

Market-Research Briefing paper by CLCA - Member - BAIKAL Communications Group

Litigation PR in Russia: cases, figures, trends

More and more public litigation disputes in Russia have been resolved through media coverage. Litigation PR comes to the rescue of plaintiffs and legal experts as the management of the communication processes during the course of any legal dispute or adjudicatory processing, aimed at creating beneficial background information around certain legal positions as well as achieving justice.

Russian cases

Just a few years ago plaintiffs and legal experts were ignoring the press, trying not to discuss their litigation disputes on social media. However, now in 2020 it is obvious for everyone – the probability to obtain an impartial and objective judiciary decision drastically increases if the general public follow litigation proceedings.

High-profile cases of Mr. Ivan Golunov, an investigative journalist, and Mr. Mikhail Efremov, an actor, demonstrated the following: public opinion influences the outcomes of litigation disputes. A well-thought-out PR-strategy, which supplemented the conventional legal activities, set Mr. Ivan Golunov free. Meanwhile, the jail time of Mr. Mikhail Efremov was extended owing to the inconsistent PR-legal activities of his lawyer. One of the most vivid examples of Litigation PR – lawsuit of Olympic freestyle skier Ms. Maria Komissarova against the clinic of Dr. Blum. Ms. Maria Komissarova broke her spine in a training crash at the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014. Dr. Evgeny Blum promised her the full recovery of all motor functions.

Nevertheless, a 50 million rubles treatment, which turned out to be just a gym training within 1,5 years, has not brought any results: Maria is still confined to a wheelchair and not able to move on her own. To win the case against the owner of the international network of clinics with wide connections and administrative resources, the large-scale information victory was needed.

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Following the release of an episode of “The Man and the Law” TV program, after the publication of over 450 articles and the petition to support Maria (signed by more than 5000 ordinary people as well as many bloggers), eventually, Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia Mr. Alexander Bastrykin took charge of this case, and Maria received financial compensation. Thus, the aforementioned communication strategy buttressed and bolstered the legal position. Another recent case – PR-support of the first Russian class action lawsuit. Blogger Ms. Katya Konasova revealed that the acne treatment manufacturer FemFatal had misinformed consumers, hiding a cheap cosmetic antibiotic in the composition. The news, regarding the lawsuit against FemFatal, generated buzz across Russian TV channels and business publications. Thematical programs, based on the case, garnered, in total, over 5 million views on YouTube, the main investigative video hit the Top-3 list of most-viewed YouTube videos within the Russian segment. As a result, the lawsuit was won, Rospotrebnadzor (Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing) prosecuted FemFatal for a number of violations, the class action lawsuit is still under consideration.

The three most effective channels of Litigation PR in Russia

Research on effectiveness of PR-support of litigation disputes, held among plaintiffs and legal experts by PLATFORMA and BGP Litigation in 2020, indicated that over 60% of all plaintiffs and legal experts had already used media coverage and publicity during a number of litigation disputes, and these instruments were considered effective. 78% of all respondents confirmed that PR-support had influenced the outcomes of litigation disputes.

In the majority of cases respondents exploited simultaneously several channels for promotion. 56% of respondents utilized media publications, 47% of respondents arranged PR-campaigns on social media, 26% of respondents embarked upon TV, 21% of respondents used Telegram-channels.

Television was used for the maximum media coverage and attention at the highest governmental level, Telegram – in case of the rapidly distributed information, large-sized online media – to stamp out the negative information on the internet.

According to the aforementioned research, the most effective channels of PR-support of litigation disputes are: conventional media resources, social media (the second place) and Telegram-channels (the third place). The most vivid examples of effective PR-support of

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litigation disputes are cases of Mr. Ivan Golunov (journalist) and Mr. Kirill Serebrennikov (stage and film director).

Main trends of Litigation PR in Russia

Nowadays in 2020 the 4 main trends of Litigation PR-2021 are quite obvious: active engagement of bloggers and influencers, publication of discreet information (private correspondence, etc.), exploitation of technologies (contextual and targeted advertising), more aggressive behavior of defendants, who are doing their best to win as leaders of the modern information agenda.

In 2021 both individuals and companies will actively exploit Litigation PR. In particular, Litigation PR will be used to criminalize business disputes and resolve disputes between business and public authorities as well as disputes “David vs Goliath” (when small and medium-sized business is in legal disputes with large companies). Besides, Litigation PR will be more often exploited by NGOs, trade unions and ecological movement.

The high necessity to summon the general public’s attention will remain with regard to consumer protection disputes, class action lawsuits as well as in case of highly probable impartial and objective judiciary decisions.

About the CLC - Alliance:

The Crisis and Litigation Communicators Alliance (CLCA) is an international network of independent, owner-managed PR firms who specialise in litigation and crisis PR. The CLCA is currently led by Austrian member firm SMJ Partners Consulting GmbH (Grillparzerstraße 7/13 Vienna, 1010)

About Baikal Communications:

Baikal Communications Group (Gruzinka 30 Business Center, Bolshaya Gruzinskaya 30A, building 1, Moscow, 123056) is a multifaceted and versatile company, which specializes in lobbying on behalf of the business and the nonprofit sector. The company is located in Moscow, and was founded in 2015. Notably, Baikal Communications Group is a corporate member of the Public Affairs Council, the leading international association for lobbyists all over the world. Furthermore, our activity is buttressed through the direct engagement in the relevant activities of the Society of European Affairs Professionals.

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