

**NEW TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS:
DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ARMENIA**

ASTGHIK AVETISYAN

PhD in Philological Sciences, Associate Professor
Yerevan State University
a_astghik@yahoo.com

Abstract

Public Relations (PR) is a system of actions that can influence public opinion, draw public attention and make it participatory in the decision-making process. The mission of a PR specialist is to explore public opinion, behaviour and relationships, to target audience, develop techniques to influence the audience, clarify the strategy, build a credible partner image, and finally maintain the established reputation. PR helps to understand the relationship between the organization and the society, analyzes the impact of policies and conflicts on the community¹. Creativity is born of competition. Day by day state agencies, business sector, non-governmental organizations, and companies are thinking of new techniques to attract public attention, as well as to promote a company's brand. Political parties and officials do their utmost to win public confidence and gain the approval of the electorate. It is public opinion that builds the reality in the democratic system, so the role of public relations specialists in politics and culture, the state and private sectors, is invaluable in the age of the newest technologies. The "Public Relations" profession is directly connected with the level of democracy in the country. Whereas Public Relations is perceived as a well-developed (though dynamic and changeable) science in the West, it is at its stage of establishment and development in independent Armenia.

Keywords and phrases

Public Relations, Communication, Information Technologies, PR tools, PR techniques, Press Secretary, Public Relations Specialist, Communication Management, Government Public Relations, Target Audience.

**ՀԱՆՐԱՅԻՆ ԿԱՊԵՐԻ ԱՐԴԻ ԳՈՐԾԻՔՆԵՐՆ ՈՒ ՏԵԽՆՈԼՈԳԻԱՆԵՐԸ, ԴԻՆԱՄԻԿ
ՋԱՐԳԱՅՈՒՄ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆՈՒՄ**

ԱՍՏԴԻԿ ԱՎԵՏԻՍՅԱՆ

բանասիրական գիտությունների թեկնածու, դոցենտ
Երևանի պետական համալսարան
a_astghik@yahoo.com

Համառոտագիր

Ժողովրդավարական համակարգում հանրային կարծիքն է կերտում իրականությունը, ուստի հանրային կապերի (Public Relations) մասնագետների դերը ժամանակակից աշխարհի բոլոր ոլորտներում՝ քաղաքականությունից մշակույթ, պետականից մասնավոր, անգնահատելի է: «Հանրային կապեր» մասնագիտությունն ուղղակիորեն

¹ **Avetisyan A.** (2014) «Public Relations in the system of mass communication», YSU Publishing house, 16-17 pages, Yerevan:

կապված է երկրի ժողովրդավարության մակարդակից: Եթե Արևմուտքում հանրային կապերն ընկալվում է որպես կայացած (թեպետ կենդանի և օրեցօր փոփոխվող) մասնագիտություն, Հայաստանի Հանրապետությունում այն գտնվում է իր կայացման և զարգացման փուլում: Մեր կողմից իրականացված ուսումնասիրությունները ցույց են տվել, որ տեղեկատվական տեխնոլոգիաների արագ զարգացմանը զուգահեռ փոխվել են նաև հանրության ուշադրությունը հրավիրելու գործիքներն ու հնարքները:

Բանալի բառեր և բառակապակցություններ

Հանրային կապեր, հաղորդակցություն, տեղեկատվական տեխնոլոգիաներ, PR գործիքներ, PR տեխնոլոգիաներ, մամուլի քարտուղար, հանրային կապերի մասնագետ, հաղորդակցության կառավարում, գերատեսչական PR, թիրախային լսարան:

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ИНСТРУМЕНТЫ И ТЕХНОЛОГИИ СВЯЗЕЙ С ОБЩЕСТВЕННОСТЬЮ: ДИНАМИЧНОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ В АРМЕНИИ

ԱՏԴԻԿ ԱՎԵՏԻՍՅԱՆ

кандидат филологических наук, доцент
Ереванский государственный университет
a_astghik@yahoo.com

Аннотация

В демократической системе общественное мнение создает реальность, поэтому роль специалистов по связям с общественностью во всех сферах современного мира, от политики до культуры, от государственного до частного, бесценна. Профессия «Связи с общественностью» напрямую связана с уровнем демократии в стране. В то время как связи с общественностью на Западе воспринимается как состоявшаяся (хотя живая и меняющаяся) профессия, в новой независимой Армении она находится на стадии своего становления и развития. Наши исследования показали, что наряду с быстрым развитием информационных технологий, инструменты и технологии для привлечения внимания общественности также изменились.

Ключевые слова и фразы

Связи с общественностью, коммуникация, информационные технологии, PR инструменты, PR технологии, пресс-секретарь, специалист по связям с общественностью, коммуникационный менеджмент, ведомственный PR, целовая аудитория.

Research Methods

The works and initiatives carried out by the RA state agencies, financial institutions, local and international political, cultural and social organizations in May 2016 - May 2017, became the subject of the research². During the research, the working tools were selected according to the target audience. Quantitative and qualitative methods have been applied. Detailed interviews and questionnaire surveys (questionnaires consisted of open, closed and semi-closed questions) were conducted during the research. Public Relations specialists of the Armenian State Agencies and Banks in Armenia (PR Advisers, Heads of Relevant Departments, Press Officers of the Heads of the Departments, etc.) have presented their work conducted during the last year. 2025 respondents were interviewed (public relations specialists, political

² This research was carried out by the research team of the “Armenian PR Association” scientific-informational NGO, www.armpr.org/prawards.

scientists, artists, psychologists, media representatives, journalists, editors). The study included 5 focus groups with 2 age groups (people aged 23-35 and 35-60, numbering 250, 63% of whom are male and 37% are female). Each media and video footage was monitored during a year.

There is a false opinion about the functions of the Public Relations Specialist in Armenia.

A Public Relations Specialist is a creator of the reputation of an organization, a product or an individual. The public relations specialist's responsibility is to develop and implement PR campaigns to enhance the image and reputation of the organization. The "Public Relations" speciality is one of the most prestigious and highly paid professions of the 21st century. Public relations specialists are involved in the highest decision-making bodies, which is justified in the opinion of authoritative research organizations and experts, as only with the comprehensive information it is possible to develop an effective strategy and implement advisory work. Among the most popular types of Public Relations jobs are PR manager, PR director, press secretary, PR consultant, the head of the relevant department and more. According to our research, there is a misinterpretation of the PR institute and responsibilities of the PR specialist in the state and private sectors of Armenia; what is more, this misconception exists not only among the leaders of organizations (public, commercial, state, etc.) but also those who hold the positions of public relations specialists. Some of the ministers' spokesmen have noticed that they are not engaged in PR, giving PR a negative tone. One of the duties of the PR specialist, as well as the press secretary's, is to establish friendly relations with media representatives, develop PR programs, build a positive image and a good reputation of their leader with the use of PR technologies. Our studies have shown that press secretaries in Armenia do not fully understand their role and act as a "barrier" between the public and the leader, which causes disappointment and dissatisfaction with the various public officials and organizations among the public.

The thorough interviews conducted during the study suggest that the PR strategy of the RA government agencies is aimed primarily at the external audience (external communication): competitors, partners, beneficiaries, and media. External PR is, of course, essential and occupies most of the responsibilities of public relations specialists. Still, there is no need to underestimate internal PR (internal communication) – the relationship within the structure (head - employee, employee - employee). Any employee can spoil successfully implemented long-term work with only one negative comment. Research shows that the inappropriate internal PR or the absence of steps towards internal communication in the strategic plan causes conflicts and acts as a barrier to the implementation of successful external PR³.

³ L. A. Cardwell, S. Williams, A. Pyle, Corporate Public Relations Dynamics: Internal vs. External Stakeholders and the Role of the Practitioner, Clemson University, 2017, P. 12-13.

Modern PR tools and techniques, dynamic growth

“Public Relations” is a dynamic profession, tools and technologies of which are changing in time. Tools for drawing public attention are also evolving along with the rapid development of information technologies. For each organization (public, private, etc.), communication with the public is of primary importance. For success and trust, any organization aims to strengthen the relationship between the organization and the public and try to involve its beneficiaries in the work of the organization. Today online tools make it possible to act publicly and enlarge the audience without a significant expense. Social media is one of the best tools for public relations and publicity. According to our research findings, it is one of the interactive platforms for dissemination of information in Armenia. All departments in Armenia, commercial, financial and political parties, officials and public figures use social media to spread information. One of the most popular social media remains Facebook, which is the most active virtual platform for political and social campaigns in Armenia. Recent international studies, however, show that 80-90% of organizations' communication resources are aimed at disseminating information from top to bottom, which excludes public involvement and feedback⁴. The lack of transparency is a top issue in Armenian political and state bodies. At the same time, it should be stated that the studies testify about changes in the Facebook management strategy over the past year. Not only the number of politicians who have attached importance to their involvement in social media, considering it as a working tool and managing it with a clear strategy but also the content and the format have changed. In particular, live broadcasts have increased, which is a positive trend, as live broadcasting in social media provides real-time dissemination of information and at the same time includes the function of feedback and participation. Bilateral communication, public response to the work done is of vital importance to the existing strategy. In some foreign countries, some digital analysts monitor social networks. UK Department of Health has a team of digital analysts. They do not manage social pages and does not publicize the activities carried out by the ministry but monitors the feedback by examining the number of comments and their nature⁵. This style coincides with the latest academic and professional advice on using the Web 2.0 platform⁶.

Official websites remain purely formal tools, which do not draw public attention. Studies show that 90% of the departments periodically update their websites, install new information. The Government of the Republic of Armenia places information on the topics discussed at each session and about all the official meetings. However, www.gov.am is mainly used by the mass media, and the public gets information

⁴ **Macnamara, J.** (2016). Organizational listening: The missing essential in public communication. New York, NY: Peter Lang, p. 236.

⁵ **Jim Macnamara** (2017). Creating a “Democracy for everyone”, UK, Australia, p. 31.

⁶ **Boler, M.** (Ed.). (2008). Digital media and democracy: Tactics in hard times. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; Macnamara, J. (2014). The 21st-century media (r)evolution: Emergent communication practices. New York, NY: Peter Lang; Siaper, E. (2012). Understanding new media. London, UK and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

mediated through mass media. For comparison, the White House, apart from official articles, periodically broadcasts short video messages that reach the audience without interference. At regular times, the preparatory photos or videos of the White House events, the President's personal photos and contemplations are posted on social media, which attracts the public, creates the illusion of presence and raises a good attitude of the public toward the institute. The UK Prime Minister's institution, (which is known for its conservative views) spends about £ 300 million a year on communication with the public and its engagement, and the official website is managed as a news portal, publishing their materials in a journalistic style⁷. The information on the results of the sessions of the Government of Armenia is posted on the website in the form of one extensive material, which is a good source for mass media but does not draw citizens' attention. The surveys show that the website of the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations is one of the most publicly accessible and available websites among those of the RA State Departments. RA Presidential Institute does not use the most accessible social network- Facebook; the website is managed in a strictly official language. It mainly focuses on Tweets for the external audience, but it should be noticed that these messages addressed to the external audience are also available in RA MFA social networks, particularly on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, which is, according to different studies, conducted at a fairly high level⁸.

Our studies have shown that public relations specialists, particularly press secretaries, do not have briefings, do not comment on the mass media; they are viewed as state figures. And journalists have the impression that contact with the press secretary is already a success. These circumstances cause a negative attitude of mass media and public towards the institution of public relations and state governmental system. Whereas the studies show that, the number of politicians using services of speechwriters has increased. During the sessions of the National Assembly and the Government, as well as at different events they often come up with the well-prepared speeches that attract people's attention, perform their functions of conviction and inspiration, which is viewed as a positive trend. The Spin doctor institute is also successfully used in the higher public administration system. Various types of spin events are carried out: organization of before-spin (preparing the audience's expectations before the event) and after-spin (mitigating or "polishing" feedbacks of the events that have already taken place) events; they are used as tools to detract public attention⁹.

Studies show that in recent years various commercial, financial organizations and government agencies have been taking more serious steps to study public opinion. In particular, commercial organizations carry out various surveys through online tools, and large organizations and political bodies apply sociological surveys. During the last

⁷ **Jim Macnamara** (2017). Creating a "Democracy for everyone", UK, Australia, p. 11:

⁸ Digital Democracy Review 2017, <http://digital.diplomacy.live/ranking-and-rating/>

⁹ **Barseghyan G., Harutyunyan G.**, (2009), Political PR. Its Armenian peculiarities, 129-132 pages.

year, some departments (in particular the Government of Armenia, the Ministry of Defense) have used the "hotline" tool, which got positive feedback from the public.

Public relations specialists target their audience for more productive work and generate messages for each target group. Nowadays, specialists divide the audience according to generation peculiarities, namely, Generation X, Millennial, and Generation Z, which have different worldview, perceptions and ability to use technology. Taking into account the approaches and technologies of the modern generation, during the last year, political parties and alliances have been distinguished by the use of various PR technologies during the pre-election period. This year new technologies have been added to traditional "door to door", "face-to-face" technology and formal speeches during the local visits: campaigns were moved on the roofs, visits were organized in "tie-free" and "question-answer" formats; parties paid more attention to their slogans, used "opinion leaders" to deliver messages to the right target.

Depending on the Constitutional Amendments, some political forces understood that they could not get through "separately" and formed alliances during the local elections. According to our survey findings, the "Way Out" Alliance was the first to succeed as a PR. 80% of the surveyed experts noted that the unification of the others took place later, which affected the further strategy. Some of the parties were rebranded: "Rue of Law" was renamed as "Armenian Renaissance", "Prosperous Armenia" Party took part in the elections as "Tsarukyan" bloc, and the Republican Party of Armenia replaced the old officials with new ones - Karen Karapetyan (Prime Minister of RA), Arpine Hovhannisyan (Minister of Justice), Vigen Sargsyan (Minister of Defence), Armen Amiryan (Minister of Culture) and others. Instead of RPA, "Love Armenia" slogan was more popular during the pre-election campaign, and "Love Yerevan" during the elections of the Mayor of Yerevan and had a positive impression on the public. Conservative RPA has organized a new and up-to-date campaign, taking into consideration the needs and thinking of the younger generation. The campaign was entrusted to Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan, whose image was quite successful and had a positive impression on the public. The "Yelq" (Way Out) bloc introduced live broadcasts on social networks, which allowed to include more users in their list of followers. As a result of the selection of young and organized youth, the newly-formed "Way Out" Alliance received enough votes to have more parliamentarians in the National Assembly, than the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun), which did not make much effort during campaigns, taking into account the approaches of its stable electorate.

The findings of the research have shown one key fact. "Public relations" or most commonly used "PR" still has a negative connotation in Armenia and other Eastern European countries, which does not allow to realize the necessity of creation and management of communications. In the era of new communications technology, the results of each initiative and program are determined by relationships. Public awareness, communication with the public, providing feedback in any situation is a guarantee of confidence towards the state.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. **Avetisyan A.** (2014) «Public Relations in the system of mass communication», YSU Publishing house, Yerevan:
2. **Barseghyan G., Harutyunyan G.**, (2009), Political PR. Its Armenian peculiarities, 129-132 pages.
3. **Betteke Van Ruler; Dejan Verčič**, Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe: A Nation-by-Nation Introduction to Public Relations Theory and Practice. Walter de Gruyter, 2004
4. **Cardwell L. A., Williams S., Pyle A.**, Corporate Public Relations Dynamics: Internal vs External Stakeholders and the Role of the Practitioner, Clemson University, 2017
5. **Macnamara, J.** (2016). Organizational listening: The missing essential in public communication. New York, NY: Peter Lang
6. **Macnamara J.**, Creating a “Democracy for everyone”, UK, Australia, 2017.
7. **Boler, M.** (Ed.). (2008). Digital media and democracy: Tactics in hard times. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press;
8. The 21st-century media (r)evolution: Emergent communication practices. New York, NY: Peter Lang;
9. **Siapera, E.** (2012). Understanding new media. London, UK and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
10. <http://digital.diplomacy.live/ranking-and-rating/>
11. <http://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/publicrelationsdefined/#.VT1TxCHtmko>
12. <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary>
13. www.gov.am

Հոդվածը ներկայացվել է տպագրության 14.01.2020 թ.,
ուղարկվել է գրախոսության 10.04.2020 թ., ընդունվել է տպագրության 17.03.2019 թ.:

316.6

ԱՐՑԱՆԻ ԲՆԱԿՉՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՀՈԳԵԲԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՊԱՇՏՊԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԵԽԱՆԻԶՄՆԵՐԻ ՓՈՐՁԱՔՆՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ

ԱՐԱՅԻԿ ՏԻՐՅԱՆ

Խ. Արովյանի անվան հայկական պետական մանկավարժական
համալսարանի հայցորդ
ara.firyan@mail.ru

Համառոտագիր

Սույն աշխատանքում առանձնացվել են հոգեբանական պաշտպանության հետևյալ բաղադրիչները՝ արտամղումը, իրականության ժխտումը, տեղափոխումը, կոմպենսացիան, ռեակտիվ կազմավորումը, պրոյեկցիան, ռացիոնալիզացիան և ռեգրեսիան: Փորձարարական հետազոտությունը անցկացվել է՝ ապացուցելու համար այն գիտական վարկածը, որ Արցախի բնակչության շրջանում հոգեբանական պաշտպանության մեխանիզմներից առավել արտահայտված են կոմպենսացիան, ռացիոնալիզացիան, պրոյեկցիան և արտամղումը: Էմպիրիկ հետազոտությունն անցկացվել է Ռ. Պլուտչիկի