these as a communication technology, creating their own podcast channels. One can listen to this audio content on the way to work or home, while playing sports, etc.

- technological activation of the addressee's complicity, namely, the use of active tabs and buttons on the sites and information resources of the authorities to induce the addressee to report failures in the implementation of national projects, express ideas and proposals for their implementation, etc.;

- regular contests for users of social networks also affect the engagement of the audience in the topic – "post a story with a picture of the product created as a result of the implementation of the national project in the brand account and invite users to create a slogan for the picture, using new content formats popular on Instagram: additional reality, masks, quizzes, questionnaires, italics, etc.'. All these increase user engagement;

- hashtags play an important role in engaging young audiences in discourse, for example, #mythoughtson, #myviewof the need for national projects, the importance of project planning in the country, large-scale plans of the authorities, etc.; #countryofmydream: how a specific national project can change a country, etc.;

- building closer relations with journalists and editorial offices, which will allow information to be provided not only through formal communication channels (official requests, mailboxes common to the department's press service) but also through informal channels, in particular, journalists' accounts in messengers and social networks. At the same time, the emphasis in the provision of information should be made not on the amount of funds spent but on the substantive component of the implementation of national projects (the connection of settlements by roads, the availability of medical care in specific settlements, the provision of places in kindergartens for children of certain urban areas, etc.);

- visualization of national projects and the course of their implementation. One of the visualization formats should be branding and image certification of project results, which is already used in a number of regions (but mainly only in relation to the Safe Roads national project);

- the creation and use of memes as a visual tool of persuasion. As indicated by the examples above, the memes existing today give a negative connotation to national projects. Perhaps, in contrast to the current situation, a meme contest or searches for the creation of other viral text/video messages with the concepts of control, success, reliability would be effective;

- development of a unified information model for presenting information about national projects on the websites of regional authorities and local government with windows for collecting feedback from the population;

- modern problems require modern solutions, so creating a chatbot is a modern way of constant communication with the audience. The chatbot can instantly respond to WhatsApp and Telegram messages; its abilities are limited not only to answering messages but also asking what the user wants to improve, what own proposal they would like to formulate or what specific question to the manager they would want to submit.

It is also proposed to hold the following activities to popularize the theme of national projects and the implementation of their tasks:

- contests for journalists of the regions (or embedding the nomination for the coverage of national projects in the existing media creative contests).

- announcement of a tender for regional media for coverage of national projects in specific regions.

Conclusion and research prospects

The image of national projects among the population needs to be adjusted. In addition, there is an obvious need to popularize the very topic of national projects, familiarize the population with the large-scale plans of the authorities and demonstrate positive results. The categories 'image' and 'information support success' are hardly subject to qualitative and, especially, quantitative assessment. However, the effectiveness of the measures proposed above can be assessed by two parameters:

- an increase in the number of people involved in media discourse through likes, subscribers in thematic groups of networks, views and reposts;
- an increase in the number of positive publications in the country's media field;
- expansion of the thematic and genre spectrum of media publications, as well as the promotion of newsmakers from among the leaders of public opinion and scientific experts.

The possible effects of the implementation of the recommendations include not only an increase in the number of people involved and the conversion of the discourse of national projects into an increase in trust in the authorities, but, above all, an increase in the social and economic effects of their implementation.

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