“Inclusive literature as an innovative marketing resource of publishing activities”

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INCLUSIVE LITERATURE AS AN INNOVATIVE MARKETING RESOURCE OF PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES

Abstract

Inclusive literature as a component of the process of real involvement of people with disabilities in active social life remains out of the attention of researchers. The paper aims to study the state and existing problems in publishing literature for people with disabilities and the use of inclusive topics by Ukrainian publishers. The results were obtained due to the theoretical comprehension of the empirical materials, which were based on a survey of 42 operating various domestic publishing houses. The vast majority of them expressed an understanding of the importance of publishing literature about people with disabilities and accessible editions for them. One-third of those surveyed publishers have experience in publishing inclusive literature. About 24% of respondents have books in accessible formats. They mainly used such publishing or engineering technologies as books with large print, picture-books, and books with pictograms. The study also found that among a few current insurmountable restraining factors of development of inclusive literature is the commercial inexpediency of such projects. The results of this study will contribute to the formation of collective public opinion on the importance of inclusive literature and, consequently, the attraction of the financing of inclusive publications of patrons, sponsors, crowdfunding platforms, etc.

Keywords book, disabilities, education, inclusion, publishing house, Ukraine

JEL Classification D22, J14, L82, M31

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is confidently becoming a prerequisite for the modern democratic society. The development and popularization of inclusive literature through the formation of a comprehensive publishing direction is one of the most effective innovative steps to its perception. However, the situation with the publication of books for people with disabilities in Ukraine has remained critical in recent decades. For example, since Soviet times, only one low-power enterprise publishes books in Braille for more than 50,000 visually impaired compatriots – the Republican House of Recording and Printing of the Ukrainian Society of the Blind (Biletska, 2014). Other publishing organizations in this area solve local problems and are funded mainly by philanthropists.

The proposed study analyzes the state and prospects of domestic publishers concerning inclusive literature and identifies possible ways to solve existing problems. It should be borne in mind that several factors have a significant influence on the book publishing industry's marketing complex. Firstly, for many years, the Ukrainian market was oversaturated with Russian products. For many reasons, domestic publishers could not compete with them. Currently, the country's authorities have been forced to impose restrictions (no more than 10 copies per person can be imported without permits) on the import of

books from Russia. Secondly, Internet technologies have a significant impact on the industry. Over the past year, the number of Ukrainian Internet users has increased by 8% to 22.96 million, or 71% of the population (Vynogradova, Drokina, Yevtushenko, Darchuk, & Irtlach, 2019). Third, with more than 7,000 officially registered publishers, only 500 or so produce more than one book per year (Shpak, 2017).

The recent adoption of Ukrainian legislative acts on the development of inclusive education, the active implementation of its principles in educational institutions, updates the problem. Inclusion, personal diversity, and accessibility are among the most pressing issues on the agenda of the International Publishers Association (Kolman, 2019). The world community is trying to make the book as accessible as possible in its format and content. These steps gave impetus to the fragmentary appearance of publications for and about this category of society on the Ukrainian book market.

The modern publishing industry is based on private publishing houses, whose activities aim to make a profit. Most of them accept work on inclusive literature as innovative marketing activities that can provide a competitive advantage. This position also significantly updates the study.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are almost no fundamental works on inclusive literature and inclusion in general in Ukraine, so the source for the study of this problem was mainly the work of foreign scholars. They substantiated the impact of inclusive literature on the implementation of equality and tolerance principles in society. In particular, Andrews (1998) explored inclusive literature as an educational tool. He offered books that are reference books and markers for authors and publishers working on inclusion issues. Prejter (2003) analyzed different versions of the image of people with mental disabilities in literary publications. Wooperer (2011) focused on the use of inclusive literature as an effective tool to promote tolerance in society. The scientist showed the importance of such literature for young people, illustrated how it allows people to avoid feelings of loneliness. He proved the need for an integrated approach to the application of inclusive literature. Not only teachers and students but also librarians, publishers, and parents should be involved in this process.

Working at the intersection of media research and disability research, Kirkpatrick (2018) analyzed changing perceptions of disability and accessibility.

Some works, like the article of Abinaya (2020), describe the differences and common traits between understanding of gender and disability and how this understanding is reflected in literature.

The term "inclusive literature" in Ukraine, for the first time, was introduced only in 2016 as the literature focused on the formation of a positive perception of disability and personal diversity.

During the last year, there were two manuscripts published: Gorbenko (2019), devoted to inclusive literature as an innovative direction of development of the Ukrainian publishing sphere, and Derkachova and Ushnevych (2020), where they are talking about inclusive literature, in which people with disabilities are the protagonists.

Teremko (2012), Vodolazka (2013) and others covered the current trends in the innovative development of publishing.

The problematics of personal diversity, changes in historical meaning and stereotypes, understanding of "unalike/others, others/their children", liberation from national stereotypes and prejudices in the Ukrainian children's literature were investigated in the works of Marchenko (2011), Vzdulska (2016a,b).

The scientific works of Kolupaiva (2014), Sofiy (2008), Meijer and Watkins (2016), Abbot and McConkey (2006), and others are devoted to the study of the problematic issues of inclusive education and its implementation in Ukraine and the world.

Despite these studies, the use of inclusive literature as an innovative marketing resource and

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the problems of commercialization of the inclusive segment in publishing are still not covered by scholars and require careful study.

Aim

The study aims to clarify the state and problematic aspects of the publishing literature for people with disabilities and to find ways to motivate innovative marketing activities of publishers in an inclusive direction.

2. DATA AND METHODS

The study of the problem was done based on the empirical research, i.e., having certain assumptions and hypotheses; the analysis of activities of the subjects of publishing was systematized, generalized, and presented. Several sources were selected as an information base for this study. These data were based on the reports of State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting, State Committee of Ukraine on Regulatory Policy and Entrepreneurship, official publications of the European Union, legislative and normative acts, etc. related to the problems of inclusive literature. Another method of obtaining information was a sample survey of publishers, which consisted of interviews and questionnaires.

The vast majority of Ukrainian publishing houses as subjects of research, which are concentrated in Kyiv, 50 Kyiv, and 25 regional publishing organizations, were invited to participate in the survey. The selection of publishing houses was carried out based on the data from the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting and the Book Chamber of Ukraine. Forty-two publishing organizations responded to the offer. They were interviewed and filled out a questionnaire.

Interlocution, or rather a personal formalized interview, was conducted with the heads of the publishing houses or their authorized persons and consisted of finding out the following information: whether the publishing house is currently operating; whether the publishing house is interested in new innovative marketing projects and whether the publishing house is ready to take part in the survey on inclusive literature as an innovative resource of publishing activity. Such a survey was necessary because, for the purity of the experiment, publishers' sampling was conducted on a formalized basis. It showed that 99% of respondents are, to some extent, related to the manufacture of publishing products for people with special needs, and 97.5% of respondents are publishers of book and magazine products. Such data confirmed the representativeness of the study.

A questionnaire was developed for the survey, which provided for an individual, selective, postal survey. The questions were aimed at finding the main thematic direction of publishing houses; determining the place of inclusive literature in it, both in the understanding of publications intended for this group of society and publications for the mass reader about this category of people; search of innovative aspects of this activity; study of the commercial feasibility of making exclusive literature; identifying the causes for the lack of attention of publishers to this literature, etc. The interview was conducted from 3 to 15 February 2020, and the collection of questionnaires took place from 15 February to 1 April 2020. The questionnaire is given in Appendix.

During the research, statistical quantitative and sociological qualitative information was collected. Based on the analysis of empirical data, using content analysis, deductive and inductive methods of cognition, the general patterns of publishing activities on inclusive literature, its problems and place in the structure of modern publications were found out, and answers on the delivered tasks, in particular on the prospects of using inclusive topics by Ukrainian publishers as an innovative marketing resource, were found.

3. RESULTS

Forty-two representatives of Ukrainian publishing houses participated in the survey. They received a questionnaire on the topic of "Inclusive literature in the portfolio of Ukrainian publishing houses", with 14 questions, which can be grouped into several categories: a) questions concerning the general information about the publishing house (name, main type of products, target audience, etc.); b)

questions that reflect the availability of projects related to the inclusive literature in the portfolio of publishing houses; c) questions that reveal attitudes to inclusive literature as a commercial project, reasons for the absence of such publications in the publishing house, potential ways of motivation to publish such books, etc.

The survey showed that most publishers specialize in book production and are focused on the mass reader. 81% of respondents consider the topic of inclusion as relevant for use in book production, and only 2% deny it.

Over the recent years, several leading Ukrainian publishers, in particular, Publishing center "12", Publishing group "Kangaroo", Publishing house "Ranok", etc., have singled out a niche of inclusive literature among their book range. However, 31% of respondents either do not position their products as inclusive or do not dare to publish it due to information uncertainty and commercial risks. About 21.4% of publishers have inclusive literature in the thematic plan for the coming year.

One-third of interviewed publishers are experienced in the publishing of the inclusive literature and consider it a marketing innovation. Their work is about people with disabilities (35.7%); internally displaced persons (9.5%); national minorities (9.5%); representatives of the LGBT-community (7.1%). 64.3% of publishing houses publish literature about older people, while 59.5% – about teenagers.

Twenty-three and eight percent of the respondents have literature for people with special educational needs (books in accessible formats) in their portfolio. The most successful marketing moves for solving the problems of inclusion are: large print in books – 38.1%, picture-books – 19% ("Express-Polygraph", Publishing center "12", "Vezha-Druk", Publishing house "Osnovy", Polygraphic-advertising and publishing center "Code", "Kiev-STUDIO", "Kangaroo"), books with pictograms – 11.9% ("Eksob", "Express-Polygraph", "Crown", "Intertech", "Kangaroo"), tactile books – 2.4% ("Kangaroo").

An analysis of the situation with the publication of literature on people with special needs showed that such publications are more commercially viable, and more than 93% of surveyed companies have such a practice. In such publications, the phenomenon of the "interesting history" with a certain category of inclusion is operated. It is dominated by materials about teenagers, people with disabilities, and the older people. A considerable number of respondents (42%) drew attention to the importance of inclusive literature in educational activities.

Figure 1 shows the main reasons for the absence of inclusive literature in the portfolio of publishers. There is a clear difference between publishers' understanding of the importance of inclusion and specific actions to implement projects to publish inclusive literature.

Nineteen percent of publishing houses do not see themselves among the publishers of such literature at all and do not conduct any marketing activities regarding the possibility of publishing inclusive literature. As a rule, publications were made at the expense of sponsors and patrons (31%); own capacities of the publishing house (23.8%); government programs (14.3%); grant programs (11.9%); collective financing (7.1%). However, if looking

Source: Authors' research.

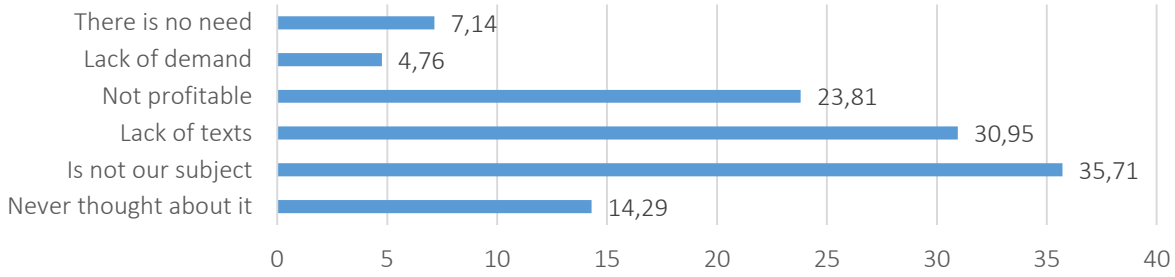

Figure 1. Percentage of the inclusive literature in the portfolio of publishers and corresponding reasons

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Table 1. Publishers' motives for inclusive literature

Source: Authors' research.

No.	Publishers	Library demand	State support	Grant program	The presence of an interesting author manuscript
1	With an experience	44%	78%	67%	33%
2	Without an experience	40%	60%	52%	40%

in perspective, the marketing forecasts of almost half of publishers (47.6%) show the possibility of making the direction of publishing of the inclusive literature economically appealing. The analysis showed that those structures that have not yet had experience in this area, mostly dominate in this conclusion. They do not exclude the possibility of the inclusion in plans of the publication of literature for this category of society; however, only under appropriate conditions. As is seen in Table 1, these conditions are practically identical in the publishing houses with experience in the studied field and without it.

Most Ukrainian publishing houses are ready to produce inclusive literature if the state support is provided or grant projects are available.

One third of respondents (33%) draw attention to the need to increase readers' demand for inclusive products as a marketing measure to draw attention to the inclusion of publishers in the problems of inclusion.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the work showed that most publishing houses in the research are focused on a wide audience. Several polled publishers have a narrow thematic and reader's focus. A striking indicator was the respondents' opinion on the reasons for the lack of inclusive literature publications in their portfolio. Thus, the second place in the number of responses (30.95%) is the lack of quality texts on inclusive topics. Indeed, it is impossible to create a high-quality book edition in an accessible format without a good quality text. One of the most successful marketing mechanisms for the systematic support of inclusive publications in the world is the holding of inclusive literary competitions. For example, The Schneider Family Book Prize is awarded for an authentic depiction of people with physical disabilities (American Library Association, 2004); the Dolly Gray's Literature Award is awarded to authors and illustrators for fiction or informative books depicting children with special needs (The Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award, 2003); the Ukrainian project "The Inclusive Literature" has become an incentive for domestic researchers, teachers, publishers to address the topic of inclusive literature (Inclusive literature, 2016); within the framework of the International Literary Contest "Koronatsiya Slova", a special award of "Terra inclusion" was created (International Literary Contest "Koronatsiya slova", 2017); the inclusive literary contest for children and youth named after Dmytro Ruzhevych (Inclusive literature, 2019).

The inclusive literature cannot be regarded solely by the content. There should be a factor in the availability of book publication, i.e., accessibility in form, and the human factor. The survey has shown that the absence of involvement of people, on whom inclusive literature is focused, into the creation of the book, cannot objectively reflect the lives of people in need of inclusive literature. Thus, the provision of complete and competent implementation of inclusive coverage in the book publishing industry is impossible without ensuring the principles of inclusion in the publishing houses themselves. Therefore, there was unearthed another problem that needed a separate study: the relationship between released inclusive books and the inclusive nature of the most professional publishing environment.

The study raised an important question: almost half of publishing houses, which noted that they create books with large print or picture-books, do not believe that they contributed to the literature for people with special educational needs. That is, due to a certain terminology uncertainty and not a system of meaningful content, publishers consider such a book-making either purely specific, or educational, without their attitude to the category inclusive.

It should be noted that international practice does not always combine the content and format in the categories of inclusive publications. The Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) directs its actions to increase the number of books in accessible formats, such as Braille, audio, and large print (Accessible Books Consortium). Inclusive Publishing (n.d.) develops the availability of the electronic content for all segments of the population, considering people with special needs. The research showed that publishers often use the term "inclusive literature" mainly to the fiction publications about persons with disabilities. However, such a classification does not promote the development of inclusion in the literature and publishing, but rather makes these areas more specific. In this context, the practical experience of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), which publishes a catalog of outstanding books for children and youth with disabilities biannually, was considered. This catalog offers a more modern and relevant approach to inclusive publications. It includes books in available formats, the artwork about persons with disabilities, and personal diversity. This approach, in the authors' opinion, can promote the development of full inclusion in publishing since inclusive literature should be accessible in a form and substance. This confirms the answers of the respondents of this research.

The publishing houses-respondents have created no books in Braille. This fact cannot mean the complete absence of such publishing houses on the Ukrainian market. It confirms the opinion on certain isolation of publishing projects working on books in accessible formats. The technical capabilities of these organizations are insignificant and require state and public support.

There is a paradoxical situation – publishing houses, which work with formats designed to unite readers, offering them comfortable and accessible formats, occupy a specific place, and are perceived as purely specific enterprises. The high cost of publications in Braille and, consequently, small editions do not allow the general public to be fully acquainted with such products. It is because such books are delivered, in the first order, to people who are, of life indicators, in need of this literature.

Interesting is the fact of using the format of picture-books by domestic publishers. This format is the second most used after the practice of increasing the font. However, it should be noted that the vast majority of publishers are turning to this format, primarily because of the aesthetic appeal, and do not view it in terms of inclusion. International experience proves that picture-books can be used as an element of social inclusion, for example, in societies with high levels of migrants. People who speak different languages can start communicating successfully using this format. "The Silent books from the world to Lampedusa and back" project under the coordination of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) can serve as an example (International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), n.d.). This practice can be interesting for Ukraine in the context of establishing inclusive communication among minority groups.

Pictograms, as inclusive communication technology, confidently took third place in terms of use. The use of pictographic symbols allows engaging in the reading process of individuals with an autistic spectrum, and atypical children start to learn the alphabet and take the first steps in reading. The use of pictograms in book publications for children has already proved its effectiveness. Children's book publications with pictograms require the harmonious work of the traditional publishing team and the compulsory involvement of psychologists, teachers, and parents of children with special needs. The process of preparation and testing of one such publication lasts, sometimes, more than a year. Therefore, due to a complex technological process of preparing a book publication with pictograms, the number of publishing houses that issue such literature is insignificant. However, the proven efficiency of this format is indicative of its high publishing potential.

The study showed that the main deterrent to the production of the literature for people with disabilities is the lack of publishers' economic interest in the results of this activity. The lion's share of such products is given for the funds of sponsors and patrons. Only one surveyed publishing house had a commercial profit from such projects. The rest of the respondents had a negative experience. Two main reasons explain the situation. First, activities on the production of inclusive literature require additional material costs and special training of employees. Second, this stratum of

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Ukrainian society, that is, direct consumers, has a very insignificant purchasing power, which does not allow publishers to sell goods at commercially reasonable prices.

Relying on such data, it can be said that the Ukrainian publishers gradually built a tolerant attitude to the inclusion in the society while having a certain commercial profit.

However, this is rather an exception than the rule. The problem of ensuring with the inclusive literature, inclusive education, and, in general, all the infrastructure of this part of the society remains unresolved.

The practice of the developed world countries shows that this problem will not be solved without state institutions. It would be desirable for the state to declare the development of an inclusive society its priority. In such circumstances, with appropriate financial and material support, the publication of inclusive literature will be economically feasible and will serve this purpose.

CONCLUSION

The study enabled us to understand that until 2020, the systematic professional researches on the topic of inclusion in the portfolio of the Ukrainian publishing houses have not been conducted.

These results showed some confusion and unsystematic approach of the professional publishing community to issues of the inclusion, proved the feasibility of further development of the inclusive literature as an effective, innovative marketing resource, resource, aimed at publishing contemporary works about persons with disabilities, personal diversity and use of available book formats.

An inclusive book is a universal communication tool that has already proved its effectiveness at the international level and showed high research potential. To increase the demand for inclusive book products, it is necessary to develop a culture of consumption of such literature, the tool of which may be publishing educational activities in the development of inclusive education.

The development of inclusion in the book-publishing industry testifies to the sufficient level of social responsibility of enterprises in this sphere. Despite the low commercialization of inclusive publishing products, most publishers realize the need for further development of an inclusive direction in publishing. Almost half of the publishing houses-respondents (48.7%) consider it possible to make the direction of publication of the inclusive literature economically appealing.

Thirty and ninety-five percent of the respondents saw the problem of the development of inclusive literature in a lack of quality texts on inclusive topics. So, professional work with authors, the development of domestic inclusive literary competitions should become a priority in the work of the inclusive publishing.

The most popular accessible book format for Ukrainian publishers is still large print. The development of books in accessible formats (Braille, with pictograms, etc.) requires publishers to improve the material and technical base, as well as to improve the skills of publishing staff, which in turn requires the introduction and development of inclusive educational programs in the field of publishing.

The direction of inclusive literature and publishing requires new qualitative research, both in the context of the accessibility of publishing products and increasing the inclusiveness of the professional publishing environment. It is necessary to diversify state targeted programs and expand grant opportunities for this category of publications to develop a certain culture of consumption and manufacture of inclusive book products.

Given the difficulties of commercialization of inclusive book products, insufficient support from the state, etc., it is essential to actively involve the financing of inclusive books of patrons, sponsors, crowdfunding platforms, etc.

Based on respondents' answers, the authors can assert that the topic of inclusion in the publishing field is interesting for both readers and producers of inclusive book products.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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