

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SMALL ENTERPRISES IN UKRAINE: CHALLENGES AND FEATURES IN WARTIME

Yushchyshyna Larysa Oleksiivna,

Ph.D. in Economics, Associate Professor

Hulchak Oleksandr Mykolaiovych,

education seeker

Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University

Lutsk, Ukraine

yuschyshyna.larysa@vnu.edu.ua

Introduction. Small businesses are a crucial component of Ukraine's economic infrastructure, providing employment, fostering innovation, and stimulating economic growth. The military actions that have been ongoing in the country since 2014, along with the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, have presented significant challenges for small businesses. In wartime conditions, many enterprises face the need to rethink their communication strategies to sustain business viability, maintain their customer base, manage internal processes effectively, and adapt to new conditions. This study focuses on analyzing the features and challenges of small business communication strategies in Ukraine during the war.

Aim. The aim of this study is to identify the main challenges faced by small businesses in Ukraine during wartime and to analyze the characteristics of their communication strategies. The focus is on determining effective approaches for adapting these strategies to ensure business resilience and minimize the negative impacts of war on operations.

Materials and methods. To achieve the set goal, scientific papers, analytical reports, and materials related to communication strategies for small businesses in crisis and wartime conditions were analyzed. The study includes research on specific examples of Ukrainian small enterprises that have successfully adapted their communication strategies to wartime conditions. Surveys and interviews were

conducted with owners, managers, and marketers of small businesses to identify their approaches to communication during the war. Content analysis of social media and other digital platforms, where small businesses communicate with their customers and partners, was also used.

Results and discussion. The study results show that small businesses in Ukraine use various approaches to adapt their communication strategies during the war. Many enterprises are relocating to safer areas and focusing on local markets, which leads to changes in communication strategy priorities. Businesses are increasingly engaging with local communities, supporting local initiatives, and implementing new projects. The role of social responsibility in small business communications is growing. Businesses actively demonstrate their support for the Ukrainian Armed Forces, volunteers, and those affected by the war, which increases customer and partner trust.

Small businesses often have limited resources for implementing complex communication strategies. Therefore, it is crucial to make the most of available tools and focus on the most important areas. To strengthen customer loyalty, personalized communication should be utilized, as small businesses are typically closer to their customers than large corporations. If a business supports social initiatives or engages in charity, it is advisable to highlight this in communications. This enhances the positive brand image. Another characteristic of small businesses is their ability to quickly adjust communication strategies in response to market changes and new customer demands.

Effective communication helps small businesses not only maintain stable internal processes but also build strong relationships with customers and partners, which is key to long-term success. The war has accelerated the process of digitalization, forcing businesses to use online platforms more actively for communication with customers and partners. Social networks, messengers, and email have become the primary channels for maintaining communication, allowing businesses to stay connected even under difficult conditions. In an environment of uncertainty and rapid change, businesses must adapt their communication messages

to be more sensitive to customer needs. Empathy and understanding of customer issues become crucial for maintaining their loyalty. Clear and influential communication strengthens consumer trust in the organization, leading to stability and success. Effective leaders use their communication skills to inspire, guide, and engage their teams, ensuring understanding of goals and expectations, and fostering productive collaboration. Mastery of communication skills is key to achieving leadership goals and organizational success.

As Anthony A. D'Souza notes, "when an organization is in danger, the leader must be ready to take full responsibility. If the leader hides behind the PR department's shoulders under such circumstances, it will be a cowardly act rather than a delegation of authority" [1, p.47].

The development of new technical means leads to changes in the goals and content of messages. Today, there is a trend towards interactivity of new communication channels, allowing consumers not only to receive information but also to select and order it, as well as to send messages in response [2, p.49].

An important function of management in the communication process is the control of message preparation, formulation, sending, and receipt. If such control is not exercised, communication can become an uncontrolled, unmanaged process. Establishing clear criteria for evaluating the success of communication strategies, such as audience reach, level of interaction, and brand growth, is a primary task of control, and its absence is one of the main mistakes and difficulties in communication.

The war is a crisis phenomenon that requires organizations to be flexible, engage in strategic planning, and quickly adapt to ensure their resilience and survival in conditions of instability. A crisis situation is an unexpected and complex scenario that requires the manager to set tasks and achieve them within a short timeframe. At the same time, experiencing crises changes the value orientations of the organization [3, p.118].

Due to the loss of part of the markets in temporarily occupied territories and decreased purchasing power of the population, businesses are forced to seek new

market niches and adapt their communications to the needs of these segments. An honest and sincere approach to communication during a crisis involves remembering the company's goals and values. According to A. Coleman, "traditional views on crisis communication have developed too strong a focus on processes and reputation" [4, p.181]. The essence of developing and implementing a strategy is to protect the organization, choose the right direction from numerous alternatives, and guide the business on the right path to ensure profit and company image. Business differs from other types of activities in that personal material interest is a sense-forming factor, while private independence and initiative are mandatory conditions for its existence [3, p.115].

Conclusions. The study shows that the war in Ukraine has significantly impacted the formation of communication strategies for small businesses, forcing them to adapt to new realities. The main challenges include maintaining communication amid uncertainty, preserving trust with clients and partners, and rapidly responding to market changes. Utilizing local markets, enhancing social responsibility, digitalizing communications, and being flexible in communication approaches have allowed many businesses not only to sustain their operations but also to find new development opportunities. These findings can serve as useful recommendations for other small enterprises facing similar challenges.

References

1. D'Suza E. (2005) *Sohodnishni lidery – nadiia na zavtra* [Similar leaders are the hope for tomorrow]. Lviv. 456 p. [in Ukrainian].
2. Osovska H.V. (2017). *Komunikatsii v menedzhmenti* [Communications in management]. Kyiv. 218 p. [in Ukrainian].
3. Yushchyshyna, L., & Bortnik, S. (2023). *Kros-funktsionalna vzaiemodiia ta komunikatsii v umovakh kryzy* [Cross-Functional Interaction and Communication in Crisis Conditions]. *Economic Journal of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, Lutsk*. No3(35). P.113–121. URL: <https://doi.org/10.29038/2786-4618-2023-03-113-121> [in Ukrainian].

4. Koulman A. (2023). Stratehii kryzovykh komunikatsii [Strategies of crisis communications]. Kharkiv. 200 p. [in Ukrainian].