

# *The Image of the Profession of Communicator through the Student's View*

—on the Material of the Research Conducted at the RUDN University in December 2016

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**Abstract**— At the end of 2016 Institute of World Economy and Business of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (IWEB RUDN University) conducted the survey of the students of Bachelor and Master Degrees. The aim of the research was to identify the complex of representations of this target audience about social, cultural and professional values, the priority communication models of information consumption, as well as the evaluation of the university's reputation, advantages and disadvantages of the received education from the student's point of view. The results of the study allowed formulate recommendations for the optimization of the educational process, the improvement of the educational program, the formation of an open system of interaction with the industry community and improve the reputation and competitiveness of the organization.

**Keywords**— public opinion, university, education, labor market, image of profession, image of a specialist in communications, advertising and public relations.

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most urgent and disputable in different contexts problem of modern education is its relevance to labor market needs. The university doesn't guarantee work for candidates then taking them for education, but undertakes a commitment to give the student a professional bundle of knowledge and skills that will make their an employer-in-demand specialist. The student become a mediator in the process of interaction between the university and the organization on the labor market. In this regard, it seems useful to compare the image of the specialist and the profession formed by the student with the existing educational and professional standards. In view of this in December 2016, we conducted a survey of students of the Institute of World Economy and Business of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (IWEB RUDN University). One of the research tasks was to identify a set of

representations of this target audience about the image of the profession and specialist in the field of advertising and public relations, as well as professional values and career opportunities from the point of view of students. This will allow to optimize the educational process and program, create an open system of interaction with the industry community, to improve the reputation and competitiveness of the organization.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### A. Selection of the respondents

In December 2016 we made a questionnaire survey of 170 students of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th year of the Bachelor's degree and the 2nd year of the Master's program in the direction of "Advertising and Public Relations" in the IWEB RUDN University. We decided not to ask the bachelors and magistracy students of 1-st year education because they didn't have full information and didn't form a sustainable opinion on the educational program.

### B. Structure of the questionnaire

We asked to answer anonymously for the tasks of the questionnaire, which included several modules about their motivation in choosing the place of study and educational program, the level of satisfaction of the knowledge received during the educational process and the evaluation of various aspects of the academic program. Moreover the questionnaire contained traditional blocks. This was an introduction, which explained the purpose and objectives of the research and included instructions for completing the questionnaire. There was also a part with information on the respondents' formal demographic characteristics, as well as an expression of

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gratitude for the attention and time spent. Questions in the survey were the different types: open, closed and semi-closed.

### III. RESULTS

We received the results after processing the information of the survey of the students of the IWEB RUDN University that allow to describe the idea of the future profession, the psychographic characteristics of the communicator required for building a career in the chosen profession, to study the correlation between this vision and the level of satisfaction with the education received.

The processing of the answers gave the following picture:

#### A. The question "Do you have job?"

This closed question involved the choice of one answer from two.

- The option "Yes" was chosen by 81 respondents. This is 47.6% of the total number of respondents.
- The option "No" was chosen by 84 respondents. This is 49.4% of the total number of respondents.
- 5 persons found it difficult to answer the question. This is 3% of the total number of respondents.

#### B. The question "What, in your opinion, is the perfect expert on advertising and PR?"

This open question didn't limit the respondents in the choice of characteristics, either quantitatively or meaningful. In the opinion of the respondents, the expert in advertising and public relations first of all must pay attention at his level of science-driven growth, education and intelligence (17% of respondents noted this characteristic), creativity (15% of respondents chose this measure as mandatory), social skills (11% of respondents believed that this quality will be useful in the future profession).

Special interest attracts the answers to questions in which the ideal advertising and public relations specialist is viewed through the prism of knowledge and skills. Thus, the importance of professional knowledge mentioned 30 persons. According to the students opinion, on the one hand, an ideal specialist in advertising and public relations should have professional knowledge and competencies ("having a high level of professional knowledge", "a person who knows a lot of different technologies in advertising and PR", etc.), and on the other hand, he must have a spacious mind ("educated in various spheres of life", "an expert must understand not only advertising and PR", "he has basic knowledge of economics", etc.).

Besides the respondents stressed the need to be abreast of the latest innovations, trends and achievements of the communication industry ("a specialist who knows about all the trends of the market", "a person who constantly follows all news, trends, etc. attends various master classes, seminars", etc.). 4 of the respondents highlighted the importance of foreign languages ("speaks at least 2 foreign languages", "knows a minimum of 3 languages at B2 level", etc.).

Professional skills in the image of an ideal specialist in advertising and public relations were noted by 11 respondents.

Among them are the following: "writes for the screen", "has the skills of a good lobbyist", "sets clear objectives, targets", "professional with a large portfolio of successful projects" and others.

Together these ideas are completely correlated with the existing educational and professional standards (in particular the project developed in the largest and oldest branch association of pr-specialists - the Russian Association for Public Relations). For example the number of personal competencies in professional standards RAPR includes the willingness and ability to continuous learning; positive thinking; responsibility and attention; social skills; proactivity and openness to change; stress resistance and stress-relieving skills; ability to work in conditions of uncertainty and multitasking; other [1].

The federal state educational standard of the direction "Advertising and Public Relations" in the Russian Federation has a several important relevant for students skills. There are a soft-skills (for example, the ability to use the basics of economic knowledge in various spheres of life or the ability to self-organization and self-education), general professional competence, as also specify professional competencies (for example, having basic skills in creating advertising texts and public relations, possession of literary editing skills, copywriting or the ability to conduct marketing research) [2].

Top-10 qualities of advertising and public relations specialists are presented in Table 1. The research team identified them on the basis of generalization by the principle of semantic affinity, ranking and frequency. The most frequency characteristics of the advertisement and public relations specialist according to the respondents opinion are noted vertically, the number of the corresponding answers of the respondents received at the result of the questioning located horizontally:

TABLE I. TOP-10 QUALITIES OF AN EXPERT IN ADVERTISING AND PR

№	Characteristics	Number of answers
1.	Many-sided man, educated, intelligent	62 answers
2.	Creative	53 answers
3.	Communicative	40 answers
4.	Responsible	26 answers
5.	Stress-resistant	19 answers
6.	Active, powerful	17 answers
7.	Professional, constantly improving in their business	16 answers
8.	Resolute	15 answers
9.	Well-organized, punctual	12 answers
	Hardworking, loves his job	12 answers
10.	Able to analyze, logical	11 answers

#### C. The question "What position do you consider as the top of your career?"

This semi-closed question presupposed the choice of answers from the five proposed and also enabled respondents to propose their own. The results are summarized in Table 2, in which the respondents' answers are arranged vertically, and the quantity of answers is shown horizontally:

TABLE II. PRIORITIES IN THE CAREER FOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS

№	Professional position as the top of the career	Number of answers
1.	Business owner	81 answers
2.	An accomplished specialist is a true professional in his area	48 answers
3.	General Director of communication agency	23 answers
4.	Vice President of Communications	7 answers
5.	Winner of professional awards and honors	7 answers
6.	Art director, creative director	2 answers
7.	Marketing director	1 answer
8.	Minister of Communications and Mass Media	1 answer
9.	Senior Copywriter	1 answer
10.	To save own personality	1 answer

Such results are quite unexpected for Russia, which only 26 years ago broke up with communist ideology as postulates of social and state structure. Almost 50% of survey respondents are ready to create their own business in the communications field. This was basically impossible in the Soviet Union, where the right of private property was limited to personal property, which included labor incomes and savings, houses and cars, household and individual consumption goods. This is evidence of a serious mental change among today's youth and the gradual withdrawal from social and economic legacy of the Soviet system.

*D. The question "What, in your opinion, most fairly characterizes the activities in the field of advertising and PR?"*

This semi-closed question involves choosing of three answers from 11 offered, and also gave respondents the opportunity to propose their own versions. At the same time the presented options were positive and negative. They characterized the activity in advertising and PR and its product. So we can confirmed that they were sufficiently diverse.

Top-10 characteristics of the profession of an advertising specialist and public relations is presented in Table 3 and ranked by the research group on the basis of frequency. The most frequent characteristics of the profession of a specialist in advertising and public relations, according to respondents' opinions, are located vertically in it, the percentage of respondents, who called the characteristics during the survey, is indicates horizontally:

TABLE III. TOP-10 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROFESSION ACTIVITY IN ADVERTISING AND PR

№	Characteristics	Percentage of respondents
1.	Interesting projects	71,8%
2.	Creativity	64,7%
3.	Possibility of self-realization	47%
4.	Irregular working hours	30%
5.	Analytics	28,2%
6.	Creating large-scale events	23,5%
7.	Professional Development	22,9%
8.	Constant stress	12,9%
9.	Effective time management	12,4%
10.	High income	9,4%

According by the obtained results, the respondents of survey formed the image of an perfect advertising and public relations specialist who has a set of positive qualities and characteristics important for the profession. They indicated the knowledge that they needed, which in general demonstrates the positive attitude of students towards their future profession.

However, the characteristics of the negative evaluativity get a certain number of votes ("long working hours" - 51 respondents, "constant stress" - 22 respondents, "routine" – 12 persons) in addition to the positive characteristics of their future professional activity, such as "interesting projects" or "creativity".

Although this number is not big, but the presence of such estimates is an indirect marker of dissatisfaction with the acquired professional experience. Only 21 persons (34.4%) were not employed at the time of the survey among 61 respondents who noted "irregular working day", "constant stress" and "routine" as the characteristics of the profession.

In a similar way it should be noted, since respondents had the opportunity to name 3 characteristics of the chosen profession, negative ones were present on a par with positive answers. Only 1 respondent in the answer to this question focused on the negative aspects and listed only the negative characteristics of the profession of the specialist in advertising and public relations. He also noted that the ideal communicator is "always working, having no personal life at all". Though the respondent didn't work at the time of the questioning and chose the educational program accidentally. This circumstance also influences at the assessment of the quality of education and the image of the future profession: the research team has identified a link between the negative characteristics of future professional activity and the motivation for the choice of the educational program and the evaluation of its quality [3].

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion of the survey we can draw a series of learning point that are interrelated and constitute a single complex.

*A. The results of the research allow retracing the deep transformations of socio-economic models in Russia*

The study showed how much Russian society has changed in recent years.

*1) Students of Bachelor's and Master's degree of IWEB RUDN University ready to consider self-employment as one of its economic models and professional behavior: Almost 50% of respondents see themselves as owners of business in case of successful career development*

*2) The key characteristics of a specialist in advertising and PR are intellectual development, creativity and communication skills, that meets demands of the knowledge economy: Exactly these qualities formed the core of the image of a communicator specialist according to the questionnaire survey of students of the IWEB RUDN University (accordingly, 17%, 15% and 11% of respondents). These*

characteristics are most demanded by the knowledge economy and the creative economy [4], [5], [6], [7], [8].

*B. The results of the questionnaire gave a qualitative review of opinions and assessments about the teaching of specialists by concerned parties*

Successful education of a specialist is always the result of interaction between three parties: student, educational organization and industry. In this regard, it is important the following:

*1) Accordance of the educational program in IWEB RUDN University with state and professional standards:* The vision of the profession of a specialist in advertising and PR, demonstrated in the results of the survey, corresponds in generally to the approaches enounced in the state and industry standards.

*2) Possible dissatisfaction with the quality of the education and the first professional experience:* In the main the revealed complex of representations about the future profession is positive, however it is necessary to note the presence of negativity in the evaluation of the chosen professional way, which was demonstrated by the survey respondents. On the one hand, this is a consequence of the general disappointment in the choice of the educational program, which directly corrects with a lack of personal motivation in the decision-making process [3]. On the other hand the first professional experience obtained by some respondents leads to such consequences ("irregular working day" was noted by 39.5% of working respondents), which indicates the necessity of applying industry standards to employers also.

*3) Formation of a principally open system of interaction with the industry community with the aim to improve the reputation of the organization and increase its competitiveness:*

There were formulated the recommendations based on the results of the study for optimisation the interaction system of IWEB RUDN University with the industry community in order to improve the implementation of the educational program "advertising and public relations" and increase its competitiveness.

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