Social media in Russian business communication: analysis and development prospects

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Social media in Russian business communication: analysis and development prospects

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This article examines patterns of social media usage by Russian companies. For the purposes of analysis we investigated 25 companies which consistently occupy the top positions in ratings of the Russian Agency *Expert RA*, and 25 companies from the bottom of the ratings. In addition, in 2014, a number of interviews with experts were conducted. The study revealed that the top-ranked companies more actively used all sorts of social media, in comparison with the companies with the lowest ratings. The dynamics of the use of new media technologies by leading Russian companies from 2011 to 2014 are defined by the further increase of use of new media resources in different areas of business. Traditional media is no longer considered an effective development instrument (the exception is TV advertising).

Keywords: social media; Russian business communication; new media technologies

Introduction

The significant growth of interest in the study of communication processes is one of the characteristic features of modern humanities. Research has been carried out on communication features in the educational, industrial, political and other social spheres; specific interactions of pupils and teachers, students and professors in different cultures; classroom communication styles, and the nature of cross-cultural conflicts and their solutions.

There are several major causes for this interest:

(1) Dramatic quantitative growth and the increasing complexity of contacts, including interactions with representatives of other cultures.
(2) Virtualization of information space, related to the fact that the information in images of objects, people and processes are losing any connection with the real images.
(3) The globalization of the information environment, reflected in the fact that if previously an interested subject read newspapers and magazines, watched TV or listened to the radio and, thus, developed a personal picture of the situation, the subject now can use electronic media, which gives them ready-made quantitative and qualitative conclusions drawn from the analysis of the whole spectrum of publications and broadcasts.

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(4) The emergence of radically new communication formats: Web 1.0 production of content by a small group of experts for later mass consumption of Web users; Web 2.0 independent content production by mass users and active information exchange between them, for example, the emergence of social networks; Web 3.0 deployment of web service recommendations generated exclusively on the basis of consumer views. Traditional media have undergone fundamental changes with the advent of computer technology, the globalization of the world information space and the formation of a virtual media environment. There are fundamentally new forms and information dissemination channels, which have an immediate impact on the content of communication. The transformation of the political and economic environment which occurred in Russia in the late twentieth century led to the emergence of a new system of social media, the role of which is increasing in all spheres of human communication: art, education, politics, business and journalism.

Such a situation is primarily due to the increasing number of users. According to the *Public opinion foundation* (Fond obshchestvennogo mneniya [FOM]), the main increase in the Internet audience in Russia is due to the regions. In autumn 2012, the average monthly audience in Moscow was 70% of the metropolis population. Two years previously, that is, since the autumn of 2010, audience growth in the city was at 25.5%, while for the same period, the audience in the villages increased by 47.3%, and towns with a population less than 100,000 people grew by 31.9%. In addition to the increased use of the Internet as an information source, the year 2012 showed growth in this media as a news channel. In 2010, only 4% of the population regarded online news sites as a source of information which they trusted most of all, and in 2012, this proportion had already reached 11% (FOM, 2013).

World and Russian businesses are beginning to more actively use social media as a resource to promote their interests. Good examples to prove this fact are companies like *Apple Computer*, *General Motors*, *Google*, *Microsoft*, *Yahoo*, *Boeing*, *Hewlett Packard*, *Intel*, *Disney*, *IBM*, *Time Warner*, *Motorola*, *FedEx*, *Nike*, *Pepsi*, *Oracle*, *Cisco*, *Mitsubishi*, *Starbucks*, *Shell* and *New York Times*.

There has been a lot of research on various aspects of surveys on organizational communication and information landscape in business organization (Bencherki & Cooren, 2011; Carbaugh, 2005; Cooren, 2012; Du-Babcock & Bhatia, 2013; Elling, Lentz, & Jong de, 2012; Ngai & Singh, 2014; Putnam & Mumby, 2013; Ruppel, Gong, & Tworoger, 2013; Scott, 2010; Tandoc 2014).

New media in Russia are becoming the object of closer attention of experts in various fields. To identify features of new media usage by Russian companies, a study was conducted, during which a comparative analysis of new media usage by two groups of companies was performed: one group consisted of companies that consistently occupy the top positions in the Russian company' ratings, and the second group consisted of companies from the bottom lines of the rating. In addition, in 2014, the staff of *Research Laboratory of Business Communications* at the *Higher School of Economics* conducted a number of in-depth interviews. Transcripts of 23 in-depth interviews (total of 148,368 words) with experts ($N = 10$), business representatives ($N = 10$) and government officials ($N = 3$).

RQ: What are the features of the top and bottom companies and their use of social media (with a focus on corporate blogs) for external communication with target audiences? The assumptions of this study are directly related to the Callisson's hypothesis that top companies offer more online content than the bottom ones (Callisson, 2003). Russian companies consider expanding online communications with investors (IR), public authorities and publicity (Government and Community), business partners and intermediate customers (Suppliers, B2B), end users (Customers,

B2C), and the media, as a necessary prerequisite for successful development, and prefer social media to traditional ones.

Methodology

The sampling was based on data rankings of Russian companies *Expert 400* in 2011–2014. The top 25 and bottom 25 companies were selected from the list of 400 companies.

During the analysis, we used the data available on the official websites of the companies: links to blogs, the ability to subscribe to really simple syndication (RSS)-mailing, the availability of video and accounts in social networks. If there were no direct links to blogs or social networks, the official pages of companies were searched on such platforms as *Facebook*, *Vkontakte*, *YouTube*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn*. If some kind of new media was not presented on the official pages of companies or search for the official pages and channels on social networks and hosts gave no result, it was assumed that public relation (PR)-service of these companies does not use these technologies. This study distinguishes the following groups of new media: Websites; RSS and podcasts; Blogs and micro blogs; Social networks and Video hosting.

As this work is focused on the study of external communications, it does not consider the information oriented to the organization or employees, despite the availability of such information in social networks and blogs. The study distinguishes five groups of target audiences: Investors (IR); Government and Community (G&C); Business Partners and intermediate users (Suppliers, B2B); End users (Customers, B2C) and Mass media (MR).

The following questions were formulated for the empirical research:

- How many new media tools do companies use on average?
- What materials are uploaded via the new media? And for what audience?
- What structure do new media channels have?
- What are the similarities and differences in the ways in which companies that hold higher and lower position in the ranking use new media tools?
- There were open-ended questions used in the interviews, a Dictaphone was used, and the interviewees were allowed to verify the transcripts of the interviews.

Participants

The transcripts of these 23 in-depth interviews were used as an object for content analysis. Characteristics of survey participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. General characteristics of the respondents.

Characteristics	Respondents
Gender	
Male	18
Female	5
Employment status	
Experts businessmen	10
Businessmen	10
Officials	3
	$N = 23$

Research instruments

Program *QDA Miner v.2.0.8* with a module *WordStat v.5.1.12*, developed by *Provalis Research,* was used to conduct the content analysis. Comments and questions of the interviewers were excluded from the analysis. The description of the qualitative and quantitative features of this content analysis is presented in a sufficient level of detail (Krippendorff 2012; White & Marsh, 2006). In the course of the research, we conducted coding and assigned parts of the text to certain categories, which were then used to conduct the analysis. Having categories allowed us to form 'glossaries' to read and interpret the transcripts (Hogenraad, McKenzie & Péladeau, 2003; Roberts, 2000).

Sample of the 'correlation' glossary was based on the criteria of frequency and order of co-located words in the text. In the list of codes for the qualitative content analysis, attention was given not to the frequency of certain words, but to the topics presented in the text. The correlation glossary helped to identify the meanings that were expressed explicitly, while the codes of qualitative content analysis reflect the implicit information contained in the text. It is known that the qualitative content analysis is characterized by relatively low reliability. To improve this reliability, some explicit coding rules involving multiple researchers as in the model proposed by Gray and Denster (1998) were formed. The codes, which were allocated by individual researchers, were compared and then the index of agreement among the coders was calculated. This index is equal to the ratio of the number of matches to the sum of the number of code matches and the number of code mismatches. An agreement index value over 0.7 is defined as reliable.

Results

The first stage of the study provided data showing the main directions of the use of new media. Primarily, there was a comparison of new media tools used for audience communication support. The vast majority of companies from the first group use more than one new media tool to post PR-messages. The average number of new media resources used for PR purposes varies from 2 to 4 for the first group of companies. The companies that occupy the bottom positions in the ranking, as a rule, used only one of the new media technologies.

The next step was to analyse the specifics of the new media. For both the first and second groups, an official website is the primary means of communication. However, the top and bottom companies showed a different intensity of the use of the communication resources to support these audiences (Tables 2 and 3).

The websites of all 25 companies from the first group have a special section, *For the Press* which, along with the traditional press releases, may contain audio and video materials with comments from the top management, as well as presentations and announcements of events for journalists.

The use of this resource for investor information support has the same intensity: 23 companies out of 25 have special sections *For Shareholders and Investors*. The audience is supported

Table 2.   Use of new media for target audiences by Top 25 companies.

Target audience	Web site	RSS	Blog	Social network	Video hosting
IR	23	6	1	1	1
G&C	16	6	4	5	5
B2B	17	11	4	6	6
B2C	4	3	6	4	4
MR	24	14	9	8	10

Table 3. Use of new media for target audiences by Bottom 25 companies.

Target audience	Website	RSS	Blog	Social network	Video hosting
IR	9	1	0	0	0
G&C	3	0	0	0	0
B2B	16	1	1	0	0
B2C	5	1	1	2	2
MR	17	3	3	1	1

through the placement of financial reports, IR-releases and financial results, as well as special the-matic publications that may be of interest to shareholders, investors and financial analysts (good examples of this are Top-Rated banks). The B2B audience has the third highest number of PR-publications. PR-content on 17 sites out of 25 provides information for business partners. In this work, we have considered not only the standard information about the products and services of the company, its mission and activities, but also thematic publications devoted to cor-porate clients, customers, tenders, and so on. Sixteen companies out of 25 place PR-publications dedicated to social responsibility, releases on interaction with federal and regional authorities, the signing of agreements, reports on procurement and environmental protection on their site. For the first group, end users have the communication support. Only 6 out of 25 companies provide com-munication support for this particular audience.

For most companies from the second group, by which it was possible to analyse the content of PR-posts placed on 25 sites, the official website is the only means of communication (22 out of 25). The way companies from the second group use communication resources differs from the one used by first group; it more narrowly targets audiences and PR-messages. For the second group as well as for the first one, the three main PR-content audiences are media, investors and business partners.

B2C and G&C audiences showed the lowest rates among this group of companies. In contrast to the top-rated companies, placing information relating to reporting on procurement, social responsibility and outreach for government relations is the exception rather than the rule – only 3 of the 25 companies of the second group put such information on their sites. A similar situ-ation is observed for the consumer audience communication support.

RSS-mailing is second for the dissemination of PR-content, after the company websites. Among the top-rated companies, 15 have the opportunity to subscribe to the mailing list by using this technology. Nineteen of the 20 sites have special sections, *For Investors* which include periodic reports, IR-releases and financial information which is required to be disclosed. Also, all the websites of the top-rated companies post information for the media: press releases, audio or video content, CEO's comments and an events calendar. It is a standard set of PR-content that is posted on the websites of companies.

However, not all companies have demonstrated a high degree of RSS-format use to commu-nicate with target audiences. Only 4 out of 25 use RSS to distribute content to business partners (*Gazprom*, *Tatneft*, *Transneft* and *Evraz Group*) and 3 companies use this format to send a news-letter to investors.

The results of the quantitative research revealing the use of RSS by top-rated companies show that this new media technology is gaining importance in the organizational relationship with the audience. At the same time, RSS-feeds may also vary within the scope of communication support. For example, *Russian Railways* has five RSS channels, which distribute news, press releases, announcements of events and updates on forums through different feeds. However, mostly com-panies use RSS-feeds to send newsletters and this represents the main form of communication

support to certain groups, especially journalists and B2B audiences. This form of PR-content distribution allows companies to communicate in real time, gives audiences the opportunity to be continuously informed of updates and track the most current information. In contrast to the top-rated companies, the bottom companies show a very low-level use of this technology. Only 3 out of 25 (*ASE*, *Ruselprom* and *Renaissance Insurance*) use RSS to mail press releases and links to official statements of the company. When the companies use this technology for the PR-content dissemination, they confine themselves to the interim reporting information occasions.

As for blogging and microblogging, in 10 of the 25 top-rated companies, PR-services maintain blogs and microblogs. Basically, they include news announcements, links to press releases and comments from the company's management. Other blogs, occurring in this population, are those of the top management. For example, the president of *Russian Railways* Vladimir Yakunin maintains a blog on *LiveJournal*, which, on the one hand, is described as 'personal', but on the other hand, the president of the company uses it to post PR-texts. He gives detailed comments on the development of rail transportation, announces the results of major projects and publishes official requests. Top managers of *Sberbank* also have blogs. Some companies of the group are moving away from using blogs as a platform for PR-texts placement and devote them to narrow topics. For example, the official blog of *Norilsk Nickel* PR-service is dedicated to the company's social responsibility, educational, sport and social projects, and support for the various initiatives. The *RusHydro* blog addresses environmental issues. We assume that these texts can be addressed to three audiences: journalists, consumers and the general public. Blogs are different from traditional PR-texts: they are interactive, the format allows you to post nonstandard texts and the direction may vary. This often complicates audience targeting.

The least-supported group in blogs is business partners and investors. Of all the companies, only two use a blog or microblog to communicate with business partners (*Rusal* and *VTB Group*), and only two banks use blogs to post financial reports, IR-releases and other financial information.

Low-rated companies use blogs for communication with external audiences less often. Only 3 of the 25 companies in this group have blogs and microblogs (*Renaissance Insurance*, *BCC Group* and *Atomstroyeksport*). They usually use platforms such as *Twitter* and *Livejournal*, or an official website providing a link to the top management's blogs. Information posted on blogs can vary. On the one hand, top management places orders and official comments on their blogs, which may be of interest to journalists or business partners. On the other hand, for example, on the blog of *Renaissance Insurance,* one can see that PR-service messages for a consumer audience have an 'instant response option', often without the need to use a formal tone.

The situation is similar with the use of social networks. The use of this channel for PR-content dissemination was evaluated by the presence of the official pages on the main Russian platforms (*Facebook*, *LinkedIn* and *VKontakte*). We reviewed only official pages where the organization communicates with its external audiences. Thus, pages, created by third parties for communication between a company's employees or consumers of its goods and services, are excluded from our view. Among the high-rated companies, 10 out of 25 have accounts in social networks. As a rule, companies attract this type of social media in order to create an interactive platform to discuss news (nine companies post news on their 'walls'), to place promotional publications (four companies) and links to press releases (eight companies). This means of communication mostly supports consumers and media.

Among the companies using this tool to communicate with target audiences, we distinguish those who, due to their sphere of activities, interact with a broad range of consumers. These are *Sberbank*, *TNK-BP*, *VTB Group*, *X5 Retail Group* and *JSC VimpelCom*. During the analysis, we assumed that if a company has an account on social networks, created to promote some of its projects, it can also be regarded as engaging social networks for the communications support of the

company. For example, *JSC Gazprom* has an account on *Facebook – Gazprom 2014* dedicated to the participation of the company in the construction of Olympic facilities in Sochi. Moreover, the link to the page is placed on the official website and contains PR-texts. This resource provides the least support to investors and G&C. If a company has an account on a social network, the chance that it contains a press release or a financial report is almost zero. From bottom-rated companies, only five have accounts on social networks. The main audience is end users: four out of five companies that have accounts on social networks use them for publishing advertising information about goods or services and promotions.

Regarding the use of video, more than half of the top-rated companies have their own channel on *YouTube*. In this study, we include a review of videos that are created to broadcast PR-posts: interviews with management, reporting presentations, slideshows, business launches, materials and press events. The audience that is mostly supported by leading Russian companies using this tool consists of the media and business partners. Official channels on video hosting sites can release corporate TV broadcasting. For instance, the channel *Russian Railways* broadcasts corporate TV, *TV RZD*, aimed to provide information to consumers, journalists and business partners. The channel broadcasts to internal and external audiences, including representatives of the companies involved in transportation, officials, line agencies, and all consumers of Russian Railways services, including investors and federal and regional structures.

Low-rated companies demonstrated a very low level of use of video hosting for PR-support of their audiences. Only 2 of the 25 companies (*Absolut Bank* and *Renaissance Insurance*) have a channel on *YouTube*. The presence of the content does not mean that the companies provide advanced communications support to their audiences: for example, *Renaissance Insurance* uses this channel only as a resource for commercials.

Following the quantitative study of Russian companies that use certain kinds of new media targeted at specific groups of recipients, we can present the achieved result in the form of two models (Figures 1 and 2).

The first model shows the relation of the new media types and the target audiences in the first group of the companies rated 1–25. This yields the conclusion that the leading companies
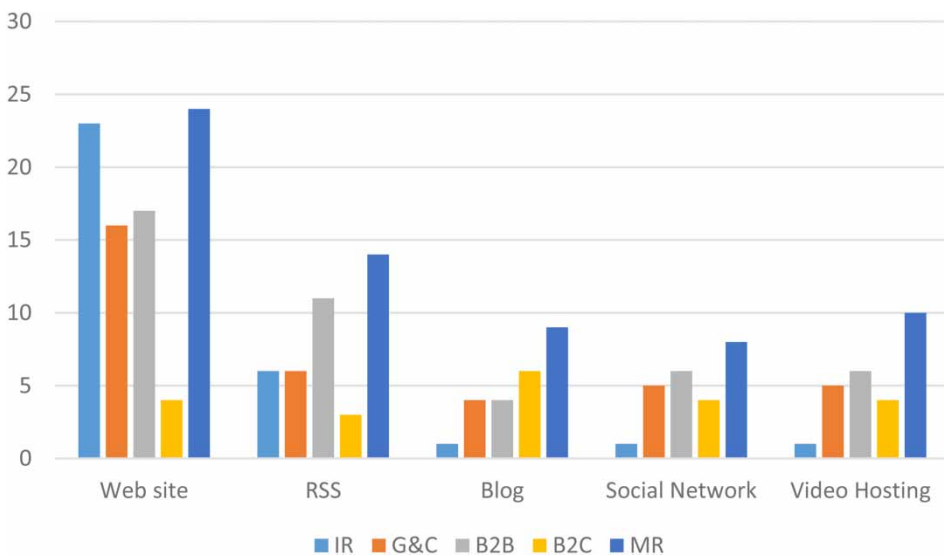

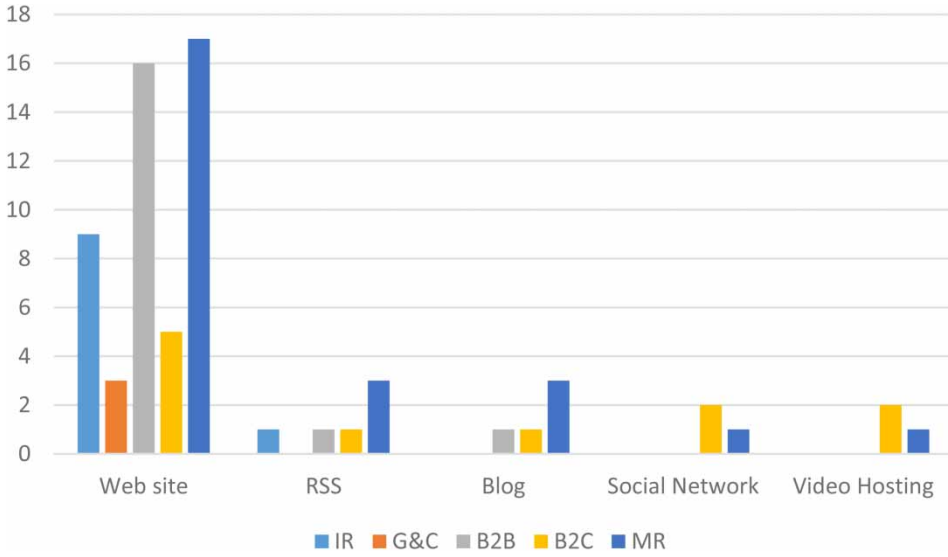Figure 1. Use of new media by companies rated 1–25.

Figure 2.   Use of new media by companies rated 376–400.

are in the process of getting into the Internet environment, but the use of new media for distributing PR-content is limited. Most of the companies use websites and RSS channels to distribute PR-content, whereas the content is addressed to the three main audiences: mass media, investors and business partners. It was also stated that companies used social media, blogs and social networks to support the mainstream consumer audiences. This group showed low support for the consumer audience which apparently depends on the industrial characteristics of the leading companies: the biggest companies belong to the oil and gas sector, the ferrous and non-ferrous metal industries, and the energy industry. However, regardless of these natural constraints, the sampled companies demonstrate a relative variety of the engaged technologies they use for external communications and a higher development level in comparison with the second group. The use of new media by low-rated companies shown in Figure 2 represents the extremely low and targeted use of new media in order to provide communication support to the audiences.

In the second phase of the research, the dynamics of the use of new media technologies by leading Russian companies from the years 2011 to 2014 were examined. Glossaries for content analysis of transcripts were formed on the basis of processing the results of in-depth interviews. In accordance with the objectives of the research project, which are aimed at determining the specificity and dynamics of usage of new media technologies by leading Russian companies, a glossary of quality codes was created (Table 4).

The glossary contains 13 codes, organized into 3 nodes: *New media, Traditional media* and *Recipients of communications*. To assess the external validity, the codes were illustrated with three examples, in accordance with the model proposed by Gray and Denster (1998). For the purpose of illustration, the code 'Blog' is defined as an element of new media with the entries that contain the text, images or multimedia; below, three examples of its interpretation are offered.

> Blog is the 'face' of a company in the new media. Corporate work in the blogosphere should consist not only of blogging, but should include other important forms: weekly monitoring of the blogosphere, participation in discussions of media materials, extensive commenting on other blogs, etc. (Business, male, 41–50)

Table 4. Glossary of quality codes.

Node	Code	Number of codes	% of codes	Number of texts	% of texts	Number of words	% of words
New media	Websites	25	4.2	17	73.9	929	0.5
	RSS and podcasts	16	2.7	13	56.5	998	0.5
	Blogs and microblogs	23	3.9	18	78.2	829	0.5
	Social networks	24	4.0	20	86.9	828	0.4
	Video hostings	16	2.7	13	56.5	998	0.5
	Crowdsourcing	25	4.2	17	73.9	1076	0.6
	Mobile devices	23	3.9	18	78.2	979	0.5
Traditional media	TV	42	7.1	20	86.9	995	0.5
	Radio	15	2.5	14	60.8	820	0.4
	Print media	16	2.7	14	60.8	993	0.5
Addressees of communication	Investors (IR)	42	7.1	21	91.3	1045	0.6
	Authorities and the public (*Government and community*)	16	2.7	19	82.6	996	0.5
	Business partners and intermediate customers (*Suppliers, B2B*)	15	2.5	15	65.2	822	0.4
	End users (*Customers, B2C*)	23	3.9	22	95.6	1044	0.6

… it is 'social media' or 'people's journalism'. This defines the main critical argument against information published on blogs: with the advent of blogs, social networks, online media and other new media, a thought became not only shorter and faster, but less accurate, which is quite logical when it comes to the speed of the response to the event. Blog posts are attributed the effect trueness, because people tend to believe the person who became a victim of certain circumstances and described them from personal experience, rather than someone who was only a witness to some events. (Business, female, up to 41)

The obvious advantage of blog services is that they give the audience an opportunity to get more up-to-date information. The main feature of the blogosphere, which favourably distinguishes it from traditional media is the possibility to express or to get acquainted with an alternative point of view. (Business, male, 41–50)

A correlational glossary (Table 5) automatically included the words that were used more than five times in less than 75% of the transcripts, a total of 886 words. The term frequency–inverse document frequency (TF–IDF) was calculated as the product of the ratio of specific category frequency to cumulative frequency of all categories in the document and the logarithm of the ratio of total number of texts to the number of texts that contain a specific category.

The data of the second phase of the research showed further increase in the importance of the Internet communications in the Russian business environment. According to experts, the first place among new media tools belongs to sites, while RSS-feeds, blogs and microblogs also keep their positions. There is a significantly expanded presence of all types of companies in social networks, and almost all companies have accounts in different networks. There is a significantly expanded presence of Russian business as on *YouTube*. Experts point out that there are new trends in the increasing use of mobile devices in the business environment and the development of crowdsourcing technologies. It can be explained by the fact that the interest of Russians in mobile devices is steadily growing. In September 2013, 29% of all visitors of *Runet* accessed the Internet using mobile devices. Also, the strengthening of the positions of crowdsourcing technologies for

Table 5. Correlation glossary.

	Frequency	% of total number	Number of texts	% of texts	TF–IDF
Business	162	0.4	22	95.6	25.3
Money	148	0.4	21	91.3	21.0
System	142	0.3	21	91.3	19.2
Today	101	0.2	20	86.9	19.9
Enough	100	0.2	19	82.6	24.7
Countries	100	0.2	17	73.9	19.5
Absolutely	99	0.2	18	78.2	18.3
Site	99	0.2	17	73.9	22.6
Mobile	98	0.2	18	78.2	16.5
Crowdsourcing	96	0.2	17	73.9	23.3
Situation	94	0.2	18	78.2	17.2
Consumer	92	0.2	20	86.9	14.5
Problem	92	0.2	15	65.2	15.8
Solution	91	0.2	16	69.5	12.3
Power	91	0.2	19	82.6	15.5
TV	91	0.2	20	86.9	16.3
Part	90	0.2	17	73.9	16.6
Investor	90	0.2	21	91.3	18.2
Level	65	0.1	18	78.2	15.6
Radio	64	0.1	14	60.8	19.5
Said	64	0.1	19	82.6	22.3
Law	63	0.1	13	56.5	34.2
Partners	62	0.1	16	69.5	13.4
Newspaper	52	0.1	17	73.9	15.2
Own	51	0.1	13	56.5	12.8
One	51	0.1	19	82.6	13.4
View	50	0.1	17	73.9	18.5
Points	42	0.1	17	73.9	14.3
Podcast	41	0.1	13	56.5	13.6
Manipulation	40	0.1	15	65.2	14.9

Note: TF–IDF, term frequency–inverse document frequency.

different fields of business structures seems quite natural. According to experts, the traditional media are considered a less significant resource in the context of business development as compared to the new ones. An exception is TV advertising which is still regarded as the most effective tool to increase profits and impact the end user.

Discussion

Primarily, blogs are the most popular resource of all existing types of new media in modern Russian business communication. Four of the most popular Russian blog hostings are *LiveJournal.com* (44.78% of posts per day out of all Russian blogosphere postings), *LiveInternet.ru* (19.98), *Diary.ru* (13.15) and *Blogs.mail.ru* (7.34). Sixty per cent of Russian bloggers are women. The mean age of a blogger is 21; which is some years less than the mean age of the average Russian Internet user. The great majority of bloggers (95%) are people who live in the cities with more than one million citizens. Almost 80% of them live in Moscow or St. Petersburg.

The launch of the *Factiva Reputation Intelligence* system by *Factiva* jointly owned by *Dow Jones* and *Reuters* on 4 August 2005 is considered the official recognition of blog significance to company reputation. The new system can seek required words and phrases not only on websites,

but also in blogs and forums. Previously, *Factiva* could track through only traditional media. The new system was primarily positioned by its owners as a reputation system designed to track through leading mass media the estimated impressions on these companies and to prevent possible crises.

With respect to the level of the Internet distribution in developed countries, the high degree of blog impact on a company's reputation is understandable. That is why a lot of companies and organizations start to create blogs. Corporate blogs may be conveniently divided into two categories. The first category is for internal use. These are the blogs where managers communicate with employees, interchange their views and discuss some projects. The second category includes blogs for external target groups. By means of blogs, PR managers and project and service managers inform users of some company information or other news. The list of some *RuNet* corporate blogs is presented below (the most popular for data http://yablor.ru/).

Russian Internet corporate blogs: advertising agencies; *Inter Ad Agency*: blog.inter.ru; *BrandAid*: blog.brandaid.ru; IT companies; *Yandex*: company.yandex.ru/blog; *Kaspersky Lab*: viruslist.com/ru/weblog; *Imperavi*: blog.lessio.ru; manufacturing enterprises; *Kristal Service*: kristall-service.net/blog; mass media; *Klerk.Ru News Agency*: klerk.info; *Delovoy Peterburg*: blog.dpgazeta.ru; trade; *Aldus Computers*: digitalcam.ru; *Allsoft*: blog.allsoft.ru; *Sila Uma*: sila-uma.ru; nutrition; *Stardogs*: stardogs.ru/blog; consulting; Analytic Centre: blog.analytic-center. ru and *Dreamco*: dreamco.ru (Novikov, 2012).

One of the most popular Russian corporate blogs is *Yandex* blog (company.yandex.ru/blog/). It developed from the news feed previously consisting of the company's press releases. The blog format allowed the company to deliver news in a more lively and entertaining format. One of the oldest Russian Internet blogs is owned by web design company *RedGraphic* (http://blog. redgraphic.ru/). This blog does not set a goal of replacing or complementing the news feed. This is an example of a typical blog where authors write in their diaries whatever they want. Another example of a corporate blog is the *Stamtest* project blog (http://www.spamtest.ru/ weblog.html). Blogs of such companies as *Analytic Centre, 1Web* and *Doctor Al* complete the picture of a corporate blogosphere in the Russian Internet.

Social networks are becoming an extremely popular corporate communication tool. Some of them turned into transnational (such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*); some became significant only in separate national web worlds, for example, *Vkontakte* and *Odnoklassniki* in Russia. *Odnoklassniki* (odnoklassniki.ru) is a network basically used for communication, and it is a problem for an information source to participate in it. But many other networks make it possible for an information source to participate in them. The number of brand communities in *Vkontakte* (vkontakte. ru) is scarcely lower than 100,000 subscribers. Often, the maximum number of brand community subscribers reaches one million people. The community subscribers may include more than five or six million people, which immediately makes them potent advertising sites. The key players here are not communities, and public sites themselves are but applications. The audience for these applications is very large and the content and format offer opportunities to hold advertising campaigns and promote any particular products.

It is also worth noting that the main features of social media – information interactivity and personification, an almost unlimited extension of potential and real authors' network, conversion of 'author-reader' opposition – result in the extension of dialogic communication means (Dzyaloshinskv, 2012; Pilgun, 2012). But it is well known that dialogic communication is performed when conversation partners have a positive attitude to each other and consider themselves as equals. Dialogic communication is always partner-centred and is conducted by individuals in their own names. Thereby, the true feelings and wishes of the subject remain open. In other words, the dialogue stimulated by new media involves a change of communicative psychological patterns. Thus, open and effective dialogue is an evident characteristic of conscious and actively

realizable social partnerships. The detailed development of the dialogue-based communication norms has renovated advertising, PR and journalism.

Conclusion

The dynamics of the use of new media technologies by leading Russian companies are defined by a further increase in the use of new media resources in different areas of the business. Traditional media are no longer considered an effective development instrument (with the exception being TV advertising). Leading companies and small and medium-sized businesses have significantly expanded the use of corporate websites, RSS-feeds, blogs and microblogs. Several types of companies have increased their presence in social networks and on *YouTube*. We believe the fact that the biggest companies that head the *Expert 400* (2011) – the Russian companies rating – use the new media as a communication resource to a greater extent than the low-rated companies, may be explained as follows.

Large companies that have complex structures and multilevel management systems are more subject to decentralized management. It can be seen from the examples of our sampling. Such holding companies as *Gazprom* or *Russian Railways*, regardless of the hierarchical pattern and submission to government that came from a ministry heritage, develop as companies, create subsidiary enterprises and extend horizontal information communications. Companies of this kind have more customers and they also must, out of necessity, represent their interests and cooperate with a large number of stakeholder groups, such as governmental authorities, large investors, a general audience and a large federal mass media. This requires a more deployed form of information reporting, and communication support systems that are designed to secure new media. Companies of the second group are smaller and, judging from our theses, are more centralized in terms of management and control redistribution. The pool of executors of middle and small companies is limited and their structure represents a less deployed information network. The pool of audiences they cooperate with is also limited. Therefore, their need to use new media for external communications will also be limited. Their management is more monocentric, and the communication model has a more traditional form; hence, they deal with the 'control paradigm shift' to a lesser degree than the biggest leading companies.

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