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Ethical challenges of political advertising

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The article examines the violation of ethical standards as a negative aspect of the election campaign. The relevance of the study is justified by the importance of complying with ethical norms in political advertising to ensure a fair election process. The necessity of research is also caused by the insufficient study of ethical violations in political advertising aspects and consequences. The main goal of the article is to define the types of ethical violations in political advertising as well as their indications.

The research methodology is based on a combination of general scientific approaches to the analysis of social and communication phenomena. The analytical-synthetic method was used to analyze political advertising as a social communication phenomenon, which made it possible to determine the principles and approaches to the selection, analysis, and generalization of theoretical research material. The application of the content analysis method made it possible to identify the key characteristics of the content of political advertising in the media.

The researcher emphasizes the legislative and ethical basis for controlling the distribution of political advertising. The lack of legal recognition of ethical norms in journalism leads to various violations.

The article examines the types of violations of ethical norms during the creation and distribution of political advertising in Ukraine. In particular, it is about hidden political advertising. The use of information materials that positively reflect the activities of civil servants and letters to editors in support of politicians has been studied. The use of literary works with political connotations for advertising purposes has been analyzed. Cases of false starts, when pre-election commercials with a positive tone become political advertisements, have also been considered. Examples of anti-advertising as a method of discrediting opponents have been described. Violations of ethical norms during election campaigns, such as low-quality campaigning and “black PR”, have been analyzed in detail.

Keywords: *hidden political advertising, black PR, mass media, pre-election campaign, ethical norms of political advertisement, journalistic standards.*

ЕТИЧНІ ВИКЛИКИ ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ РЕКЛАМИ

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У статті досліджено порушення етичних стандартів як негативного аспекту в передвиборчій кампанії. Актуальність розвідки зумовлена важливістю дотримання етичних норм у політичній рекламі для забезпечення чесного виборчого процесу. Потреба в дослідженні також викликана недостатнім вивченням проблем етичних порушень у політичній рекламі та їхніх наслідків. Основною метою статті є виокремлення різновидів етичних порушень у політичній рекламі та визначенні їхніх ознак.

Методологія дослідження базується на поєднанні загальнонаукових підходів до аналізу соціально-комунікаційних явищ. Для аналізу політичної реклами як соціально-комунікаційного феномена було використано аналітико-синтетичний метод, що дозволив визначити принципи та підходи до відбору, аналізу та узагальнення теоретичного матеріалу дослідження. Застосування методу контент-аналізу дозволило виділити головні характеристики змістового наповнення політичної реклами в медіа.

Дослідниця робить наголос на законодавчій та етичній базі контролю поширення політичної реклами. Відсутність юридичного визнання етичних норм у журналістиці призводить до різноманітних порушень.

Стаття розглядає різновиди порушення етичних норм під час створення та поширення політичної реклами в Україні, зокрема прихованої політичної реклами. Досліджено використання інформаційних матеріалів, що позитивно відображають діяльність держслужбовців, та листів до редакцій на підтримку політиків. Проаналізовано використання з рекламною метою літературних творів із політичною конотацією. Розглянуто випадки фальстарту, коли передвиборчі ролики з позитивним відтінком стають політичною рекламою. Описано приклади антиреклами як методу дискредитації опонентів. Детально проаналізовано порушення етичних норм під час виборчих кампаній, зокрема недоброякісну агітацію та «чорний піар».

Ключові слова: прихована політична реклама, чорний піар, мас-медіа, передвиборча кампанія, етичні норми політичної реклами, журналістські стандарти.

The relevance of the problem

Since Ukraine's independence, political advertising has gone from its inception to the active development phase. If, at the end of the twentieth century, this type of political communication with voters only developed, then at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the development of technologies and social networks, political advertising began to actively change and improve. The legislative framework, which aimed to control the dissemination of political advertising and the campaigning process, has been changing along with it. However, considering political advertising as a factor in the social communication process, it is worth focusing not only on legislative aspects but also on ethical ones. Compliance with ethical standards when creating and distributing political advertising is one of the crucial principles of the legal electoral process. However, in Ukraine, very often, there is a violation of ethical standards regarding the creation and distribution of political advertising and campaigning.

The problem statement

In Ukraine, compliance with journalistic standards is based on the "Ethical Code of the Ukrainian Journalist". However, it should be noted that, unlike laws, ethical norms are not legally recognized. Compliance with ethical norms is only a moral component of journalists since media workers have no criminal or administrative liability for violating journalistic standards.

The state of problem studying

Ukrainian and foreign experts studied ethical norms and journalistic standards in political advertising. O. Kuznetsova (1998, 2007), in her works "Professional Ethics of Journalists" and "Journalistic Ethics and Etiquette" examines the ethical norms of political advertising in mass media. She emphasizes on the prohibitive and obligatory norms of political advertising and highlights ethical requirements for television and radio advertising. Professor O. Kuznetsova was one of the first scientists who began to study hidden advertising. However, she focused more attention on commercial jeansa (hidden political advertisement).

Among foreign researchers, the importance of the ethical norms of journalism functioning during election campaigns was studied by E. Modzelewski (2006), who, in the work "Ethics and Politics", wrote about the importance of journalists' responsibility to society. In the works of W. Cwalina and A. Falkowski (2006) "Political Marketing" as well as in R. Wiszniowski and A. Kasińska-Metryka's (2012) "Political Marketing" black PR is described as one of the unethical elements of the election campaign. Ethical norms in journalism were also studied by E. Pietrzyk-Zieniewicz (2004) — "The Political Scene and Media", J. Pleszczyński (2015) — "Ethics of Journalists and Journalism".

Unresolved issues. However, the topic of identifying the signs of inappropriate political advertising, which violates ethical standards of journalism and leads to a destructive impact on society and, probably, to the wrong choice in the election, remains insufficiently studied.

The research tasks are: to define the main types of ethical violations in political advertising and identify their indications.

The main material

During pre-election campaigns, journalists do not always comply with high professional standards, which leads to the appearance of specially commissioned materials in the media, the so-called hidden political agitation (advertising), i.e., political “jeansa” and/or anti-advertising. Professor O. Kuznetsova (2007) identifies six ethical principles of advertising in the media (p. 139). We believe that three of these principles can be applied to political advertising: the principle of identification, the principle of good faith, and the principle of honesty.

The principle of identification requires that advertisements must be clearly marked before and after their coverage on radio and television or indicated with the headings “Advertising” and “As an advertisement” when advertising is placed in print media or on the Internet. The absence of such marks is considered as the distribution of hidden political advertising. For the first time, this principle of political advertising dissemination was applied in 1999 in the newspaper “Fakty”. It was the year that the publication published almost the entire autobiographical book of Leonid Kuchma on the eve before the elections. “Fakty managed to get an “in progress” version of Leonid Kuchma’s future book, which deals not only with the results of the past but also with the plans for the future. There was also a frank, sincere, sometimes even harsh analysis of his own miscalculations and mistakes. Such is Kuchma” (Ft, 1999, 10bcent.). Excerpts from the future book were presented as exclusive material and an extraordinary find for publication. However, in our opinion, this material is a perfect example of hidden advertising. After all, at that time, all Ukrainian publications of a socio-political nature did not print any other books that were soon to be published. This way of presenting information about the future book is inherent only in specialized literary publications.

Informational materials, which in a praising form provide information about the ordinary working days of civil servants or their work trips, can be considered as another method of spreading hidden political advertising. For the first time, such materials were published about the candidate for the post of President of Ukraine L. Kuchma, in the newspaper “Fakty” under the headings “Work trips”, “State problems”, “First-hand”, etc. (FT, 1999, June 1–15 November), which refers to his work as a statesman. Journalists present positive facts from the frequent working days of the President of Ukraine.

During the next elections, there was a similar situation. Positive facts about the common working days of the Prime Minister of Ukraine, presidential candidate V. Yanukovich, were published by the newspaper "Moloda Halychyna" — "Viktor Yanukovich obliged the authorities to reach every victim" ("Viktor Yanukovich zoboviazav", 2004), "Viktor Yanukovich: pensions will be raised again from August 1" (MH, 2004, July 2). Also, "Moloda Halychyna" has several publications about the summer of 2004, which became a real test for the population of the Lviv region. The natural disaster that covered the Lviv region was another reason to show the care of the then Prime Minister. "Viktor Yanukovich obliged the authorities to reach every victim. The natural disaster in the Lviv region resonated with pain throughout Ukraine. The Prime Minister began to control the situation the minute he received messages" ("Viktor Yanukovich zoboviazav", 2004). For greater emotionality, the material also used a photo in which V. Yanukovich hugs an elderly woman. Another example was in the "Topical-interview" section: "Viktor Yanukovich: Every person is responsible before the law and the Constitution" ("Viktor Yanukovich: "Kozhna liudyna", 2004). For a more positive effect, the following sections were used: caring for people (MG, 2004, September 23), caring for the future (MG, 2004, September 30), tax progress (MG, 2004, October 14), helping people (MG, 2004, Oct. 26.), etc. We consider such materials as hidden advertising. In addition, we consider it an act of abusing administrative resources and the use of the situation in favor of the politician.

The publication of lines from letters to the editor in the "Silski Visti" newspaper is another type of hidden political advertising. In their letters, the authors express support for Oleksandr Moroz, using epithets that inspire confidence in the politician: "We, ordinary peasants, consider O. Moroz an honest and frank person, devoted to his homeland", "he has a bright mind, honesty, decency, nobility, and sincerely roots for his Ukraine-mother..." ("Riadky z lystiv", 1999). The same letters of support were published in the newspaper "Moloda Halychyna" in support of V. Yanukovich: "We understood what feature Viktor Yanukovich has — he does not make unrealizable promises. He can quickly and promptly resolve issues. His belief that we will soon be able to overcome difficulties, as well as his optimism, are transmitted to people" ("Lysty pidtrymky", 2004).

During 2006–2007, hidden political advertising, as a phenomenon, also appeared in literature. Ukrainian printed publications, such as Yurii Rohoza's books "To Kill Yuliia", Volodymyr Pishko "You-Yuliia: Circler of Sonnets", Maria Matios' "Mr. and Mrs. Yu-Ko in the Land of Ukrainians" and Andriy Kokotiukha "Yurii Lutsenko. Field Commander", contain elements of political advertising. They are present both in the texts and in the visual design of the covers. Although literature primarily serves an aesthetic and educational purpose, in this case, it functions as political advertising. And

since we do not have a clear identification, we can interpret the spread of such information as political jeans.

During the 2010 elections, in addition to hidden advertising, a phenomenon such as a false start appeared. Long before the beginning of the election campaign, commercials appeared on television that could not be marked as political advertising or campaigning. Several videos talked about the mysterious "SHE" that claimed to work! Later, with the beginning of the official election campaign, the continuation of these advertising videos appeared on the screens, which turned into political advertising. At that point, the advertisement directly indicated: "She works! She is Ukraine. Yuliia Tymoshenko". At the same time, Viktor Yanukovich's team developed promotional material that was posted even on the day of silence under the slogan "Ukraine for people!"

In 2019, the candidates also started political advertising long before the official start of the pre-election campaign. Officially, the campaign began in January 2019, but promotional materials appeared much earlier. On many boards in Ukrainian cities, there were slogans like "New course" by Yuliia Tymoshenko, "President is a servant of the people", "Offensive 2019" and others. Formally, this did not violate the Law, but in fact, it was already the beginning of political competition.

Another type of poor-quality political advertising that violates ethical principles is anti-advertising.

It appeared almost simultaneously with the political jeans. Anti-advertising is a violation of the principle of good faith because, according to ethical norms, political advertising should not violate fair competition principles by pointing out other people shortcomings, praising themselves, or comparing. It is also the decency principle violation, the main criterion of which is not to humiliate honor, dignity, and competitors' business reputation.

Analyzing 1999 agitation materials, elements of anti-advertising against Leonid Kuchma can be seen. One of the agitations in style resembles an acrostic poem. From the words that characterize the negative phenomena in society: crisis, poverty, bureaucracy, mafia, oligarchy, corruption, racketeering, immorality, terrorism, and intrigue, the word KUCHMOCRACY can be assembled in Ukrainian. The campaign depicts Leonid Kuchma with a whip over a herd of sheep and the signature "All to the elections!!", symbolizing Ukrainian people who are being driven to the polls. Another agitation presents Ukrainian society in a negative light. Leonid Kuchma claims that the Ukrainian population is extremely gullible, and if the electorate is persuaded correctly, it will "step on a rake" for the second time. With this message, the campaign creators tried to convey to the audience that the first term of L. Kuchma's presidency was unsuccessful, and voters chose the wrong one.

In the 2010 presidential election campaign, presidential candidates also actively used anti-advertising. A striking example of anti-advertising was

commercials that were broadcasted before the elections on the all-Ukrainian channels 1+1 and Inter.

During the pre-election period, all Ukrainian TV channels aired Yuliia Tymoshenko's political party campaign commercial "She Works". In the video, Yuliia Tymoshenko's video alternates with a video, in which the then-prime minister visits factories and enterprises where he communicates with people. "Every day until late at night, I work because I know that every minute is for the sake of people, the sake of Ukraine. I know that millions of people work every day too, because they understand that their work is needed more than ever. Every minute our country melts metal, sows bread, heals the sick, creates art, teaches, and educates children. This is it, our best country. She works, she is Ukraine" (Tymoshenko, 2009).

As an anti-advertisement of the Yuliia Tymoshenko political party "BYuT", a commercial of the Party of Regions was created. It should be noted that the advertising product never explicitly mentioned the name of Yuliia Tymoshenko or the party name. However, the audience can easily hold an associative series since before that, a commercial for Yuliia Tymoshenko's party "She Works" was released on TV screens.

The video was built according to the scheme: photos that alternate with text and synchronous voice acting of the text. Photos depict the sad faces of elderly people (pensioners — auth.), and miners. The video sequence is made in black and white, which adds to the oppression. The sequence of the text is: "Has it become easier for you to live? She wants you to believe it. Has your salary increased? Have products become cheaper? Has Ukraine emerged from the crisis? She believes that everything is already in order in Ukraine. She feeds the people with promises that will never be fulfilled. Maybe she lives in one country, and we live in another. If she works like that, maybe it would be better for her to rest" (*Politychna reklama "Partii rehioniv"*, 2010).

In contrast to the political anti-advertising of the Party of Regions, the political party BYuT created a commercial that also did not mention the name and surname of Viktor Yanukovich, a direct competitor in the presidential elections in 2010, but, as in the previous video, the audience could easily conduct an associative series. After all, it was in this video that a fact from Viktor Yanukovich's biography was used — his property in Mezhyhirya. The commercial features Yuliia Tymoshenko's voice: "Think! Ukraine is facing a choice. You choose the future, your future. You choose: Ukraine will be energy independent, or he will hand over the pipe and put you on the gas needle. You choose: the land will be yours, or he will steal it as Mezhyhiria. You choose: your dreams of freedom and a decent life will be realized, or he will bury them. Think about what future you want, think about Ukraine, think about yourself. Think! Protect Ukraine!" (*Politychna reklama politychnoho*, 2010).

During the pre-election campaign to the Verkhovna Rada in 2015, IMI (Institute of Mass Information) registered numerous violations and cases of hidden political advertising in mass media. Besides, it was at this time that the first manifestations of the so-called “black PR” became visible. Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klychko and Lviv Mayor Andrii Sadovyi suffered from this technology the most.

Black PR, as one of the methods of discrediting a political rival acquires its active development at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The origin of this phenomenon in political communication occurs, in our opinion, during the period of active distribution of anti-advertising and is its more aggressive form. However, some Ukrainian researchers, Tetiana Liapina (2001) in particular, consider black PR to be a “local CIS invention” (p. 74). We do not agree with this statement because the phenomenon of black PR in politics is discussed in the studies of Polish researchers Robert Wiśniewski and Agnieszka Kasinska-Metrica (2012), who consider it one of the unethical elements of the pre-election campaign, as well as in the study of Ukrainian researcher Kateryna Kyrychenko (2010).

Black PR, like anti-advertising, violates the ethical principles of decency and fair faith. These are commissioned materials that are created to discredit a competitor and form a negative opinion about him in the audience. As a result, there is a downgrade in ratings. An example of black PR in the Ukrainian media space is the campaign launched in 2016 against Andrii Sadovyi.

Andrii Sadovyi has been the permanent mayor of Lviv since 2006. His ratings have always been high. In the election of the mayor of Lviv, Andrii Sadovyi's competitors had practically no chance since Lviv residents saw only A. Sadovyi in this position. “Sadovyi's competitors for this position are usually seriously behind him, in terms of the number of votes. In 2010, more than 120,000 citizens voted for him, and half as many voted for his competitor from the Party of Regions. In 2015, he received almost 141,000 votes, and the candidate from Svoboda received just over 85,000” (Belovolchenko, 2019).

In 2012, the mayor of Lviv created the Samopomich political association. Since that time, A. Sadovyi is known not only in Lviv but throughout Ukraine. Lviv residents are envied because they have a European progressive mayor. A. Sadovyi's rating is growing not only in Lviv but also in Ukraine as a whole. Some political scientists considered the mayor of Lviv a real contender for the presidency.

However, in the summer of 2016, there was a fire at the Hrybovytskyi landfill because, for a long time, the authorities ignored the problem of storage and processing of garbage. Journalists called the tragedy the “Garbage crisis”. In Lviv and all Ukrainian media, this topic became top in the news feed — “Tragedy in Hrybovychi” (zaxid.net), “Tragedy in

Hrybovychi” (Lviv portal), “Rescuers who died at the landfill in Hrybovychi were honored in Lviv region” (Tvoie misto), “Tragedy at the Hrybovychi landfill” (Tvoie misto), “Block of garbage claimed the lives of 4 people” (Gazeta.ua) etc. Mayor Andriy Sadovyi was blamed for the tragedy on the World Wide Web: “The public did not have to look for the culprit for a long time — Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadovyi was de facto named responsible for the tragedy. First, he disappeared from the information space altogether, and then, threw all his forces in his defense. Until now, Andrii Sadovyi is convinced that unknown arsonists are to blame for the tragedy. However, if you look into the backstory of the tragedy, perhaps he should not completely wash his hands off. Just a few facts about why the mayor of Lviv is personally responsible for what happened in Hrybovychi” (Yankovska, 2016). This information had a rather negative impact on the image of the Lviv mayor. His ratings began to fall rapidly — and at the end of 2016, the mayor did not receive even three points. “According to opinion polls, Andriy Sadovyi has little chance of winning in the 2019 elections — his rating fluctuates at 2%. Although a few years ago, he was called one of the real contenders for the presidency” (Belovolchenko, 2019). In political circles, they began to talk about the political confrontation between Petro Poroshenko’s party and Samopomich. Black PR, which was supported in the media for almost two years, significantly lowered A. Sadovyi’s ratings on an all-Ukrainian scale.

After analyzing the materials that we consider to be political “jeansa”, we propose to distinguish the following features of hidden political advertising:

- unmarked materials of political advertising;
- journalistic materials that have an informational occasion but cover information with unreasonably positive one-sidedness in favor of some politician;
- materials from public events praising a single politician;
- letters of praise to editors praising a particular politician;
- almost the same or identical material published in several media at once;
- publication of excerpts from books by politicians (biographical essays, memoirs) or about politicians, in non-specialized publications;
- journalistic materials without an informational occasion or commissioned materials (most often they are placed under the headings “The Thought”, “Position”, “Actual”, “ThoughtsPro”, “You asked for it– we did it”, “You asked”, etc.).

Instead, to identify anti-advertising, we offer the following features:

- ridiculing the shortcomings of the politician and pointing out only negative traits and/or weaknesses;

- pointing out negative actions of competitors and opposing them to themselves and/or creating a positive image of humiliating a competitor;
- taking information out of context.

Conclusion

In the modern world, political advertising in the structure of social communications is one of the most important levers of managing economic and political processes. In the election struggle of candidates for political office, social communication processes play a vital role, which form public opinion and direct the electorate towards a specific choice. Political advertising in the structure of social communications covers the content and formal aspects and allows the electorate to conduct an optimal search for solutions that can unite society in choosing candidates for government positions. Successfully created and distributed political advertising helps to win elections.

During election campaigns, the mass media not only inform but also popularize specific views, teachings, and political programs of candidates for political office and, thereby, participate in directing the society. Influencing public opinion, the development of certain attitudes and beliefs, the media pushes voters to a specific choice. Producing appropriate attitudes and ideas, political advertising can not only direct society but also manipulate the audience, pushing it to the programmed choice of a candidate. The problem of the quality of political advertising in the aspect of information culture is especially relevant at the time of building an open society in Ukraine, the key to which is the freedom of mass media, pluralism, legality, humanistic goal, the concept of social responsibility of mass media and journalists for their materials.

Therefore, political “jeansa”, anti-advertising, and black PR are all negative phenomena in political communication.

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