

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
BELARUSIAN STATE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF JOURNALISM
Department of International Journalism

XIONG XIAOSHUANG

**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PR PLATFORM OF CHINA'S
GOVERNMENT SECTOR**

Master's Thesis

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Scientific supervisor:
E.G. Hilevich,
Senior Lecturer

Approved for defense
«__» _____ 2024
Deputy Dean

L.R. Khmel
PhD in Philology, Associate Professor

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet technological revolution is changing people's perceptions and influencing the society and economy, and at the same time, it has a great impact on the political system and development strategy of the country. The information technology represented by intelligent search, 4G mobile internet and big data has made the public's demand for service innovation increasingly precise, and all these changes require the government to pay attention to public relations with netizens, social media and foreign governments, innovate the government public relations mode and build a smart government. In the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee, the central government proposed that in the new period, all government departments should adhere to the strategic significance of the network strong cause, and use government informatisation to promote the modernisation of the national governance system. Facing the new social, political and network environment, seeking the ways of improving government public relations, opening a new mode of interaction between the government and the public, and promoting further development of government informatisation platforms has become a common concern of government departments.

In the era of network transformation, the rise of social media has changed the way organisations, businesses and governments communicate with their audiences. In China, the importance of government departments using social media as a platform for public relations (PR) activities has grown in recent years. With the development of social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo and TikTok, governments have begun to utilise this new communication channel to reach out to citizens, promote policies and manage public image.

The research topic deals with the analysis of the ways Chinese government departments use social media (WeChat) to conduct their public relations activities and evaluation of PR effectiveness. Based on the combination of domestic and international scholars' research on the theory and practice of governmental public relations, this paper analyses and interprets the concepts, main types and basic theories of governmental public relations and new media, and outlines the functions and roles of governmental online public relations in the social media environment by taking the characteristics of social media that differentiate it from the traditional mass media as an entry point. In order to analyse the current situation of China's government online PR in the social media environment, This article selects the "Shanghai Releases" WeChat public account as a typical case, analyses the achievements and shortcomings of the Chinese government in the process of regular PR activities and crisis events, and explores the influencing factors of government PR activities in the era of mobile Internet. The inadequacies of the governmental PR

activities are identified and suggestions on efficient ways to conduct PR in social media environment are given.

The main problem under discussion in this thesis is the problem of the effective use of social media as a public relations platform for the Chinese government to maintain a favourable government's image, conducting regular activities as well as resolving crises given the fact that social media not only provide ample opportunities but also present certain challenges.

The topicality of the research could be explained by the fact that understanding the role of social media in PR has become a precondition for a successful functioning of any business, institution, government in particular. Social media serve as a favourable platform for the government regular PR activities with the goal of creating a good image, guiding people's opinions, advancing governmental policy, thereby developing the country. Handling of crisis events, such as the case of Shanghai Bund incident analyzed in the research, also demonstrates the potential of social media and efficiency of their usage in crisis PR.

The main methods used in this thesis are literature research method, content analysis, case study method and data analysis method.

The areas of possible practical implementation: The results of the research can be applied in the practice of conducting public relations activities of governmental bodies in social media as well as in carrying out further research into the issues of effective PR strategies.

OVERVIEW

Keywords: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, GOVERNMENT PR, SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT, REGULAR PR ACTIVITIES, CRISIS COMMUNICATION.

The **research aim** is to determine the ways and effectiveness of the Chinese government's use of social media in conducting regular PR activities and managing crisis events.

To reach the aim the following **research tasks** are set:

- 1) to consider the concepts of public relations and government public relations
- 2) to describe social media environment for conducting government PR;
- 3) to provide a study of government regular PR activities in official social media accounts;
- 4) to analyze government crisis PR in social media;
- 5) to examine reasons for imperfect PR activities in social media and offer suggestions on improving PR efficiency.

The **research object** is PR activities of Shanghai governmental bodies on WeChat social platform.

The **research subject** is the ways and efficiency social media used in regular and crisis PR activities of Shanghai governmental bodies.

The **research results** are the following. The paper analyzes regular and crisis PR activities of Shanghai governmental bodies in @ShanghaiRelease official media account. The study describes efficient strategies in government regular communication with public as well as challenges faced. The paper also considers government crisis PR activities in the Shanghai Bund incident and analyzes imperfections in crisis management. Finally, the paper provides suggestions for the government on improving the efficiency of its PR.

The **structure** of the master's thesis includes three chapters covering the following topics: (1) “Social Media as a Means of Conducting Public Relations Activity”, which provides definitions of the basic concepts, theoretical description, and literature review of the research topic; (2) “Public Relations Activities of Chinese Governmental Bodies in Social Media”, which provides the in-depth analysis of PR activities of Chinese governmental bodies; (3) “Inadequacies in government PR activities and ways to improve their efficiency”, which presents the analysis of the reasons for imperfections in government PR and offers suggestions on their improvement.

The length of the theses is 62 pages. It contains 8 figures, 6 tables and 58 sources.

ОБЩАЯ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА РАБОТЫ

Ключевые слова: СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ МЕДИА-ПЛАТФОРМЫ, ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ PR, МЕДИА-АККАУНТ, ПОВСЕДНЕВНЫЙ PR, КРИЗИСНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ.

Цель исследования — определить способы и эффективность использования китайским правительством социальных медиа в повседневной PR-деятельности и управлении кризисными ситуациями.

Для достижения цели поставлены следующие исследовательские **задачи**:

- 1) рассмотреть понятия связей с общественностью и государственных связей с общественностью;
- 2) описать социальную медиа-среду для ведения государственного PR;
- 3) изучить повседневную PR-деятельность государства в официальных медиа-аккаунтах;
- 4) проанализировать государственный кризисный PR в социальных сетях;
- 5) изучить причины несовершенства PR-деятельности в социальных сетях и высказать предложения по повышению эффективности PR.

Объект исследования – PR-деятельность органов власти Шанхая на социальной платформе WeChat.

Предмет исследования – способы и эффективность использования социальных медиа в повседневной и кризисной PR-деятельности органов власти Шанхая.

Результаты исследования. В работе анализируется повседневная и кризисная PR-деятельность органов власти Шанхая в официальном медиа-аккаунте @ShanghaiRelease. Исследование описывает эффективные стратегии повседневной коммуникации правительства, а также возникающие проблемы. В работе также рассматривается кризисная PR-деятельность правительства в связи с инцидентом на Шанхайской набережной и анализируются недостатки в антикризисном управлении. Наконец, в работе представлены предложения по повышению эффективности государственного PR.

Структура магистерской диссертации включает три главы: (1) «Социальные сети как средство ведения PR-деятельности», в которой даны определения основных концептов и обзор литературы, 2) «PR-деятельность китайских правительственных органов в социальных сетях», в которой дан глубокий анализ PR китайских правительственных органов; (3) «Недостатки государственной PR-деятельности и пути повышения ее эффективности», в которой представлен анализ причин несовершенства государственного PR и предложены предложения по ее совершенствованию.

Объем диссертации – 62 страницы. Работа содержит 8 рисунков, 6 таблиц и 58 источников.