INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS FOR BUILDING THE IMAGE OF PUBLIC LEADERS

Abstract. The article substantiates the need to address the issue of improving the image of public leaders in the context of the development of the information society. In particular, the authors outline two main directions in which the communication activities of the leadership of public administration bodies should be developed. The main tasks of information and communication mechanisms for creating the image of public leaders are highlighted. It is emphasized that the communication activities of public authorities’ leaders should be aimed at creating an information space that would contribute to the formation of a positive image of the authorities and at the same time help to meet people's expectations. Focusing on the functional and structural aspects of the two main functions of communication in the public administration system (formation of a positive image of public leaders and timely and effective public information), three main functions of communication should be distinguished for the image of a public institution. It is established that the new Ukrainian system of mass communication is characterized by the emergence of a public information and communication sphere for the development of civil dialogue, which is based on the conflict of interests of certain owners or co-founders of the media and is capable of creating a clear and rational discussion on various issues of public leaders' activities. It is assumed that information and communication
mechanisms for shaping the image of the leaders of public Ukrainian government in the ideological context can be considered within the framework of four media theories. At the same time, the reality formed based on images may carry the danger of separating the people from the leaders of the government. The mechanism of image interaction between public leaders has two sides: subject-object and subject-subject. In the process of forming a positive image of public authorities' leaders, the development of a democratic state on the ideological principles of liberalism, transparency and openness of public administration, by reducing the necessary and administrative elements, and increasing the efficiency of communication and information technology components, is of priority importance. It is proved that the mass media act as a fundamental element of the mechanism for shaping the image of public administration leaders.

**Keywords:** leadership, public administration, information state, image of public official, communication technologies, public, European integration, mass media.

Калашникова Христина Ігорівна кандидат економічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри менеджменту і публічного адміністрування, Харківський національний університет міського господарства імені О. М. Бекетова, вул. Маршала Бажанова, 17, м. Харків, 61002, тел.: (066) 144-91-95, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9190-6187

Гайдученко Світлана Олександрівна доктор наук з державного управління, професор, професор кафедри менеджменту і публічного адміністрування, Харківський національний університет міського господарства імені О. М. Бекетова, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3173-4763

**ІНФОРМАЦІЙНО-КОМУНІКАЦІЙНІ МЕХАНІЗМИ ФОРМУВАННЯ ІМІДЖУ ЛІДЕРІВ ПУБЛІЧНОЇ ВЛАДИ**

**Анотація.** У статті обґрунтовано необхідність вирішення питання покращення іміджу лідерів публічної влади в умовах розвитку інформаційного суспільства. Зокрема, окреслено два головних напрямки, по яких повинна розвиватися комунікативна діяльність лідерства органів публічного управління. Виділено основні завдання інформаційно-комунікаційних механізмів щодо створення іміджу лідерів публічної влади. Підкреслено, що комунікаційна діяльність лідерів публічної влади має бути спрямована на створення такого інформаційного простору, який би сприяв формуванню позитивного іміджу влади і водночас допомагав виправдати очікування людей. Зосереджуючи увагу на функціональних та структурних аспекти двох
основних функцій комунікації в системі державного управління (формування позитивного іміджу лідерів публічної влади та своєчасне й ефективне інформування громадськості), для іміджу державної установи слід виокремлено три основні функції комунікації. Встановлено, що нова українська система масової комунікації відрізняється появою публічної інформаційно-комунікаційної сфери для розвитку громадянського діалогу, яка базується на конфлікті інтересів певних власників або співзасновників ЗМІ і здатна створювати чітку і раціональну дискусію з різних проблем діяльності лідерів публічної влади. Зроблено припущення, що інформаційно-комунікаційні механізми формування іміджу лідерів публічної української влади в ідеологічному контексті можна розглядати в рамках чотирьох медіа- теорій. Водночас сформована на основі образів реальність може нести в собі небезпеку відриву народу від лідерів влади. Механізм формування іміджевої взаємодії лідерів публічної влади має дві сторони: суб'єкт-об'єктну та суб'єкт-суб'єктну. У процесі формування позитивного іміджу лідерів публічної влади пріоритетного значення набуває розбудова демократичної держави на ідеологічних засадах лібералізму, прозорості та відкритості органів публічної влади, шляхом скорочення необхідних та адміністративних елементів, підвищення рівня ефективності комунікаційної та інформаційно-технологічної складових. Доведено, що засоби масової інформації виступають як основоположний елемент механізму формування іміджу лідерів публічної адміністрації.

Ключові слова: лідерство, публічна влада, інформаційна держава, імідж державного службовця, комунікаційні технології, громадськість, європейська інтеграція, засоби масової інформації.

The problem statement. The development of modern information technologies is accompanied by social transformations aimed at forming a new society characterized by the concept of the "new information age". As a stage of human development, the information society is of global importance for all branches of knowledge, with elements specific to the social structure of each type of society. In view of this, the modern development of information and communication technologies is increasingly revealing the essence of our era. It is logical that in the process of modernization of modern society, the effective functioning of public leaders is possible only if they create a positive image of the government. That is why one of the main problems facing public administration specialists is theoretical and practical developments in the field of the image of public administration in Ukraine. That is why the study of the problems of information and communication mechanisms for forming a positive image of public leaders is a promising area of scientific research, which is inextricably linked to the problems of effective functioning of the state apparatus as a whole.
Overview of recent research and publications. The issues of formation and development of the theory of the image of leaders of state institutions as a category of public administration science have been studied and developed by such scholars as: R. Voitovych [1], K. Glushchenko [2], O. Zapadynchuk [3], V. Kornienko, S. Denysiuk [4], A. Lipinska [5], Y. Melnychuk [6], I. Panteleychuk [7], M. Syngaievska [8], T. Topolnitska [9], N. Shcherbak [10] and others. However, despite the available research, in the context of the rapidly changing processes of globalization, Ukraine's European integration and the development of the information society, there is an extremely urgent need not only to analyze the genesis of such concepts as: "political image", "image of public leaders", "image of public service", but also in the formation of objective criteria for measuring the effectiveness of the areas of image improvement, including its political variety. The image of public service leaders is one of the important aspects of the state's communication activities and is one of the components of the public administration system in the development of the information society. It should change in accordance with the dynamics and trends of social development. Theorists and practitioners have focused on creating a positive image of government leaders as a global social phenomenon, the study of various features of which can be found in many scientific works that make up the general meaning of this phenomenon.

The purpose of the study (task statement). The purpose of the article is to identify current trends and patterns in the formation of information and communication mechanisms for the activities of public leaders in Ukraine with a view to improving the existing ones and creating new approaches to shaping a positive image of public leaders.

Research results. An important component of public administration is the activity of public leaders, which should contribute to the effective functioning and competitiveness of the state in the international arena. This necessitates addressing the issue of improving the image of public leaders in the context of the development of the information society. In this regard, it is advisable to study scientific approaches to the implementation of measures aimed at forming a positive image of government leaders in order to increase the level of public confidence in the government in Ukraine.

Important in the context of this publication is the main idea that can be traced in the work of many representatives of the public administration sector, which is that communication technologies influence the public and the formation of a positive image of public administration leaders, which, in turn, should focus on the interests of both parties - the government and the public.

Therefore, in view of this, it can be argued that the communication activities of the leadership of public administration in the current conditions should be developed in two main directions:
use of public relations as one of the main factors in the development of modern communication technologies, and as an important element in creating the information field of the state;

formation of scientific analytical studies on public opinion as a means of providing feedback that allows assessing the effectiveness of public administration efforts in creating the image of public authorities' leaders.

The research of the relationship between communication and the image of the state shows that the main purpose of using the communication approach in the activities of public leaders is to ensure that the chosen political course and political decisions are in line with the interests of the public. At the same time, the activities of public administration leaders should be aimed primarily at meeting the social needs of the population, taking into account public opinion. If there is public support, the government can increase its legitimacy.

The main challenges of information and communication mechanisms for creating the image of public leaders are [9]:

- providing public support for state measures, by increasing the level of trust of the population in the work of representatives of state authorities;
- implementation of a unified state communication policy by creating a comprehensive system of information influence on the public;
- creating and maintaining effective feedback from citizens to monitor the socio-political situation and evaluate the performance of public leaders;
- establishing interaction and cooperation with the media in order to inform the public about the state policy, as well as to establish and maintain a positive image of the government leaders.

Considering the proposed challenges, it should be emphasized that the communication activities of public leaders should be aimed at creating an information space that would contribute to the formation of a positive image of the government and at the same time help to meet people's expectations.

Such activities include: direct and feedback communication with the public, provision of information on the implementation of state and local programs, as well as studying the public reaction to the actions of public leaders.

Based on the functional and structural aspects of the two main functions of communication in the public administration system (formation of a positive image of public leaders and timely and effective public information), three main communication functions should be distinguished for the image of a public institution:

I. facilitating the way information about the public administration system and public policy is presented for its full perception by the audience;

II. providing the most desirable mode of information presentation for citizens' perception of the results of the government leaders' activities;
III. preparing the ground for the formation of information and communication mechanisms that would promote a positive attitude of the population towards the government.

The attention of public administration theorists and practitioners to the choice of communication channels for shaping the leadership image of a state institution is largely due to its powerful ability to provide a model of mass consciousness for interpreting the surrounding reality.

Compared to the Soviet propaganda system, it is important to note that the new Ukrainian system of mass communication is distinguished by the emergence of a public information and communication sphere for the development of civil dialogue, which is based on the conflict of interests of certain owners or co-founders of the media and is capable of creating a clear and rational discussion on various issues of public leaders' activities.

A characteristic feature of the "market" model of media activity is the desire to make a commercial profit from the sale of information, while the model based on the ideology of the "state" is focused on lobbying the interests of the state in the information sphere.

In general, in modern Ukraine, information and communication mechanisms for shaping the image of public leaders in the ideological context can be considered within the framework of four media theories, since the media system can be authoritarian, paternalistic, commercial and democratic [11]. The particularities of each of them are shown in Table 1.

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<th>Media theories of mass media</th>
<th>Main peculiarities of information and communication mechanisms for forming the image of public leaders</th>
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<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>The main objective of communication is to transmit instructions, guidelines, ideas, and approaches of the dominant group, elite, or caste. Such a system is simple, very unambiguous, and quite reliable, and it is widespread in states where democratic principles are too weak.</td>
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<td>Paternalistic</td>
<td>The strategy of mass media development is the responsibility of the state, which sets the rules of the game, i.e. dictates the conditions for the existence of the news media</td>
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<td>Commercial</td>
<td>It differs from an authoritarian or paternalistic one by a greater degree of internal freedom of the mass media, you can say anything you want, provided you have the legal right to say it</td>
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<td>Democratic</td>
<td>It is based on the fact that the true task of the mass media is to describe a picture of reality that enables people to make informed decisions. Moreover, the better the mainstream media fulfill this role, the more powerful their own influence will be. This is the most desirable system for civilizational development, but it is also the most complex</td>
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The image of public leaders as an information and communication phenomenon is an important tool for realizing national interests. One of the important features of the image is the ability to provide information about the object of management, its professional and personal qualities.

In this context, the image of public institutions is a source of information for citizens about the public administration system, law enforcement mechanisms and activities of public leaders.

The realization of the image as an information and communication phenomenon has led to the creation of a certain figurative reality. On the one hand, a modern person is in the real world, and on the other hand, the media resembles reality, but produces another world full of illusions and symbolism. The real world is filled with events that are the result of people's activities and relationships, which are actually reflected and evaluated in people's minds. Reality is usually presented in accordance with the hidden interests (individuals, organizations) of the subjects of the image, so we mostly deal with a specially constructed image, not with any other information about someone [12]. In this regard, the image reality of leadership in public administration, the real world of an individual, social, professional groups, etc. is perceived through symbols, clichés, associations that can be created spontaneously, with the help of information and communication technologies, and has an emotional and rational impact on citizens. Creating an image of public leaders is the goal of the information society [4]. Simultaneously, the reality formed based on images may carry the danger of separating the people from the leaders of the government, which is characterized by varying degrees of abstraction, probability, arrogance, and complexity.

Given the understanding of the concept of interaction as a process of direct or indirect influence of one subject on another, resulting in their interdependence and interconnection, it is possible to form the opinion that in the space of image reality it is possible to achieve intersubjective interaction between the subjects of public administration, which include: public leaders, the public and the media, who exchange information, emotional and evaluative reactions. The object is the image itself, which is shaped by all three subjects.

The mechanism of image interaction between public leaders is, on the one hand, subject-object, and on the other hand, subject-subject. In the first case, the situation is assessed by public leaders "vertically", while in the second case, interaction involves the development of various forms of dialogue because of partnership. Thus, the functional responsibilities of public leaders are to ensure the effective implementation of the public administration aspect. Accordingly, the main factor in shaping the image of public leaders is the creation of political, legal, economic and social conditions for self-development of a positive image that would allow establishing partnerships between the subjects of relations.
In the process of forming a positive image of public leaders, the development of a democratic state on the ideological principles of liberalism, transparency and openness of public authorities, by reducing the necessary and administrative elements, increasing the efficiency of communication and information technology components, is of priority importance. Public authorities should demonstrate accessibility for discussion of proposals and cooperation; develop a democratic style of public service delivery to avoid bureaucratic methods of work.

Through well-organized citizen participation and communication, stakeholders can significantly influence the outcome of decisions. Ultimately, citizen engagement can contribute to increasing public trust in the government and improving the legitimacy and quality of public administration leadership. Accordingly, it can be concluded that communication of public leaders is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of their activities. The essence of this idea is that communication technologies can work in the interests of both parties - government leaders and the community - and influence public opinion in such a way as to create a positive image for public leaders.

Instead, the communicative aspect of public leaders' activities should be constantly manifested through direct and mutual contacts of the governing bodies of any system in order to create, establish and maintain a positive managerial image that affects the emergence of a favorable environment for interaction between both parties. The mass media are undoubtedly a fundamental element of the mechanism of forming the image of public administration leaders. They exert emotional and rational influence on citizens to achieve the goals of public administration. In the sphere of image reality, there is a possibility of subjective interaction between public administration actors, in particular: public leaders, the public and the media, who exchange information, emotional and evaluative reactions. Further research should focus on methods of communication in the public relations system, methods of digital communication, and methods of improving the quality of communication between public leaders and society [13].

**Conclusions.** Consequently, the subjects of image interaction of public leaders function in a certain socio-cultural sphere with political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the state development. Therefore, an important factor for the system of forming a positive image of public authorities is the identification of common interests with the population as a necessary condition for their existence and functioning. Based on the knowledge gained, information about the expected image of government leaders is identified and structured, which is the basis for making certain management decisions. Thus, the process of forming the image of public authorities' leaders involves constant improvement and adjustment of information based on objective data obtained from different groups of the population.
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