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The communicative potential of public administration in the dimension of public events

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the analysis of the phenomenon of event management and its specific implementation in the field of public administration. The research solves the problem of theoretical substantiation of the socio-cultural nature of public events, which are a tool of communicative activity of public administration bodies, and elucidation of their socio-cultural determination in the context of the tasks of public administration activities. It was revealed that it is the socio-cultural nature and determinism of events that form the specific features of the event activity of public authorities, determines its internal features and technological functions as a tool of social communication of public authorities with society, its organizations and individuals. It was found that a public event organized and implemented by a public administration body is a means of influencing the external environment of the public administration system and, at the same time, a component of the internal environment of the authority. Such an event is a manifestation of the socio-cultural potential of society, the state of development of cultural traditions, the nature and levels of interaction between the community and the authorities, the degree of development of democratic traditions of society. The implementation of events by public authorities, the need to use their socio-cultural potential are determined by the communicative orientation of various aspects of the activities of authorities in the information society, the need to ensure stable, constant and effective external communication in the long term. That is why events have already become one of the widespread communicative tools of the authorities in their interaction with society, and the management of public events requires institutionalization into event public management as an element of public management activity. It was found that event public management is a purposeful activity of public authorities and their officials regarding the use of specific tools and technologies for organizing and conducting events as a socio-cultural phenomenon capable of ensuring effective communications between authorities and society.

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Introduction

The modern system of public administration is built on communications, but it does not take into account the serious potential and socio-cultural capacity of public events. Public events are a unique and, until now, insufficiently studied phenomenon within the public administration system. Official events tend to gravitate toward the content of previous management models, although they should be oriented toward the prospects of public management development and the construction of a good governance model, which is becoming the main paradigm of public management and administration in Ukraine.

This actualizes the problem of using events to perform public management tasks. Today, this problem is gaining strategic importance because public events constitute a component of the strategic communications of public authorities.

Events, due to their socio-cultural nature, reflect the prospects of synergizing their potential with the communicative capabilities of authorities. This allows us to speak of achieving a managerial effect through their further systemic integration into the system of strategic public communications.

Consequently, this leads to the need to distinguish a specific type of public management activity: event public management.

The purpose of this article is a theoretical study of the role and significance of public events within the structure of the communicative potential of authorities, as well as the identification of socio-cultural factors that will contribute to the integration of events into the communicative strategies of authorities and strengthen their communicative potential.

The research methodology reflects the logic of a systemic approach to the analysis of government communications, determined by the socio-cultural specificity of events. It takes into account methods of sociological event analysis, their socio-technological functions, and the assessment of individual participation in events from a psychological perspective. The main research tools are content analysis, comparative methods, and a structural-functional approach to understanding the essence of the communicative potential of authorities and its elements.

Awareness of the role of public events in the structure and functions of the communicative potential of authorities is determined by their socio-cultural dimensions. This confirms the need for an in-depth analysis of the sociocultural capacity of events within the framework of this article, as well as in subsequent publications, in order to form holistic knowledge regarding public events as a communicative tool of public authority.

Materials and Methods

Communications are of strategic importance for ensuring the effective functioning of public authorities in the era of the information society. Among other forms of communication, public events occupy a special place because they possess significant communicative and socio-cultural potential. Such a conclusion can be drawn from the prior experience of organizational functioning, which has been actualized under the conditions of the information society.

Previous studies have found that effective communications and consumer interactions are important aspects when examining consumer online experiences and the continued success of organizations (*Kharouf , 2020*).

The public administration sector is no exception. It acts as the most active consumer of the results of public communications and public events. Here, we are not referring to economic results, but to social gains. How can the effectiveness of events be made more significant for the interests of authorities? Today, this problem is extremely relevant.

Current evidence shows that, so far, increases in the efficiency of technical equipment, ensuring the work of state authorities, creating separate units entrusted with communicative tasks, and building public trust in state authorities do not show positive dynamics. As a result, the quality of public communications is not improving (*Kyrychenko, 2019*).

One should agree with this conclusion and make a logical remark about the underestimated role of events in public administration and the neglect of their significant socio-cultural potential, which could be used much more effectively in a strategic context.

Why do we turn to events as a public management tool? The answer is obvious. Events are a phenomenon of the socio-cultural order, and are therefore objectively included in the mechanisms of society management and their communicative components.

It must be recognized that social impacts are increasingly used as one of the main justifications for staging and funding events; yet, there is very little empirical evidence regarding the extent to which these impacts are realized by different kinds of events or in different settings. This timely volume fills this gap by being the first to explore the different social aspects of events, looking in particular at the role of events in developing social capital, social cohesion, and participation in local communities. Based on cutting-edge empirical research, it evaluates the contribution of both cultural and sports events to social capital, social cohesion, community spirit, and local pride across a range of event types and settings, with case studies drawn from Europe, Australia, and South Africa. It therefore furthers knowledge about the social benefits and impacts of events and significantly contributes to the development of event studies (*De Brito, & Richards, 2013*).

Within the framework of this article, we do not set the task of empirically substantiating the impact of events on the effectiveness of public communications, but limit ourselves to theoretical analysis and the further development of the logic of previous studies.

Important factors that, in our opinion, determine the prospects for transforming event management into a strategic field of public communications are their versatile nature, sufficiently adaptive application, and technological diversity.

The fact that cultural events can be used both in the context of public relations (as a means of building trust) and in the field of event marketing (as an advertising tool) underlines their versatility. In order to continue maintaining stability, cultural events must characterize destination offerings as ongoing rituals or standards, and a sustainable event culture must be sustained over the long term. Cultural events are a great opportunity for destinations, and destinations should not forego the communicative and identity-building effects of these events (*Zarotis, 2021*).

Individual researchers do not deny the socio-cultural nature of events, but concentrate on clarifying their technologies in order to identify managerial influences on the target audience. J. V. Fernandes proposes a new conceptual framework for festival customer experience, which can be used to improve brand experiences at festivals. This is an emerging area that warrants further attention, since festivals provide a valuable opportunity for brands to engage and build relationships with prospective and existing customers. This study is the first to combine insights from the interrelationships between event design, the digital environment, and the social environment to better understand how to improve the management of brand experiences at festivals (*Fernandes, & Krolowska, E., 2023*).

Such a conceptual basis allows for transforming conclusions into the public sphere, viewing within events socio-technological functions that can be effective from the perspective of the tasks of public authorities.

The universality of events determines the multifaceted nature of their social effects, which can fulfill the goals of public management and important social strategies. Researchers draw attention to the fact that events can contribute to positive community development (*Wallstam et al, 2020*). P. L. Knox and H. Meyer believe that events are examples of "third spaces" that people access in order to enjoy informal social interactions that lead to shared experiences, common understandings, a sense of community, and an improved sense of social well-being (*Knox., & Meyer, 2013*).

Summarizing the practice of holding festivals, researchers conclude that events serve an integrating function and assume that events can "promote equality, cultural diversity, inclusion, good community relations, and human rights" (*Pernecky, & Lück, 2013*).

However, the function of public events in relation to the goals and tasks of public administration is still insufficiently substantiated. This is rightly emphasized by A. Van der Hoeven and E. Hitters (2019), who assume that little is known about the policy conditions that could support the achievement of these kinds of outcomes (*Van der Hoeven, & Hitters, E, 2019*).

B. Quinn et al. also agree with the thesis that events, although used in public policy, have not yet turned into an element of strategic government communications. They note that events "have not yet influenced policy-making to any noticeable degree" (*Quinn et al, 2020*)

In our opinion, the work by B. Quinn, A. M. Vieira Fernandes, and Th. Ryan is particularly interesting, as it considers the case of Dublin. The city has been using events to position itself internationally for at least 25 years. The reported empirical study undertakes a detailed, critical analysis of public policy documents that relate festivals and events to tourism, alongside a qualitative study of festival-goers attending one of the main tourism-oriented festivals in the city. A key question addressed is whether events can be strategically used to further tourism goals while simultaneously fostering socio-cultural development (*Quinn et al, 2022*).

Thus, we have established that events are a communication tool, possess a universal and versatile character with a wide range of impacts on society, exhibit a pronounced socio-cultural nature, and are not yet sufficiently mastered by public authorities as an element of strategic public communications.

Results

Communication between public authorities and society—by which we usually mean the external communication of public administration—is a purposeful, regulated, and public process implemented through various forms of direct or participatory democracy. However, such communication remains merely formal unless it relies on other, less formalized communication tools that possess a socio-cultural rather than authoritarian nature.

Such forms are part of the toolkit of New Public Management and can be represented by a common phenomenon such as an event.

An event is a socio-cultural phenomenon that reflects the socio-technological functions of modern culture, such as relaxation from the event itself, celebration, ritual, or preparation for it. We also see significant social and psychological potential in events, as management tasks at the individual, collective, group, and even mass levels are resolved through the conscious or subconscious desire to derive pleasure from the atmosphere, impressions, and communication. Such collective types of relaxation have already been identified by sociological science and are justified by the psychological motives of human social activity.

Events also perform an important function in the social adaptation of an individual, assigning them to a specific community and facilitating the adoption of its values. Today, this is an extremely urgent task for the public authorities of Ukraine under the conditions of war and, especially, post-war recovery. An individual's deep desire to create social practices that unite them with the community can be interpreted as a vital social and public management task.

The public sector has long been a provider of special events with requirements for public assembly, and in recent years, community events have increased local government involvement. Events have become an integral part of the collective community psyche in terms of celebrating culture and demonstrating civic pride, providing both social and economic benefits. Previous research has shown that it is possible for public sector marketing strategies to utilize events strategically to bring long-term economic and social benefits to a location and its community.

The marketing functions of local councils can be carried out more effectively through the use of events integrated into a strategic plan. Although the boroughs investigated are moving toward a more strategic use of events, the focus remains operational and ad hoc, resulting in missed opportunities. The benefits of a broader, long-term use of events within place marketing strategies are clear; however, the funding and organizational structures of local authorities can create barriers to achieving this (*Wood, 2004*).

Nevertheless, for the purposes of our theoretical research, it is essential to clarify the exact socio-cultural impact of events and their respective functions in community management processes. Regardless of the form of the events themselves, attention should be paid to their significant role in the formation of local communities.

The socio-cultural impact of events on local communities lies in the benefits communities receive from these events (*Ramasamy et al, 2021*).

Events can be official or less official in nature. Their main feature is publicity, as they are often initiated, created, and defined by public authorities or subjects of the public sphere, or in the public interest. Public events have become such a widespread phenomenon in public administration at all levels that we have concluded it is necessary to designate authority-driven event management processes with a special term: public event management.

This specific type of public management has a dual nature, as it is a component of the public sphere while utilizing specific methods of the socio-cultural domain. This makes it a distinct element, yet one that significantly diversifies the communication capabilities of authorities and strengthens their overall communicative potential.

Today, the effective use of such events to ensure ongoing communication—as well as building a public communication system that contributes to the effective execution of management functions by public bodies—is a highly relevant issue.

This importance is currently in the focus of the scientific community, the public, and other stakeholders involved in public management and administration processes.

The system of communicative activities within state administration and local self-government bodies is practically grounded in various events. However, it should be noted that the potential of public events remains insufficiently studied, and consequently, underutilized and inefficiently applied by public authorities. This especially applies to local self-government bodies, which still rely on outdated models and view public events as rudiments of Soviet-era agitation and propaganda.

The traditions of holding public events to execute the tasks and functions of public administration allow for the improvement of forms and methods of event activity, but require qualitatively new approaches from authorities and officials regarding a strategic vision of the social consequences of public events.

Attention should also be paid to the fact that under current conditions, organizers of events held by public authorities must take into account a number of factors primarily related to, and mediated by, the socio-cultural sphere, taking into consideration the level of citizens' inclusion in socio-cultural processes.

R. Sharpley and P. R. Stone directly discuss the relationship between socio-cultural influences and social capital. They write that events—especially mass events—have shared socio-cultural consequences for participants. However, all events share a common characteristic: people. In any case, an event may impact participants, spectators, the local (host) community as a whole, and, depending on its nature and scale, communities further away or not directly involved in the event. At the same time, people are involved in events as organizers—whether as members of the local community, local leaders, representatives of specific interest groups, or professional event organizers. Importantly, it is the interactions and relationships within and between these different stakeholder groups that determine, to some extent, the nature and extent of the social and cultural impacts of events (*Sharpley, & Stone, 2011*).

The study of these influences offers direct benefits in justifying the importance of using events in the public interest and achieving social management goals.

D. Grosbois, reviewing existing frameworks and methods proposed for assessing the socio-cultural impact of events, also examines key considerations and issues affecting their application. In particular, the author highlights problems associated with determining the scope of socio-cultural influences (*De Grosbois, 2009*).

One should agree with the author's assessment of the social impact of events and extend this idea by linking the socio-cultural outcomes of public events to the necessity of managing them.

We view the event activity of a public authority as an element of public management—specifically as event public management, which is a set of forms, methods, and tools of communicative activity possessed by a public authority to implement its communicative tasks during its primary operations. Event public management acts both as a tool and as a direction of public management activity aimed at achieving communicative goals or the broader objectives of an authority. All public events can be classified by their purpose, content, and participants.

Public event management has recently become an important element of public communication. It is based on leveraging the significant socio-cultural and organizational potential of events, creating the necessary conditions to establish a dialogue between authorities and citizens.

As a result, some authors justify the importance of professional event technologies in shaping a country's national image through the organization of state-level events and holidays as an effective tool of public communication, positively influencing public opinion (*Pashkevych, 2018*).

It is worth agreeing with this approach, as well as with the conclusion that modern state events created on a professional basis gradually achieve a high aesthetic level and support the public's sense of unity, patriotism, and healthy optimism—all of which are essential under present conditions. Alongside this, however, it is necessary to analyze how the unprofessional actions of politicians involved in state-level events can undermine their underlying purpose ("supertask") and contribute to the devaluation of the state's image (*Pashkevych, 2018*).

Thanks to research by M. Wallstam, D. Ioannides, and R. Pettersson, we pay attention to evaluating the social consequences of events, and consequently, their mediated potential in public administration. Policymakers in destinations regularly struggle to identify effective ways to evaluate the impacts of planned events. Especially problematic is the relative lack of knowledge regarding the social impacts that planned events incur. This challenge is largely attributable to the historical focus on economic impacts. However, this trend is shifting alongside the realization that events often fail to deliver promised economic trickle-down effects. Destination-level policymakers currently lack the common language needed to effectively measure these social impacts.

The authors suggest using a Delphi approach to pinpoint social impact indicators that are useful in policy settings. Their results reveal six indicators that meet the study criteria, thereby contributing toward a unified set of indicators for dealing with strategic event management at the destination level (Wallstam et al, 2020).

It should also be recognized that public events significantly influence the communicative potential of a public authority.

By communicative potential, we understand the organizational, structural, and creative capacity of interacting elements within the communication process (the sender and receiver of the message, the message itself, and the communication channel) to execute effective communication (Shturhetskyi, 2011).

In general, the problem of communicative potential is outlined by the tension between the ideal possibility of communication and its practical realization (Shturhetskyi, 2011). In evaluating the potential of events, one should note their specific advantages: because events are structured and planned, their practical implementation diverges only minimally from the ideal. This represents a distinct advantage of event management as a component of public administration.

Communicative potential is a phenomenon of a strategic order—a strategic advantage that is strengthened by all other components, including the human, socio-cultural, and economic potential of government.

Many municipal entities resort to a form of public event management that involves creating event management strategies and implementation plans, grounded in a strategic approach to territorial development, attracting investment to events, and enhancing the communicative capabilities of local self-government.

Such strategic documents contribute to regional and local development, expand a municipality's cultural, tourist, and infrastructural potential, and generate new positive economic, socio-cultural, social, inclusive, and ecological outcomes. One of the primary benefits of these strategies is the expansion and strengthening of local government's communicative potential in its interaction with residents and guests. It is particularly telling that strategic event plans have already transitioned from the local to the regional level, signaling the generalization of this public event management practice and the scaling of experience.

Applying event management methodology can be highly effective within the specialized domain of election administration. An analysis of specific electoral procedures reveals that activities such as candidate registration, lot drawing, meetings with candidates, voting, and election commission sessions are inherently public events. Utilizing event management techniques in organizing these procedures not only helps fulfill the objectives of the events themselves but also advances the overarching goals of the electoral administration system. Currently, the communicative potential of these events remains underutilized in electoral practices. To address this, members of election commissions require targeted training in public event organization to enhance administrative efficiency across all levels.

Conclusions

Public event management has recently become an important element of public communication. It is based on the use of significant socio-cultural and organizational potential of the event, which creates conditions for establishing a dialogue between the authorities and citizens.

We investigated the effects of public event management on the communicative potential of the public management body and its ability to implement public management decisions through the functions that create public events.

Public authorities are able to more effectively use the socio-cultural potential of public events, which are one of the common methods of public management. Effectiveness depends on the level of formation of socio-cultural experience, organizational culture and communicative abilities of the authority and public servants. The state of formation of such competences indicates the level of formation of the communicative potential of public authorities, which is realized, including through public events. Authorities should build communications in public events more professionally, as the effectiveness of such connections is much higher than in other forms of public communication.

The current events that take place in the conditions of the information society, take into account the technological level and structure of modern society, are significantly different from the previous ones and require a detailed study in order to identify their communicative potential, taking into account the modern achievements of information and communication technologies. Modern events basically implement certain sets of socio-cultural aspects inherent in this or that society, or even some or that community.

In our opinion, the socio-cultural potential of events has not yet been sufficiently realized in the practice of public administration. Public events can have a much more multifaceted positive impact on individuals, groups of people and social communities. As for their impact on the communicative activity of public authorities, attention should be paid to such event results as the mobilization of a significant number of people to achieve a socially significant goal, the creation of social experience and opportunities designed for long-term socially active behavior of people. That is why we can say that the socio-cultural potential of the event is capable of solving much more complex social and management tasks than just entertainment.

Thus, the socio-cultural results of organized public events largely shape the integrity of local communities, solve tasks of a strategic nature, and therefore require strategic approaches.

Theoretical analysis reveals the practical applicability of event management methodology in addressing key challenges within election administration. Electoral management bodies, responsible for organizing public events across individual election procedures, must master public event management techniques to achieve both procedure-specific objectives and the overarching goals of the electoral governance system.

Conflicts of interest

Author declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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