

The Advertorial as a Tool of Mediated Public Diplomacy

GUY J. GOLAN
EVHENIA "ZHENIA" VIATCHANINOVA
Syracuse University, USA

This study examines Russia's use of the advertorial as a strategic tool of public diplomacy. Our analysis of 303 advertorial news items published in supplemental sections of *The Washington Post* and *The Times of India* finds that, overall, Russian advertorials focused primarily on economics, culture, and international relations. However, the results point to greater diversity in issue promotion for the U.S. advertorials than for the Indian advertorials. Furthermore, we identified dissimilar attribute promotion strategies between the two advertorials. The Indian advertorials focused predominantly on Russia's power attribute, whereas U.S. advertorials highlight Russia's attributes as an innovative, developed, and investor-friendly nation. Research findings are discussed in the wider scope of mediated public diplomacy and international agenda-building scholarship.

Keywords: public diplomacy, advertorial, Russia, soft power, public relations, diplomacy, India, newspapers

In September 2013, Russian president Vladimir Putin published an op-ed in *The New York Times* in which he articulated Russia's foreign policy concerning Syria directly to the American people. Although Putin's op-ed garnered much media attention, it was but a small part of a much larger global engagement strategy that combines Russian and international media platforms to communicate and articulate Russian foreign policy. The most developed of these is Russia Today (RT), which is a Russian satellite television broadcasting system similar to Qatar's Al Jazeera or France 24 (Powers, 2011). Established in 2005 to rebrand Russia's global image, RT has been criticized for its ideological-driven content that, to many, seems like propaganda (Seib, 2005). Described by Becker (2004) as a neo-authoritarian media system, the entire Russian media industry is tightly controlled to fit the worldview of the Russian government. RT falls into this category. More recently, RT expanded its global reach via the adaptation of various social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube (Kelly et al., 2012). Cross-platform, both the traditional and social media channels allow the Russian government to build and promote its international relations agenda.

Guy J. Golan: gjgolan@syr.edu

Evhenia "Zhenia" Viatchaninova: evhenia.v@gmail.com

Date submitted: 2013-04-13

Copyright © 2014 (Guy J. Golan & Evhenia "Zhenia" Viatchaninova). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

One platform of mediated public diplomacy that most people are not aware of is the advertorial, a paid form of advertising that is similar in presentation to traditional newspaper content (Golan & Vitchaninova, 2013). Whereas audiences may be aware of Russian broadcasting tactics as tools of government communication, the advertorial presents a much more covert form of controlled media messaging that may be mistaken by audiences to represent newspaper editorial content. Together, Russian electronic broadcasting, official government communications in international forums (Tsygankov, 2012), and nontraditional agenda-building tactics such as advertorials and op-eds allow Russia to promote its foreign policy objectives and national brand.

In the decades after the Cold War, Russia has struggled to give voice to its post-Soviet status within the international community. As part of his new realism approach, President Vladimir Putin aimed to redefine Russia as a global leader through various international public diplomacy efforts (Sakwa, 2008). Some observers describe Russia's public diplomacy strategy as twofold. On the one hand, it aims to build a relationship that is mutually beneficial with the United States and the West (Trenin, 2007). On the other, it uses a soft balancing approach that focuses on Russian independence and builds issue-specific coalitions that may counter the West on specific issues (Paul, 2005).

Under the leadership of Putin and Medvedev, the Russian government was aware of the negative depiction of its government and its policies in Western media, engaged in numerous public diplomacy outreach programs that aimed to improve Russia's image, attracted foreign investments (Elaeva, 2011), and gained more influence over issue management as related to Russia in the international media (see Centre for Eastern Studies, 2009). Because Russia's public diplomacy efforts targeted global audiences across different regions of the world, some have criticized these efforts as incoherent and even as propaganda (see Avgerinos, 2009; Sakwa, 2012).

This study aims to advance the understanding of international government public relations by examining Russia's attempts to promote positive framing of its policies and influence the news agenda of foreign media. More specifically, we examine Russia's use of the advertorial magazine inserts paid for by Russia and placed in elite foreign newspapers as a tool of strategic public diplomacy in the United States and in India. By comparing two distinct public diplomacy campaigns presented through the advertorial platform, we hope to understand how Russia aimed to promote salient issues and attributes to two distinct foreign audiences.

Literature Review

Mediated Public Diplomacy and Public Relations

During the past decade, public diplomacy research has received much attention from communication scholars. Unlike traditional diplomacy that focuses on nation-to-nation relationships, public diplomacy examines the relationships between governments (Gilboa 2000; Manheim, 1994), nongovernmental organizations (Zhang & Swarts, 2009), and corporations (Molleda, 2011) and citizens of other nations. As explained by Wang (2006), nations use public diplomacy tactics to promote their desired image and build relationships with nations and their people. Inspired by Nye's (2005, 2008) soft power

approach, several public diplomacy studies have examined international cooperation programs, including cultural diplomacy and educational exchanges (Schneider, 2003; Snow, 2008), aid diplomacy (Lancaster, 2007), health diplomacy (Wise, 2009), sports diplomacy (Xifra, 2009), and even water diplomacy (Karaev, 2005).

Recognizing the complex interaction between government programs, global news coverage, and international public opinion, scholars have argued for the examination of public diplomacy through a public relations perspective (Fitzpatrick, 2007; L'Etang, 2009; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). Signitzer and Wasmer (2006) have asserted that public diplomacy is a specific governmental function of public relations whose goals are intertwined. Ultimately, public diplomacy is focused on the establishment and maintenance of a mutual beneficial relationship between governments and foreign citizens (Gilboa, 2008; Signitzer & Coombs, 1991; Yun, 2006). This goal is consistent with the body of public relations literature that focuses on relationship management (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Ki & Hon, 2007; Ledingham, 2003) and stewardship (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Waters, 2009, 2011). Because of this focus on relationships, many scholars have asserted that the public relations perspective provides a relevant construct for scholarship on public diplomacy (L'Etang, 1998, 2008; Signitzer & Wasmer, 2006; Wang, 2006).

One emerging area of scholarship in the field of public diplomacy research is the specific examination of mediated public diplomacy, which is defined by Entman (2004, 2008) as the attempt by governments to shape and influence their framing in the international news media. Although only a handful of academic studies have directly tested the mediated public diplomacy concept by name, many public relations studies have examined government attempts to engage in global agenda building using public relations strategies and tactics. In essence, mediated public diplomacy extends the agenda-building concept to a specific type of an organization (government) in an international news context. As such, governmental efforts to build foreign media news agendas constitute a strategic management function that directly relates to the field of international public relations. As a theoretical subset of agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), agenda building investigates the forces that shape the media agenda. As argued by Kiousis, Popescu, and Mitrook (2007), agenda building emphasizes organizational attempts to promote the saliency of both issues and attributes within the news media agenda.

As a key theoretical paradigm within the field of public relations (Kim & Kiousis, 2012; Lieber & Golan, 2011), agenda-building scholarship examines the manner in which corporations (Ragas, 2012; Ragas, Kim, & Kiousis, 2011), issue advocates (Huckins, 1999; Wirth et al., 2010), and political interests (Kiousis, 2006; Kiousis et al., 2009) attempt to shape and influence their discussion within the news media. This attempt takes place through the promotion of both issues and attributes saliency through media relations tactics. As noted by Zoch and Molleda (2006), organizational attempts to set the media agenda are a central function of media relations and issue management. Moving beyond mere saliency, scholars have also examined organizational attempts to not only make some issues more salient but promote a particular interpretation and presentation of salient issues by foreign media. As such, frame building serves as an extension of the agenda building perspective (Hänggli, 2012; Sheaffer & Gabay, 2009; Sheaffer & Shenhav, 2009).

Like other organized interests, world governments employ various tactics to promote their agendas while often countering competing agendas from rival nations in what is a complex agenda-building process (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). Governments participate in agenda-building strategies to impact their coverage in foreign media, including hiring public relations and lobbying firms (Kioussis & Wu, 2008; Manheim & Albritton, 1984; Zhang & Cameron, 2003), producing information subsidies such as press releases and media advisories (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009; Zhang & Benoit, 2005), creating websites (Curtin & Gaithner, 2004; Searson & Johnson, 2010), conducting organized state visits to foreign nations (Wang & Chang, 2004), and even submitting op-eds written by their leaders to foreign newspapers (Golan, 2013). One particular platform used by governments as an agenda-building tool is the advertorial. Unlike most public relations tactics such as information subsidies, the advertorial is not subject to editorial decision making but is, rather, a form of paid-for content disguised as editorial content.

Advertorials and Organized Interests

This study examines the Russian government's use of the advertorial as a tool of mediated public diplomacy. As a uniquely controlled media platform, the advertorial has the potential to shape both the media and the public agenda. As described by Kim, Pasadeos, and Barban (2001), an advertorial is "a print advertisement disguised as editorial material" (p. 1). Although it is self-regulated by the media industry in terms of designated labeling as paid content, research has indicated that many advertorials fail to clearly label themselves as paid-for content that is distinct from the newspaper content (Kirchner, 1991; Singer, 1991). It is worrisome to note that even when labeled as paid-for advertising, newspaper readers often fail to distinguish between newspaper editorial content and the paid advertorials (Cameron, 1994; Kim et al., 2001). Perceived as more credible by readers than other paid content formats (Cameron & Ju-Pak, 2000), the advertorial has become a popular public relations tactic for corporations and organized interests alike (Brown, Waltzer, & Waltzer, 2001). This credibility is borrowed in part from the newspaper in which the advertorial is printed (Salmon, Reid, Pokrywczski, & Willett, 1985).

Brown and Waltzer (2004) note that the advertorial is an important tool used by organized interests to create an advantageous public opinion climate regarding controversial issues. By making certain issues and attributes salient within the editorial content of respected publications, the advertorial has been used by special interests to influence journalists, elites, and ordinary people (Cooper & Nownes, 2004), and it holds the potential to build the media agenda (see Kioussis et al., 2007; Kioussis & Wu, 2008).

Although advertorials are widely used by government agencies, corporations, and lobbying firms to shape public opinion, mass communication scholars have yet to comprehensively examine their use and potential impact (Cooper & Nownes, 2004). The need to expand this line of research is important in light of the growing use of branded content in native advertising strategies by corporations and special interest groups (Lieb, 2013).

This study aims to advance research on international public relations by examining the application of the advertorial, an agenda-building tactic that allows Russia to promote the saliency of certain issues and attributes through a platform that enjoys high audience credibility. The study examines the framing of Russia as presented in its advertorial publication titled *Russia Beyond the Headlines*. Media

scholars have offered varied definitions for media framing (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). For the purposes of the current study, we will use Entman's (2004) definition of framing: "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (p. 4). By comparing the *Russia Beyond the Headlines* advertorials published in the United States and in India, we hope to answer the following research questions:

RQ1a: What issues were highlighted in the U.S. and Indian advertorials?

RQ1b: Did the U.S. and Indian advertorials present a different agenda of issues?

RQ2a: What attributes were highlighted in the U.S. and Indian advertorials?

RQ2b: Did the U.S. and Indian advertorials present a different agenda of attributes?

RQ3a: What engagement programs were highlighted in the U.S. and Indian advertorials?

RQ3b: Were there differences in the discussion of the engagement programs between the U.S. and Indian advertorials?

Method

To understand how Russia promoted key issues and attributes through the *Russia Beyond the Headlines* advertorial, we performed a content analysis of all *Russia Beyond the Headlines* editions that were included as supplements in *The Washington Post* and in *The Times of India* newspapers during 2011. The United States and India were selected based on the differences in their historic relationships with Russia. Whereas the United States is a historic rival of Russia, India–Russia relations typically have been described as mostly cooperative on a regional basis (Khripunov & Srivastava, 1999). Both publications were selected for analysis based on their status as elite newspapers in the two nations and were likely selected by the Russian government for the same reason. In 2001, 10 editions of *Russia Now* were published in *The Washington Post*, and 6 editions of *Russia India Report* appeared in *The Times of India*. These advertorials were placed in the newspapers in the form of a freestanding insert magazine that included news stories, editorials, pictures, and public opinion polls.

Every edition was coded by a team of trained coders who analyzed the advertorials for key variables as presented in their coding sheets. The advertorials were downloaded from the official *Russia Beyond the Headlines* website (<http://rbth.ru/e-paper>). *Russia Beyond the Headlines* is produced by *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, a daily newspaper backed by the Russian government.

The unit of analysis was the individual news item. Because the advertorials analyzed were not traditional newspaper advertisements but were disguised as complete magazine inserts, we refer to individual items contained in them as news items. Of course, we recognize that these items do not represent actual newspaper news items but rather advertorial items disguised as news. A total of 203

news items appeared in *The Washington Post* edition of *Russia Now*, including 106 news articles, 50 research articles in brief pieces, 33 opinion pieces, 4 interviews, and 10 blogs. A total of 100 news items appeared in the *The Times of India* editions of *Russia India Report*, including 61 news articles, 22 research-in-brief pieces, 10 opinion pieces, and 3 interviews. To ensure intercoder reliability, a second coder independently coded 10% of all news items. The results of the Holsti (1969) reliability test produced an average agreement score above 0.80.

Each news item was coded for the following variables:

Key issue: Each news item was coded for the primary issue that was highlighted in it. In cases of multiple mentions within a single news item, the coder identified the primary issue by prominence as operationalized by word count. Issues included domestic politics, international politics, economics, human rights, arts and culture, society, science and technology, human interest, and other. For example, a news item that included the following text was coded as a society issue: "Russia has experienced a baby boomlet, thanks in part to the 2007 legislation introducing the 'mother's capital'—a cash payment to women who have more than one child" (Burrows, 2011, p. 3). An item that included the following text was coded as an internal politics issue: "President Dmitry Medvedev has moved against some of the most powerful men in the government, including Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin, who is perhaps the closest figure to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin" (Tsyvinski, 2011).

Attributes: The attributes variable focused on those adjectives directly linked to Russia in terms of their prominence in the individual news items as reflected in the advertorial. The separation of issues from attributes as distinct frames stems from the use of these categories in traditional agenda-setting research (see Golan & Wanta 2001; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). Each news item was coded for the presence (1) or nonpresence (2) of an attribute directly linked to Russia. These included nine dichotomous variables, each exclusive of the others. Attributes include: Russia as a democracy, an attractive market for investments, a protector of human rights, globally influential or powerful, a good global citizen, a leader in education and innovation, a benevolent regional power, a leader in culture and the arts, and an attractive and secure tourist destination. For example, a news item that included the following text was coded as having the attribute of Russia as a good market for investments: "The rate of return on investment in Russia is among the highest in the world—for the well-connected or the aggressive risk takers" (Aris, 2011, p. 2). Alternatively, an item that included the following text was coded as highlighting Russia's attribute as a leader in culture: "Russia, a country frequently defined by its epic novels, has witnessed a recent prolific surge in nonfiction" (Shabaeva, 2011, p. 5).

Engagement programs: An engagement program is one that builds and maintains relationships between the Russian government, organizations, or the Russian people and the public in either one of the target nations (United States or India). Each news item was coded for the primary engagement program or initiative that was highlighted in it. In the cases of multiple mentions within a single news item, the coder identified the primary engagement program by prominence as operationalized by word count. Engagement programs included: cultural engagement, aid and development, sports programs, educational exchanges, economic partnerships, military cooperation, nation-branding/reputation management, none, and other. For example, a news item that included the following text was coded as an economic

partnership program: "As Russia forges ahead with partners [the United States], the vision for space exploration comes into focus" (Alenov, 2011, p. 6). This statement was coded as a cultural program: "World-famous Russian pianist launches American tour" (Tveritina, 2011, p. 6).

To extract a full understanding of the content analysis data, each coder identified key quotes from the different advertorial news items that reflected the themes and constructs measured in the quantitative analysis. Examples of these quotes are displayed in the results section, along with the quantitative findings.

Results

In identifying the key frames that Russia aimed to make salient through its advertorials, we found that the most salient issues in the advertorial news items were economics (26%), arts and culture (19%), international relations (14%), domestic politics (11%), and human interest (11%) (see Table 1). The results of the χ^2 test indicate that the saliency of key issues differed significantly between the advertorials published in the United States and in India ($\chi^2 = 19.2, p = .014$). Most advertorials in both *The Washington Post* and *The Times of India* focused on three issues. While 67% of the advertorials published in *The Times of India* focused on economics, arts and culture, and international relations, only 56% of *The Washington Post* advertorials focused on these topics, allowing for a wider array of issues to be promoted, including human rights, domestic politics, and society. While the χ^2 test indicates significant differences in issue saliency promotion, the data (as presented in Table 1) indicate that, while statistically different, the issue agendas of the advertorials published in the two newspapers share much in terms of issue promotion.

Table 1. Issue Saliency as Promoted in the Advertorials.

Issue	<i>Washington Post</i>	<i>Times of India</i>	Total
Economy	23%	34%	26%
Arts and culture	22%	14%	19%
International relations	11%	19%	14%
Domestic politics	13%	6%	11%
Human interest	11%	12%	11%
Society	9%	4%	8%
Technology	4%	6%	5%
Human rights	5%	1%	4%
Other	1%	4%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%

$$\chi^2 = 19.2. p = .014$$

Several differences emerged in attribute promotion between the advertorials published in the two newspapers (see Table 2). When interpreting the results, it is important to note that our coding scheme allowed for multiple coding for more than one attribute within a single advertorial. Overall, the advertorials

portrayed Russia as an investor-friendly nation (129 news items), culturally developed (84 news items), a global power (76 news items), and as innovative (71 news items). A closer look at the data provides evidence of a dissimilar attribute-promotion strategy between the advertorials within the two newspapers. *The Washington Post* advertorials portrayed various attributes, with investor-friendly (68 items), culturally developed (59 items), and global power (39 items) as the most mentioned attributes. However, several other attributes were also portrayed, including Russia as a democracy (34 items), as innovative (26 items), as a good global citizen (25 items), and as a safe tourist destination (24 items). These results do not indicate a specific attribute-promotion strategy, but rather many country-related attributes.

In *The Times of India*, the attribute-promotion strategy was not as balanced. Russia's power attribute was most prominent when combining Russia's global power attribute (37 items) with Russia's regional power (26 items), for a total of 63 items. This attribute was followed by Russia's attribute as investor friendly (61 items) and as innovative (45 items). The results suggest that Russia's international standing and global economic status were prominently highlighted in these advertorials.

These findings are supported by the χ^2 test, indicating a significant difference in attribute presentation between the U.S. and Indian editions regarding Russia's attributes as investor friendly ($\chi^2 = 22.8, p = .000$), globally influential/powerful ($\chi^2 = 11.98, p = .002$), innovative ($\chi^2 = 39.37, p = .000$), a good global citizen ($\chi^2 = 10.14, p = .006$), democratic ($\chi^2 = 12.88, p = .000$), and committed to human rights ($\chi^2 = 7.65, p = .02$).

Beyond the statistics, as presented in Tables 1 and 2, a qualitative look at the advertorials better contextualizes the descriptive results. A comparison of the two editions reveals that, whereas the *Russia India Report* advertorial consistently highlighted Russia's positive attributes, such was not the case in the U.S. version of the advertorial. A qualitative analysis of the advertorials finds that the framing of Russia in *The Washington Post* edition was more critical of Russia and did not highlight many of the positive attributes that were highlighted in the Indian edition. The U.S. version also included a more balanced framing approach that not only highlighted the positive attributes of Russia but provided some criticism of Russia's commitment to human rights, democratic reform, and innovation.

The following quotes indicate the critical nature of some of the *Russia Now* advertorials toward the same country that paid for its placement in the newspaper. For example, in regard to human rights, Nemtsova (2011) states:

Russia's security agencies tend to label all fundamentalist Muslims—called Wahhabis by the police, even though they do not always accept that term themselves—as terrorist suspects. And the police have engaged in sometimes brutal tactics in an attempt to suppress a violent insurgency, according to human rights activists. (p. 3)

Contemplating whether Russia is a democracy, Bovt (2011) asserts, "The country's enormous bureaucracy is guided by this leader—his style, wishes, habits, whims, strengths and weaknesses—rather than by institutions, the law and written rules" (p. 4). Balmforth (2011) highlights the critical approach regarding both Russia's attributes of

global power and its technological capacity: "On the one hand, we dream of becoming a great empire, while at the same time we haven't sorted out elementary problems in basic technology in many sectors" (p. 3).

Although the criticism of Russia in its own advertorial may be counterintuitive, we argue that such a framing strategy was meant to inoculate U.S. suspicion of Russia and of its advertorial platform.

Table 2. Portrayal of Russia and Attributes of Russian State.

Attribute	<i>Washington Post</i>	<i>Times of India</i>	χ^2	Total
Investor Friendly	68 (33%)	61 (61%)	22.8**	129 (43%)
Culturally developed	59 (29%)	25 (25%)	552	84 (28%)
Global power	39 (19%)	37 (37%)	11.98*	76 (25%)
Innovative	26 (13%)	45 (45%)	39.37**	71 (23%)
Russian global citizenship	25 (12%)	26 (26%)	10.14*	51 (17%)
Democracy	34 (17%)	9 (9%)	12.88*	43 (14%)
Regional power	16 (8%)	26 (26%)	24.4**	42 (14%)
Safe tourism destination	24 (12%)	14 (14%)	4.08	38 (13%)
Commitment to human rights	12 (6%)	12 (8%)	7.65*	20 (7%)
Total	203	100		303

* $p = 0.05$. ** $p = 0.01$

As discussed in the literature review, the inclusion of the Russian-sponsored advertorials in major international newspapers such as *The Washington Post* and *The Times of India* is part of a larger mediated public diplomacy strategy that complements Russia's traditional soft power programs. Our analysis indicated no clear strategy regarding the promotion of Russia's global engagement as reflected in the advertorials. Overall, the advertorials highlighted Russian cultural engagement (19%) and economic cooperation (14%) as key programs. Nation branding (9%) and military and technological cooperation (8%) followed. Although 21% of advertorials discussed Russia's cultural engagement, Russia's engagement programs were not highlighted in most *Washington Post* advertorials.

By contrast, the advertorials in *The Times of India* promoted several engagement programs, with economic cooperation as most prominent (25%), followed by cultural engagement (16%) and military and technological cooperation (14%). The results of the χ^2 test indicate statically significant differences between the two newspapers ($\chi^2 = 39.39$, $p = .000$). One potential explanation for the more direct highlighting of Russian engagement program in *The Times of India* is that it is a function of perceived difference between U.S. and Indian readers. Based on the history of the Cold War, we believe that subtle, as opposed to overt, mentions of engagement programs were not coincidental but rather resulted from a strategic agenda-building effort by the Russian government to gain credibility with U.S. audiences who may not have accepted an outright approach as credible.

Table 3. Russia's Public Engagement Program.

Engagement program	<i>Washington Post</i>	<i>Times of India</i>	Total
Cultural engagement	21%	16%	19%
Economic cooperation	9%	25%	14%
Nation branding	7%	12%	9%
Military/tech cooperation	4%	14%	8%
Other	6%	7%	6%
Education exchange	1%	4%	2%
Aid and development	3%	1%	2%
Sports engagement	1%	1%	1%
Not mentioned	47%	20%	38%
Total	203	100	303

$$\chi^2 = 39.39. p = .000$$

Soft power programs such as cultural engagement, sports diplomacy, and education engagement were clearly identified. For example, Fox and Frazier (2011) discussed educational exchanges directly: "The project, funded by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, involves both Russian and U.S. secondary school teachers of Foreign/World Languages (FL/WL) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)" (p. 5). Taranova (2011) reported on the new Russia policy promoting international outreach to athletes as a part of its sports diplomacy initiative: "For the first time, Russia has begun to hand out passports to international athletes with Olympic potential" (p.).

However, with more sensitive engagement programs, such as economic, military, and technological cooperation, the Russian government used a more subtle approach. For example, Usov (2011) discusses prospective concessions Russian manufacturers will make to engage in closer military and economic cooperation with the Indian government: "Russian defense industrialists believe the plan to establish production in India with the right to re-export should be a substantial argument in favor of the Russian machines participating in the tender" (p. 2). Nash (2011) dwells on Russia's economic cooperation with other emerging market countries, which translates in its growing political weight:

Russia is building relationships across a wide spectrum. The improvements in relations with the United States and Europe have tended to attract most of the headlines. Treaties on nuclear weapons reductions, better cooperation with the West on Iran, progress on World Trade Organization, steady gas supply into Europe and the less-confrontational abstention vote in the UN all reflect significant improvements in relations between the West and Russia. (p. 4)

Discussion

As noted by Brown and Waltzer (2007), the main focus of research on advertorials has been on their application by corporations and noncorporate business interests. The current study broadens this field of inquiry by examining how foreign governments use advertorials as an agenda-building tactic of mediated media diplomacy. More specifically, we examine the Russian government's application of advertorials as a strategic tool in its global positioning campaign in the United States and in India. The results of our analysis of advertorials placed in *The Washington Post* and *The Times of India* highlight differences in the issue and attribute promotion strategies that Russia employed in both nations. Our analysis shows that, overall, Russian advertorials focused on issues of economics, international relations, and arts and culture while promoting Russia's attributes as a global and regional power as well as an investor-friendly nation. The issue and attribute saliency promotion strategies differed between the two newspapers. Although more prominent in the Indian than in the U.S. publications, overall, Russia framed and promoted itself in terms of power and status. Our study is consistent with other academic publications (Liñán, 2009; Spechler, 2010) and reports from think tanks and the news media (Cohen, 2012; Cohen & Dale, 2010; Satter, 2010) that describe Russia's attempt to position itself as a global power and competitor to other world superpowers as a part of a multipolar positioning strategy (Ambrosio, 2001; Cohen & Dale, 2010; Tsygankov, 2005). Although Russia's engagement programs and soft power were present, we found that Russian public diplomacy was not prominently featured in the advertorials.

Among the key contributions of our study is the discussion of the important role that advertorials can play in governments' global engagement efforts. As argued by Entman (2008, p. 89), mediated public diplomacy is the organized attempt by a government to exert as much control as possible over the framing of the state's policy in foreign media.

It is because of its strategic management function in which governments use public relations tactics to shape foreign media agenda that mediated public diplomacy serves as a conceptual bridge between traditional public diplomacy and international public relations research. Unlike traditional public diplomacy programs, mediated public diplomacy efforts entirely depend on the news media as a key mediator between governments and key stakeholders. As such, these efforts require a strategic management function that is fundamental to the public relations field (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000; Grunig, 2006; Ki & Hon, 2009) but is not essential for such traditional public diplomacy programs as cultural or educational exchanges (Bu, 1999; Hayden, 2009; Payne, 2009).

Although it is difficult for scholars to fully account for those factors that allow governments to shape and influence foreign media coverage, the advertorial presents a unique opportunity to investigate how governments attempt to present themselves to foreign audiences because the content of the advertorials is fully controlled by the governments.

Because the advertorial is a paid-for advertisement rather than an information subsidy often used in mediated public diplomacy (see Molleda, 2011), it provides the government with complete control over the framing of the nation and its foreign policy. The results of our analysis indicate that, despite their ability to fully control the advertorial content, the Russian editors understood the problematic nature of the medium and readers' potential skepticism and provided a critical and more balanced framing strategy in the case of the U.S. version of the advertorial. Although traditional agenda-building research at both of its levels examines the transfer of issue and attribute saliency between organizational content (typically in the form of subsidies) and the media agenda, our study did not measure such transfer of saliency but rather provided a cross-national analysis of saliency and frame promotion. We found mixed evidence of a balance between a standardization and adaptation strategy by the Russian government. (Ryans & Griffith, 2003; Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003). Critics of the standardization approach have long argued that the approach fails to account for cultural dissimilarities between nations. An emerging line of scholarship in the field of mediated public diplomacy argues for the importance of cultural adaptations by organizations in their attempts to shape the news agendas and public opinion across different nations (Sheafer & Shenhav, 2009; Sheafer et al., 2013).

As argued by international communication scholars, the news media plays a key role in teaching audiences about foreign nations and international affairs (Manheim & Albritton, 1984). Although the advertorial is a paid form of media, it still can shape and influence public opinion. By presenting an adaptive rather than standardized framing strategy in both the United States and in India that considers an audience and historical context, the Russian government aimed to influence the media agenda in both nations with the hope of impacting foreign public opinion (see Brewer, 2006; Wanta et al., 2004). We interpret the more subtle framing strategy aimed at U.S. audiences in the context of the historic relations between Russia and the United States. Furthermore, we argue that the highlighted prominence of Russia is consistent with Putin's multipolar positioning strategy that places Russia as a global leader that is equal to the United States and the European Union.

International public relations scholars and practitioners can benefit from our findings by understanding how governments as well as other international players can expand beyond the traditional public relations tool kit such as the production of information subsidies to paid forms of media in their attempts to promote organizationally favorable frames. The advertorial provides a key advantage from a strategic communication management perspective, because it allows organizations to directly engage key stakeholders by bypassing traditional mediators such as editors and producers. Public relations scholarship indeed indicates that those exposed to advertorial content typically fail to distinguish its contents from regular newspaper content (Kim et al., 2001; Kirchner, 1991). As such, the advertorials placed in elite foreign media provide organizations with high perceived credibility and with complete control over content. Although the use of advertorials raises many ethical concerns, it provides international players with a highly effective strategic tool of issue and frame promotion.

Future studies might expand upon the current research by investigating the agenda-building and agenda-setting impact of advertorials as used in public diplomacy campaigns. They should examine the integration of the advertorial into the public diplomacy campaigns of other nations that aim to build and maintain relations with other international publics. Key limitations of this study are its highly descriptive

nature and its dichotomous variables that provide a low level of measurement. Future studies might move beyond the descriptive content and toward a more in-depth analysis that would answer not only how nations frame their governments and policies but why such framing strategies are pursued and how they best fit into the larger strategic public diplomacy campaign.

References

- Alenov, N. (2011, March 30). Gagarin opened the heavens. *Russia Now*, p. 6.
- Ambrosio, T. (2001). Russia's quest for multipolarity: A response to U.S. foreign policy in the post-cold war era. *European Security*, 10, 45–67.
- Aris, B. (2011, June 29). Moscow still churning out billionaires. *Russia Now*, p. 2.
- Avgerinos, K. P. (2009). Russia's public diplomacy effort: What the Kremlin is doing and why it's not working. *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, 20, 115–132.
- Balmforth, T. (2011, September 28). Crash killing hockey team raises ire. *Russia Now*, pp. 1, 3.
- Becker, J. (2004). Lessons from Russia: A neo-authoritarian media system. *European Journal of Communication*, 19, 139–163.
- Bovt, G. (2011, May 25). Two leaders, one throne. *Russia Now*, p. 4.
- Brewer, P. R. (2006). National interest frames and public opinion about world affairs. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 11(4), 89–102.
- Brown, C., & Waltzer, H. (2004). Organized interest advertorials responding to the 9/11 terrorist attack and other national traumas. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 9(4), 25–48.
- Brown, C., & Waltzer, H. (2007). Buying national ink: Advertorials by organized interests in *TIME Magazine*, 1985–2000. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 5(4), 19–45.
- Brown, C., Waltzer, H., & Waltzer, M. B. (2001). Daring to be heard: Advertorials by organised interests on the op-ed pages of *The New York Times*. *Political Communication*, 18, 23–51.
- Bu, L. (1999). Educational exchange and cultural diplomacy in the Cold War. *Journal of American Studies*, 33, 393–415.
- Burrows, E. (2011, April 27). Better neonatal care, one text message at a time. *Russia Now*, p. 3.
- Cameron, G. (1994). Does publicity outperform advertising: An experimental test of the third-party endorsement. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 6, 185–207.

- Cameron, G. T., & Ju-Pak, K. H. (2000). Information pollution? Labeling and format of advertorials. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 21, 12–24.
- Centre for Eastern Studies. (n.d.). *Russia builds up its public diplomacy structures*. Warsaw, Poland: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/eastweek/2010-02-10/russia-builds-its-public-diplomacy-structures>
- Cohen, A. C. (2012). How the U.S. should deal with Putin's Russia. *Heritage Foundation Issue Brief*, (3530).
- Cohen, A. C., & Dale, H. C. (2010). Russian anti-Americanism: A priority target for U.S. public diplomacy. *Backgrounder*, 2373, 1–10.
- Cooper, A. C., & Nownes, A. J. (2004). Money well spent? An experimental investigation of the effects of advertorials on citizen opinion. *American Political Research*, 32, 546–569.
- Curtin, P. A., & Gaither, T. K. (2005). Privileging identity, difference, and power: The circuit of culture as a basis for public relations theory. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17(2), 91–115.
- Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (2000). *Effective public relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Elaeva, A. Y. (2011). *Case study of Russia's public diplomacy to attract US direct investment* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Ball State University, Muncie, IN.
- Entman, R. M. (2004). *Projects of power: Framing news, public opinion, and U.S. foreign policy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Entman, R. M. (2008). Theorizing mediated public diplomacy: The U.S. case. *Press/Politics*, 13(2), 87–102.
- Fitzpatrick, K. (2007). Advancing the new public diplomacy: A public relations perspective. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 2(3), 187–211.
- Fox, R., & Frazier, W. (2011, October 26). Teacher exchange for a 21st century education. *Russia Now*, p. 5.
- Gilboa, E. (2000). Mass communication and diplomacy: A theoretical framework. *Communication Theory*, 10, 275–309.
- Gilboa, E. (2005). Media-broker diplomacy: When journalists become mediators. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 22(2), 99–120.

- Gilboa, E. (2008). Searching for a theory of public diplomacy. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, 55–77.
- Golan, G. J. (2013). The gates of op-ed diplomacy Newspaper framing the 2011 Egyptian revolution. *International Communication Gazette*, 75(4), 359–373.
- Golan, G. J., & Viatchaninova, E. (2013). Government social responsibility in public diplomacy: Russia's strategic use of advertorials. *Public Relations Review*, 39(4), 403–405.
- Golan, G. J., & Wanta, W. (2001). Second-level agenda setting in the New Hampshire primary: A comparison of coverage in three newspapers and public perceptions of candidates. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 78, 247–259.
- Grunig, J. E. (2006). Implications of public relations for other domains of communication. *Journal of Communication*. 43(3), 164–163.
- Grunig, J. E., & Huang, Y.-H. (2000). From organizational effectiveness to relationship indicators: Antecedents of relationships, public relations strategies, and relationship outcomes. In J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 23–53). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hänggeli, R. (2012). Key factors in frame building: How strategic political actors shape news media coverage. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 56(3), 300–317.
- Hayden, C. (2009). Applied public diplomacy: A marketing communications exchange program in Saudi Arabia. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53(4), 533–548.
- Holsti, O. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hon, L. C., & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations*. Gainesville, FL: Institute for PR. Retrieved from http://www.instituteforpr.org/research_single/guidelines_measuring_relationships
- Huckins, K. (1999). Interest-group influence on the media agenda: A case study. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76(1), 76–86.
- Jing, Z. (2005). *U.S. newspaper coverage of immigration in 2004: A content analysis* (Master's thesis). Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. Retrieved from <http://handle.tamu.edu/1969.1/2464>
- Karaev, Z. (2005). Water diplomacy in Central Asia. *MERIA*, 9(1).

- Kelly, J., Barash, V., Alexanyan, K., Etling, B., Faris, R., Gasser, U., & Palfrey, J. (2012). *Mapping Russian Twitter*. Berkman Center Research Publication. Cambridge, MA: Berkman Center for Internet and Society.
- Khripunov, I. & Srivastava, A. (1999). Russian-Indian relations: Alliance, partnership, or? *Comparative Strategy*, 18(2), 153–172.
- Ki, E. J., & Hon, L. C. (2007). Testing the linkages among the organization–public relationship and attitude and behavioral intentions. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19(1), 1–23.
- Ki, E. J., & Hon, L. C. (2009). The causal linkages between/among relationship cultivation strategies and relationship quality outcomes. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 3(4), 242–263.
- Kim, B-H., Pasadeos, Y., & Barban, A. (2001). On the deceptive effectiveness of labelled and unlabelled advertorial formats. *Mass Communication and Society*, 4(3), 265–281.
- Kim, J. Y. & Kiousis, S. (2012). The role of affect in agenda setting for public relations: Implications for public relations outcomes. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 89, 657–676.
- Kiousis, S., Popescu, C., & Mitrook, M. (2007). Understanding influence on corporate reputation: An examination of public relations efforts, media coverage, public opinion, and financial performance from an agenda-building and agenda-setting perspective. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19(2), 147–165.
- Kiousis, S., & Wu, X. (2008). International agenda-building and agenda-setting: Exploring the influence of public relations counsel on US news media and public perceptions of foreign nations. *International Communication Gazette*, 70, 58–75.
- Kirchner, J. (1991, June). Ad section ambiguous. *Washington Journalism Review*, 13, 10.
- Kunczik, M. (2003). Transnational public relations by foreign governments. In K. Sriramesh & D. Vercic (Eds.), *Handbook of global public relations* (pp. 399–424). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Lancaster, C. (2007). *Foreign aid: Diplomacy, development, domestic politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ledingham (2003). Explicating relationship management as a general theory of public relations. *Public Relations Research*, 15, 181–198.
- L' Etang, J. (1998). State propaganda and bureaucratic intelligence: The creation of public relations in 20th century Britain. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 413–441.

- L'Etang, J. (2004). *Public relations in Britain: A history of professional practice in the 20th century*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- L'Etang, J. (2009). Public relations and diplomacy in a globalized world: An issue of public communication. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53, 607–626.
- Lieb, R. (2013). *Defining and mapping the native advertising landscape* [Report]. San Mateo, CA: Altimeter Group. Retrieved from: <http://www.americanpressinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/report-defining-mapping-native-advertising-landscape-rebecca-lieb.pdf>
- Lieber, P. S., & Golan, G. J. (2011). *Political public relations, news management, and agenda indexing*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Liñán, M. V. (2010). History as a propaganda tool for Putin's Russia. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 43, 167–178.
- Manheim, J. (1994). *Strategic public diplomacy and American foreign policy: The evolution of influence*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Manheim, J., & Albritton, R. (1984). Changing national images: International public relations and media agenda setting. *American Political Science Review* 78(3), 641–657.
- Mitchell, J. M. (1986). *International cultural relations*. London, UK: Allen & Unwin.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176–187.
- Molleda, J. C. (2011). Global political public relations, public diplomacy, and corporate foreign policy. In S. Kioussis & J. Strömbäck (Eds.), *Political public relations: Principles and applications* (pp. 274–292). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Nash, R. (2011, April 27). Putin bets on pragmatism. *Russia Now*, p. 4.
- Nemtsova, A. (2011, March 30). In Dagestan, marked as a terrorist. *Russia Now*, p. 3.
- Nye, J. (2005, December 29). The rise of China's soft power. *Wall Street Journal Asia*.
- Nye, J. S. (2008). Public diplomacy and soft power. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, 94–109.
- Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. *Political Communications*, 10, 55–76.
- Paul, T.V. (2005). Soft balancing in the age of US primacy. *International Security*. 30, 46–71.

- Payne, J. G. (2009). Trends in global public relations and grassroots diplomacy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53, 487–492.
- Petrova, O. (2011, September). Incredible India casts a spell. *Russia India Report*, pp. 1–2.
- Powers, S. (2011). U.S. international broadcasting: An untapped resource for ethnic and domestic news organization. In *Public Policy and Funding the News*. Retrieved from http://fundingthenews.usc.edu/related_research/4_Carnegie_USInternationalBroadcasting.pdf
- Ragas, M. W. (2012). Issue and stakeholder intercandidate agenda setting among corporate information subsidies. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 89, 91–111.
- Ragas, M. W., Kim, J., & Kiousis, S. (2011). Agenda-building in the corporate sphere: Analyzing influence in the 2008 Yahoo!–Icahn proxy contest. *Public Relations Review*, 37(3), 257–265. Russia offers bailout assist. [Editorial]. (2011, November 30). *Russia Now*, p. 2.
- Ryans, J. K., Jr., & Griffith, D. A. (2003). International advertising research: Standardization/adaptation and the future. In S. C. Jain (Ed.), *Handbook of research in international marketing* (pp. –). Location: Publisher.
- Sakwa, R. (2008). New Cold War or twenty years' crisis? Russia and international politics, *International Affairs*, 84(2), 241–268.
- Sakwa, R. (2012,). *The problem of "the international" in Russian identity formation*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association annual conference, Montreal, Canada.
- Salmon, C.T., Reid, L. N., Pokrywczynski, J., & Willett, R. W. (1985). The effectiveness of advocacy advertising relative to news coverage. *Communication Research*, 12, 546–567.
- Satter, D. (2012). *Russia and the West* (e-notes). Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute. Retrieved from http://www.fpri.org/docs/Satter-Russia_And_The_West.pdf
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(4), 103–122.
- Schneider, C. (2003). *Diplomacy that works: "Best practices" in cultural diplomacy*. Washington, DC: Center for Arts and Culture, Georgetown University. Retrieved from http://ccges.apps01.yorku.ca/oldsite/IMG/pdf/03_Schneider.pdf
- Seib, P. (Ed.). (2005). *Media and conflict in the twenty-first century*. Location: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shabaeva, T. (2011, March 30). Writing verbatim. *Russia Now*, p. 5.

- Sheafer, T., & Gabay, I. (2009). Mediated public diplomacy: A strategic contest over international agenda building and frame building. *Political Communication*, 26(4), 447–467.
- Sheafer, T., & Shenhav, S. R. (2009). Mediated public diplomacy in a new era of warfare. *Communication Review*, 12(3), 272–283.
- Signitzer, B. H., & Coombs, T. (1992). Public relations and public diplomacy: Conceptual convergence. *Public Relations Review*, 18, 137–147.
- Signitzer, B., & Wasmer, C. (2006). Public diplomacy: A specific governmental public relations function. In C. Botan & V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public relations theory II*. (pp. 435–464). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Singer, S. (1991, September). Auto dealers muscle: The newsroom. *Washington Journalism Review*, 13, 25–28.
- Snow, N. (2008). International exchanges and the U.S. image. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, 198–221.
- Spechler, D. R. (2010). Russian foreign policy during the Putin presidency: The impact of competing approaches. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 57(5), 35–50.
- Taranova, Y. (2011, February 23). American athletes turn to Russia for sport. *Russia Now*, pp. 1–6.
- Theodosiou, M., & Leonidou, L. C. (2003). Standardization versus adaptation of international marketing strategy: An integrative assessment of the empirical research. *International Business Review*, 12(2), 141–171.
- Trenin, D. (2007). Russia redefines itself and its relations with the West. *Washington Quarterly*, 30(2).
- Tsygankov, A. P. (2005). Vladimir Putin's vision of Russia as a normal great power. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 21(2), 132–158.
- Tsygankov, A. P. (2012). The heartland no more: Russia's weakness and Eurasia's meltdown. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 3(1), 1–9.
- Tsyvinski, A., & Guriev, S. (2011, April 27). No more minister chairman. *Russia Now*, p. 4.
- Tuch, H. (1990). *Communicating with the world: U.S. public diplomacy overseas*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Tveritina, A. (2011, April 27). The charismatic virtuoso from Irkutsk. *Russia Now*, p. 6.

- Usov, A. (2011, May 25). Plans to produce helicopters in India. *Russia India Report*, pp. 1–2.
- Wang, J. (2006). Managing national reputation and international relations in the global era: Public diplomacy revisited. *Public Relations Review*, 32, 91–96.
- Wang, J., & Chang, T. K. (2004). Strategic public diplomacy and local press: How a high profile “head-of state” visit was covered in America’s heartland. *Public Relations Review*, 30, 11–24.
- Wanta, W., Golan, G., & Lee, C. (2004). Agenda setting and international news: Media influence on public perceptions of foreign nations. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(2), 364–377.
- Waters, R. D. (2009). Measuring stewardship in public relations: A test exploring impact on the fundraising relationship. *Public Relations Review*, 35(2), 113–119.
- Waters, R. D. (2011). Increasing fundraising efficiency through evaluation: Applying communication theory to the nonprofit organization–donor relationship. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 40, 458–475.
- Wirth, W., Matthes, J., Schemer, C., Wettstein, M., Friemel, T., Hänggli, R., & Siegert, G. (2010). Agenda building and setting in a referendum campaign: Investigating the flow of arguments among campaigners, the media, and the public. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 87(2), 328–345.
- Wise, K. (2009). Public relations and health diplomacy. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 127–129.
- Xifra, J. (2009). “Building sport countries” overseas identity and reputation: A case study of public paradiplomacy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53(4), 504–515.
- Yang, S. U., Shin, H., Lee, J. H., & Wrigley, B. (2008). Country reputation in multidimensions: Predictors, effects, and communication channels. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 20, 421–440.
- Yun, S. (2006). Toward public relations theory-based study of public diplomacy: Testing the applicability of the excellence study. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(4), 287–312.
- Zhang, J. (2005). World system and its agents: Analysis of the registrants of foreign agent registration act (FARA). *Public Relations Review*, 31, 47–54.
- Zhang, J., & Cameron, G. T. (2003). China’s agenda building and image polishing in the U.S.: Assessing an international public relations campaign. *Public Relations Review*, 29, 13–28.
- Zhang, J., & Swartz, B. C. (2009). Toward a model of NGO media diplomacy in the Internet age: Case study of Washington profile. *Public Relations Review*, 35(1), 47–55.

Zoch, L., & Molleda, J. (2006). Building a theoretical model of media relations using framing, information subsidies, and agenda-building. In C. H. Botan & V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public relations theory II*. (pp. 279–309). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.