



## Media Relations of PR-Structures in Uzbekistan (In the Example of Political Parties)

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**Abstract:** *Various studies in the world show that mass media plays a great role in shaping public opinion by paying great attention to certain issues in the eye of people. That is why public relation services of different organizations and governmental structures try to cooperate closely with mass media. It is one of the main tools of communicating with audience. This article gives descriptive analysis of cooperation channels of PR-structures with mass media in Uzbekistan. The paper explores media relations of four political parties in the country and their media coverage in ten Uzbek nationwide newspapers – Uzbekiston Ovozi, XXI asr, Milliy Tiklanish, Adolat, Khalq Suzi, Narodnoe Slovo, Pravda Vostoka, Khurriyat, Mokhiyat and Jamiyat. PR-articles published from 2010 to 2014 were studied and evaluated by its amount of and valence.*

**Keywords:** *Mass Media, Public Relations, Media-Channel, Media Relations, Newspaper, Political Party.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Mass media and journalists play an essential role in shaping public opinion by connecting events occurring in the world with the images of these events in people's minds [1] (Lippmann, 1997). Since most people lack direct experiences with an event their opinions on some subjects are mainly based on the information they receive from the mass media. Since McCombs and Shaw [2] (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) published their study on agenda setting in 1972, various studies have tested the idea that there is a strong correlation between the amount of coverage certain issues receive and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences. That is why public relation services of different organizations and governmental structures pay a great attention to partnership with mass media. For PR services mass media is one of the main channels of communicating with audience.

With so much importance attached to mass media this article intends to observe media relations of PR-structures in Uzbekistan in the example of political parties.

#### 1.1. Research Question

What communication channel is significant in media relations of political parties?

### 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article gives descriptive and comparative analysis of print media coverage of political parties in Uzbekistan. To find an answer to the research question all PR-articles about political parties published from 2010-2014 in ten nationwide newspapers of Uzbekistan were studied in terms of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Altogether, 8261 PR-materials were studied. Only stories with strong and direct connections with the political parties in those newspapers were included in the dataset.

Quantitative assessments were based on the number of articles published in all 3 channels of media communication. Qualitative assessments were based on content analysis of articles, in other words the valence of the coverage (positive, neutral or negative).

About 10 percent of the articles were first coded by the researcher, and an experienced journalist to assure the intercoder reliability, to check the researcher's fairness. And the coding of the rest materials was done by the researcher. Calculated by the software Stata the intercoder reliability for valence is .89 according to the Pearson correlation coefficient.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Quantitative Analysis

PR uses a lot of channels to communicate with public. PR has two channels of communication with public:

- Media-channels (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, web-sites, direct mailing, media pamphlets, booklets, posters)
- Non-media channels (meetings, briefings, conference, seminar-trainings, exhibitions).

Media channels of communication are divided to following:

- Earned media (coverage generated through editorial).
- Owned media (own publication, broadcast or website).
- Bought media (advertisement).

Achieving effective communication with public depends on selecting effective methods of communication.

Political parties in Uzbekistan cooperate with mass media closely. For example, Milliy Tiklanish Democratic Party's faction in Legislative Chamber organized more than 70 non-media live events in 2010 to propagandize the party's ideas and to implement the tasks outlined on the electoral platform, but made more than 4000 media coverage [3] (Mukhammadiev, 2011). PDPU reports that the members of the PDPU faction participated in 39 live events in 2013, but were made 2829 media coverage [4] (PDPU, 2014). These numbers show that political parties factions communicate with audience through mass media more than live events.

So, what media-channel is more significant in coverage of political parties in print media than the other ones? To answer the question the number of articles published in all channels of media communication were compared with each other.

#### 3.2. The First Channel of Cooperation

Political parties try to be covered by newspapers to reach out the public as much as possible. That's why they always keep relations with editorials. After studying the content of leading nationwide non-party newspapers like Jamiyat, Mokhiyat, Pravda Vostoka, Narodnoe Slovo, Khalk Suzi and Khurriyat from 2010-2014, it became clear that they published a lot of materials reflecting political parties' activities. Totally, 1090 PR-materials were published in five year. And it was also found that coverage of political parties in Uzbek press was increasing year by year (Look at the Table 1).

**Table1.** The number of PR-articles about all political parties published in non-party press in 2010-2014.

№	Newspaper	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
1	Khurriyat	8	5	2	6	15	36
2	Mokhiyat	22	14	5	4	23	68
3	Pravda Vostoka	17	16	13	9	56	111
4	Narodnoe slovo	27	34	17	44	70	192
5	Khalk suzi	42	33	21	43	72	211
6	Jamiyat	50	156	82	35	149	472
	Total	166	258	140	141	385	1090

#### 3.3. The Second Channel of Cooperation

State bodies and non-governmental organizations in Uzbekistan established their own media. For example, Khalk Suzi Newspaper is the organ of Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan and The Cabinet of Ministers. The founder of Toshkent Okshomi Newspaper is Tashkent City municipality. Soglom Avlod Uchun international nongovernmental charity fund established Soglom Avlod Newspaper. Postda and Na Pastu Newspapers were set up by Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan.

Today, 53 percent of print media were established by state bodies and 47 percent by non-governmental organizations. 60 percent of electronic media are governmental and 40 percent non-

governmental organizations. 97 percent of internet media were established by state bodies, 93 percent by non-governmental organizations (the data values from 2016 January 1<sup>st</sup>) [5] (Abdulkaromov and Abdusattorov, 2016: 37). That kind of media can be example for second channel of cooperation.

And this communication channel is significant in political parties' media relations, too. Today Uzbek party press plays a big role as a PR-tool for political parties. The party press highlights the party's ideology, position, goals and policies which it belongs to. For example, the basic ideology of Milliy Tiklanish Democratic Party is building national legal democratic state and this goal is accordingly gets reflected in the party's newspaper. National traditions and heritage of Uzbekistan is covered nearly in every publication of Milliy Tiklanish Newspaper.

The party press serves on the benefits of two sides:

- Serves as a PR-tool for political parties. It introduces the public with party program, ideology, its politics and activities. For example, in the letter of gratitude titled "With the help of the party ..." published in Adolat newspaper in 2011, December 2, B.Sobirov, from Chirchik district, thanks Adolat SDP for helping to solve his problem. Such letters of gratitude help to raise parties' reputation.
- Raises problems and issues concerning electorates' interests. For example, the platform of the Milliy tiklanish Democratic Party outlines tasks like preserving cultural and historical monuments of the country. Based on these tasks Milliy Tiklanish newspaper published an article titled "Objects of cultural heritage" in 2011, February 2, stating that many objects of cultural heritage in Karshi city was in bad state, scientific researches in many archaeological sites were suspended and illegal constructions were ongoing in such sights instead. The article criticizes the deputies of the MTDP and the local party organization for not taking any measures on this issue.

Totally, 7171 PR-materials about political parties were published in 4 above-mentioned party newspapers during five years. And it was also found that coverage of political parties in Uzbek press was increasing year by year (Look at the Table 2).

**Table2.** *The number of articles about political parties published in party press in 2010-2014.*

№	Newspaper	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
1	XXI asr	268	345	301	261	308	1483
2	Milliy Tiklanish	266	301	388	412	490	1857
3	Uzbekiston Ovozi	257	268	462	378	540	1905
4	Adolat	224	363	343	459	537	1926
	Total	1015	1277	1494	1510	1875	7171

### 3.4. The Third Channel of Cooperation

As not all organizations can afford paying money for commercials, that's why the role of the third channel of communication is slightly. Political parties in Uzbekistan don't deduct money for giving ads in print media so much. If to say in concrete figures, only 4 articles (0.04 %) out of 8261 published from 2010-2014 were ads.

If to compare the data above, one can see that second channel of media communication is the most important channel in cooperation of the two institutes. 7171 (86%) articles out of 8261 from 10 newspapers in the country were published in the party press.

### 3.5. Qualitative Analysis

The media's coverage is analyzed not only in terms of the amount, but also the valence of the coverage.

Some of the articles were about just one political party, some of them about two or three parties, and some of them about all four political parties. That's why the stories which are about several parties were attributed for each of the political party. Overall, during 2010-2014 Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan were written about in 2196 stories, Milliy Tiklanish Democratic Party in 2435 stories, People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan in 2533 and Adolat Social Democratic Party in 2578 stories in five years.

Valence was measured on how the depiction of a party appears to common people. Positive is coded as 3, neutral as 2 and negative as 1. Positive news associates a party with progress. For example, an event organized by any branch of a party, any activity or speech of a party member or a fraction's member on some issues, praise or support of a party's policy is regarded as positive. When a story associates the party with weakness, inefficiency, it is coded as negative. For example, weak organization, a person's opinion against a party's policy was coded as negative. Stories those are balanced between positive and negative sides, or hard to determine its valence fall into the neutral category. The coverage of both strong and weak local branches of a party in the same story was usually coded as neutral.

Besides the researcher an experienced journalist did the coding to check the researcher's fairness. About 10 percent of the articles were first coded by both coders to assure the intercoder reliability, and the rest was done by the researcher. Calculated by the software Stata the intercoder reliability for valence is .89 according to the Pearson correlation coefficient.

The overall tone of media's coverage of political parties is leaned to the positive side. Out of 2578 articles about Adolat SDP only 69 are negative (2.68 %), 280 are neutral (10.86 %) in five years. Out of 2196 articles about UzLiDeP only 116 are negative (5.28%), 184 are neutral (8.38%). Out of 2435 articles about Milliy tiklanish DP only 58 are negative (2.38 %), 186 are neutral (7.64%). Out of 2533 articles about PDPU only 115 are negative (4.54%), 179 are neutral (7.07 %) (Look at the Table 3).

**Table3.** *The overall tone of media coverage of political parties in all articles published in 10 newspapers during 2010-2014.*

№	Political parties	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
1	Adolat SDP	2229 (86.46 %)	280 (10.86 %)	69 (2.68 %)	2578
2	UzLiDeP	1896 (86.33 %)	184 (8.38 %)	116 (5.28 %)	2196
3	Milliy tiklanish DP	2191 (89.97 %)	186 (7.64 %)	58 (2.38 %)	2435
4	PDPU	2239 (88.32 %)	179 (7.07 %)	115 (4.54%)	2533

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

So, in the result of quantitative and qualitative comparative analyzes of media coverage of political parties in Uzbekistan, it was found that party press covers political parties much more than other newspapers. Hence, we conclude that the owned media is the most important communication channel in partnership of mass media and PR-structures. Besides, the level of media coverage of political parties in Uzbekistan is increasing year by year, and it is leaned to be mostly positive in all newspapers.

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**Citation:** Oydin N. Sadullaeva. "Media Relations of PR-Structures in Uzbekistan (In the Example of Political Parties)". *International Journal of Media, Journalism and Mass Communications (IJMJMC)*, vol 4, no. 4, 2018, pp. 37-40. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2455-0043.0404004>

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