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**SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS OF ICT
COMPANIES**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAICT – China Academy of Information and Communications Technology

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

ISIC – International Standard Industrial Classification

KOLs – Key Opinion Leaders

PR – Public Relation

UGC – User Generated Content

INTRODUCTION

Social media have become an indispensable part of modern business activities, including Public Relations. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies also use social media to manage their Public Relations: build and support their corporate image, communicate with customers, deal with crises, optimize services, and marketing, improve their role and value in today's society and increase brand awareness, enhance competitiveness and capture more business opportunities. ICT businesses are the leaders of social media marketing: for instance, Qualcomm, Yahoo and Huawei are among the winners of The China Digital Media Awards [67]. They use innovative tactics and creative formats of social media to amplify their PR. Therefore, the study of social media use in Public Relations activities at the example of ICT companies is relevant and topical for public relations studies and communication studies.

While social media platforms such as Weibo, WeChat and Douyin in China provide ICT companies with diverse channels to reach their audiences, the strategies they employ are often multifaceted and tailored to specific goals. For instance, these companies leverage social media analytics to gain insights into customer preferences and feedback, which in turn informs their PR strategies and helps in crafting more personalized and effective communication.

Moreover, the interactive nature of social media allows ICT companies to engage with their stakeholders in real-time, fostering a sense of community and loyalty among their followers. Social media enables ICT companies to showcase their innovations and thought leadership. By sharing expert insights, industry trends, and behind-the-scenes content, these companies can position themselves as leaders in the tech industry. This not only enhances their corporate reputation, but also attracts top talent and potential investors.

Furthermore, social media campaigns can be highly targeted, reaching specific demographics with tailored messages. This precision in targeting enhances the effectiveness of marketing efforts, ensuring that the right audience receives the right message at the right time. For example, by using hashtags, influencers, and sponsored content, ICT companies can significantly amplify their reach and engagement.

The problem under discussion in this thesis lies in the necessity to explore the strategic use of social media by ICT companies for their public relations objectives, which finally can play a critical role in their overall business strategy. The ability to effectively harness social media can lead to substantial benefits, including improved brand perception, stronger customer relationships, and increased market opportunities.

The degree of the exploration of the problem lies in understanding the

definition of public relations. Rex Harlow defines public relations as a unique management function [2, p. 14]. Liu Jintong in his book *The Practice of Public Relations* defines public relations as the science and art of shaping the image of an organization through communication and exchange in society and organizations [3, p. 3]. As for the basic structure of public relations, Liao Weijian pointed out that it consists of three parts: the social organization, the public and the communication [4, p. 44], and Yang Chen mentioned that the purpose of public relations is to establish and maintain a good image among the public through effective communication and good relationship management so as to help the organization to achieve its goals [9, p. 81]. Regarding the definition of social media, Zhang Yali points out that social media are online platforms that allow users to create, share and exchange information, carrying content including text, images, audio and video [18, pp. 273 – 290]. Peng Lan argues that social media is characterized by a combination of content production and socialization, while the users of social media are the protagonists [21. pp. 3 – 8].

The dynamic and rapidly evolving landscape of social media also presents both opportunities and challenges for ICT companies. Staying ahead of trends, understanding platform algorithms, and continuously innovating in content creation are essential for maintaining a competitive edge. As such, ongoing research into the best practices and emerging PR trends in social media use is vital for ICT companies to optimize their PR strategies.

The **aim** of the research is to determine the public relations practices and strategies used on social media by ICT companies.

The **objectives** of the research are:

1. To explore the concept of public relations and describe its elements, structure, goals, functions.
2. To investigate the role of social media in public relations.
3. To examine the social media frequently employed by ICT companies in their public relations.
4. To determine the public relations practices and strategies of social media use by the selected ICT companies.
5. To assess the effectiveness of social media use in public relations of ICT companies.
6. To determine challenges of social media use in public relations of ICT companies and suggest the ways to overcome them.

The **research object** is social media of ICT companies.

The **research subject** the practices and strategies of public relations of ICT companies on social media.

The **structure of the dissertation** is the following:

Chapter 1. Theoretical Foundations of Public Relations and Social Media

discusses the definition, functions, goals and elements of public relations, the definition and elements of social media, and the advantages and disadvantages of public relations activities done through social media.

Chapter 2. Content Analysis as a Basis for the Case Study of Public Relations Strategies on Social Media is an overview of the research methodology of this paper, which consists of a case study approach, a content analysis method, a sentiment analysis and a public relations strategy analysis.

Chapter 3. ICT Company's Public Relations on Social Media explores how manufacturing and service ICT companies use social media for public relations in the situations of product or service launch and assesses the public's emotional disposition towards such public relations. It also describes the challenges and provides suggestions to overcome them.

The research methods employed in this thesis are literature review, review of secondary data, case study method, content analysis, sentiment analysis.

The practical significance of research topic is that the combination of social media and public relations is a hot topic in current academic research. Through the study of ICT companies' social media PR activities, it can not only enrich the theoretical system of public relations and communication studies, but also provide valuable practice cases for practical operation and promote the combination of academic research and practical application.

The areas of possible practical implementation of the research results are public relations, communication studies, training of communication and PR specialists.

ABSTRACT

Keywords: SOCIAL MEDIA, PUBLIC RELATIONS, PR STRATEGIES, ICT COMPANIES.

The **research aim** is to determine the public relations practices and strategies used on social media by ICT companies.

The **objectives** of the research are:

1. To explore the concept of public relations and describe its elements, structure, goals, functions.
2. To analyse the role of social media in public relations.
3. To examine the social media frequently employed by ICT companies in their public relations.
4. To determine the public relations practices and strategies of social media use by the selected ICT companies.
5. To assess the effectiveness of social media use in public relations of ICT companies.
6. To determine challenges of social media use in public relations of ICT companies and suggest the ways to overcome them.

The **research object** is social media of ICT companies.

The **research subject** is the practices and strategies of public relations of ICT companies on social media.

The analysis of the PR strategies of four ICT companies: Huawei, Xiaomi, Tencent and miHoYo on social media platforms Weibo, WeChat, Douyin and Bilibili demonstrates the following **results of the research**. These ICT companies utilize social media platforms for posting their product information, conducting brand linkages, sweepstakes interactions, and inviting users and key opinion leaders for product experiences in order to increase audience engagement. The use of social media for public relations has increased the visibility and credibility of these companies, constructing their positive corporate images.

However, the study also identified some challenges such as the user feedback aspect and managing negative comments that need to be further strengthened.

The master's thesis **structure** includes three chapters (1) Theoretical Foundations of Public Relations and Social Media, (2) Content Analysis as a basis for the Case Study of Public Relations Strategies on Social Media, (3) ICT Company's Public Relations on Social Media.

Areas of possible application are public relations, media studies, and education in the area of public relations.

The length of the theses is 71 pages. It contains 1 figure, 26 charts and 73 sources.

ОБЩАЯ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА РАБОТЫ

Ключевые слова: СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ МЕДИА, СВЯЗИ С ОБЩЕСТВЕННОСТЬЮ, PR-СТРАТЕГИИ, ИКТ-КОМПАНИИ.

Цель исследования – определить практики и стратегии связей с общественностью, используемые ИКТ компаниями в социальных сетях.

Задачами исследования являются:

1. Изучить понятие связей с общественностью и описать его элементы, структуру, цели, функции.
2. Проанализировать роль социальных медиа в связях с общественностью.
3. Изучить социальные медиа, часто используемые ИКТ-компаниями в своих связях с общественностью.
4. Выявить практики связей с общественностью и стратегии использования социальных медиа, выбранными ИКТ-компаниями.
5. Оценить эффективность использования социальных медиа в связях с общественностью ИКТ-компаний.
6. Определить проблемы использования социальных медиа в связях с общественностью ИКТ-компаний и предложить пути их преодоления.

Объект исследования – социальные медиа ИКТ-компаний.

Предмет исследования – практики и стратегии связей с общественностью ИКТ-компаний в социальных медиа.

Анализ PR-стратегий четырех ИКТ-компаний: Хуавей, Сяоми, Тенсент и МиХоЙо на платформах социальных сетей Вейбо, Вичат, Доуин и Билибили показывает следующие **результаты исследования**. Данные ИКТ-компаний используют платформы социальных сетей для размещения информации о своей продукции, установления связей с брендом, проведения лотерей и приглашения пользователей и ключевых лидеров мнений для ознакомления с продукцией с целью повышения вовлеченности аудитории. Использование социальных медиа для связей с общественностью повышает узнаваемость и авторитет этих компаний, формируя их положительный корпоративный имидж. Однако, исследование выявило и проблемы, такие как обратная связь с пользователями и управление негативными комментариями, которые нуждаются в совершенствовании.

Структура магистерской диссертации включает три главы (1) "Теоретические основы связей с общественностью и социальных медиа", (2) "Контент-анализ как основа для кейса по изучению стратегий связей с общественностью в социальных медиа", (3) "Связи с общественностью ИКТ-компаний в социальных медиа".

Сферы возможного применения: связи с общественностью, медиаисследования и образование в области связей с общественностью.

Объем магистерской диссертации составляет 71 страницу. Она содержит 1 рисунок, 26 диаграмм и 73 источника.