

THE ROLE OF SPORTS EVENTS IN THE FORMATION OF STATE IMAGE

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Abstract: The article touches upon the role of the FIFA World Cup in forming the image of the Russian Federation. According to this aim the basic theoretical and methodical approaches to the understanding of the categories "image", "concept" and "brand" were analyzed. The features of international image of the state and the ways of its formation were reviewed. The technologies of creating the image of the state were studied. The input of large sports events of international scope into the image of the state was regarded. The main attention is focused on the role of significant sports events, organized on the territory of the Russian Federation, in forming the image of Russia. The results of the conducted content-analysis of the foreign Mass Media allowed to make a conclusion about the positive role of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in the formation of state image.

Keywords: image of the state, 2018 FIFA World Cup, content-analysis, Mass Media, stereotypes.

1 Introduction

International image of the state is a form through which the ongoing situation in the country is perceived in a definite way. If the state has a negative image abroad, all information about what is going on in the country will be transferred in terms of this concept. On the contrary, if the state has a positive image at the international scene, the ongoing moments will be shown without misrepresentation or in favor of the state. Creation of the positive image of Russia is very important for providing information and communication policy of the state. Prosperous communication field allows the state to promote its interests at the international scene. Consequently, the favorable conditions for the economic development, realization of the national interests and national security of the state are created (Kochetkov, 2017a). The process of forming the image of the state is based on the objective characteristics, for example, political structure or national economy development. The image of the state strikes a balance between the real state of things and public perception, connected with its expectations. Moreover, the image of the state is characterized by the dynamics, that is dependence on the external, internal factors of development of the state and world scene.

The task of forming the international image of Russia is formalized in the article 84 of the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 as a task solution of providing national security in the cultural sphere. The FIFA World Cup, held in 2018, attracted close attention to Russia among many states and Mass Media, and by this reason it became a significant ground for forming image of Russia.

This article analyzes the role of the 2018 FIFA World Cup as one of the factors of forming positive international image of Russia.

2 Literature Review

Currently such Russian researchers as E. A. Galumov (2003, 2004), I. A. Vasilenko (2012), E. N. Davyborets and I. V. Radikov (2015), A. A. Graver (2012) explore the international image of the state. The investigations dedicated to the image of the state have interdisciplinary character: it is studied from the perspective of political psychology, communication and cultural approaches, marketing and economy positions, sociological approach (Graver, 2012).

Etymology of the word "image" has English origins. There are several variants of translating this word into Russian: a concept, shape, picture, presentation, reflection (Muller, 1995). Concerning diverse interpretations within Russian research field, it is hard to differentiate the terms "concept", "brand" and "image" of the state.

The concept of the state. This term is studied profoundly by B. Shestopal (2008), who notes that political concept includes the reflection of real characteristics of the object perception and expectations representation of perception subject. Stereotypes and attitudes of collective consciousness influence the perception of the political concept.

The image of the state. This term was studied by such scientists as E. V. Anokhin (2014) and E. A. Galumov (2003). E. V. Anokhin (2014) and may be defined as the image of the state as developed in collective consciousness with stereotype nature, complex of practical and emotional conceptions about the country, formed among people based on the personal experience and existing information, received from different resources. This understanding of the country's image is close to the comprehension of the state concept belonging to other researchers. E. A. Galumov (2003) notes that the image of the country is a complex of objective interrelated characteristics of the state system (economic, geographical, national, demographic, etc.), formed in the process of evolutionary development of statehood as complicated multifaceted subsystem of global structure, the efficiency of its units' interaction is determined by the tendencies of socio-economic, public-political, national-confessional and other processes. The novelty of the image definition, made by this scientist, consists in emphasizing the characteristics inherent to the state, reference to the people's conception about state is omitted.

The brand of the state. This term, studied by such scientists as O. A. Vasilieva (2015), A. N. Chumakov, M. P. Bocharov (2006). O. A. Vasilieva (2015), characterizes the need for the strengthening of the national brand from the position of "Anholt's hexagon" for representing the state from the best side. Designing the successful brand allows the state to realize national interests, increase the volume of export, attract additional investments and unify the population of the country. A. N. Chumikov and M. P. Bocharov (2006) investigate the branding of the territories: cities, regions, states. Here state is regarded from the position of attracting future consumers: citizens, investors, tourists. Designing the brand of the territory includes the analysis of existing characteristics, problems and advantages of the state. Further the emphasis is placed on the positive features and their visualization, and also it is often presented in the form of slogan. Creation of the state brand is characterized by considerable efforts rather than formation of the city brand, by this reason, states create brand taking into account only one of directions.

This study is focused on the international image of the state as a set of historical, geographical, cultural, political, economic and social characteristics of the state, valuable for its perception at the international scene (Kochetkov, 2019a, 2019b).

The general image of the Russian Federation is composed of many elements of the society spheres: economic, social, political and cultural. Basic components of Russia's image can be relatively divided into positive and transitional.

Positive components include: wealth of natural resources, image of the national leader, power of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, information and communication policy. The wealth of natural resources includes a big territory of the country and large raw materials deposits. The Russian Federation is a leader in the ranking of the countries according to the size of the occupied territory; it is at the second place according to the natural gas production and coal deposits. Regardless of the negative assessment of selling raw materials in foreign countries, omitting the stages of processing, the resource potential of the state is enormous and it fosters image of the state.

Successful communication at the international scene depends on the concept and manner of behavior of the national leader. Moreover, every year world top lists of trust are made, where the

position of the leader of the state plays a significant role in the understanding of the state. V. V. Putin regularly occupies strong positions in a number of rankings: he received the second place after Chinese leader Xi Jinping in the ranking of the most influential people according to Forbes in 2018 (Forbes, 2018) and was included into Top-100 of the most influential people (The World's 100 Most Influential People, 2019).

The power of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation contributes to perceiving the state as a powerful commonwealth, able to defend citizens from the enemies' attacks, consequently, having the possibility to maintain its interests at the international scene. According to the data of the Military Strength Ranking-2019, Russia occupies the second position after the USA (Military Strength Ranking, 2019).

Concerning young Russian statehood, the identity of Russia is at the formation stage, for this reason it cannot be the resource of positive image of the state. After the Soviet time the new spiritual bonds of Russian people haven't formed yet.

The state of Russian economy along with the military sphere plays an important role in the possibility of the state to defend its positions. At this moment we cannot call Russian economy as an advantage of the state, however the positive tendency is seen, although it is a slow, but positive pace of growth.

It is also too soon to consider the state of Russia's social policy as a strong element of the state image. The Russian Federation is a social state where certain social benefits for population exist, however the content and quality of these benefits should be improved (Kochetkov, 2015b).

Holding sports events of the international level in the state surely influences its image. It occurs, in particular, because long before the sports events, world Mass Media attentively observe all ongoing in the country. Besides, long enough after the end of sports event world information field is ready to receive the statements about the occurred event. This aspect can be used as a naturally created information platform for forming the positive image of the state (Kochetkov, 2015a).

Furthermore, state-organizer of the international sports event can deal with the tourists using "soft power": with the help of traditional cuisines, objects of historical heritage, and peculiarities of citizens' everyday life - everything that can be attractive for foreigners. Help in the organization of the event assembles foreign sponsors, who can make significant investments into the economy of the country in the future (Kochetkov, 2019b).

The Russian Federation as an heiress of the USSR received substantial part of the soviet sports glory, that determines its more favorable position comparing to those countries that form the image of their country "from scratch" (Kochetkov, 2017b). From the beginning of the new millennium Russia has organized about 20 great sports events of the world level, among which Summer Universiade (2013), Winter Olympic Games (2014), Formula 1 Russian Gran Prix (annually from 2014), FIFA World Cup (2018) and Winter Universiade (2019) are of particular interest.

The experience of Winter Olympic Games in Sochi showed that Russia managed to organize such a great event. This fact is confirmed not only by the words of the president of Russia, but also by the political analysts: "In practice Olympic games became the instrument of rebranding Russia, which was very often considered in the world as a retarded and archaic country, regardless of the success in the XX century", - O. Gaman-Golutvina confirms (RIA News, 2014). British newspaper The Telegraph emphasizes that Russians were really joyful during the closing ceremony: the owners organized the event of great importance and difficulty and turned it into reality (Chadband, 2014).

3 Methodological Framework

The aim of this research was to study the role of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in forming the international image of Russia.

The main tasks of the investigation are:

1. To reveal the main themes of publications, dedicated to the FIFA World Cup.
2. To determine information priorities of foreign Mass Media.
3. To observe the dynamics of publications mood, dedicated to the FIFA World Cup.
4. To find out how Russia's image has changed in the publications of foreign Mass Media after having organized the FIFA World Cup.

The main research method is content-analysis of publications in foreign Mass Media.

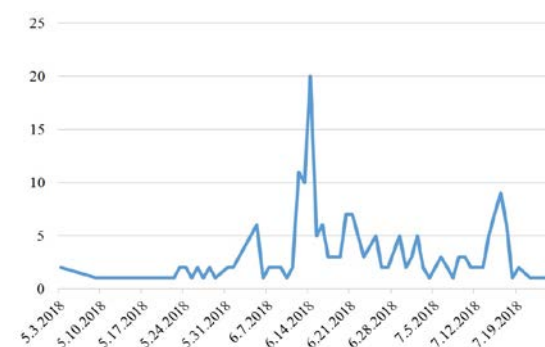
Such foreign Mass Media as The New York Times, The Washington Post, People's Daily, BBC, USA Today, China Daily, CNN, Fox News, Hindustan Times and New Indian Express were chosen for the research. Searching the texts for the analysis was done in English with the help of Google during the period of May 1, 2018 to August 1, 2018. The articles should include the words "Russia" and "World Cup" at the same time. In general, the web search query looked like this website: [the website of the publication] Russia and World cup. The most popular articles according to the Google queries were included into the sample.

4 Results and Discussions

In February of 2019 the students under my scientific supervision explored 200 publications in foreign newspapers in English and the text columns of the news on television and radio over the period of May 1, 2018 to August 1, 2018, where the 2018 FIFA World Cup and Russia were mentioned (Mahova, 2019).

Based on the sample, the dynamics of publications was studied. If to review the increase of topicality of the FIFA World Cup in the information data, we can notice that the period of peak is attributed to the official opening of this sports event - that is the June 14, 2018 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Dynamics of publications in foreign Mass Media from 01.05.2018 to 01.08.2018, number of publications



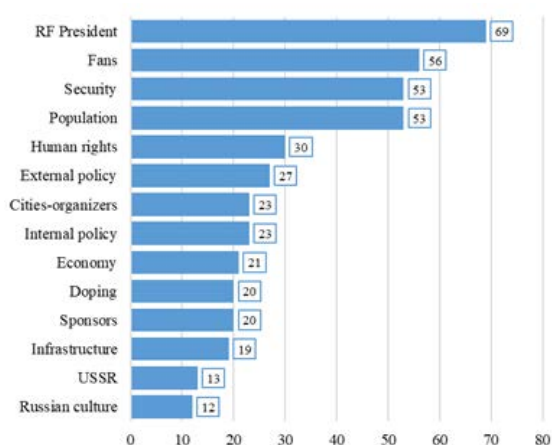
Source: author

This statement is clear, close attention of the world community was attracted particularly to the Opening Ceremony of the international sports event. However, it is interesting that the second significant peak in publications was the next day after the closing ceremony of the FIFA World Cup - that is July 16, 2018, and it is explained by summing up the results of the conducted event.

The peculiarities of perceiving the 2018 FIFA World Cup by foreign Mass Media show the number of mentioning of certain categories (see Figure 2). The personality of the president is the

most important, then fans, security and impression of the events, which also play a role in the successful organization of the 2018 FIFA World Cup. The third position is occupied by the category "Security". It should be noted that this category included not only the security of the fans as such, but also their separate categories, in particular, LGBT-community representatives. Interest to the Russian people from the side of foreign Mass Media consisted in referring to the international policy of Russia, in particular, what life is expected by the Russians after the FIFA World Cup. Human rights complete Top-5, the issues of tolerance and security of LGBT-community representatives were the most popular. Anxiety was caused by the Russians' attitude to them because of the adherence to the traditional values and the existence of the law banning gay propaganda.

Figure 2 Categories mentioned in the publications of foreign Mass Media from 01.05.2018 to 01.08.2018, number of articles



Source: author

Russian culture wasn't so interesting for Mass Media. It may be connected with the prevalence of foreign sponsors in the FIFA World Cup and little possibility to know national cuisine in the places where fans stay. Mentioning the USSR shows that foreigners remember Soviet history and the connection with contemporary history of Russia.

The FIFA World Cup became one of the greatest sports events of 2018. Football matches were held in 11 Russian cities. According to the data of the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media, 1,83 million of FAN IDs were issued. Russia occupies a leading position (987 thous.) on the number of fans, it is explained by a rare chance to see international teams at the territory of their country.

Regardless of the fact that Chinese team didn't pass the qualification stage to get into the 2018 FIFA World Cup, Chinese occupied the second place according to the number of FAN ID users after Russians (68 thous.). The People's Republic of China was included into top 10-ranking of the countries-record holder according to the tickets bought, this aspect can be explained by the close collaboration of Russia and China, as well as the increased economic possibilities of Tianxia citizens (FIFA: 100,000 Chinese fans attend Russia World Cup, 2018).

Besides that, among the countries, whose citizens bought the largest number of tickets, we can point out the USA (52 thous.), Mexico (44 thous.), Argentina (37 thous.), Brazil (35 thous.), Great Britain (31 thous.), Columbia (31 thous.), Germany (30 thous.) and Peru (27 thous.). It is a significant moment that despite of the implemented sanctions in relation to Russia, the number of fans from the countries that initiated them (the USA, Great Britain and Germany) was the largest at the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

According to the data of the Russian public opinion research center (VCIOM), 83% of the Russians support the organization of sports events, like the 2018 FIFA World Cup, on the territory of the country. Answering the question if this event brought to Russia more benefit or harm, 71% of the respondents chose the variant "more benefit", 9% of the citizens chose the variant "more harm", 15% of the surveyed decided that "nothing has changed", other participants found it difficult to answer.

Among the reasons of choosing the variant "more benefit", 60% of the Russians mentioned the improvement of Russia's image, 16% of the surveyed said about a great number of tourists and development of tourism, 14% of the respondents thought that it was a big financial flow from the tourists. Those who chose the variant "more harm" mentioned the following reasons: 49% of the surveyed think that much money was spent, wastes are not compensated; 31% of the respondents suppose that money which was wasted for the 2018 FIFA World Cup or profit could be spent for the needs of the country; 19% of the citizens are sure that the FIFA World Cup was used to divert people from real problems. In particular, it could be the result of implementing pension reform right before the opening of the FIFA World Cup which produced sharp public reaction.

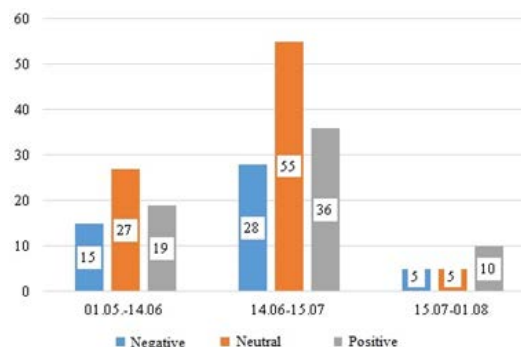
The respondents were also suggested to choose the statement that they agree. 60% of the surveyed think that much money was spent, but the FIFA World Cup was worth it, meanwhile, 34% of the citizens consider that it is very good that this sports event took place in Russia, but wasted money could have been used for other needs.

Answering the question how will change the attitude of other countries to Russia after the 2018 FIFA World Cup, 72% of the respondents chose the variant "will improve", 22% of the surveyed said that "won't change", 1% of the citizens chose the variant "will become worse", the rest of the people found it difficult to answer.

According to the research data of S. Anholt (2010), after having organized the FIFA World Cup Russia saved its 23 position in the world ranking of national brands, meanwhile Southern Korea, after the organization of the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, raised over three positions in the general ranking. However, the Russian ranking has increased on separate indicators such as "People" and "Tourism". It should be noted that any ranking is a measurement in accordance with the definite set of selective indicators, specifically developed by the authors; due to this reason these indicators shouldn't neutralize the role of the FIFA World Cup for the image of Russia.

The international image of Russia can be reviewed from the point of view of hostile rhetoric in the publications of foreign Mass Media.

Figure 3 Dynamics of hostile rhetoric in foreign Mass Media from 01.05.2018 to 01.08.2018, number of publications



Source: author

As Figure 3 shows, at the preliminary stage of the FIFA World Cup (01.05-14.06), as well as at the realization stage (14.06-

15.07), the articles with neutral rhetoric prevailed. In Mass Media critical attitude to the FIFA World Cup was demonstrated, although the number of articles with a positive opinion increased. After having held the FIFA World Cup (15.07-01.08) the articles with positive rhetoric prevailed. The number of articles with a negative position, reached its peak during the FIFA World Cup (14.06-15.07) and decreased significantly at the results analysis stage of the FIFA World Cup (15.07-01.08).

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this analysis affirm the positive role of the FIFA World Cup in forming the image of the Russian Federation. According to the objective indicators, 2018 FIFA World Cup was organized at the high level that was confirmed by the official representatives of the FIFA Council. Information priorities of different foreign Mass Media are diverse. For the American and British Mass Media it is important to respect human rights in Russia, for the Chinese Mass Media - to increase the profit by supplying their goods. Russia's image of Russia in different countries will vary. However, after having finished the FIFA World Cup, a negative position was changed into the positive one, it shows that the Russian Federation got well with the stated organizational purpose and the whole world had a great chance to compare foreign stereotypes with the Russian reality.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AD, AJ, AK, AO