Anthropocentric Model of Corporate Media Discourse

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Abstract

The article deals with a person as an object of anthropocentric research of corporate media discourse. The researchers identify the structure of the discourse with a person in its center on the example of the print edition of a large Russian manufacturer United Metallurgical Company (OMK, Moscow). The representation of a person (an employee of the enterprise) is propounded within the anthropocentric model: thematization of professional achievements, personal qualities and hobbies; types of media images; visualization elements, language tools, etc. The purpose of authors is to reveal distinctive media images presented on the pages of the corporate print edition. The object of the study is the texts published in the issues of the corporate print edition over the years. The relevance of the research is determined by the importance of a complex study of the anthropocentric model of corporate media discourse as part of reality, reflecting the features of the communicative practices of corporate media of commercial enterprises. The study was based on the traditional method of document analysis, continuous sampling and thematic analysis. Headings, topics, photos, visualization elements and language means of publications were used as units of the analysis. The obtained results allow us to actualize the types of media images within the anthropocentric model, contribute to the study of the specific features of internal communications within a commercial enterprise, allocate a wide range of means of constructing the discourse of a corporate print edition.

Keywords: media image, corporate media discourse, anthropocentric model, thematic analysis.

1. Introduction

The agenda of corporate media is under the influence of various factors, the key ones are not only pragmatic, but also valuable. The selection and structuring of information for publications in corporate media is carried out through its thematization and categorization, contextualization, selection of semiotic means and objects of representation. The latter may include people, technologies, achievements, production indicators, reporting information and others. Decision-making process regarding the information policy of corporate media in general and specific materials is motivated not only by the norms and rules of PR activity, but also by the value-laden ideas of the editorial board and publisher about the significance and importance of a particular model of representation.

Using corporate media makes it possible to represent various models of employees' images (workers, middle management staff, top managers, etc.) cultivated by the company and the company and its activities in general. The emphasis on certain aspects of the company's functioning, as a rule, is also determined by its value system and socio-economic context.

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The variation of axiological models of corporate media discourse from resource-centric to representing a person as the main value of the company indicates its various priorities. In this regard, the content of the corporate media discourse can act as a marker of the axiological attitudes of the company.

Our research focuses on the study of specific media images representing the company's employees as "experienced professionals", "highly qualified specialists", "authoritative leaders", "youth mentors", etc. This may be regarded as a kind of positive "modeling" of employee images for significant audience groups. Using this tool, the company gets the opportunity to influence the consumers of corporate media content and form values necessary for solving corporate tasks. This is also significant for solving the problem of increasing dehumanization of corporate media content.

2. Materials and methods

The study has been carried out in order to identify the main universal models used in the corporate media discourse. The authors analyzed media images in the print edition of a large Russian manufacturer United Metallurgical Company (OMK). The peculiarities of the employees' representation in the anthropocentric model on the example of the newspaper *Territory of OMK* are considered.

The newspaper *Territory of OMK* encompasses all manufacturing sites of the enterprise (Vyksa, Chelyabinsk, Chousov, Blagoveshchensk, Almetyevsk, Belgorod, Moscow). This newspaper is an example of a high-quality corporate edition. It is quite typical for such a category of corporate media in terms of rubrication, subject matter and a number of other significant parameters. *Territory of OMK* was published weekly from 2015 to 2019. From the year 2020 to the present day it is published biweekly. In the spring of 2021, the editorial office of the corporate media of the United Metallurgical Company was selected the best in Russia in three nominations.

The contest *The Best Corporate Media in Russia – 2021* received more than 100 applications from representatives of various industries: metallurgy, energy, construction, trade, financial sector, etc. The editorial office of OMK received three awards in the nominations that are considered to be the most important. *The Best Corporate Newspaper for Employees* and *The Best Corporate Magazine for Employees* were recognized *OMK Territory* and *OMK Team*. The editor-in-chief of these issues received the diploma in the nomination *The Best Eeditor of Corporate Media*. It should be noted that OMK turned out to be one of the few companies represented at the competition that publish corporate media independently, without resorting to the services of publishing houses and experts.

The editorial office believes that this approach allows maintaining a high level of information products (from texts to design). In terms of design, it is necessary to note the long-term strict adherence to the "passports" of key headings – this element of editorial policy as a significant impact on the corporate media discourse as a whole.

The authors analyzed 258 issues of the newspaper *Territory of OMK* since its establishment (September 2015) to the present day (December 2021). The study was based on the traditional method of document analysis, continuous sampling and thematic analysis. Headings, topics, photos, visualization elements and language means of publications were used as units of the analysis.

3. Discussion

The study of anthropocentric model of corporate media discourse requires the clarification of the basic terms and notions. As Ch. Galloway defines it, "corporate media refers to all forms of media (print, broadcast, online), both internally and externally focused, owned and operated by a corporation" (Galloway, 2018: 1). N. Gvozdannya designates the corporate media discourse as "a unique phenomenon which unites personal appeal to readers, industry information, brand promotion, company's image development, in doing so,nit acts as an integral part of the program of building employees' loyalty to the company" (Gvozdannya, 2015: 214).

This discourse is implemented by various types of texts of diverse subjects. The resulting media image is interpreted by a number of researchers as "the image of the social world formed by the media" (Bogdan, 2007), "the form of the existence of mass consciousness in media communication" (Galinskaya, 2013). E. Malysheva and N. Gridnev understand the media image as "the fragment of the information (media) picture of the world represented in media texts; relatively stable, continuously developing virtual model of an object/phenomenon of reality, constructed by

the media, which both reflects and reframes and/or forms the knowledge and ideas of the addressee" (Malysheva, Gridnev, 2016). We take this definition as a basic one.

Corporate media content is traditionally formed taking into account their communication and production functionality (Denner et al., 2021; Jacobs, 2018; Lapina, 2004; Macnamara, 2021; Murzin, 2005; Oltarzhevsky, 2019; Romashova, 2015). A number of researchers interpret them as a tool that allows to achieve constant reconstruction of the company's information and news agenda, contributing to the development of constructive communication between employees, supporting corporate culture and increasing the sense of loyalty to the company on the part of its employees (Allison, 2019; Bracker et al., 2017; Heller, Rowlinson, 2019; Volkova, 2018). Corporate media is often considered as a marketing tool (Nariniani, 2017; Oltarzhevsky, 2013) and a sociomaterial resource (Hoof, Boell, 2019).

However, regardless of the theoretical interpretation of the applied tasks of corporate media, the authors adhere to a consensus regarding their general function. Corporate media is one of the main subjects of semantic and value-forming action in the system of internal communications of a commercial enterprise (Bridges, 2018; Ertem-Eray, 2021). Their topics are often limited by the scope of corporate information and corporate culture norms.

At the same time, the editors of corporate media face the task of an objective and holistic representation of reality. At the discursive level, this task is solved by creating a positive image of the enterprise and a number of positive media images of employees. In doing so, the created texts, as T.G. Dobrosklonskaya claims, acquire new connotations due to the properties of a particular mass media. The press in particular combines verbal with graphic and illustrative parts of the text (Dobrosklonskaya, 2014: 38), however we should admit that almost all the corporate/ organizational media are facing systemic transformations due to the digital challenges (Clegg et al., 2019), which also may influence the normative and ethic system of corporate media discourse.

Within the context of present-day realities, the recipient of corporate media texts is not an individual, but social groups with "similar social and cultural characteristics, and the created media picture is mainly designed to determine the behavior of such groups, form system of values, etc." (Volodina, 2011).

Barchiesi and La Bella define "five independent value orientations: customer/user; employees; economic and financial growth; excellence and social responsibility" (Barchiesi, la Bella, 2014: 161). In the framework of our study, the axiological aspect of human-centred discourse is very significant regarding the previously described transformations of value models of a corporate print edition in terms of economic paradigm of organization's internal communication shift (Semashkina, 2020).

4. Results

The analysis showed that among the most important, key themes that help create a positive image of the company and its employees, there are three central topics:

1) news about goods production, progress and achievements (modernization of existing production facilities, implementation of new technologies and innovations, development of new types of products, etc.);

2) development prospects (market situation analysis, geographical expansion of product delivery mechanisms, important personnel changes in the company's management, business partnerships consolidation, etc.);

3) feedback (charity projects in the regions where the company operates, healthy lifestyle popularization, sports promotions, employees' hobbies, etc.).

In doing so, employees' positive image-making process is based on number of universal models.

Within the framework of our research, we analyze the groups of texts that actualize the types of images of OMK employees as:

1) *"professional"* (the hero of the article, a representative of a certain profession and a master of his craft);

2) *"expert"* (an authoritative specialist in his field or a top manager expressing an experienced judgment on topical strategic issues of the company's development);

3) *"enthusiast"* (volunteers, travelers, people with interesting hobbies; the focus is on personal qualities and hobbies of employees).

The examples of the implementation of each of these models are listed below. The media image of a "professional" is created by a set of appropriate headings, genres, themes, subject matter and means of expression (linguistic and visual), the appropriate style of the material presentation.

Traditional headings: *Essay. Personal, Direct speech. Personal,* as well as *Direct speech. Career* (since 2018). Texts are mainly written in the artistic and journalistic genre (essay, interview), represent the hero of the publication as a qualified specialist with good theoretical and practical skills, devoted to his profession.

The focus is on professional achievements and significant contribution to the development of the company, leadership qualities of the employee. The interview, among the constantly asked ones, contains questions about the beginning of the working career and the peculiar properties of mastering the profession *("How did you begin the working career?", "Was it difficult to master the profession of a turner?"),* the material usually ends with one or two questions about family life or hobbies *("Who supports you?", "Do you manage to combine work with family life?", "And how do you manage to replenish personal energy resources?").* At the same time, the authors of newspaper publications do not always manage to avoid specific abbreviations, bureaucratic words or common journalistic stock phrases. Business qualities and industrial achievements are described in detail, but the character and personal qualities of the hero of the publication are often presented schematically and stereotypically.

The form of material presentation is strictly regulated: it occupies the entire A3 format page, and each heading has its own "passport" with the exact list of the main (number of lines, photos) and variable elements (employee's file indicating the stages The mandatory element is a large, high-quality full-face portrait photo taken at the manufacturing area. Headlines *Essay. Personal* and *Direct speech. Personal* are usually impersonalized, but the lead necessarily contains the exact position and place of work (workshop, site, indication of the geographical affiliation of this OMK division). A quote is also a mandatory element.

A title-quote is traditionally used in the category *Direct speech. Career.* The mandatory elements, in addition to the photo and the head manager comment, are information about the education of the hero of the publication and a reference describing the main stages of his career (position, the essence of the work, achievements, required qualities, etc.). Over the period analyzed, this model of media image "professional" in the heading *Essay. Personal* is presented in 163 issues of the corporate edition, under the heading *Direct speech. Career* – in 28 issues, under the heading *Direct speech. Personal* – in 87, which is, respectively 62.7 %, 10.8 % and 33.5 % in percentage terms.

A typical textual representation of this media image is presented in the following example.

Example 1. OMK Territory, No. 6 (239), March 26, 2021.
Category: Essay. Personal.
Heading: A lead worker from the glorious ferroalloy.
Lead: Anton Bobylev, master of the ferroalloy shop of the Chusovsky Metallurgical Plant, leads the team that was proudly designated the best.
Quote: "From the point of view of outside observer, it seems that all alloys are the same. We know that none of them repeats. It's a complicated but very interesting process."
Colleagues' comments: "Has a good command of ferrovanadium smelting methods – and successfully teaches them to colleagues. He is demanding and fair to the members of the brigade. He has authority with the labour collective. He responsibly fulfils the duties, reacts correctly to comments. He is a master of his craft."

It should be noted that this model often emphasizes the creative component of the chosen profession, which at first glance is not obvious, as can be observed in the following fragments of the publications.

Example 2. OMK Territory, No. 10 (243), May 21, 2021.
Category: Direct speech. Personal.
Heading: Strong character, creative nature.
Lead: Galina Ashieva, the turner of the tool shop of the OMK Blagoveshchensk plant, became an example for many colleagues from the first working days.
Quote: "Maybe the profession of a turner is physically difficult, but creative. Processing every detail is like creating a work of art."
A colleague's comment: "Galina Petrovna gave a good account of herself as an initiative, responsible, reliable and competent specialist, able to perform the assigned task on time and be

responsible for the results of her work. She produces all kinds of test samples with high quality. She performs production tasks one hundred percent without reject".

Example 3. OMK Territory, No. 21 (132), June 15, 2018.
Category: Direct speech. Career.
Heading: The head of the warehouse of the Chusovsky Metallurgical Plant, Alexander Kilunin: "There must be courage and excitement from work."
Manager's comment: "The first quality of Alexander Kilunin that allows him to lead the department successfully is perfectionism. He constantly monitors order and discipline in his department. His second quality is the desire to consider each case and essence of the problem carefully. It became evident when he was working in the price control department. And the third thing is the ability to create a team and lead people".

The special heading "Direct speech. Actual" forms the media image of the "expert". It is a kind of "platform" for the speeches of OMK top managers on the most significant issues of the strategic development of the enterprise. There is no strict periodicity here – materials are published in case of momentous newsbreak. It occupies A3 format, the genre is an analytical interview, less often - a conversation with the head manager. Mandatory elements (in accordance with the "passport" of the heading) are a large, high–quality full–face portrait photo, a quote from the speaker; variable background information, figures and facts on the topic of publication.

The focus is on structural changes in the company and new personnel appointments, plans to optimize the company's activities and development prospects. The most frequently asked questions are about cost reduction and changes in the employee compensation fund, anti-crisis management ("How will the operational management of the enterprise in Chelyabinsk be carried out?", "Will centralized functions meet the needs of all OMK enterprises?", "Will the wage fund be reduced?"). The authors of such materials are usually journalists of the head (Moscow) editorial office, analytical data are provided by all territorial representations of OMK. The headings are usually personalized (the title is a quote), the position of the expert is mandatory.

The style of presentation is businesslike, the emphasis is on the authority of the speaker's figure, his competence, the scale of strategic thinking and his openness to dialogue with the company's employees. After the fact (in the next issue of the corporate edition), the main theses from the speech, links to the full video version of the interview on the corporate portal and the exact number of participants in the meeting are often published.

Over the period analyzed, this model of media image "expert" in the heading "Direct speech. Actual" is presented in 74 issues of the corporate newspaper *OMK Territory*. It is 28.5 % in percentage terms. The distinctive structural and linguistic elements demonstrating this model are presented in the examples below.

Example 4. OMK Territory, No. 5 (20), February 12, 2016.
Heading: Natalia Eremina, Deputy Chairman of the United Metallurgical Company Board: "We have to reduce management costs by 20 percent."
Quote: "We understand that the current crisis will be protracted, so it is impossible to maintain the stability of the company without reducing costs along the entire chain."

Example 5. OMK Territory, No. 5 (238), March 12, 2021.
Heading: General Director of the United Metallurgical Company Serey Toropov: "We need to close off the redundant things."
Quote: "We have to remove unclaimed services, duplication of functions, unnecessary control, bureaucracy. Remove a few extra levels of management."

Example 6. OMK Territory, No. 12 (245), June 18, 2021.
Heading: Alexander Vashchenko, Managing Director of the Belgorod and Chelyabinsk plants of the United Metallurgical Company: "The situation is very difficult."
Quote: "We arrived in Chelyabinsk with a team of managers from Belgorod to sort everything out in detail, load the plant with orders, build production and sales efficiently, remove all unnecessary expenses – and in a year bring the enterprise to break-even operation, and then to profit."

Personal qualities and creative hobbies of employees are reflected in the media image *"enthusiast"*. Its construction is carried out through the traditional headings *Hobby* (since 2016), *Essay. Volunteer* and *Journey* (both headings appeared in 2018). The texts are presented in the genres of essay, portrait interview, travel report. The focus is on personal achievements, sports and creative hobbies, personal or family life, social activities in spare time. The style of presentation is

more informal, emotional, there are no bureaucratic words, complex syntactic constructions. The photos are taken close-up. They are mostly genre, dynamic, often illustrating the hobbies of the hero of the publication, or group photos – with family members, friends, and fellow volunteers.

The form of material presentation in each category is clearly regulated: it occupies the entire page of A3 format, the place of work and the position of the hero of the publication are mentioned. The variable elements in the category *Essay. Volunteer* are "volunteer questionnaire", "expert comment" and "project passport", indicating the essence of the volunteer initiative, beneficiaries, and directions for further development. The mandatory elements of the *Hobby* category are a dictionary of specialized terms (3-5 words; "pigeon breeder dictionary", "basketball player dictionary", "beekeeper dictionary"), a variable historical reference, additional small photos of equipment items or archival photographs on the topic of publication.

The elements of the heading *Travel* are the details of the trip, photos of the hero of the publication in a certain geolocation, as well as route details and Top 5 attractions (with photos). Each heading usually ends with recommendations for employees: how to start practicing vocals, how to choose equipment for a particular sport, what souvenirs to bring from a trip, etc

The title is usually playful: *Four horseshoes for luck* (about the hobby of equestrian sports), *Castles in the air turn into sand ones* (about a volunteer project to improve playgrounds), *If you like to ride, do it* (about winter skiing on the ski slopes of the Southern Urals).

Over the period analyzed, the media image "enthusiast" in this model is presented in 62 issues of the corporate newspaper in the category *Hobby*, in 31 issues in the category *Essay. Volunteer*, in 37 issues in the category *Travel*. This is, respectively 23.8 %, 11.9 % and 14.2 % in percentage terms.

Example 7. OMK Territory, No. 33 (48), September 9, 2016.
Category: Hobby. Potter trade.
Heading: In animal style.
Lead: Ceramic figurines created by Vladislav Bogdanov, a charge maker at the ChMZ ferroalloy workshop, are kept in the collections of foreigners and the governor of the Perm Region.
Potter's Dictionary: A muffle kiln is a heating device, the main feature of which is the presence of a muffle – a special chamber where the product is placed to protect it from contact with fuel and its combustion products.

Example 8. OMK Territory, No. 42 (153), November 9, 2018.
Category: Essay. Volunteer.
Heading: Up to sixteen and much older.
Lead: Tatiana Zakharova, a technician for reserve parts of the VMZ railway workshop, gets along well with children and elderly people.
Volunteer questionnaire: Zakharova Tatiana Ivanovna; place of work – railway workshop of the VMZ transport logistics directorate, technician for reserve parts; start of volunteer activity – 2014; implemented projects: "Attention, children!", "There are no other people's children".
Passport of the project There are no other people's children. The essence of the project: adaptation of children from orphanages and correctional boarding schools, children with disabilities, children from low-income families and risk groups. The volunteers were trained by the specialists, they not only communicated with the wards themselves, but also taught others how to deal with children from these categories.
Beneficiaries: students of the social rehabilitation center for minors "Pelican" in Vyksa, as well as volunteers who want to help children. *Project cost:* 250 thousand rubles. *Source of funding:* grant of "OMK-Partnership" (competition of social and charitable projects). *Further development of the project:* a team of mentors develops and implements individual and collective projects to help children in difficult life situations.
Expert's comment: "We have been cooperating with the Council of Young Metallurgists for several years... Tatiana Zakharova is one of those people who is always eager to help others. She is ready to give care and warmth, can organize people for a holiday or an action. On behalf of all the staff and residents of the "House of Mercy", I want to thank her for her kind, understanding and open heart."

Example 9. OMK Territory, No. 18 (177), May 17, 2019.
Category: Travel. Montenegro.
Heading: At the foot of the Black Mountain.

Lead: Pavel Belov, a leading automation engineer at VMZ-Techno, told how the company helped him take his family to the Adriatic coast.

Route: Vyksa – Moscow (bus: 362 km, 6 hours), Moscow - Tivat (plane: 2012 km, 3 hours 10 minutes), Tivat - Podgorica - Petrovac (bus: 87 km, 45 minutes).

5. Conclusion

The representation of a person within the anthropocentric model is based on the thematization of his business, as well as personal qualities and hobbies; accompanied by the usage of a close-up full-face photo of the publication's hero; manifested by specific stylistic features and linguistic means. Topics are always clearly actualized; they are easy to identify. Each topic embodies real objects and subjects, significant phenomena of the current activity of the enterprise.

Linguistic expressive methods are used along with graphic, visual techniques: memorable and original visual images, font variation, the presence of headings about people of labor in each issue and the standardized arrangement of materials on the page.

The texts are characterized by indices of social status, representing the hero of the material as a member of an institutional community belonging to a certain profession, occupying a certain hierarchical position, expressing a competent expert opinion.

It is characteristic that photographs and essays about the best employees of the enterprise are present in each issue of the corporate edition, often (in different headings) 2-3 similar materials in the issue. This fact, in our opinion, indicates the anthropocentricity of the corporate media discourse. The publications are usually devoted to the representation of employees as professionals, hardworking and positive people.

It is logical to assume that the editorial office of the corporate newspaper *Territory of OMK* is carrying out systematic work to create stable media images of employees of the enterprise, indirectly contributing to strengthening the prestige of the enterprise in the eyes of the readership of the corporate print edition.

It can be stated that cultivated models are a means of forming identification guidelines and value meanings for the company's employees. The impact effect is magnified many times due to the fact that the anthropocentric model of corporate media discourse is being developed simultaneously at several levels: at the level of language, at the level of graphic visualization, at the level of axiological differentiation of corporate media content.

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