

18th PCSF 2018
Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future

FEATURES OF NATIVE ADVERTISING IN ROSTOV MEDIA

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Abstract

The article deals with native advertising as a new creative technology of communication in the media. Native advertising becomes an integral part of modern edition work. Moreover, not only its commercial part, but also creative. After all, it is the journalist who is responsible for the main work on creating native advertising – establishing productive communication with the audience through non-standard technologies for advertising. This type of advertising fully integrates with the media site, looks organic and is better perceived by the audience. Thus, native advertising is a certain compromise between the interests of users and advertisers. The user receives the content, which he appealed to; advertisers get promotion of the advertised product. Despite the obvious advantages of native advertising, a number of problems are associated with the introduction of this creative technology. In the Russian legislation, the concept of "native advertising" is not still available. There is a problem of advertisers distrust to native advertising. Especially we face this difficulty in regions where advertising budgets are more modest, and advertisers are more conservative. Finally, this creative technology is quite new, so there is a shortage of specialists in the regions. We investigated the situation in the market of native advertising in Rostov-on-Don in order to understand how the situation develops, how effectively this creative technology of advertising communication is implemented in the Rostov media, what formats prevail and what problems the media and advertisers themselves face.

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Keywords: Communication, media advertising, native advertising, media.



1. Introduction

We live in the information society, which main product is information; it should be equally accessible to every social class. In this case, media perform their functions. Although times are changing, online publications, new newspapers and magazines, radio and TV channels appear, but advertising is still the basis of media revenues. Nevertheless, the real situation is not easy.

Specialists of advertising Agency Marilyn have conducted a study, which showed that the average Russian watches ads up to 430 times a day (Kozlova & Karpukhin, 2017, p. 245). The brightness of the picture and beautiful slogans no longer attract the reader, as banner advertising goes by the wayside.

Traditional advertising methods are outdated and mostly irritate the consumer. While reading the newspaper, a modern person tends to turn the page containing obsessive pictures and calls to buy some goods. However, modern advanced media are seriously engaged in this issue and they are studying all possible ways of influencing the audience. New advertising technologies should help the media to reach a new level of communication with the consumer of information, and thus to increase the profit of the publication. We can consider native advertising as modern technology in the media industry.

The relevance of this topic is due to the need of native advertising studying as a relatively new technology that is rapidly developing in the Russian market. Natural advertising requires a careful, serious approach, because it is not a banner ad, the main means of which is design, but a completely different communication technology aimed at the reader's perception of the text. Native advertising should be seamlessly integrated into the media content on which the platform is presented. Moreover, native advertising as a new creative communication technology in the media becomes an integral part of the work of the modern editorial board, and it becomes not only its commercial part, but also creative. After all, journalist is responsible for the main work on the creation of native advertising, which means the establishment of productive communication with the audience through non-standard technologies of advertising.

2. Problem Statement

The advertising and marketing market is rapidly changing. Many of the attention-grabbing technologies that were popular just a few years ago are now fading into the background.

Today, advertising can be divided into a large number of different criteria. We would like to draw attention to the type of advertising that is gaining popularity, namely, native advertising.

Native Advertising is the way an advertiser attracts attention in the context of the site and user interests. In the original, it is perceived as part of the media viewed, takes into account the features of the site, it is not identified as advertising and does not cause audience's rejection (Melekhova, 2015).

In other words, native advertising is "woven" into the main stream of content and corresponds to it in the terms of format and content, unlike traditional advertising placements, to which the probability of "banner blindness" is high. The purpose of such advertising is to create a more natural and less intrusive advertising appeal to increase the number of clicks, sales and other targeted actions.

The concept of "native advertising" appeared in 2011. During the conference Online Media, Marketing, and Advertising Conference co-founder of the investment Fund Union Square Ventures in New York said the term "native advertising" in the advertising context (Smelova, 2016, p. 47).

Soon, large representatives of the media market began to use this name actively, but there were some problems with its conceptual apparatus. Since this phenomenon is quite new, we can say that the conceptual and legal apparatus of native advertising has not been developed yet. Now we are witnessing the stage of formation of the phenomenon of native advertising around the world: a practice that is gradually beginning to share by the territory principle.

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) – the largest Association of interactive advertising in the world has taken responsibility and tried to explain the meaning of this word. IAB has developed Native Advertising Playbook in order to streamline the terminology of native advertising, organize its types and practices used for labeling. According to the playbook, native advertising appeared as a result of active searches of digital marketers who needed a new, bright way of interaction with the consumer, as well as a new source of income for publishers from advertising (The Native Advertising Playbook, 2013). The question of what is native advertising is relevant to the industry, many different definitions have been proposed, but none of them has become universal.

The lack of one precise definition of natural advertising caused some difficulties for marketers. Very often, an advertising industry specialist could not explain exactly why a particular example is a native advertising. This hindered the development of the industry, so there was a clear request for the development of basic rules for native advertising, which would be acceptable to all market participants. For this purpose, a special conference was held. It was attended by leading specialists of the advertising market. During a long discussion, the main criteria defining the concept of "natural" advertising were developed. Today we can distinguish two key criteria of native advertising, which recognize all the practices of the media industry: 1) the presence of the indicator "advertising" / "affiliate material" (to distinguish between editorial and advertising content) and 2) the integration of advertising content in the media platform itself, on which it is presented.

Natural advertising is developing very quickly today. Advertisers and editors strive to create the most favorable and attractive advertising images. At the same time, the attitude of consumers to different types of advertising products is changing. People are gradually discovering new ways to communicate with advertising content. Therefore, it is impossible to develop the same recommendations for native advertising. Today a lot depends on the type of advertising, the platform on which it is placed and the area of distribution.

IAB and analytical center of Edelman Berland have conducted a study that explained the success of native advertising. Five thousand people were interviewed, they told about their attitude to different types of advertising. Already outdated pop-up ads and banners were in the last place of this survey, followed by ads and video ads. Finally, respondents found native advertising the most attractive. However, not everything is so simple. The researchers came to several conclusions about natural advertising: 1) it is in demand by the reader only when it is appropriate, beautifully designed and trustworthy; 2) native advertising on non-specialized sites has almost no success; 3) high-quality native advertising can increase the credibility of the platform on which it is located, as well as the recognizable platform increases the confidence in the materials placed on it (Osmanova, 2018).

Despite all the advantages of native advertising, it is necessary to pay attention to content segmentation in order to achieve great success from its placement. To create interesting and optimal

content it is necessary to study the audience carefully: its age, status, financial condition, interests, etc. This knowledge will also help to broadcast advertising relevant to the needs of the end user on those sites that he most often visits. You should also monitor the adaptability of the content, if the advertising is placed on several resources. It should be unique and look equally organic on all sites (Content Marketing Institute, 2015).

As a rule, the media is engaged in this, in the context of which native advertising is placed. Thus, native advertising, which is made in the right format, causes loyalty among the audience and earns its trust, and therefore contributes to sales growth. Native advertising, as we have already found out, implies that the reader will perceive it in the context of the site on which it is presented. But it is very versatile and can vary depending on the format and features of the publication, which is located on the site.

Despite the fact that native advertising is currently developing and gaining momentum, we can already identify the main types of native advertising. During the IAB conference in 2013, six typical examples of advertising were developed, which can be attributed to the natural.

In-Feed Native Ads is a paid advertising message that is embedded in the news feed and "fits" into the material of the content which the reader is currently interested. Such material is usually marked as advertising. Usually, this type of native advertising is used on the Internet and finds the user with the help of targeting, that is, the allocation of the entire available audience only the part that meets the specified criteria (Sumarokova & Butkovskiy, 2016, p. 133).

Search & Promoted Listings is a search engine native ad. This scheme is used by popular search engines to monetize the response. In the case of this type of advertising, the user receives not only a specific response to his request, but also contextual articles on the interesting topic with reference to any store, enterprise, etc.

Content Recommendation Widgets are the recommended articles. Blocks with recommended articles are selected for each material, mixed with links to paid articles of advertisers. At the same time, links to paid articles can be both internal and external, if partner traffic exchange systems are connected.

Promoted Listings are some paid ads that satisfy search queries and get into the search results.

In-Ad (IAB Standard) with Native Element Units is type of advertising, which was developed by the IAB. It is a regular advertisement with native elements.

Custom "Can't Be Contained" – all types of natural advertising which are developed for a particular case and cannot be attributed to any of the listed (Hu, 2016).

The most interesting thing for the advertiser is that natural advertising can be of any kind. It is limited only by the imagination of the publisher and a briefing with the client.

However, like other types of advertising, natural advertising has its own methods and techniques that help this type of marketing to become more and more attractive to both the reader and advertisers and the media.

First of all, it is necessary to remember that it is the journalist, not the advertiser, who copes better with native advertising. It is the journalist who knows his platform better than others, he can create a project that will fit into the platform of the publication and can also assess whether a particular topic will be interesting to the target audience. And here we come to the understanding of native advertising as a special kind of media communication, creative technology. The main producer of this type of

communication today is the editorial office of the media with a key figure of a journalist as a Communicator who knows his audience and has a wide range of tools and knowledge of technologies. Here we can state an interesting practice of using traditional journalistic tools-genres - to create advertising content.

In this regard, there are several genres of journalism that are perfect for creating natural advertising. These are already classical genres of journalism: correspondence, reportage, experiment, as well as infographics, question and answer.

Another format of native advertising is special projects and tests. A special project means a separate format of native advertising. Such advertising campaigns go beyond the format of the publication and are created individually. Special projects are available only to major brands because of the high cost and complex implementation; they aimed at creating or maintaining the image.

Tests are the way of presenting native advertising, which is one of the most attractive for the audience. Game form of presentation and strong personalization well enough to remove all the negative impressions of advertising. Another big plus of this format is its pliability. The test can be done on almost any topic. With all this, this method is not very expensive. The basis of the test taken subject corresponding to the products of the brand.

Game native advertising is one of the ways to revive the interaction. The brand does not just transmit the message to the reader but offers him two-way communication. Under these conditions, a potential customer looks at the product from a different angle (Perkins, 2018).

Online calculators are game content aimed at audience that is more serious. "Calculators" are mainly added to informational articles. This mechanism will attract readers who apply to the publication for specific business and analytical information.

Voting is a well-known practice that is used in social networks. Voting attracts the reader and helps to refresh the advertising post.

Quest is a format that only comes to our country from Western practices but is already gaining great momentum. The reader is invited to investigate any case or resolve an issue related to the advertised object.

Interactive video is an example of video advertising. In such videos, the viewer has the opportunity to choose their own plot twists.

Let's list the advantages of using game techniques and formats in native advertising.

- Users linger on such materials, thus the time viewing the advertisement is increasing.
- This advertising is different from the classic options to native advertising, but due to the novelty effect of increasing interest in the material.
- The reader has an emotional engagement effect that affects brand recognition.

Such materials have a viral effect: the reader will share them on social networks, tell friends, etc. (Laursen & Stone, 2016).

3. Research Questions

The market of native advertising in Russia, despite its young age, is quite an interesting picture. According to the Native Advertising Institute report, the number of native advertising providers has

increased by 48% in 2017 (Pollitt, 2018). However, there is a whole range of problems in the industry that deserve attention and careful study. We highlight the main ones that are relevant in Russia.

Despite the obvious advantages of natural advertising, it still has contradictions. One of them is different approaches to measuring its effectiveness. Publishers are able to work with standard editorial metrics: depth, engagement, etc. In addition, they can measure quantitative indicators for teasers: impressions, clicks, reviews. In addition to these metrics, advertisers are concerned about performance indicators: transitions to the site, purchases. They want to calculate the ratio of the cost of the advertising company and the profit it has brought.

However, many studies have repeatedly proven the effectiveness of native advertising. According to IPG Media Labs and Sharethrough, the native people interact with advertising as well as editorial content. Studies show that native advertising is watched for 53% more often than banner advertising, and it stimulates the purchase for 53% stronger (Cohen, 2016).

In addition, 25% more readers pay attention to native advertising embedded in the narrative in comparison to standard banners. The most interesting seems to be the following: native advertising has more influence on the disposition towards the brand and intention to buy than classic banner advertisements (Laursen, 2017).

Let us turn to the positive and negative sides of native advertising.

Like any format of communication with the public, natural advertising has its negative and positive sides. Unlike any other advertising format, the native one is created taking into account the preferences of the reader. It should be of interest to the public regardless of the brand that represents (Popov & Tsilikina, 2017).

One of the important positive factors is that native advertising is not blocked by special programs aimed at blocking advertising banners, for example, Ad Blockers. Accordingly, it covers more people than standard accommodation. That is why natural advertising is very effective. Banners, to attract attention, constantly increase in size, become brighter. Created new banners: fly apart, pop-up, with added video and audio. The reader is immune to it (Tarina, 2017).

However, for all its advantages, natural advertising has a number of disadvantages. Unlike banner advertising, native advertising is unique, that is, different sites will have to use different content. Accordingly, it requires a lot of resources in its manufacture and support.

The ethical side is also important. First, it is not always clear how to mark native advertising – sponsored material, affiliate, advertising or fully editorial and therefore does not need to mark it.

Native Advertising Institute interviewed publishers and concluded that many of them see the mixing of editorial and sponsored content as the main threat to the development of native advertising (Boland, 2016).

Some publishers do not act quite ethically towards the advertiser. Native advertising, in general, is not an expensive format, but the media, seeing the new format, put on it too high prices. In this case, the publication loses, because the expensive project cannot be put on stream – it just will not be interesting to the advertiser. Any innovation should be cost attractive. It is when the media will produce high-quality content for a good price, there will be a flow of customers.

Advertising, for the most part, exists as a separate format of publication, which is necessary. The publisher, which does not want to lose the interest of the reader, with the release of native advertising, should be more careful and accurate. This format cannot simply be copied or made into a template. Natural advertising should be created taking into account the interests of readers, otherwise it will not show its useful qualities.

Summarizing the above, it should be noted that in the case of native advertising, the ethical side is as important as the legal side. When it comes to reputation, an editor who values his publication will not make mistakes.

However, in addition to the reputational and ethical moment, there is also a legal side. As native advertising is, for the most part, editorial material, often it looks like an ordinary paper or a special project. That is why native advertising should be marked as advertising material.

Portal AdAge conducted a study of native advertising in the United States and came to the conclusion that two dozen major publishers strongly neglect the word "advertising" during the designation of paid materials. To do this, they produce different synonyms. For example, "sponsored content", "branded content", "promoted article", etc.

Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) has prepared guidelines to improve the transparency of native ads. The organization wrote that these measures will allow consumers to clearly identify sponsored online content. Earlier, IAB and Edelman conducted a survey that showed that only 41% of consumers uniquely identify native advertising as paid for by the brand (Neff, 2015).

In the Russian legislation, the concept of "native advertising" is not available yet. It is not very beneficial for the industry: until the rules of the game are defined, a number of players can "cheat", which in the future will have a negative impact on the development of the industry. After all, the credibility of the audience to this kind of content can be significantly reduced and this creative communication technology will lose its effectiveness.

Also, in this context there is a problem of distrust to native advertising on the part of advertisers, especially in regions where advertising budgets are more modest and advertisers are more conservative.

4. Purpose of the Study

As noted above, native advertising is a promising creative communication technology, but it poses many challenges to the modern media industry, puts forward a series of questions that have yet to be answered by practitioners and researchers. We tried to explore native advertising at the local level.

As the purpose of our study, we set the definition of the specificity of functioning of native advertising on the Rostov media market, with identifying problem areas and growth points. For the empirical basis of the study, we took the largest online media in Rostov-on-Don. Thus, we have studied the practices of such online publications as: "Gorodskoy reporter", 161.ru, "Krestyanin", "Kommersant-Yug". We also decided to find out the direct opinions of the major advertisers in the region. On the nature and methods of our research read further.

5. Research Methods

In connection with the goal as the main methods of research we have chosen content analysis of advertising content of four online media in Rostov-on-Don and the method of in-depth interviews of representatives of these editions (editors, marketers) and heads of advertising departments of large companies in Rostov-on-Don. These methods allowed us to make the most complete picture of how native advertising develops in Rostov-on-Don and what problems the introduction of this creative technology of advertising communication faces.

So then, we analyzed all advertising content of four online editions of Rostov-on-Don portals "Gorodskoy Reporter" and 161.ru, Newspapers "Krestyanin" and "Kommersant-Yug" of 2017. We have determined the percentage of native advertising from the total amount of advertising content coming out on each of these Internet platforms. Also revealed the format of native advertising for each object.

During the study, we interviewed representatives of editorial teams of these media directly related to advertising content. We asked questions: "What types of advertising often appear in your publication?", "Do you practice the introduction of native advertising on your media site?", "What problems did you face while creating native advertising on your site?" We addressed these questions to the chief editors of editions: Oleg Kitaev ("Gorodskoy Reporter"), Mikhail Malyshev (161.ru), Victoria Nikitchenko ("Krestyanin"), and to the representatives of advertising and marketing departments of the newspaper "Kommersant-Yug" Evgenia Stepanova, publishing house "Krestyanin" Marina Kryuchkova.

The second stage of the study, to create a more complete picture, was an appeal to representatives of large companies in the city, in order to find out their opinion about native advertising: how much they are interested as advertisers in this format of communication with the audience and whether they are ready to resort to this type of advertising. We asked the managers the following questions: "What kind of advertising does your company prefer?", "Was there any experience with native advertising?", "Do you think this type of advertising is promising and are you ready to use it?" The director of the company "Promet – Rostov" Daniel Blagus, the foreman of printing PKF "Atlantis Pak" Oleg Kucherenko, the head of the advertising Department of the company "Bettex" Michael Nehoda were the respondents of our survey.

Of course, we do not pretend to be all-encompassing research. Nevertheless, the results are very representative and reflect the overall situation in the market of native advertising in Rostov-on-Don.

6. Findings

According to the results of content analysis of four Rostov online media in 2017, more than 90% of all advertising content is banner advertising. In total, about 9,300 advertising materials (9,278) were published in these publications in 2017, and only 347 of them were identified as native advertising (the presence of an appropriate mark and the integration of advertising content into the media platform). Thus, the share of native advertising accounts for only 4% of the total advertising content of these Rostov online media. This is a very modest figure. A more detailed picture of each edition separately can be seen in the summary table, where the results are given as a percentage of the total number of all advertising materials for the past year.

Table 01. Ratio of banner and native advertising in publications in 2017 (%)

	161.ru	"Gorodskoy Reporter"	"Kommersant-Yug"	"Krestyanin"
Banner advertising	96%	98%	94%	99%
Native advertising	4%	2%	6%	1%

As we can see, the overall picture is about the same. Although such editions as the newspaper "Kommersant-Yug" and the portal 161.ru implement native advertising on their sites more productively. So, in 2017 "Kommersant-Yug" published 175 materials that fit the criterion of native advertising, and 161.ru -110, respectively.

The results of the analysis of genres and formats of implementation of native advertising in the media studied by us are also interesting. The predominant format is the partner material, the most popular format of the competition and the most complex format of native advertising-a special project. It is worth noting that the genre (format) variety of native advertising on different platforms varies and the only media that uses the largest number of different formats/genres of native advertising is the Internet portal "Gorodskoy reporter". Next, we will clearly present the results of research on the formats of native advertising for each media.

On the portal 161.ru from 110 materials of native advertising 66 materials of partners, 42 special projects and 2 materials in the format of the competition.

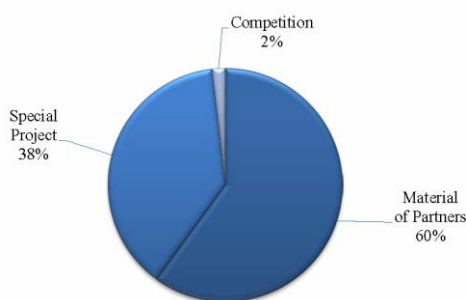


Figure 01. The ratio of native ad formats in 161.ru

From 37 materials of native advertising published on the website of the publication "Gorodskoy reporter" in 2017, 17 materials are presented in the format of competitions, 11 – partner materials, 5 materials – in the test format, 4 – in the format of infographics and 1 material is implemented in the format of the game.

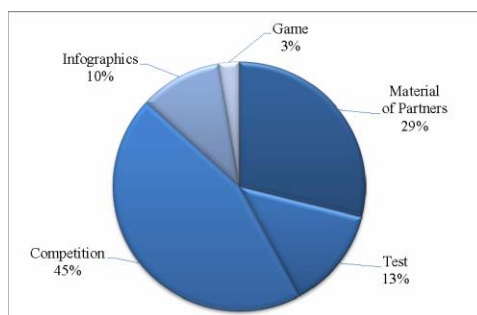


Figure 02. The ratio of native ad formats in the "Gorodskoy reporter"

As we can see, the publisher "Gorodskoy reporter" does not meet the format of the special project, but there is no less complex, creative and interesting format of the game, which they developed specifically for the company Tele-2 and released in March 2017. Note that this format of native advertising we met only in one edition of the investigated by us. The development of a full-fledged game, as noted by the editor-in-chief Oleg Kitaev, required significant resource and financial costs. Such complex solutions are more likely to be used by Federal Russian media, such as Meduza portal. In the Rostov media, we have not seen such a format of native advertising before.

Next, we turn to the newspaper "Kommersant-Yug". In the online version of this edition, we have counted the largest number of native advertising materials – 175. Impact of the Federal context of the media: we are talking about the regional version of the Federal edition. As for the variety of presentation formats and genres, this media cannot boast of a special variety. We met only three options for the implementation of native advertising in this media in 2017: 159 affiliate articles, 5 surveys and 11 special projects.

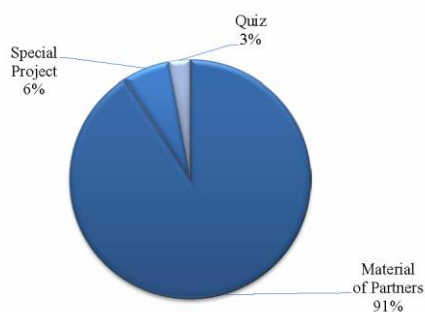


Figure 03. Ratio of native advertising formats in "Kommersant-Yug"

As we can see from the diagram, the vast majority of all materials of native advertising are affiliate articles and much less falls on surveys and special projects. This is primarily due to the problem of "distrust" to native advertising by advertisers.

Finally, in the business newspaper "Krestyanin" native advertising is the weakest. In this edition, its online version of the portal "Agrobook" of more than 2,000 promotional materials only represent 25 native ads. And it is implemented in only two formats: partner material (22 cases) and expert interview (3 cases).

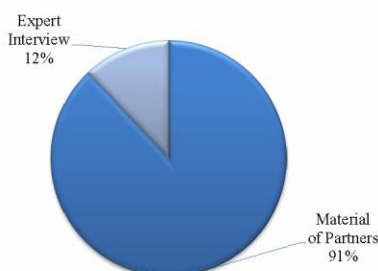


Figure 04. The ratio of native ad formats in the "Krestyanin"

The format of expert interviews as practice of implementation of native advertizing is interesting in this edition. This decision is due to the specifics of the publication. As explained by the editor-in-chief of the newspaper "Krestyanin" Victoria Nikitchenko, they created an online portal ID "Krestyanin" in the hope of consolidating representatives of agricultural business as an industry resource. Based on this specificity, the choice was made in favor of the format of expert interviews for the implementation of a number of cases of native advertising.

Let us now turn to the results of the interviews we conducted with representatives of the media industry and direct advertisers. All of them concerned the issues of native advertising. The results are bleak. Most representatives of the media industry noted that advertisers are not actively resorting to native advertising formats, preferring a more conservative format of banner advertising on the Internet. Among the reasons for the frequent refusals of advertisers are "misunderstanding the sense of native advertising", distrust of this format, unwillingness to pay for complex projects in which the company or product is mentioned indirectly. At the same time, absolutely all respondents from the media outlets are confident in the prospects of this type of advertising communications, and also admit that they often have to convince advertisers of the need and effectiveness of native advertising: to carry out explanatory work, to show statistics, to prove the effectiveness, although questions of this kind about banner advertising do not arise from advertisers. Media representatives are also unanimous in the issue of marking native advertising: absolutely everyone said that native advertising should be appropriately labeled to differ from editorial content. The main argument here is the preservation of the reputation of the media.

The advertisers we interviewed, although they consider native advertising to be an interesting way to communicate with potential customers and buyers, admitted that they are not still ready to give it preference compared to banner and other types of marketing promotion (sponsorship, branding). Business representatives explain the cautious approach to native advertising by the fact that it is difficult to monitor the effectiveness of this type of advertising.

This is the opinion of two parties – media representatives and advertisers.

7. Conclusion

Summing up the results of our research, we can say that native advertising as a new creative technology of advertising communication, carried out through the media, finds its application in the market of Rostov online media. This type of advertising we found on the sites of all four publications we studied. However, the percentage of this type of advertising and the variety of formats leave much to be desired. Correlating the results of the content analysis and in-depth interviews with representatives of the media editors and advertisers, it can be argued that the small frequency and the scarcity of application formats for native advertising are due to the negativity of advertisers to invest in this type of advertising communications, and representatives of the media industry can't provide the business a transparent algorithm to determine the effectiveness of this type of advertising.

Thus, we can say that the market of native advertising in Rostov is at the stage of its formation and needs further development, which should also take into account the relationship to this type of advertising content and audience. It is believed that further research of the audience's opinion and its representative presentation will increase interest in this type of creative technology of advertising communication on the

part of advertisers. And it can serve as a growth driver for the Rostov market of native advertising in the future.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all the representatives of the media industry and business who paid attention to us and answered all our questions.

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