“The impact of environmental PR on product consumption”

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THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PR ON PRODUCT CONSUMPTION

Abstract

The article argues that modern media and public relations play a significant role in addressing environmental issues. It is shown that in order to create favorable conditions for the implementation of ecological PR, it is necessary to take into account the relations not only between the enterprises and their target audiences but also between the subjects of environmental PR.
It is proved that carrying out environmental PR is possible with the use of PR-tools, which can be various, depending on measures, such as publications in mass media; events for journalists; environmental measures; social-environmental advertising.
Based on generalized literature sources, it has been proved that modern market relations for the support of socially responsible businesses require the use of such aspects of motivation during environmental PR that shape the consumer with a caring attitude to the environment and their health.
It is proved that along with the production of environmentally friendly products, the opposite phenomenon is observed – greenwashing. Therefore, examples of social responsibility of enterprises that carry out environmental PR and are responsible for ecological problems form social responsibility for environmental protection for all market participants.

Keywords ecology, environmental PR, PR-tools, consumption, target audience

JEL Classification M39, Z180

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ВПЛИВ ЕКОЛОГІЧНОГО PR НА СПОЖИВАННЯ ПРОДУКЦІЇ

Анотація

В статті обґрунтовано, що сучасні засоби масової інформації та зв'язки з громадськістю виконують значну роль у вирішенні екологічних проблем. Показано, що для формування сприятливих умов реалізації екологічного PR треба враховувати відносини не тільки між підприємствами та їх цільовими аудиторіями, а і між суб'єктами екологічного PR.
Доведено, що проведення екологічного PR можливо із застосуванням PR-інструменти, які можуть бути різноманітними, залежно від заходів, таких як: публікації в ЗМІ; заходи для журналістів; екологічні заходи; соціальна екологічна реклама.
На підставі узагальнення літературних джерел було доведено, що сучасні ринкові відносини для підтримки соціально-відповідального бізнесу вимагають використовувати під час проведення екологічного PR такі аспекти мотивації, які формують у споживача дбайливе ставлення до навколишнього середовища та до свого здоров'я.
Доведено, що поряд з виробництвом екологічно чистої продукції існує зворотне явище – грінвошінг, тому, приклади соціальної відповідальності підприємств, які проводять екологічний PR і відповідально ставляться до проблем екології, формують у всіх учасників ринку соціальну відповідальність в справі захисту навколишнього середовища.

Ключові слова екологія, екологічний PR, PR-інструменти, споживання, цільова аудиторія

Класифікація JEL M39, Z180

INTRODUCTION

According to estimates (World Health Organizarion. Regional Office for Europe, 2017), 24% of the disease burden, and 23% of all deaths worldwide can be attributed to environmental factors. Air and water pollution, hazardous chemicals, waste, and climate change are among the factors that not only harm the environment but can also lead to serious health problems. On the contrary, interventions aimed at protecting and conserving the environment can directly contribute to the ecology and human health improvement.

Nowadays, eco- food, toys, and household items, clothing, and cosmetics are very popular. In most cases, manufacturers spend more money on such products and services advertising than on improving the environmental friendliness of the products they promote.

Businesses cannot stay out of the social mood, as increasing attention to environmental issues affects attitudes towards consumption. Changing lifestyles lead to new consumer needs and desires. Buyers want to know the components and method of production, the general attitude of the manufacturer to a sustainable business (Harris, 2000). Therefore, there is a need to create communication between organic producers and consumers.

It was researched (Kates, Parris and Leiserowitz, 2005, p. 12) that 75% of buyers prefer a company that is known to be making significant efforts to do environmentally conscious activities, and 72% of respondents are interested in what companies do to maintain environmental sustainability.

Such consumers' attitude encourages manufacturers to introduce the new methods of doing eco-business and comprehensive coverage of their environmental activities. The more people learn about the harmful effects of chemicals in everyday products, the more interested they are in confirming the safety of manufactured goods for the health of not only the individual but also of the whole environment as a concern for the future well-being of society. Enterprises announce a waste reduction strategy and usage of raw materials (ideally available for recycling) as a priority (Blazhey, 2018, p. 17).

Businesses are actively looking for new methods of competition in the field of organic production to enable their brands to be included in the green list. Consumer behavior studies show that an environmentally safe product is more likely to be purchased. The presence of environmental characteristics is considered as an added value when choosing between competing products in one price category (Blazhey, 2018, p. 17). Finding a competitive advantage in the market requires eco-producers to build communication with customers through PR activities. Among these activities, there are following: exhibitions, seminars, presentations, press conferences, charity events, organization of thematic conferences, etc. Such measures, on which the information on the environmental friendliness of products, are called environmental PR.

Shared values between consumers and the businesses they trust play an important motivational and inspiring role in corporate and individual life, and they create a solid basis for purchasing decisions.

Environmental concerns equally affect the interests of all segments of the population, age, gender, and ethnic groups. Supporting environmental promotions is the best foundation for social PR businesses, in which owners work in different price categories or even in different consumer markets. Modern enterprises are doomed to do good and to inform consumers about the environmental friendliness of products. Paradoxically, a modern businessman comes to the need for spiritual growth, which will increase consumer loyalty, in their number, and, accordingly, the profitability of the business.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Issues of ecology have been reflected in the researches of Berlova (1997), Friedman [(988), Cvyk (2000), Kohanova (2000), whose research findings on the role of the media and public relations in addressing environmental issues can be summarized as input:

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- ecology is the science of relationships that sustain life in the environment. It focuses not only on biological objects but also on the conditions that are necessary for their existence;
- the problem of nature protection, its rational usage based on environmental laws, is one of the most important for humanity. Ecology is the theoretical basis for solving this problem;
- the main practical result of the ecosystem ecology development was a clear awareness of the complete dependence of humanity on the state of the environment, the need to restructure the economy following environmental laws;
- environmental problems have arisen as a result of the exploitative attitude of man towards nature, the rapid growth of technology, the scale of industrialization and population growth;
- human impact on terrestrial ecosystems, which in their totality, interconnection, and interdependence, form the ecosystem of the Earth as a planet, causes changes in the complex system of the human environment. Furthermore, the negative consequence of this effect is expressed as a threat to the ecological conditions of the holistic existence of people, a threat to health through the air, water, and food, which are polluted by substances produced by man.

According to the findings of scientists (Rutkowska-Podołowska and Pakulska, 2018), economic activities aimed at environmental protection are most manifested in the field of eco-innovative development and combine business and environmental goals. The degree of environmental pollution directly affects the standard of person living. Eco-innovations make it possible, on the one hand, to improve the quality of life and, on the other, to develop businesses, create new jobs, and increase GDP. The so-called balanced development is precisely the achievement of two goals.

Until recently, ecology was regarded as a relatively narrow field of study of relationships between living objects in a limited area, and which was of practical interest to only a few biologists. In the 21st century, it has become a global problem affecting the broadest aspects of human-environment relations – a problem that determines not only the state but also internal politics and, as a result, the future of all humankind. A large number of specialists are involved in solving environmental problems. To solve these problems, they use environmental public relations (PR).

Nevertheless, it is hard to disagree (Pashkevich, 2018) that environmental (also called "green") PR is one of the most controversial and controversial areas of public relations. The "conflict of interest" is that, on the one hand, it promotes the social responsibility of market participants in environmental matters. On the other hand, it is a tool for managing consumer choice when selling goods and services.

2. AIMS

The purpose of the study is to substantiate the impact of environmental PR, as a component of public relations, on product consumption through the use of PR tools to increase the level of social responsibility of producers.

3. METHODS

The following methods are used in the article: analysis – to characterize the content of the basic concepts in identifying forms of interaction of problem elements; induction and deduction – when considering logical research techniques and assumptions; generalization and synthesis – while working on the result of interconnection and interdependence of problematic aspects and conclusions of the study.

4. RESULTS

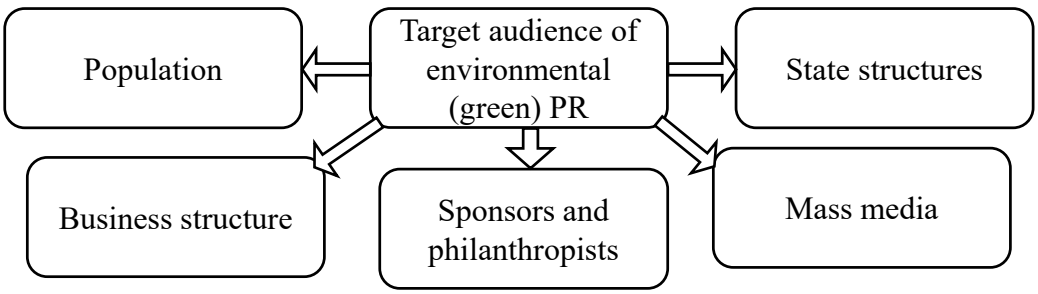
The main objective of environmental (green) PR is to support the development of civil society as an expression of the right of the population to a favorable environment. International organizations and associations are established to control the state of the environment and the rational use of its resources. Greenpeace is an international

independent environmental organization, which means "Green World" in English. This organization was created in Canada in 1971, the purpose of which is to prevent environmental degradation. The same goal is pursued by UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, WHO (World Health Organization), IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), GEF (Global Environmental Facility). The Club of Rome, an international non-governmental organization, has made a significant contribution to the study of the prospects for the development of the biosphere and promotes the idea of harmonizing relations between man and nature. The club's mission is to draw the world's attention to global issues through its reports. Besides, there are commissions in the world that study the socio-economic situation in different parts of the world, make recommendations to governments, and participate in projects. These are the Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), Latin America (ECLAC), Europe (ECEC) committees within which there are Environmental Policy Committees.

To promote any commodity, including commodity demand, publicity campaigns – Environmental Public Relations (PR) are better than others. These measures include (Ministry of the Environment Republic of Kazakhstan, 2004): promoting the saving of natural resources at the domestic level; campaigns to support recycling, tree posting, and more. The mechanics of such measures are designed to engage as many users as possible. The program of such environmental PR almost always involves the active use of BTL tools and cooperation with the mass media. In essence, it is an advertisement in which instead of the standard appeal – "buy", it sounds – "pay attention to the problem for society, and at the same time the product".

In terms of business, environmental (green) PR is an activity that aims to build favorable and mutually beneficial relationships between businesses and their target audiences. Often, environmental PR actors (entities) are those presented in Figure 1.

Research of scientists (Khaminich and Khyzhnjak, 2015, p. 592) argues that among the existing types of public relations, environmental (green) PR, which is the basis of corporate social responsibility in society, is relevant in the field of environmental protection. Modern businesses use environmental PR to promote their ideas, to inform and involve the public in environmental issues, to discuss ways to solve environmental problems, to engage in their activities with the tools listed in Table 1. Moreover, such devices can be varied depending on activities such as publications in the media; events for journalists; environmental measures; social advertising (Khaminich and Khyzhnjak, 2015, p. 595).



Source: Own generalization.

Figure 1. Subjects of the environmental PR

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Table 1. Basic PR-tools that can be used for environmental PR

Source: Developed based on (Khaminich and Khyzhnjak, 2015).

Events	PR-tools
Publications of various information in the media	An essential tool for solving environmental problems is environmental journalism. Any event that threatens the environment, flora, and fauna, people living near the epicenter, in a matter of hours, becomes the property of the world public. The specialized environmental press is also used by the mass media to promote environmental ideas. The media publishes environmental articles, press releases, environmental news, reports, newsletters, social, environmental advertising, brochures, reports, interviews, television and radio programs, and more.
Events for journalists	Press-conference, press-tour, briefing, statements, press-club.
Special ecological events	Seminars, meetings, roundtables on environmental issues, conferences, debates, discussions, public hearings. This category also includes environmental events: environmental events, festivals, gatherings, flash mobs, sports, and cultural events, presentations, professional holidays, anniversaries, sports, exhibitions/ exhibitions, blogs and forums, movies, TV- and radio plots, TV shows and plots, trips, open days, polls, contests, awards, and more.
Ecological social advertisement	Environmental social advertising aims to change public behaviors and address environmental issues. Environmental social advertising can be printed, presented in the form of leaflets and brochures, as well as outdoor advertising, distributed in the form of posters and modules on advertising space, transport, etc. Television environmental social advertising, expensive and distributed in the form of commercials on TV channels.

Also, PR-tools are used on the Internet: when creating sites of environmental organizations, the use of electronic media, on social networks, blogosphere, and more. PR tools include educational programs, social projects; charity; sponsorship.

The effectiveness of PR tools depends on the skill of the performers – their ability to come up with an idea, plan a campaign, build relationships with the media. Sometimes enterprises use environmental stories during stories such as stetting, legends, myths, rumors.

Environmental PR encourages product discussion but does not give a 100% guarantee that it will be positive. Moreover, the positive outcome of such discussions cannot be guaranteed.

For businesses, the goal of green PR is to increase the awareness and reputation of the company, to build a public relations system that is consistent with the existing environmental concept. Its tactics include posting news articles, winning awards, communicating with the environmentally-conscious public, and distributing publications. There are several techniques that involve green PR, among them (Khaminich and Khyzhnjak, 2015, p. 592) (Table 2).

Table 2. Methods that include green PR

Source: Developed based on (Khaminich and Khyzhnjak, 2015).

Techniques	Characteristics
Use of environmentally friendly materials	Promotes environmental protection because such materials harm not only the person but also nature around him
Introduction of new technologies	The introduction of new technologies enhances the functional quality of products or services and promotes environmental safety
Safe disposal	Disposal of garbage or the product itself after usage
Holding promotions and events	Promotions and events may be linked to company anniversary dates that address environmental issues
Closed-loop production and compliance with the «3R» rule	The «3R» rule: reducing – reducing waste, reusing – reusing materials, recycling – recycling
Formation of environmental provisions	The presence of environmental regulations at the enterprise will help to develop a caring attitude towards the environment
Eco-sponsorship	Use of charitable assistance for the organization of ecological PR companies
Communication concept of eco-timing	Allows environmental PR entities to create communications in an entertaining format

Environmental PR is used by businesses to promote their ideas, to inform and involve the public in environmental issues, to inform them about ways to solve environmental problems, to get involved in their activities, and so on.

Besides, green PR is used to build a positive image and reputation. For example, using environmental materials in production, implementing programs to improve the environmental state of the environment, conduct sabbaticals, and more.

Environmental protection and economic activity are directly related to the idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which has been around since the 1930 s. V. Gasparsky calls this, perhaps somewhat exaggerated, even by philosophy. He writes that CSR is "a philosophy that proclaims that a company is a social work and as such should be involved in the initiatives of its local community; Company management makes decisions and actions that promote both the care of their own interests (profit multiplication) and the protection and increase of social well-being" (Gasparski, 2004).

An essential component of environmental PR is the creation and retention of a target audience by businesses. Modern market relationships to support socially responsible businesses require the use of environmental aspects of motivation in environmental PR that shape the consumer's caring attitude to the environment and their health (Ministry of the Environment Republic of Kazakhstan, 2004) (Table 3).

Table 3. Aspects of consumer motivation for environmental PR

Source: Developed based on (Ministry of the Environment Republic of Kazakhstan, 2004).

Motivation Aspects	Characteristics of aspects	Target audience
Pragmatic aspects	Wildlife – the basis of a healthy living environment, the source of material goods, livelihood; The well-being and health of family members depend on the state of the wild.	Necessary for most of the middle and older population of different social groups.
Patriotic aspects	Ukraine plays a crucial role in preserving global biodiversity and supporting the functioning of the biosphere; biodiversity – the most valuable component of national heritage and an integral basis of national culture (at the regional level – a component of the unique nature of the region, the traditional way of life and national culture of indigenous small peoples).	Necessary for the patriotic population.
Economic aspects	Conservation of wildlife is a way of obtaining additional profit, improving the quality and competitiveness of goods, forming a positive environmental appearance of the company. The most significant benefit is the long-term sustainable use of biodiversity, where biodiversity is restored, its biodiversity preserved, and the environment preserved.	Important for businessmen and entrepreneurs.
Aspects of prestige	Nature preservation is a right tone, part of today's prestigious and respectable lifestyle.	Necessary for the most active and prosperous population.
Aspects of fashion	To keep wildlife is fashionable because that is what famous artists, athletes, and leaders of the youth subculture do.	Necessary for most young people.
Moral and ethical aspects	Living beings have the same rights to life as a man; animals and plants suffer from inadequate treatment of humans.	Necessary for children, emotional and believing people.
System-rationalistic aspects	Wildlife is a subsystem of the biosphere without which it cannot exist; the destruction of wildlife will impair the parameters of the whole system as a whole.	Necessary for people of rationalist type, technical and scientific intelligentsia, teachers, students.
Aesthetic aspects	Wildlife is beautiful, and it enables a person to enjoy contemplating it.	Necessary for all people to see.
Religious aspects	The duty of everyone who believes in the care of nature as a creation of God. Most religious teachings recognize the importance of nature as a testimony of Divine wisdom through which one can commune with God.	necessary for the religious population

Taking into account these aspects of environmental motivation by enterprises will contribute to the expansion of the target audience, which, in the future, will provide an opportunity to profit.

Ukrainian consumers, due to lack of environmental awareness and biased reaction to the process of greening production, perceive advertising appeals and public relations in different ways. An example of the application of the concept of environmental PR is the company Coca-Cola. In their research, scientists (Khaminich and Khyzhnjak, 2015, p. 594) argue that, in Ukraine, such an event is reduced to "green" promotions that are more focused only on raising awareness and awareness of the country's environmental condition and proper behavior to conserve natural resources and to promote healthy lifestyles and to maintain social responsibility. Regarding the company's environmental PR activities abroad, it focuses on global rather than local issues, calling on eco-conscious consumers to dispose of their products.

By supporting the eco-trend, Coca-Cola demonstrates a concern for the environment and shows an attitude

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towards the quality of its products or services in order to maintain a positive image for the community. Eco-advertising and eco-PR in the classic form are taking a more exciting and creative style in Europe and America. That is, the implementation of environmental PR and the use of its "green" tools by the company is widespread in those countries where well-developed consumer awareness (Khaminich and Khyzhnjak, 2015, p. 594).

To evaluate the real environmental friendliness of any modern company can be based on the results of its environmental activities. To this end, there is a sufficient number of different assessments by global corporations on environmental pollution. Almost every year, the Global Sustainable Development Index (DJSI) is analyzed (SDSN, 2018) and trends are identified to assess the performance of companies in the field of sustainable development. Thus, in 2018, a decrease in the number of companies engaged in medicine, biotechnology, and the production of essential goods was revealed. On the contrary, the number of companies engaged in electronics, transport infrastructure and housing has increased significantly. In 2018, the US Environmental Protection Agency summarized the top tech companies. Priority companies included in this rating are GoogleInc, Microsoft Corporation, Intel Corporation, Equinix, Inc., Wells Fargo.

More and more well-known companies are increasing the range of their products at the expense of "green" options. For example, green clothing companies such as Gap, H&M, Levi Strauss, Nike, Patagonia, Marks & Spencer are involved in the production of eco-friendly clothing. Among the companies that have switched to recycling in their products, you may note the Timberland footwear manufacturer. Walmart, the world's leading retailer, has announced itself as the new green giant. Concerning the Japanese company Toyota, the production of hybrid cars Toyota Prius takes into account the concern for the environment (Holovnia, Ilchenko and Trubei, 2019).

Among the socially responsible enterprises can also be identified as the Dutch production and trading group of companies "IKEA". During the production of furniture, they use a large amount of wood, but their contribution to the conservation of the environment is the use of advanced methods of forestry, without sacrificing vast areas of forest. The company also invests in the development of renewable energy sources.

An excellent example of environmental protection is Nike, which strictly adheres to environmental standards when manufacturing its products. The result of these actions is that over the last 10 years the pollutant emissions have been reduced by 80%.

Many scientists' (Holovnia, Ilchenko and Trubei, 2019) researches have shown that market competition requires modern businesses, in particular from start-up companies, to prefer innovative eco-friendly products. However, the analysis of companies that position their products as "eco-friendly", "natural", "natural" showed that only 4.5% of enterprises could prove it.

Closed-loop production, in particular, is gaining ground: products are created with the potential to be processed at the end of their useful life. The manufacturer controls the entire process of materials obtained after processing used in the manufacture of new products. Among the companies that partially implemented the closed-loop production are Xerox, AMD, Coca-Cola, Bosch, H&M. It also solves the problem of reducing the quality of raw materials after processing due to the degradation of the structural integrity of the material (down-cycling) in favor of technologies that allow the re-use of products without a critical impact on them (up-cycling) (Han, Tyler and Apeagyei, 2015, p. 4).

In the XXI century, consumers are so keen on protecting the environment that some refuse to buy products that would not be environmentally friendly. At one time, thanks to Armani's eco-friendly promo, legendary fashion designer Armani managed to stimulate sales in Western Europe and the United Kingdom, where it is difficult to achieve significant sales growth because the consumer markets of these countries are long saturated (Harris, 2000).

However, sometimes companies are so focused on the production of environmentally friendly products that they forget about organizing an environmentally friendly manufacturing process.

Along with the production of environmentally friendly products, there is a reverse phenomenon – greenwashing.

Greenwashing (or "green camouflage") is a term that characterizes the practice of organizations using different environmental activities to give the company or its product a "green" image. The term "greenwash" was proposed by Jay Westerveld in 1986 from a combination of the English words green (green, eco) and whitewashing (i.e., literally "green laundering") (Harris, 2000).

As argued (Pashkevich, 2018), some enterprises aim primarily at a profit, not a real environmental concern. Green camouflage is used by questionable manufacturers to create an image of an eco-friendly company and increase sales. This marketing move is often used by large transnational corporations who, in the course of their business, unduly pollute nature and the environment. Thus, to restore interest in their products, these companies "wash" their image. Green camouflage companies are investing in the development of a new eco-style (logo and color), with more emphasis on organic, eco-friendly.

A striking example is sticking to a container of bright agricultural labels with green trees and leaves that should give a sense of confidence in the safety and environmental friendliness of the product inside.

An example of "eco-camouflage" in Ukraine is the use of green colors in the logo and advertising, as well as allusions to the environmental friendliness of products by operators of OKKO and WOG filling stations.

CONCLUSION

Research has shown that environmental PR is the responsibility of modern businesses to be responsible for protecting the environment.

When communicating with consumers to promote products through environmental PR, a variety of PR tools should be considered. Moreover, such tools may be different depending on the activities being undertaken, namely: publication of various information in the media, events for journalists, special environmental measures, environmental and social advertising, etc.

The result of the study is also shown that modern market relations support socially responsible businesses and require the usage of environmental aspects of motivation in the consumer, which shape the consumer's caring attitude to the environment and their health. Taking into account these aspects of motivation contributes to increasing attention to environmental issues and influences attitudes towards consumption by the target audience.

Examples of the implementation of environmental PR and the usage of its "green" tools by well-known enterprises show that such communication is widespread in those countries where consumer awareness is well developed. It is hoped that environmental advertising and eco-PR, in the classic form, will take a more exciting and creative form not only in Europe and America but also in Ukraine.

Examples of social responsibility of enterprises that carry out environmental PR and are responsible for environmental issues make all market participants social responsibility in the field of environmental protection. Therefore, all subjects of environmental PR should be aware that along with the production of environmentally friendly products, there is a reverse phenomenon - greenwashing, and not to destroy the environment, but to attract green PR.

Further prospects for the study of this issue will be the development of an algorithm for the usage of PR tools and recommendations for the organization and conduction of environmental PR by modern enterprises: to retain and increase consumers of products, give the importance of environmental problems beyond the economy, directly affect the social and moral ethics life.

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