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ПИСЬМО-ПОДТВЕРЖДЕНИЕ

Настоящим подтверждаю, что тезисы Бодруновой С.С., Непиющих Д.В. (Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет) *Cumulative opinions in unhealthy communicative milieus: Non-deliberative discursive patterns and conspiracist information sourcing in the COVID-dissident Telegram community anti_covid21*, тезисы Смоляровой А.С., Бодруновой С.С., Тарасова Н.А. (Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет) *Ad hoc media: A blurred border between media, arenas, and publics in new forms of collaborative posting on social networks*, тезисы Нигматуллиной К.Р., Бодруновой С.С., Полякова А.К., Касымова Р.М. (Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет) *Narrative Communities on Social Networks and the Roles of Legacy Media in them: The Case of User Complaints in Russian Regions* и тезисы Родичевой А.А., Бодруновой С.С., Блеканова И.С., Тарасова Н.А., Беляковой Н.Ю. (Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет) *Cumulative crises and reputation management of Russian brands on social media* приняты к публикации в сборнике по итогам международного форума «Пятнадцатые международные научные чтения в Москве. СМИ и массовые коммуникации-2023. Эпоха неопределенности в современных СМИ и журналистике: вызовы больших данных и искусственного интеллекта», который состоялся на факультете журналистики МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова 9-10 ноября 2023 года.

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Cumulative crises and reputation management of Russian brands on social media

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Russian brands sometimes face crisis situations which massively manifest via outbursts of user commenting on social media. Despite the growing number of cases of online reputational crises and the critical interest of the industry, there are very few case studies that would explore the crisis experience of Russian companies relying on scientific methods. Moreover, the social media management (SMM) industry professionals and data gathering companies try to create efficiency evaluation methods for assessment of crisis management independent from SMM professionals' views that would allow company CEOs to judge upon the professionals' efficiency, but with no recognizable success.

To evaluate the efficiency of crisis management strategies of Russian brands on VK.com and provide recommendations for maintaining audience loyalty, we first enquire into the nature of crisis opinion formation and show that it has clearly cumulative nature. Thus, linking the cumulative deliberation theory (Bodrunova, 2021, 2023) to methods of online sentiment detection, we have developed a methodology for analyzing reputational dynamics and crisis communications of Russian brands on VK.com (ex-VKontakte) based on automated and manual research methods.

We have chose two crisis cases, namely Vkusvill's publication of a LGBT-featuring post and Alfa Bank's collaboration with the rap singer Morgenstern. The dataset was compiled of the posts and comments on the official accounts of these brands on VK.com: 1) 3,577 posts and 42,607 comments for the Vkusvill's audience, 6,074 posts and comments on behalf of the company, May 30 to July 30, 2021; 2) 3,363 comments from the Alfa Bank's audience, 23 posts and 1,613 company comments from February 15 to April 16, 2021. The chronological framework is limited to times between the active COVID-19 pandemic and the special military operation in Ukraine, to avoid distortions in commenting.

The methods we used included data collection, automated sentiment analysis, quantitative-qualitative content analysis via text coding as suggested by Krippendorff (2018), and data visualization.

Our results suggest the following. During the crisis, the brands' official VK communities see a sharp cumulative rise in commenting with no signs of active deliberation, but the division of these comments by sentiment remains proportional to the pre-crisis state, due to different opinions of users on the company behavior. While working on crises on VK.com, brands move from a denial strategy to active attempts to restore reputation. The inefficiency lies in the brands' slowness in responding to negative feedback and even more in denialist and sarcastic strategies of negativity rebuttal, which contributes to the uncontrolled second-step accumulation of audience reaction.

We recommend that brands proactively develop a crisis response plan across all their social media accounts, respond quickly to massive negative user feedback, and manage conflict via acknowledgement of the crisis and active engagement in discussion, in order to prevent user opinions from accumulating uncontrollably. The results of the study can be used by Russian brands to develop social media crisis response strategies.

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage Publications.

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