Relationship between Russian societal culture and public relations strategies*

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Abstract

The study is a part of the dissertation about the influence of environmental variables on public relations in companies in Russia. This paper is focused on the relationship between public relations strategies and societal culture as defined in the GLOBE theoretical framework (House et al. 2004) with nine dimensions: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance and humane orientation. Quantitative research was conducted on the sample of 225 public relations specialists. According to our findings, the societal culture significantly influences two-way, symmetrical, asymmetrical, ethical, unethical, interpersonal, mediated communication and conservation strategies. The study did not confirm same influence on one-way communication and cultural interpretation.

Keywords: Public relations, Russia, Societal culture, Companies, Public relations strategies

Introduction

This paper focuses on the influence of societal culture on public relations in companies that have operations located in Russia. The practice of modern public relations is approximately one hundred years old, while its scientific study is much younger (Ruler/Verčič 2004). Historically, the purpose of public relations was to favourably represent companies in public and manage their reputation. Public relations were for a long time understood as a function for dissemination of information within an organization. Falkheimer (2008) believes that in Europe, public relations were developed from relations with the government while in the United States, they were developed from journalism and communication activities related to reactive control of damage. The history of the development of public relations in Russia differs significantly from the development of this profession in the Western world. This difference is created not only by the youth of the Russian field but also by the lack of Russian scholarly works about the theory of public relations. In Russia, the communication tradition does not exist

(Tsetsura 2003:303). Public relations in present-day Russia appears to be a complex mixture of professional views and practices imported from the West, and a legacy of organizational communication traditions and practices carried over from the former Soviet Union (Mitchell 2013). Public relations were not practiced in Soviet Russia and profession emanates from the emergence of democratic and economic reforms (Ragozina 2007:65). As the nation transitioned from the Communist Soviet Union to Capitalist Russian Federation, its form of communication and information shifted from one of propaganda and inculcation to public relations and multiple messages and channels (Mitchell 2013). From the Russian standpoint, it is important to distinguish between public relations and propaganda to establish a clear understanding of which public relations practices are ethical (Tsetsura 2009). A vast majority of public relations specialists in Russia and abroad today clearly distinguish public relations from propaganda. They argue that public relations in a modern strategic sense has been active in Russia only in the last 30 years (Tsetsura 2014).

There are only a few studies that linked public relations with societal culture outside of the Western world. Given the important relationship between the two concepts, the interplay between them deserves to be analyzed, but it has long been sidelined by the body of knowledge of public relations. The relationship can be addressed with culture as an "environment" that influences public relations. The conceptualization and the recent body of literature in public relations are limited mostly to this relationship (Sriramesh/Verčič 2012:3). Therefore, our research contributes to the global and Eastern European public relations body of knowledge.

With globalization, organizations started to open their branches abroad and to integrate their smaller companies into larger organizations, and in some cases even relocating their headquarters. Since 1991, there have been significant changes in Eastern Europe as well. Influenced by globalization Russia has become a country of huge business opportunities and in this renewed environment the need for public relations has increased. Ihator (2000:44) argues that historically, there has always been a symbiotic relationship between business expansion and the need for public relations. Sriramesh (2008:409) notes that in most of the countries, democratic processes had emerged in the 20th century when modern public relations matured. Molleda's (2009:3) definition of global public relations is based on the organizational need to communicate not only with the local public but also with their host country or the transnational public. Wakefield (2011:6) believes that the reputation of an organization is the outcome of its relations. The quality of those relations is driven more by the behavior of the organization than by the dissemination of information to the public. With the shift from one-way to two-way communication emerged a need for adaptation and interaction between different cultures. Falkheimer (2008:294) thinks that from a cultural point of view, globalization should probably be interpreted as glocalization since local

identity cannot be substituted with one global identity. In 2012 the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) published a modern definition of public relations stating: Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their public. Sriramesh and Verčič (2009:xxxiv) added a cultural perspective: Public Relations is the strategic communication that different types of organizations use for establishing and maintaining symbiotic relationships with relevant publics many of whom are increasingly becoming culturally diverse (Sriramesh 2009). That is also the reason that public relations strategies need to be adopted in different cultures.

Public relations models and strategies

In 1976, Grunig defined the quantitative measurement of the public relations concepts – models of public relations (Grunig/Grunig 1992:293). Based on the historical evolution of the field they have developed and represented four development steps. Grunig and Hunt (1984) have identified four models according to the direction of communication: one-way models (press agent/publicity and public information) and two-way models (asymmetrical and symmetrical).[1]

Research that evaluates the practice of public relations in Russia has been very limited (Mitchell 2013:5). Ragozina (2007) found out that Russian public relations specialists use all four models, while the dominant models are public information and the two-way asymmetrical model. The study showed the lowest use of the two-way symmetrical model. Pysh and Pritchard (2009) conducted a quantitative study in Russia and their research revealed an extremely low use of public information model and a medium use of press agentry model. According to Zajcev (2013:304), the dialogic model (two-way symmetrical model) is a virtually unknown concept to Russian public relations specialists and scholars today.

Theoretical public relations models have experienced a number of criticisms. Grunig et al. (2002) suggested a shift from the models to the public relations di-

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1 **Press agent/publicity model** uses persuasion and one-sided arguments to shape the thoughts and opinions of the publics; its aim is to publish stories that could be manipulative and not necessarily truthful. **Public information model** moves away from the manipulative tactics and aims to disseminate truthful information. Since it still does not take into account the public's opinion, it is only one-way**. Asymmetrical model** represents a more »scientifically persuasive« way of communication since specialists already conduct research to better understand the public's opinion and behaviors and use it as the basis for communication strategy. Since this model still uses persuasive communication as the benefit of the organization, it is considered asymmetrical and imbalanced**. Symmetrical model** argues that the public relations practitioner should serve as a liaison between the organization and key publics and establish a mutual beneficial relationship. This model is more balanced and most ethical since specialists in communication take into account both sides, organization, and the public.

mensions. Studies conducted by Grunig's students (Rhee 2002; Huang 2004; Sha 2006, 2009) contributed to the creation of new dimensions. Huang (2004:308) extended the static typology of public relations models to five dimensions: interpersonal, mediated, symmetrical (asymmetrical), two-way (one-way) and social activities. Rhee (2002) excluded the dimension of social activities and divided ethical and symmetrical communication. Sha (2009) proposed a new dimension – conservation. Grunig et al. (2002) defined a set of seven dimensions: one-way, two-way, interpersonal, asymmetrical, symmetrical, mediated and ethical communication. The dimensions of public relations did not receive as widespread adoption as models had earlier since scholars have not resolved the problem of dimensions' dichotomy.[2] Additionally, using models as the foundation for building dimensions is undesirable from conceptual and methodological points of view (Laskin 2009:50). However, since there is no other theoretical alternative in the field, we have used them as the basis for our research. Ragozina (2007) studied personal influence (Sriramesh/Grunig 1988) and cultural interpretation (Lyra 1991) strategies within the Russian market and we included them along with the conservation strategy (Sha 2009). At the end, our research model consisted of the ten below described strategies:

One-way vs. Two-way strategies derived from the direction of communication (e. g. monologue or dialogue). Their essential difference is whether the communication process takes into account feedback or not.

Mediated vs. Interpersonal strategies represent communication carried out by the use of mass or online media. *Personal influence* strategy as a way of interpersonal communication represents a personal impact on key individuals, such as from the media, government, politics, and among activists (Sriramesh/Grunig 1988).

Symmetrical, Asymmetrical and Conservation strategies are based on communication purpose. Symmetrical communication is characterized by a willingness of an organization to listen and respond to the concerns and interests of its key stakeholders in order to achieve a mutually beneficial relationship. Asymmetrical communication is not balanced since it tries to change the opinion of the public in favor of an organization. Due to the criticism that the asymmetrical communication is not the opposite pole of symmetrical communication (both ends of the continuum have the interests of the organization, and only one side has the interests of the public), Sha (2009) defined a new dimension called con-

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2 Grunig et al. (2002) place on the opposite side of asymmetrical communication the symmetrical communication. Since symmetrical communication represents the interests of both organization and publics and asymmetrical purely the interest of the organization, they cannot be called dichotomous. Similar it is with one-way and two-way communications since the two-way communication includes one-way communication in itself – only twice: one-way from the organization to the public and one-way from the public to the organization (Laskin 2009:49).

servation. It grew out of the asymmetrical model and means that organization refuses to change and wants to conserve its own fundamental agenda.

Ethical vs. Unethical strategies

Ethical communication is the key factor in responsible behavior, decision-making, and development of public relations within business, culture and public. Since unethical communication remains one of the most important topics/issues, especially in Russian business, we have decided to measure this dimension independently.

Cultural interpreter strategy was defined by Lyra (1991) in the study conducted in companies in Greece. The findings showed that international organizations recruit local public relations specialists in order to assure culturally sensitive communication practice. They need someone who understands their language, culture, customs and political system of the country.

Societal culture

Culture as a term has a range of meanings and definitions and, even in the field of anthropology, does not have one uniform definition (Sriramesh/Verčič 2009:40). Hall (1976: 16) as a founding father of intercultural communication believes that culture is not genetically inherited and cannot exist on its own, but is always shared by members of a society. According to Hofstede (2001: 9–10), culture is a collective mental programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. His comprehensive study among IBM employees from 40 nations[3] revealed four separate cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs. femininity. In 2001 Hofstede published the data from additional 10 nations and introduced fifth dimension – long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation. Hofstede's dimensions became the basis for different cultural theories. Since the beginning of this century, a number of research projects have been conducted to study Russian culture on the basis of his methodology. Russian culture may be roughly characterized by low to medium individualism, medium to high power distance, medium masculinity, high uncertainty avoidance, medium long-term orientation, and fairly high paternalism[4] (Ambrozheichik 2011:320–321).

House (2004:15) defines culture as shared motives, values, beliefs, identities and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common expe-

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3 The data were collected between 1967 and 1973.

4 This dimension was defined by Naumov (1996) as the condition of a high need felt by the weaker members of society to receive protection and care from the more powerful members (Ambrozheichik 2011:319).

riences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations. In the early 1990 s House conceived the idea of a large-scale international study of cultural, leadership and organizational practices that resulted in the Global Leadership & Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) project that has expanded to 170 researchers from 62 countries. GLOBE (2004) expanded the five Hofstede's dimensions to nine: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, gender egalitarianism, in-group collectivism, institutional collectivism, future orientation, performance orientation, assertiveness and humane orientation. We included GLOBE cultural dimensions in our research model and defined our key research question: What are the correlations between factors of societal culture and particular public relations strategies?

Methodology

This study represents a part of the extensive PhD research about the impact of environmental variables (societal culture, infrastructure, and media system) on public relations strategies in Russia. In the dissertation, we presented results of qualitative and quantitative studies. However, in this paper we present only the first part of the quantitative research that was focused on the correlations between factors of societal culture and public relations strategies in Russia.

In 2012/2013 we conducted a qualitative study – 16 semi-structured in-depth interviews with public relations specialists from companies in Russia that helped us develop the research question and quantitative questionnaire. The results suggested that societal culture correlates more with interpersonal, one-way, unethical, cultural interpreter and conservation strategies than with mediated, two-way, symmetrical and asymmetrical strategies. Since we wanted to verify the findings, we decided to conduct a quantitative study (online questionnaire) with Russian public relations specialists.

Questionnaire development

Findings from in-depth interviews have in addition to theoretical background, given us a deeper insight into the studied topic and influenced the structure and content of the questionnaire.

Societal culture (independent variable) was measured with a shortened form of the GLOBE questionnaire (House et al. 2004) as adapted by Northouse (2009). The questionnaire had two items (statements) for each of the nine dimensions (a total of 18 items; refer to Table 1).

In our research model, we included the following public relations strategies (as dependent variables): (i) one-way, (ii) two-way, (iii) asymmetrical, (iv) symmetrical, (v) ethical, (vi) unethical, (vii) interpersonal communication (including personal influence), (viii) mediated communication, (ix) conservation and (x)

cultural interpretation. Dimensions of public relations strategies were measured with 54 indicators (refer to Table 2).

All independent and dependent variables were measured on a 7-point Likert type scale of agreement, where 1 meant strongly disagree and 7 fully agree (refer to Table 1 and 2 below).

Data collection and sample characteristics

An online survey was conducted via a software "1KA". It was launched in Russian, English and Slovenian languages in June 2014 and was active until September 2014. The main challenge was to define the population of public relations specialists due to weak linkages, infrastructure and geographic distance among public relations associations in different regions and the difference in the naming/definition of the profession and function. Therefore, we defined our population as specialists who perform public relations activities in companies in Russia. According to the above-mentioned reasons, we used a snowball sampling method, asking the public relations specialists to connect us with potential respondents. In addition, Russian Public Relations Association (RPRA), Russian Communications Consultancies Association (AKOS) and the Russian Management Association were asked to share our questionnaire with their members. Given the fact that we were collecting the data outside our native country and because of the questionnaire's length (108 indicators), it was at the beginning difficult to get a sufficient amount of data via completed questionnaires (our goal was to get 100 fully completed questionnaires from all three versions in one month). Therefore, we had to prolong this phase to three months. By September, 643 respondents clicked on our questionnaire link, however the final sample consisted of 225 public relations specialists from companies operating in Russia.

Frequencies for demographic variables showed that the sample included 94 males (41.8%) and 131 females (58.2%). The majority – 196 respondents completed the Russian version of the questionnaire (87.1%), 15 Slovenian (6.7%) and 14 English version (6.2%). Among the age groups, the majority of the respondents were between 31 and 41 years old (46.0%), followed by a group of 21–31 years (33.0%), 15.0% were in the group of 41 and 51 years, only 5.0% above that age and 1.0% under 21 years old. In the sample, the majority of specialists completed a bachelor degree (68.4%), followed by a master's degree (21.3%), high school (2.3%) and respondents who did not specify their level of education (8.0%).

The sample included different types of companies: similar amounts of multinational (44.0%) and Russian companies (43.6%), and with only one percent difference with international (5.3%), Slovenian (4.4%) and other smaller com-

panies (2.7%)[5]. Most of the respondents were from companies with 1,001 to 10,000 employees (25.3%), followed by large companies with 251 to 1,000 employees (21.3%), and 53.4% with 250 or fewer employees. Most of the respondents defined their role as public relations specialists (35.1%), some of them changed their title to Communications or PR specialist, and they defined their role under option Other (49.8%); 102 respondents listed their titles that were so diverse that could not be further broken down (e. g. PR Manager, Communications consultant/manager, Product/Project manager, Head/Director of PR, Head of Press and media). 15.1% defined themselves as marketing managers. Since our study included mainly respondents from bigger cities in Russia (Moscow 86.9%, St. Petersburg 4.1%, others 9.0%), we were not able to generalize the conclusions for the whole of Russia, which has several regions and sub-cultures. In addition, we focused our research on the business community which does not represent the entire Russian public relations field.

Methodology

We analyzed the data with quantitative multivariate analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation and exploratory factor analysis that we performed in IBM "SPSS Statistics 19". First, we performed Descriptive Statistics for each of the dimensions of societal culture and public relations strategies. We also calculated the reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha for each of them. For indicators of societal culture, we ran an Exploratory Factor Analysis because we wanted to check whether the theoretically set dimensions corresponded to the factors derived from the collected data. Based on that we calculated the Pearson's correlation coefficients between the societal culture and public relations strategies that helped us to answer our research question.

Results

Descriptive statistics for societal culture

The results for descriptive statistics of societal culture indicators and dimensions are presented in Table 1. The analysis showed that respondents mostly agreed that children take pride in the individual accomplishments of their parents (in-group collectivism; $M = 5.44$) and even more that parents in Russian society take pride in the individual accomplishments of their children (in-group collectivism; $M = 6.22$). The economic system is more designed to maximize collective than individual interests (institutional collectivism; $M = 5.14$). Leaders still

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5   The aim of this categorization was to differentiate the companies that have Russian or foreign ownership and importers/exporters with no investment outside of their home country (international) vs. those that have investment in other countries, are focused on adapting their products and service to individual local market, but do not have coordinated product offerings in each country (multinational).

encourage more group loyalty vs. individual goals (institutional collectivism; M = 4.19). Students are focused on performance (performance orientation; M = 4.72) and are more often than not rewarded for excellent performance (performance orientation; M = 4.14). This indicates a relatively high level of institutional collectivism and shifts from collectivism to individualism that is also the trend of a modern competitive economy. The results revealed a high degree of power distance since respondents were fairly determined that power in Russian society is concentrated at the top (power distance; M = 6.01), and that people rarely express their opinion and often obey their leaders without question (power distance; M = 4.79). Uncertainty avoidance is still relatively high since orderliness and consistency are stressed even at the expense of experimentation and innovation (uncertainty avoidance; M = 4.53). Respondents had a neutral opinion regarding details of societal requirements, with citizens knowing what they are expected to do (uncertainty avoidance; M = 3.59). They also did not fully agree that the company encourages more men than women in attaining a higher education (gender egalitarianism; M = 3.39). Although these responses were closer to a neutral score, respondents strongly agreed that men are more likely to serve in a position of high office (gender equality; M = 5.38). Based on that, we can conclude that the perception of gender equality on a sample of public relations specialists is on a low level. According to the findings, Russians are not very assertive (assertiveness; M = 3.61), but they are tougher (assertiveness; M = 4.85). The respondents had a neutral opinion about the fact that people in Russian society are sensitive to others (humane orientation; M = 3.59), with concern about others (humane orientation; M = 3.28). They also acknowledged quite a lower level of future orientation since Russians are more focused on solving current problems than planning for the future (future orientation; M = 2.81) and they more often than not accept the "status quo" (future orientation; M = 3.64).

Descriptive statistics for public relations strategies

In Table 1 we are presenting descriptive statistics for dimensions of public relations strategies. Results of the survey suggest that companies generally strive for a two-way strategy. Average ratings of respondents were high for two-way communication: public relations programs include two-way communication (M = 4.87); companies listen to public opinion (M = 5.28), but before they start with public relations activities, they rarely conduct public opinion research (M = 3.97). Respondents agreed that they often evaluate their activities after they perform them (M = 5.34).

Slightly higher averages were for asymmetrical communication. Programs of public relations are more often than not designed with the objective to convince the public to agree with the point of view of the company (M = 4.52) and to behave in a way that the company wants them to behave (M = 4.10). Respondents

firmly agreed that they only share information with the public that helps the company be seen in a positive way (M = 5.20). From the results, it is difficult to conclude that companies communicate largely asymmetrically since the average score for the symmetrical strategy was similar.

The survey revealed that companies in Russia behave more ethically (M = 5.36) than unethically (M = 4.41), although the average score for the unethical strategy was above average. Usually, companies do not disclose negative information about the company (M = 5.18), they promote the interests of the organization if its decisions have a negative impact on the public (M = 4.92), and more often than not believe that they should share with the public only positive information (M = 4.30). Nevertheless, they do not avoid dialogue with the public, when a company takes an unfavorable decision (M = 3.25).

The highest average among all the strategies had the mediated strategy. Companies often send newsletters (M = 5.50), advertise less frequently (M = 4.05), often organize press conferences (M = 5.02) and use the mass media (M = 5.44). We did not expect such a high level of use of online communication (news, blogs, etc.) (M = 6.05) and social media (M = 5.26). Press releases and briefings are less in use (M = 4.81) than other above-mentioned activities, public speeches (M = 5.26) and other public events (M = 5.09). Companies also use fewer printed materials for communication purposes (M = 4.54).

Conservation strategy had a low average which is a positive outcome. However, according to the respondents, the companies in Russia are not ready to give up their principles (M = 5.30), have more or less the same strategy since the founding of the company (M = 4.09) that often does not change (M = 2.77).

Two indicators of cultural interpreter strategy had very high averages. Based on the results, we can argue that understanding of the second/foreign language is extremely important for public relations specialists (M = 6.42) and they also need to speak the Russian language (M = 6.26).

Reliability of measuring the public relations strategies (Table 2) was tested with Cronbach's alpha coefficients. It was the highest in the dimension of interpersonal communication (α = 0.873, N = 128) and the lowest in the conservation strategy (α = 0.554, N = 123).

Relationship between societal culture and public relations strategies

We have done the factor analysis for all indicators of the societal culture. Our aim was to investigate whether theoretically driven factors reflect set dimensions. Keiser-Meyer-Olkin rate of the suitability of the sample (KMO) shows whether the data is relevant for factor analysis. It is optimal that KMO is greater than 0.8, still acceptable is a rate greater than 0.5. Based on the analysis we found out that KMO for societal culture is 0.722 which means that it is quite

close to the optimum value and that our data corresponded to the factor analysis. Bartlett's test for statistical significance is less than 0.05 (p = 0.000), so the correlation matrix is not unitary.

Kaiser's rule recommends that we have as many factors as the extents of eigenvalues greater than 1. Based on that we obtained 5 factors (λ_1 = 3.668, λ_2 = 2.536, λ_3 = 1.452, λ_4 = 1.381, λ_5 = 1.110). These five factors explain 56% of the total variance, as follows: the first one explains 14.8%, second 11.7%, third 11.4%, fourth 10% and fifth 8.6% of the total variance. The remaining variance can be attributed to other specific factors.

Table 3 contains the outcome of the Varimax rotation[6] based on which we defined five new factors: Traditional Collectivism, Individual Performance, Future Orientation, Human Orientation and Gender Egalitarianism.

New factors were not fully aligned with theoretical assumptions of House et al. (2004). Factor analysis combined most of the indicators in Factor 1 (previously, they were part of the institutional collectivism, power distance, in-group collectivism, and assertiveness), which we named traditional collectivism[7]. The second factor was tied mainly to the performance, which is a business-specific value associated with individualism. Therefore, we called it individual performance[8]. Future and human orientations are specific dimensions in the GLOBE project and they remained consistent with its theoretical assumptions. Factor analysis added in gender egalitarianism one indicator of uncertainty avoidance, which according to the theory falls in the traditional collectivism.

We also checked the measurement reliability of new factors. Average reliability was from rather low to high. The highest reliability had future orientation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.707) and the lowest gender egalitarianism (Cronbach's alpha = 0.301). The reason for this may be in a small number of indicators (two for all dimensions) and different meanings of the categories on each side of the 7-point type Likert scale[9]. As we could not increase the reliability with exclusion of particular indicator, we continued the analysis with the proposed factors from Factor analysis (see Table 4).

6 Due to the paper limitation, we included only labels without description. They can be found in Table 1.

7 This factor included items from in-group (one item) and institutional collectivism (two items), power distance (two items), assertiveness (one item) and uncertainty avoidance (one item) which we see as traditional dimensions of Russian culture and history. Therefore, we named it traditional collectivism.

8 This factor consisted of in-group collectivism (one item), assertiveness (one item) and performance orientation (two items).

9 Gender egalitarianism had masculine (1 – men) on one side and feminine (7 – women) on the other side of the scale.

With obtained factors, we created a new variable "societal culture" that is an average of five factors. The average of indicators of the variable "societal culture" is 4.13, with a standard deviation of 0.591. In order to answer the research question, we calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient (refer to Table 5) between societal culture and individual public relations strategies. We found out that there is:

a medium statistical significant correlation between societal culture and:

- symmetrical communication ($r = 0.398^{**}$, $p = 0.000$),
- ethical communication ($r = 0.391^{**}$, $p = 0.000$),
- mediated communication ($r = 0.347^{**}$, $p = 0.007$),
- two-way communication ($r = 0.323^{**}$, $p = 0.000$),
- asymmetrical communication ($r = 0.320^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) at 1 % significance level;

a weak statistical significant correlation between societal culture and:

- conservation strategy ($r = 0.291^{**}$, $p = 0.001$),
- interpersonal communication ($r = 0.239^{**}$, $p = 0.005$) and
- unethical communication ($r = 0.239^{**}$, $p = 0.006$) at 1 % significance level;

no statistical significant correlation between societal culture and:

- cultural interpretation ($r = 0.154$, $p = 0.089$),
- one-way communication ($r = 0.082$, $p = 0.329$) at 1 % significance level.

In addition, we examined also the correlation coefficients among five obtained factors of societal culture and public relation strategies (Table 5). Both traditional collectivism ($r = 0.367^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) and individual performance ($r = 0.422^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) have the highest correlation with ethical communication. This means that Russian collective values and tradition might support ethical communication and that individual performance influences it as well. Their correlation with most of the other strategies indicates their importance in studying public relations strategies in Russia. Future orientation has the highest correlation with conservation ($r = 0.223^{**}$, $p = 0.000$). Due to the lower level of future orientation Russian companies are less likely to be willing to change. Humane orientation has the highest correlation with symmetrical communication ($r = 0.314^{**}$, $p = 0.000$). Since the GLOBE and our results showed a low level of human orientation in Russian culture it might have a negative impact on the use of symmetrical communication. On the other hand, none of the public relations strategies have significant correlation with gender egalitarianism at 5% significance level.

Based on the results of the correlation analysis, we answered our key research question: What are the correlations between factors of societal culture and public relations strategies?

Analysis showed the medium correlation with symmetrical communication (r = 0.398**, $p = 0.000$) that was not expected according to our qualitative study[10]. Interviews indicated that companies in Russia use more asymmetrical than symmetrical communication. We also hypothesized that societal culture correlates more with one-way, interpersonal, unethical communication, cultural interpretation, and conservation strategies but our results confirmed weak or no significant correlation.

Due to the significant correlation between ethical and symmetrical communication ($r = 0.692**$, $p = 0.000$), we can conclude that those companies that communicate ethically, are more likely to communicate symmetrically[11]. The strongest significant correlation was between two-way and symmetrical communication ($r = 0.780**$, $p = 0.000$) at 1% significance level that is consistent with the Grunig's excellence public relations model.

Discussion and future research

The relationship between societal culture and specific public relations strategies have so far not yet been studied among companies in Russia. In addition to that, most of the public relations studies used Hofstede's (2001) classification system with five dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity and long-short term orientation) for studying societal culture. Although seven of the nine dimensions from GLOBE have their origins in the Hofstede's theory, GLOBE expanded them and provided a broader and more elaborate way of describing dimensions of culture. The results of our quantitative research of societal culture are largely consistent with previous similar studies, such as Naumov and Puffer (2000), Hofstede (2001), GLOBE (House et al. 2004), Grachev, Rogovsky, Rakitski (2007), Pysh and Pritchard (2009). GLOBE results (2018) show Russia as relatively low in uncertainty avoidance ($M = 2.88$), future orientation ($M = 2.88$), performance orientation ($M = 3.39$), assertiveness ($M = 3.68$) and humane orientation ($M = 3.94$), medium in gender egalitarianism ($M = 4.07$) and institutional collectivism ($M = 4.50$) and high in power distance ($M = 5.52$) and in-group collectivism ($M = 5.63$). Even though the data are not fully comparable due to different measurement, our research showed a positive trend in performance orientation ($M = 4.43$). We had similar results as GLOBE study for dimensions of collectivism, nevertheless, higher level of individualism as previous studies. Our average for institutional collectivism is 4.64 and for in-group collectivism 5.82.[12] Individual

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10 The qualitative study was not included in this paper. For more details, please refer to Lumbar Globočnik (2017).

11 Due to the text limitation, we have not presented the detailed table with correlation coefficients here. It can be found in Lumbar Globočnik (2017).

12 7-point scale (GLOBE) was labeled from 1 – individualism to 7 – collectivism.

trend can be linked to the economic reforms, shift of power from state to private companies and political decentralization as noted already by Naumov and Puffer (2000). As per Grachev (2007) Russia displayed the deepest shifts in all spheres of economic and societal life that thrived through the crisis of the 1990s with wild privatization, financial, political instabilities and moved into the 2000s with strengthening state capitalism, enlarging bureaucracy, and slowing down the development of democracy and free market. It also explains the remaining high level of power distance ($M = 5.36$). Our findings show that in turbulent economic environment and with fast changes, people are less strategic (future orientation ($M = 3.23$)) and human (human orientation ($M = 3.43$)). Therefore, the national culture is changing and can vary in different segments of the public.

Lumbar Globočnik (2017) assumed that societal culture significantly impacts the choice of public relations strategies. Results confirmed that there is a medium statistically significant correlation between societal culture and the public relations strategies ($r = 0.485^{**}$). Hypothesis was confirmed as it can explain 23 % of the variability of the public relations strategies.[13]

In the era of communism, there was no concept of public relations as we understand it today. Especially in Russia, practitioners mainly used propaganda as the least desirable one-way and manipulative model that existed even in the West at the beginning of the development of public relations. More advanced strategies as proposed by Grunig et al. (2002) have been recognized in Russia only in the last decade. Our study showed that generally accepted excellence strategies (two-way, symmetrical and ethical communications), are in use in Russia. Therefore, we confirmed the development of Russian public relations that is under the significant influence of its societal culture.

The findings in our research revealed weak to medium influence of societal culture on two-way, symmetrical, asymmetrical, ethical, unethical, interpersonal, mediated communication and conservation strategies. However, we could not confirm the influence of societal culture on one-way and cultural interpretation strategies, since the data was not statistically significant. Descriptive statistics confirmed that public relations specialists in Russian business environment mainly use cultural interpretation and personal influence (interpersonal) strategies. Surprisingly, they use much more often mediated and symmetrical strategies as we expected. We found that companies do use more ethical than unethical communication. Contrary to our predictions, we found out that there is the strongest (vs. other strategies) but a medium correlation between societal culture and symmetrical, mediated, two-way and ethical strategies. High use of the cultural interpreter strategy showed that it is recommended for companies to hire Russian public relations specialists, who can act as the "translators" for foreign/international companies. The study also showed that the knowledge of the Rus-

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13 For more details, please refer to Lumbar Globočnik (2017).

sian language (and culture) is extremely important (M = 6.26) and contributes to the public relations efficiency.

The purpose of our study was to understand the relationship between public relations strategies and societal culture. Even though the findings confirmed correlation between the variables, our study has some limitation as we did not use the complete GLOBE questionnaire for studying Russian culture, and we conducted the research on the sample of public relations specialists from companies based in major cities, especially Moscow. It would be worthwhile to validate our model with a complete questionnaire and with a larger sample of public relations specialists also from the non-business sector, other Russian regions or in different countries.

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Table 1: **Descriptive statistics for individual indicators and dimensions of societal culture, including Cronbach's Alphas for dimensions**

Dimension (Cronbach's Alpha)	Indicator	Indicators of societal culture	N	M	SD
Uncertainty avoidance α= 0.55 M = 4.06 SD = 1.29	UA_01	In this society, orderliness and consistency are stressed even at the expense of experimentation and innovation.	180	4.53	1.53
	UA_02	In this society, societal requirements and instructions are spelled out in detail so citizens know what they are expected to do.	180	3.59	1.57
Power distance α= 0.58 M = 5.36 SD = 1.36	PD_01	In this society, followers are expected to question their leaders when in disagreement.	180	4.79	1.70
	PD_02	In this society, power is shared throughout the society (1) / concentrated at the top (7).	180	6.01	1.44
Institutional collectivism α= 0.49 M = 4.64 SD = 1.37	IGC_01	In this society, leaders encourage group loyalty even if individual goals suffer.	180	4.19	1.66
	IGC_02	The economic system in this society is designed to maximize individual (1) / collective (7) interests.	180	5.14	1.68
In-group collectivism α= 0.74 M = 5.82 SD = 1.22	IC_01	In this society, children take pride in the individual accomplishments of their parents.	180	5.44	1.39
	IC_02	In this society, parents take pride in the individual accomplishments of their children.	180	6.22	1.26
Gender egalitarianism α= 0.30 M = 4.36 SD = 1.16	GE_01	In this society, boys are encouraged more than girls to attain a higher education.	180	3.39	1.78
	GE_02R[14]	In this society women (1) are more likely to serve in a position of high office then men (7).	180	5.38	1.19
Assertiveness α = − 0.11 M = 4.23 SD = 0.89	AS_01	In this society, people are generally assertive (1) / nonassertive (7).	175	3.61	1.36
	AS_02	In this society, people are generally tender (1) / tough (7).	175	4.85	1.20
Future orientation α = 0.71 M = 3.23 SD = 1.22	FO_01	In this society the accepted norm is to accept the status quo (1) / plan for the future (7).	175	3.64	1.41
	FO_02	In this society, people place more emphasis on solving current problem (1) / planning for the future (7).	175	2.81	1.37

14   R means that the values were recoded before we have run the analysis of descriptive statistics.

Dimension (Cronbach's Alpha)	Indicator	Indicators of societal culture	N	M	SD
Performance orientation α = 0.68 M = 4.43 SD = 1.25	PO_01	In this society, students are encouraged to strive for continuously improved performance.	175	4.72	1.48
	PO_02	In this society, people are rewarded for excellent performance.	175	4.14	1.40
Humane orientation α = 0.76 M = 3.43 SD = 1.21	HO_01	In this society, people are generally not at all concerned about others (1) / very concerned about others (7).	175	3.28	1.31
	HO_02	In this society, people are generally not at all sensitive to others (1) / very sensitive toward others (1)	175	3.59	1.40

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for individual indicators and dimensions of public relations strategies, including Cronbach's Alphas for dimensions

Dimension (Cronbach's Alpha)	Indicator	Indicators of public relations strategies	N	M	SD
One-way communication α= 0.78 M = 3.59 SD = 1.32	1-WCOM_01	Information flows out from our company, but not into it.	144	2.85	1.66
	1-WCOM _02	We speak more than we listen in doing public relations.	144	3.75	1.63
	1-WCOM _03	Public relations activities in our company involve one-way communication from the company to public.	144	3.29	1.72
	1-WCOM _04	Most public relations activities in our company are designed to disseminate information to the public.	144	4.50	1.73
Two-way communication α= 0.80 M = 4.86 SD = 1.23	2-WCOM _01	Public Relations programs in our company involve two-way communication between company and public.	144	4.87	1.70
	2-WCOM _02	We listen to the opinion of the public.	144	5.28	1.44
	2-WCOM _03	Before carrying out public relations activities, we first conduct research to understand how the public feels about certain issues.	144	3.97	1.68
	2-WCOM _04	After conducting public relations or communication activities, we conduct evaluations of these activities.	144	5.34	1.68
Asymmetrical communication α= 0.60 M = 4.61 SD = 1.20	2-WCOM _01	We do programs or projects to persuade publics to agree with our company's point of view.	137	4.52	1.61
	2-WCOM _02	We do programs or projects to persuade publics to behave as our company wants them to behave.	137	4.10	1.69
	2-WCOM _03	In doing Public Relations we try to provide only information that will help the public to see our company more favorably.	137	5.20	1.54

Dimension (Cronbach's Alpha)	Indicator	Indicators of public relations strategies	N	M	SD
Symmetrical communica-tion α= 0.72 M = 4.99 SD = 1.12	SIMCOM_01	We do not try to change the attitudes and behavior of members of the public, but also try to change our attitudes and behavior.	137	4.89	1.46
	SIMCOM_02	Before making final decisions or adopting policies, we seek the opinions of those groups or individuals that will be affected by the decision or policy.	137	4.52	1.60
	SIMCOM_03	We believe Public Relations should provide mediation for the organization – to help management and publics negotiate conflict.	137	5.75	1.56
	SIMCOM_04	We consider the opinions of members of the public and try to change behavior and pol-icies.	137	4.82	1.46
Ethical communica-tion α= 0.82 M = 5.36 SD = 1.16	ETHCOM_01	The information we provide is factual.	132	5.89	1.38
	ETHCOM _02	We consider the interests of the public as much as organizational interests.	132	4.68	1.63
	ETHCOM_03	We take into account the effects of the Public Relations activities or communication activi-ties on the public.	132	5.61	1.20
	ETHCOM_04	We explain our motivations or why we do things to the public.	132	5.27	1.48
Unethical communica-tion α= 0.72 M = 4.41 SD = 1.23	UNETHCOM_01	When doing programs or projects, we avoid disclosing negative information about our company/organization.	132	5.18	1.58
	UNETHCOM_02	We believe the role of Public Relations is to promote the interests of the organization even if the organization's decision has nega-tive effects on the public.	132	4.92	1.76
	UNETHCOM_03	We try to avoid dialogue with the public when the organization makes unpopular de-cisions.	132	3.25	1.59
	UNETHCOM_04	In our Public Relations, we believe that favor-able information should be disseminated but unfavorable information should be kept from the public.	132	4.30	1.70
Interperson alcommuni-cation α= 0.70 M = 4.83 SD = 0.86	INTERCOM_01	We use face-to-face communication.	130	4.47	1.68
	INTERCOM_02	We offer valuable gifts.	130	3.05	1.86
	INTERCOM_03	We communicate in person with the public.	130	3.82	1.78
	INTERCOM_04	We attend meetings.	130	5.49	1.45
	INTERCOM_05	We make informal contact with the public.	130	5.14	1.45
	INTERCOM_06	We hold public/social events.	130	5.35	1.65
	PI_01	Having good interpersonal relationship with other employees in our company is very im-portant for Public Relations practitioner.	130	6.35	1.16
	PI_02	Having good interpersonal relationships with people outside my organization is very im-portant for Public Relations practitioner.	130	6.40	1.15
	PI_03	The best way of being successful at Public Re-lations is to provide benefits (dinner, gifts) to gain influence with personal contacts.	130	3.35	1.81

Dimension (Cronbach's Alpha)	Indicator	Indicators of public relations strategies	N	M	SD
Mediated communica-tion α= 0.87 M = 5.12 SD = 1.30	MEDCOM_01	We distribute news letters.	129	5.50	1.67
	MEDCOM_02	We use advertisements.	129	4.05	2.20
	MEDCOM_03	We hold news conferences.	129	5.02	2.04
	MEDCOM_04	We use mass media, such as television and radio broadcasts, newspapers, or magazines.	129	5.44	1.86
	MEDCOM_05	We use our web site (blogs, news, ...).	129	6.05	1.40
	MEDCOM_06	We offer information and news briefings.	129	4.81	2.01
	MEDCOM_07	We often use social media (e.g. VKontakte.ru, Odnoklassniki, Facebook, Twitter, LikedIn ...).	129	5.46	1.92
	MEDCOM_08	We give speeches.	129	5.26	1.91
	MEDCOM_09	We stage events, tours, open houses.	129	5.09	1.95
	MEDCOM_10	We distribute flyers, pamphlets, magazines, or other printed materials that represent the company.	129	4.54	2.13
Conservation strategy α= 0.55 M = 4.34 SD = 0.88	CONSER_01	Our company subscribes to certain ideals that it will never give up.	128	5.30	1.60
	CONSER_02	Our company has a sense of purpose that has remained unchanged since its founding.	128	4.09	1.97
	CONSER_03	We often shift from one vision to another in our company.	128	2.77	1.58
	CONSER_04	When my company communicates with me, I feel that it is more interested in accomplish-ing its own agenda than in my opinion.	128	4.23	1.81
	STRAKON_05	Our company's mission is unlikely to change in response to external pressures.	128	4.34	2.00
	STRAKON_06	Our company exists primarily to accomplish its own goals.	128	5.51	1.40
	STRAKON_07	In communicating with others who hold views different from those of itself, our com-pany would never compromise on its pos-ition.	128	4.16	1.48
Cultural intepretation strategy α= 0.65 M = 5.40 SD = 1.10	KULPRE_01	Understanding a second language is impor-tant for Public Relations practitioner.	123	6.42	1.05
	KULPRE_02	International Public Relations specialists have to speak Russian language in order to be able to perform their role on Russian mar-ket.	123	6.26	1.34
	KULPRE_03	Providing services for international compa-ny is an important part of my job.	123	5.15	1.89
	KULPRE_04	Helping my company understand Russian business environment is important.	123	4.90	1.89
	KULPRE_05	Introducing my co-workers to important peo-ple in Russian society is important.	123	4.26	2.13

Table 3: Factor matrix for indicators of societal culture with Varimax rotation

SOCIETAL CUL-TURE INDICATORS	FACTORS				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
IC_02	**0,693**			0,239	-0,280
PD_02	**0,627**				
PD_01	**0,620**	0,125	-0,140	-0,153	0,206
IGC_02	**0,554**	0,372	0,300		
IC_01	**0,536**		0,122		
UA_01	**0,510**	-0,296	0,210	0,248	0,450
AS_02	**0,507**		-0,107	-0,301	0,281
PO_02		**0,785**		0,176	0,113
PO_01	0,246	**0,678**	-0,120	0,355	
AS_01	-0,163	**0,549**	0,385		
IGC_01	0,259	**0,515**	0,441	0,104	
FO_01			**0,810**	0,174	
FO_02			**0,668**	0,359	0,103
HO_02		0,233	0,197	**0,786**	-0,129
HO_01		0,314	0,276	**0,689**	
GE_02R		0,128		-0,155	**0,689**
GE_01	-0,196	0,154	0,407	-0,298	**-0,575**
UA_02	0,295		0,330	-0,112	**0,524**

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and reliability for societal culture and five obtained factors of societal culture

	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Standard. Cron-bach's Alpha
SOCIETAL CULTURE	175	1,00	7,00	4.13	0.59	0,408
FACTORS						
Traditional collectivism	180	1.00	6.86	5.08	0.950	0,697
Individual performance	180	1.00	7.00	4.50	1.068	0,665
Future orientation	175	1.00	6.50	3.23	1.223	0,707
Human orientation	175	1.00	6.00	3.43	1.213	0,756
Gender egalitarianism	180	1.67	7.00	4.11	0.975	0,301

Table 5: Correlations between societal culture, five obtained factors of societal culture and public relations strategies

PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES		One-way communication	Cultural interpretation	Unethical communication	Interpersonal communication	Conservation	Asymmetrical communication	Two-way communication	Mediated communication	Ethical communication	Symmetrical communication
SOCIETAL CULTURE	Pearson. Coeff.	,082	,154	,239**	,245**	,291**	,320**	,323**	,347**	,391**	**,398****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,329	,089	,006	,005	,001	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Traditional collectivism	Pearson. Coeff.	,217**	,323**	,252**	,331**	,297**	,254**	,176*	,358**	**,367****	,273**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,009	,000	,004	,000	,001	,003	,035	,000	,000	,001
Individual performance	Pearson. Coeff.	,037	,142	,234**	,265**	,224*	,326**	,331**	,285**	**,422****	,405**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,664	,117	,007	,002	,011	,000	,000	,001	,000	,000
Future orientation	Pearson. Coeff.	,043	,021	,179*	,147	**,223***	,210*	,126	,148	,087	,158
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,610	,816	,040	,094	,011	,014	,133	,094	,320	,065
Humane orientation	Pearson. Coeff.	-,078	-,057	,086	,036	,087	,151	,263**	,148	,249**	**,314****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,351	,530	,324	,684	,326	,078	,001	,095	,004	,000
Gender egalitarianism	Pearson. Coeff.	,008	,118	,036	-,004	,102	,035	,052	,036	,109	,020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,928	,194	,679	,961	,252	,685	,536	,683	,212	,814

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 significance level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 significance level (2-tailed).