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PECULIARITIES OF CREATING HEADLINES IN THE
PROCESS OF PREPARING PR-TEXTS FOR INTERNET
PUBLICATIONS ON TOURISM TOPICS

Abstract. The article considers the importance of the stage of writing headlines in the process of preparing PR-texts on tourism topics, specifies the features of creating titles of different types of PR-texts published in online publications, identifies factors that affect the reader’s attention and facilitate the perception of the headline.

Keywords: headline, types of headlines, PR-text, types of PR-texts, press release, press announcement, online edition, tourism topics.

The leading role in the process of forming the tourist image of the country is played by the mass media. The mass media in the conditions of rapid development of global communication are established in the information space as a reliable model of recipient’s perception of information. There is also a detailed and well-formed image of the country, which creates an orderly idea of the country, its tourist opportunities and is perceived by users of tourist services as a real image of a tourist facility.
However, it is important to adhere to the principle of conformity when promoting a tourism product on the foreign market. This means that the image that is promoted on the market must correspond to the level of development of society, in order not to irritate the client by the inconsistency of the created image with the real state of the tourist area.

The main tool of PR-communications are texts transmitted to the audience through mass communication channels. The latest trends in the study of PR-texts cause the question of professionalism of their creation. The success of the promotion of new products, news events, PR-campaigns, travel agencies, travel locations as well as effective interaction with the media largely depend on a well-written PR-text.

One of the conditions for the effectiveness of such a text is its successful title. However, the headline attributes change over time. It (headline) adapts to reality, reflects the processes and laws according to which society exists and develops. Since Internet media are increasingly used in the modern media space as alternative channels of information transmission along with traditional, the question of the peculiarities of writing tourist headlines for all media texts and PR-texts in particular is enough relevant.

It should be noted that the outlined issues are insufficiently developed by domestic researchers. One of the first phenomena of PR-information and PR-communication began to be considered by the Russian scientist O. Krivonosov, who analyzed the genre varieties of PR-texts in the process of research. D. Wilcox, D. Gettins, S. Ponomarev, I. Alyoshina, and I. Yakovlev also worked within the framework of this issue. Certain aspects of this issue have been studied by domestic researchers, in particular H. Pocheptsov, V. Korolko, N. Mantulo and others.

Despite the fact that journalists have accumulated extensive experience in researching the creation of headlines, media linguistics still lacks a proper interpretation of the headline. The literature represents the attempts of scientists to systematize the developed materials (O. N. Kulakov, E. O. Lazarev, L. O. Korobova, D. M. Pryliuk), but the problem of titles for online editions still remains almost unexplored. Ukrainian scientists V. Rizun, L. Kanibolotska, A. Yevhrafova,
V. Zdorovega and others researched the headlines of the print media. Despite the growing popularity of online publications, modern scholars pay insufficient attention to their study, in particular the differences in the titles of print and online media, the peculiarities of the creation of Internet news headlines. Insufficient coverage of these issues, as well as the need to analyze the experience of the first online publishers determined the relevance of the chosen topic.

R. Craig, M. Stevens are foreign scholars who have studied the creation of headlines for information portals, the exceptional importance of headlines in online media.

The purpose of the scientific research is to find out the peculiarities of creating headlines of PR-texts on tourism topics (for example, online publications), to identify effective methods of writing headlines of PR-messages on tourism topics for online publications.

Achieving this goal involves solving the following tasks: substantiation of the importance of the stage of writing headlines in the process of preparing texts of PR-communication on tourism; analysis of methods of creating Internet headlines of different types of PR-texts on the example of Ukrainian online publications; identification of factors that affect the reader’s attention and facilitate the perception of the title.

The object of research is regional online publications, namely: “Rivnenski novyny”, “Chetverta vlada”, “Take Rivne”.

The subject of the research is the headlines of PR-texts of various types of tourism topics, including press releases, press announcements, image articles, image interviews, which are presented in online publications and methods of writing them.

Before considering this issue, it is worth focusing on the definition of “PR-text” and its classifications, which will further identify the specifics of the preparation of materials for the public. According to scholars who study media texts, PR-text is “a written text that has the purpose to form or increase the public capital of the basic PR-subject; has hidden (rarely – direct) authorship; intended for external or internal public” [5, p. 5]. Such messages are disseminated through the media in person or by direct delivery and have their own sources: primary (oral as information, from the
first person; written – in the form of management documents) and secondary (written and oral presentations / publications in the media). Researcher O. Krivonosov notes that PR-text is a kind of mass communication texts, because the media, through which PR-text can be distributed, as well as PR and press services that “generate” this type of text, is a component of mass communication. The author believes that PR-text, as well as other types of texts of mass communication (journalistic and advertising), must meet the criteria of texts of mass communication, namely: accessibility, specificity, conciseness, ease of perception, aesthetics, etc. [6]. This will contribute to the implementation of one of the main functions of the PR-text – the function of influence, which is to “form in the public a stable positive attitude towards the basic PR-subject” [5, p. 9]. O. Krivonosov thinks that “PR-texts are divided into primary, combined, media texts and related texts. The primary ones include a press release, invitation, background, letter of questions-answers, fact-letter, biography, statement, by-liner, greeting, letter. Combined PR-texts are a press kit, booklet, brochure, newsletter, postcard. Media texts or texts for the media are represented by image interviews, image articles, case stories. Related texts include a slogan, summary, press review” [5].

Of course, each of the above genres of PR-texts has its own peculiarities of writing. However, in the process of preparation of all types of PR-texts it is important to take into account the tasks of PR-communication, which were emphasized by S. Katlip [3]: 1) attracting the attention of the target public; 2) stimulating interest in the content of the message; 3) formation of needs and intentions to act in accordance with the notification; 4) the direction of action of those who behave in accordance with the message. The most effective way to solve the second task is to stimulate interest in the content of the message, the headline of the text. After all, headlines are the first thing that attracts a reader’s attention in the process of looking for the material. Sometimes the reader only needs to read the headlines in the news feed on the site to be informed about the events.

It is worth noting that M.-Yu.-L. Patashute most fully characterizes the headlines of online publications: “the headline is a compressed version of the whole article or note and carries the maximum information about it” [9, p. 86]. Relevant is
V. Rizun’s definition, which can be applied to the titles of online articles: “All elements of the title complex are reference points that show the most important textual information, advanced elements of the text that serve as a support for the reader in understanding the content, which, segmenting the content act as a means of ensuring the communicative interests of readers” [11, p. 193-194]. In fact, the headlines of information sites often cover the content of the work, so that readers decide whether to read the journalistic material or not. Sometimes the title even replaces the article itself. Thus, according to O. Amzin, “in 60-80% of cases the news is not read, but get an idea of what is happening from the headlines” [1]. It is obvious that, writing a headline is a crucial component of the process of creating both texts in general and PR-texts in particular.

In order to identify the peculiarities of writing the titles of journalistic materials in the tourist media, it is necessary to consider their classification. The most common is the division of headlines into informational and motivating. Thus, the collection of educational materials compiled according to the French method of advanced training of media workers “Journalist’s Guide” states that “the task of the information headline is to report basic information for 2-3 seconds, which the reader spends to get acquainted with it” [2, p. 6]. Requirements for the information headline: it must be extremely clear and understandable, has the simplest syntactic construction, be as short as possible. The motivating headline has the task to influence the reader emotionally, to intrigue, “without specifying” the key news. It is also called a hook title. Requirements for the selection of such a title: shock, rewrite a famous phrase, use a play on words; rhyme; combine words in an unexpected way [2, p. 6].

Researcher O. Amzin notes that certain basic principles of creating a successful headline remain the same for everyone. For example, the total length of the title should be seven to eight words, if the number of words is close to ten or more, then such a title can be considered unsuccessful [1]. Such as: “Rivne will take part in an interregional video conference on the protection of tourists in the European Court” [12]. The length of the title given in the example is 12 words. Too many words complicate the reader’s perception of the essence of the information story and
reduces the chance that he will get acquainted with the material. All online media headlines should answer the questions “Who?”, “What did he do?”, “Where?” (“When?”). For example, “The Ministry of Emergencies of Ukraine announced a storm warning for tourists” [13]. “In Rivne region 3324 people registered for a tourist trip” [12]. The headlines clearly state the facts. They are devoid of generalizations, because the title with vague expressions will not interest anyone. Therefore, media headlines should summarize the most important facts, but consist of a small number of words to be quickly and easily perceived by the audience.

However, R. Craig states that to draw the reader’s attention to the publication is possible only with the help of a creative approach to writing the title. However, this does not mean that “every title should be funny or even clever” [4, p. 176]. This statement is justified, as the primary purpose of any Internet headline is to explain the content of the material. The title should match the mood of the material. For example, it is inappropriate to use witty phrases in a story about a fire or a car accident. Of course, you should not give up wit, but not at the expense of information.

Particular attention should be paid to the verb when creating a title. As mentioned above, it is an important element of a network headline. Thus, the online edition “Rivnenski novyny” mainly uses past tense verbs of the perfect form. D. Randall noted: “the most popular are stories about what happened” [10]. For example: “Rivne region received a tourist award” [12]. The author used the past tense verb of the perfect form “received”, which gives the message the completion of the action, which is associated with a certain result. D. Randall recommends avoiding future tense verbs altogether. However, let us disagree with this statement. The use of future tense verbs should not be abandoned in press releases. This is one of the types of PR-texts, the successful title of which depends on its effectiveness. It aims to inform the audience about a specific PR-event. It means, not just in the form of an announcement, but specifically to inform not only about the time and place of the event, but also about its purpose and content. [8, p. 65]. It will be appropriate to use verbs in the future tense in the titles of such texts. For example: “A tourist route will be built in Rivne” [13].

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It is inappropriate to use the present tense verb in the title, for example, “The authorities of Rivne region support youth tourism initiatives” [12]. Sometimes it is impossible to avoid the present tense, but in this case it is appropriate to say “supported”, because it describes the events that have already happened.

Another effective way to create a successful title is micro stamps. Micro stamps are not only peculiar abbreviations, but also funny phrases that are understandable to any native speaker in general [1]. Usually such a title consists of actors, actions and clarifications. For example, “Rivne politician visited the tourist TL” [12]. The abbreviation “TL” in this title is known to all readers as the Tunnel of Love and is easily identified by the audience. The undoubted advantage of using micro stamps is the optimization of headers, which facilitates the perception of the essence of the message by the reader. The ability to properly select and place such micro stamps is the key to creating a successful title.

As already mentioned, the important elements of the Internet title are the clarifications of the place, time and so on. First, it contributes to the accurate statement of facts, so that the author explains to the reader the basis of the message. Secondly, often clarification contains the most interesting part of the news. For example, “During the weather, rescuers helped more than 600 tourists in Rivne region” [7].

The above-mentioned methods of writing headlines can be applied to the creation of the title of a press release – the most common type of PR-texts. Its task is to spread information about something / someone through the media. At the same time, press releases are an important source of news for journalists and content editors. In order for the latter to pay attention to them, PR-texts of this type must be professionally written. This requirement is especially important for the main structural element of press releases – the headline. Well-known PR specialist A. Kulish notes that the press release should look like a ready-to-print information text [8, p. 52]. The title of the press release has a specific feature in the use of time categories of verbs. It is necessary to write about the event as if it had already taken place, i.e. the verb should be used in the past tense. A. Kulish indicated that this is a world media standard [8, p. 50]. Of course, if the title of such a text meets the
requirements for news headlines, the probability that it will be published without changes will increase. The title should be clear about the essence of the message conveyed by the organization and its importance to the audience of a particular publication. The main task of the title of the press release is to attract the attention of the editor, so he must briefly and clearly state the main content of the message.

But such types of PR-texts as image interview, image article require a motivating title. It should be noted that these texts are prepared by employees of PR-services for the media as ready-to-publish materials, and a good title for them is very important. So the headline for the image interview can be a quote that expresses the essence of the material or an unexpected statement. To write an interesting title for an image article, it is possible to redraw a well-known phrase, use a play on words, rhyme, use well-known aphorisms, puns. For example, “From a bouquet to a tablet: how women’s tastes have changed” [12]. However, when creating such headlines for the Internet, it is worth remembering that the authors write not only for readers, but also for search engines that do not understand the phrases, irony or puns. In such cases, it is needed to stick to the middle ground between informativeness and intelligence.

In general, to determine the most effective type of travel message headline it is possible by analyzing the number of readers it “touched” – most often they leave their comments under the article, which is a definite advantage of online media. However, we should not forget that the essence of what is being reported plays an important role here. The language and composition of the title should be intense, verbs – active and accurate, sentences – optimized. And adjectives should be used sparingly, because they complicate the perception of information by the reader and are often not factual material.

Therefore, to create an accurate headline of the tourism topic we have to take into account the rules of its structure and composition. The title should consist of 6-8 words so as not to overload the reader with information. Preferably, the three questions should be answered: “Who?”, “What did he do?”, “Where?” (“When?”) – that is, to inform the reader of the most important facts and at the same time leave an intrigue (“Why?”, etc.) which will encourage the user to read the news in full.
The subject of the message (logical emphasis) is desirable to place at the beginning of the title, which immediately draws the reader’s attention to the most important. An important element of the network headline is the verb (mostly past tense, as it presupposes the presence of a result), which gives the expression dynamism. It is needed to use simple words that do not complicate the perception of information by the reader and optimize the title. It is also necessary to avoid adjectives, because they mostly do not name the facts, lengthen the name, complicating its perception by the reader. In addition, a good way to optimize the title is to use micro stamps, which represent most of the actions, faces and refinements.

The peculiarity of creating headlines for PR-texts is that the use of the above techniques of professional writing should be subject not only to the task of informing, but also the task of attracting attention and instructing the audience to perceive the necessary information for the subject of PR-activity.

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