

Analysis of the Media Coverage concerning the Czech Republic

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Introduction

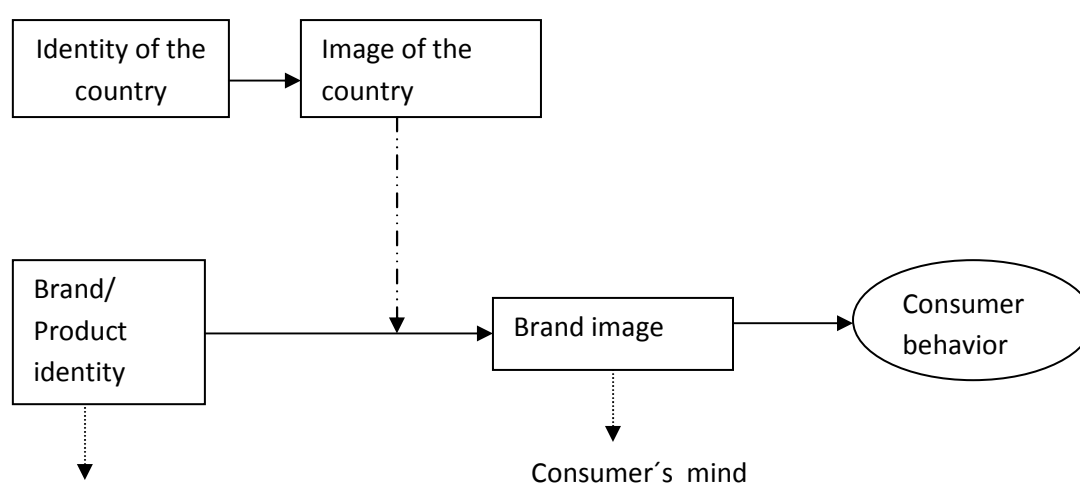
This paper aims to analyze the media coverage of the Czech Republic as a country of origin through the analysis of articles that have been published in selected international media and which have covered topics related to the Czech Republic. The research on this topic started already last year as one of the authors of this paper introduced his paper “Country of Origin- the Impact of Media on the Perception of the Country- Czech Presidency of the European Union” at the E-CASA conference in Tallinn. That paper analyzed the media coverage of the Czech Presidency of the European Union from 1st of January 2009 till 31st of March 2009 in BBC. Since that time the research team concentrated on further research on this topic by finishing the analysis of the media coverage of the Czech Republic in BBC for whole year 2009 and by adding also selected Russian media into the analysis for the year 2010. The research team also continuously worked on the research methodology and on the theoretical concept of the country of origin.

In this paper we want to introduce the progress of our research during the last year by introducing the results of the analysis of the media coverage in BBC for the whole year 2009 and the results of the analysis of BBC and selected Russian media for the first four months of the year 2010.

Country of origin

The phenomenon of the country of origin is being researched by marketing researchers from all over the world since few decades¹ as one of the most important factors influencing the consumers' purchasing decisions when they consider buying a product originating from another country. In such situation the consumer is usually confronted with a relatively high level of uncertainty as he/she does not know what they could expect from a certain product. In this situation the country of origin could play an important role in the decision-making process. The consumer uses his/her ideas and biases concerning the country that the product originates from and automatically and unconsciously assigns the qualities that he/she connects with the country also to the products that originate from this country. Following picture shows the way how the country of origin influences the consumer's perceptions towards a certain brand and thus her/his purchase behavior.

Figure 1: Influence of the country of origin on the perception of the brand



Created by the company

Source: Příkrylová, J, Čech, P: Country of origin and its possible impact on marketing strategies, Case study, University of Economics, Prague, 2004

The consumer's decision on whether to buy a certain brand is influenced by his/her perception of the quality of the brand itself which is influenced by the identity of the product (that means the quality and physical features of the product) and by the country that the brand originates from. The country of origin influences the perception of the product brand not directly by its identity but indirectly through its perceived image. It is obvious that the image of the country does not necessarily correspond with the reality. For countries that are often visited by tourists

¹ Dinnie, K.: Country-of-origin 1965-2004: A Literature Review, Version 2003, Accepted for Journal of Consumer Behaviour

or business people from other parts of the world and which products are widely purchased the image will be closer to reality than by those countries that are not such frequent tourist destinations and which products are not so widely purchased. It is also important to mention that in neighboring countries consumers tend to have more personal experience with the country and therefore their ideas about the country will be closer to reality.

In case of the Czech Republic the personal experience with the country plays relatively less important role in the perception of the country as the research results of GfK show. The results of this research are summarized in following table which compares the personal experience with the Czech Republic with its neighboring countries Austria and Germany.

Figure 2: Personal experience with the country

Personal experience with country	Czech Rep.	Germany	Austria
Percentage of people who visited country on business or as tourists	13 %	32 %	19%
Percentage of people who visited country on business	3 %	10 %	3%
Percentage of people who have in country friends	13 %	44 %	16%
Percentage of people whose friends visited the country	24 %	52 %	32 %
Percentage of people whose friends studied or worked in the country	4 %	21 %	6%
Percentage of people who bought products or services produced in the country	26 %	67 %	32 %

Source: Jaroslav Jíra, Anholt-GfK Roper NBI 2008 & CBI 2009, Image značek, „Česká republika“ a „Praha“ v mezinárodním srovnání, GfK Praha, July 2009

The research results clearly show that the personal experience with the Czech Republic and also with the products that originate from there is significantly lower than by neighboring countries. Therefore we could assume that the perception of the Czech Republic will be mainly influenced indirectly by media and the way how those inform about the country.

Media, for the purpose of this research, could be considered as influential opinion leaders thanks to their long- lasting relationship with their target audience combined with a local experience (most of the media have their own reporters or co-operators in the Czech Republic). Their audience therefore trusts the information that is published in the media and also tends to accept their opinion. Thus media have not only the power to decide which topics

are important and relevant for their target audience concerning a concrete country but could also suggest positive or negative attitude to the topic.

The factors influencing the perception of a certain country are known as a national image hexagon which consists of following groups of factors²:

- tourism,
- exports,
- internal political situation and foreign affairs,
- investment and immigration,
- culture and cultural heritage,
- people.

Each of the groups of factors influences the perception of a certain country to a different extent. While, for example, by larger countries, such as the US, their perception is widely influenced by their foreign affairs, by smaller countries this factor usually does not play such important role. In this context media play crucial role in the selection of the topics that influence the perception of each country. Besides media also relatives, friends and personal experience play important role as sources of information about the country.

Research objectives and methodology

The objective of this research is to analyze the media coverage concerning the Czech Republic in BBC and in selected Russian media. The analysis of BBC will cover the year 2009 as well as the publicity during the first five months of the year 2010. Publicity in Russian media will cover the time period from the 1st of January till the 31st of May 2010. The main goal of this research is to introduce a long- term analysis of the media coverage of the Czech Republic which will identify the main topics that are covered by the foreign media and also the way how each of the topics potentially influences the perception of the Czech Republic (i.e. rather positively or rather negatively). The analysis should also show the differences between media coverage in the BBC and in the Russian media. The research results should therefore be helpful for Czech companies which plan their international campaigns as it should provide them by information about topics that are positively or negatively connected with their country of origin and which should or should not be used in their marketing communication campaigns. On the other hand the research results should also

² EURO 38/2006

be helpful for governmental institutions which are responsible for the international promotion of the Czech Republic as an attractive tourist destination and location for investments.

As there is no other research on this topic, primary research methods have been used to obtain the data for the further analysis. The data have been collected directly from the websites of the media by the research team. Firstly we collected all articles that have some attitude to the Czech Republic and as a second step we selected those that cover the Czech Republic only, or the Czech Republic is one of the main topics. The articles that just mentioned the Czech Republic but the Czech Republic was not their main topic have been ignored in further analysis because their potential to change the perception of the country is rather small.

For further analysis of the selected articles standard methods of evaluation of PR activities have been used. Country of origin, in this case the Czech Republic, has been analyzed in a way that usually PR activities related to a certain brand are analyzed. This methodology is enabled by the fact that the country of origin could be perceived as a brand representing certain values as was explained in the previous part of this paper. The methods of media monitoring and media audit were used to analyze the topics of the articles and also their attitude to the topic (i.e. positive, negative or neutral).

To fulfill the objectives of this paper the data received from the analysis were summarized and compared and the results should provide information which topics related to the Czech Republic were mentioned most frequently in the selected media and could thus most probably change the perception of the country as well as the way how each of the topic was presented (positively, negatively or neutrally). Also the comparative analysis was used to compare the results of the analysis of the media coverage in the year 2010 in BBC with the results of this analysis done on selected Russian media.

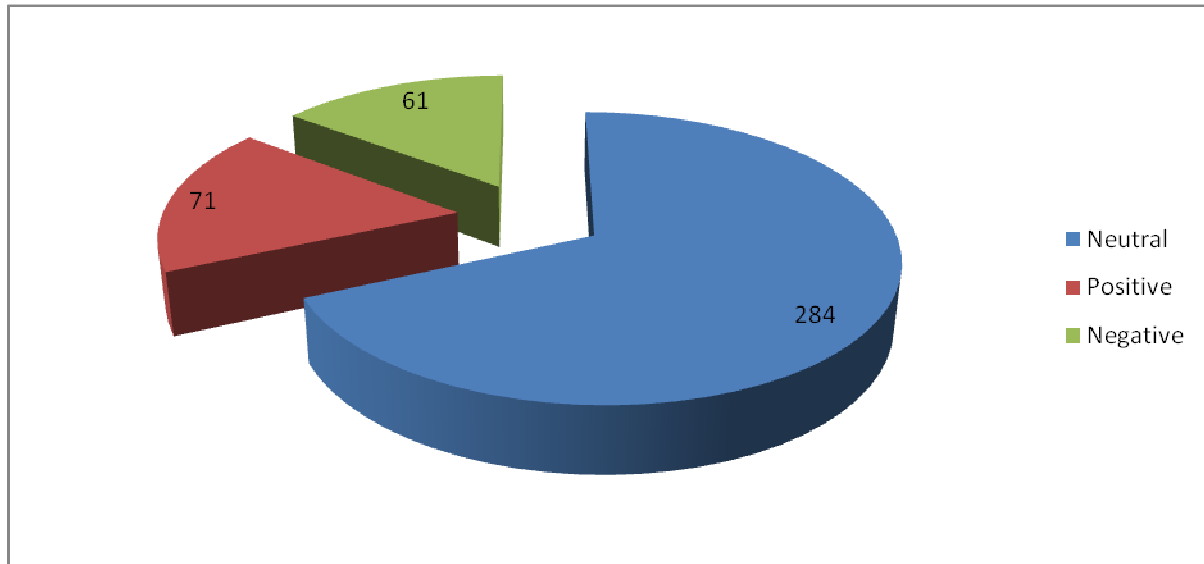
Research results

BBC- results of media monitoring and audit in 2009

During the year 2009 altogether 416 articles related directly to the Czech Republic were published in BBC. The majority of them had neutral attitude to the topic (284 articles, 68 per cent). More than 17 per cent of the articles had positive attitude and just almost 15 per cent of the articles informed negatively about topics related to the Czech Republic. Based on this simple analysis we could conclude that the media coverage of the Czech Republic in BBC in the year 2009 was mainly neutral and positive and could potentially change the perception of

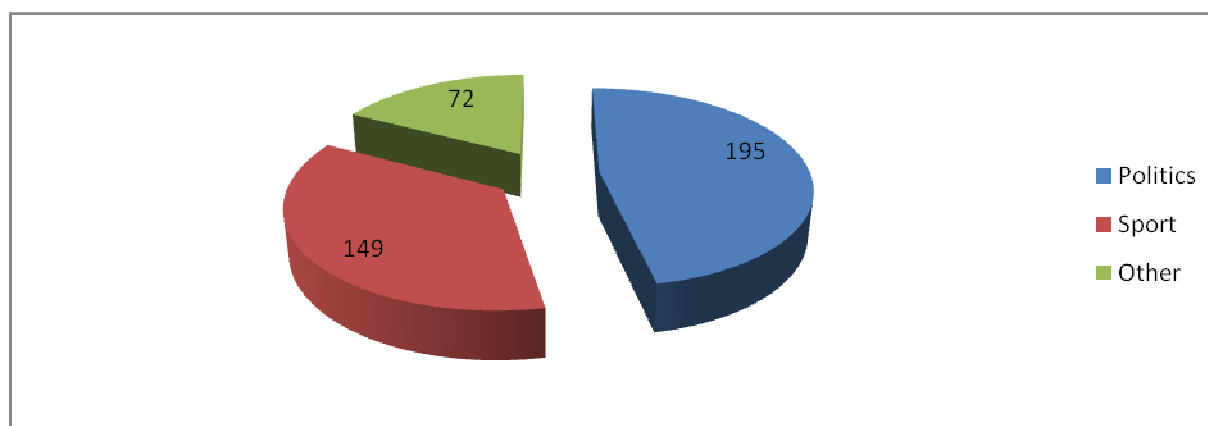
the country in slightly positive way. The results of media monitoring are summarized in following chart.

Chart 1: Distribution of articles according to the attitude (BBC- year 2009)



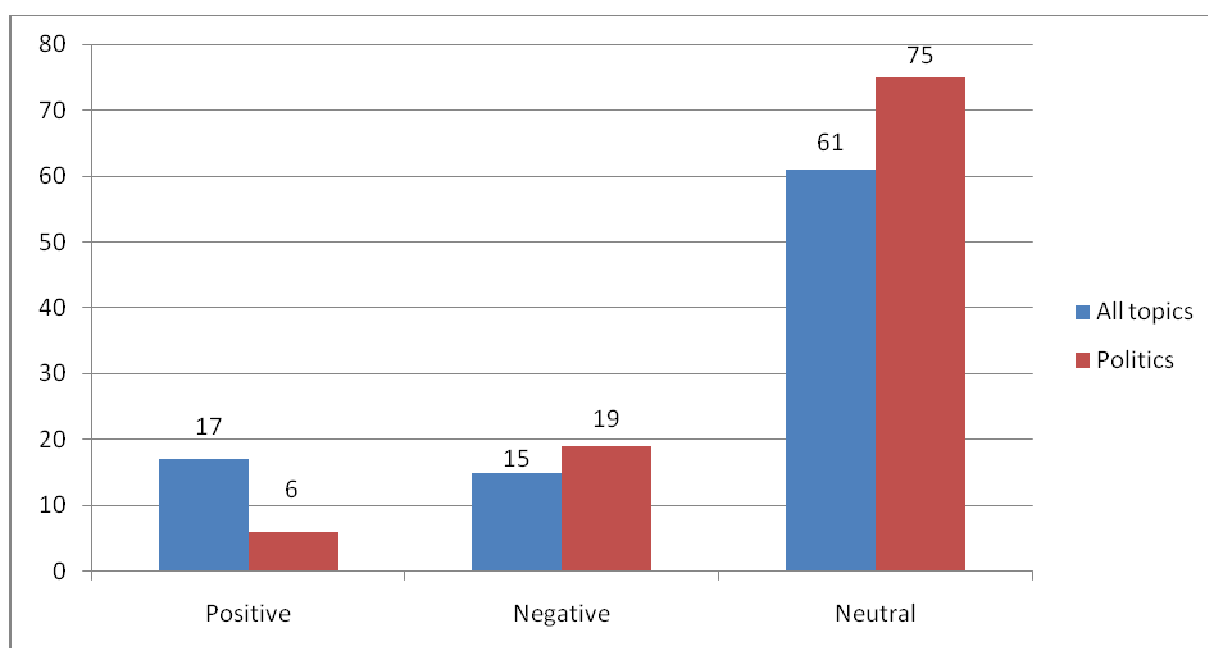
Source: own research

Media audit was used further to identify the topics that were covered by BBC during the year 2009. The main topic was politics with 195 articles (almost 47 per cent of the total publicity) which is not surprising due to the fact that the Czech Republic held the presidency of the EU during the first half of that year and also other important events took place in the Czech Republic (such as some of the EU summits, the visit of the US president Obama in Prague in April 2009 and the pope's visit in September 2009). The second most important topic was sport which accounted for almost 36 per cent of the total publicity. Other topics, such as business, accounted just for 17 per cent of the total publicity and stayed far behind the politics and sport. Following chart summarizes the results of media audit for BBC in 2009.

Chart 2: Distribution of articles according to the topic (BBC- year 2009)

Source: own research

Politics was the main topic for BBC during the year 2009 and that is why we decided to conduct a cross- data analysis in which we compared the articles related to politics with the all articles related to the Czech Republic. The objective of this analysis was to discover if politics influenced the perception of the country more positively than other topics or no. At the beginning of the year 2009 the overall consensus within the Czech media was that the presidency of the EU, the first ever that the country held, would bring more intensive and positive media coverage worldwide. The objective was therefore to confirm or to refuse this assumption. Following chart shows the results of this analysis.

Chart 3: Distribution of articles according to the attitude and the topic (BBC- year 2009)- in per cent

Source: Own research

The chart shows clearly that politics was covered rather negatively while other topics rather positively. Just 6 per cent of all articles covering politics had positive attitude while 19 per cent of them were negative and 75 per cent neutral. For all topics the coverage was much more positive with 17 per cent of articles having positive attitude, just 15 per cent negative and 61 per cent neutral. The reasons why politics was covered less positively than the rest of the topics were mainly the fall of the Czech government just in the middle of the presidency and also the delayed ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the Czech President Vaclav Klaus. Czech Republic became the last member state to ratify the Treaty which was mainly criticized by the articles published in BBC.

Media monitoring and audit results for the year 2010

For the year 2010 we decided to cover also Russian media as Russia is one of the most important target markets for Czech companies. Altogether 19 internet media were analyzed in Russia³. Publicity in BBC was analyzed as well which enabled us to compare the media monitoring and audit results for BBC and Russian media and to find out if there were any differences in topics selected as well as in the attitude. Following part of the paper summarizes the research results for the time period from 1st January till 40th April.

During the first 4 month of the year there were altogether 87 articles published in BBC directly related to the Czech Republic. In the selected Russian media there were 427 articles published. The majority of the articles in both media informed about sport (including Olympics) which was no surprise given the results from the previous year and also given that fact that the Olympic games took place in Canada in this period. In BBC there were 48 articles covering sport (55 per cent of the total publicity) while Russian media published 207 articles related to sport (some 48 per cent of the total publicity).

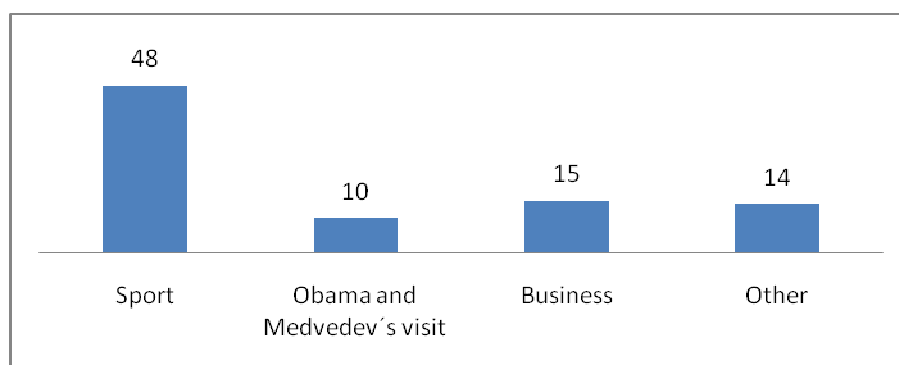
Politics remained the second most important topic for both Russian media and the BBC. The main topic in politics was definitely the meeting of the US and Russian president in Prague in April 2010. This summit was covered by 10 articles in BBC (11,5 per cent of the total publicity) and by 70 articles in Russian media (16 per cent of the publicity). Another topic related to politics that was mentioned in both BBC and Russian media was the corruption scandal related to the BAE Systems. Russian media informed also about the cancelled plan for

³ The list of Russian media could be found in the appendix.

American anti- missile radar in the Czech Republic (20 articles) while BBC did not mention this topic anymore. Also another topic- namely the Czech- Russian dispute on Czech visas for Russian students- was covered just by Russian media (16 articles) while BBC did not inform on this topic at all. On the other hand BBC informed (with one or two articles) about some topics related to politics that were not covered by the Russian media at all (for example about the discrimination of Roma citizens in the Czech Republic, corruption or illegal actions in the Czech Republic regarding carbon permits).

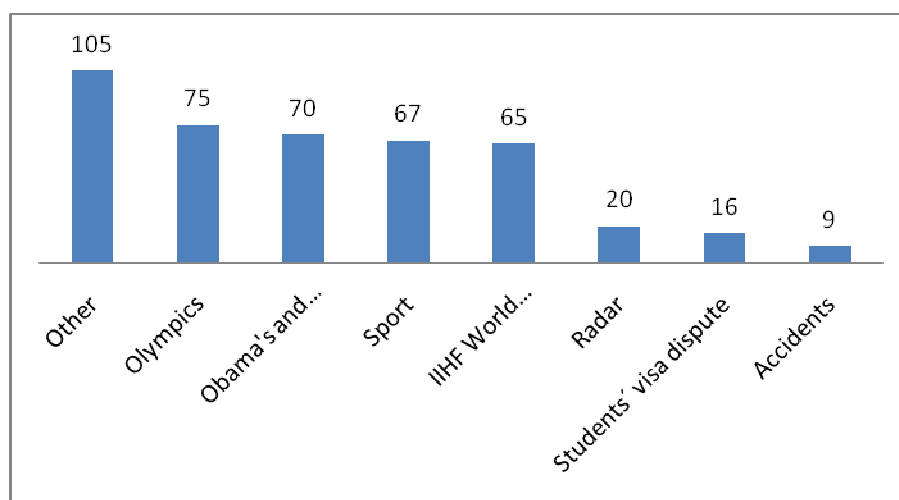
Other topics were covered just by smaller numbers of articles. Those topics range from prostitution and stag parties (mentioned in BBC) to the death of Ivan Medek and CEZ's plans to invest into sun power stations (mentioned in the Russian media). Following two charts summarize the publicity in BBC and Russian media during the first four month of the year 2010.

Chart 4: Distribution of articles in BBC according to the topic



Source: Own research

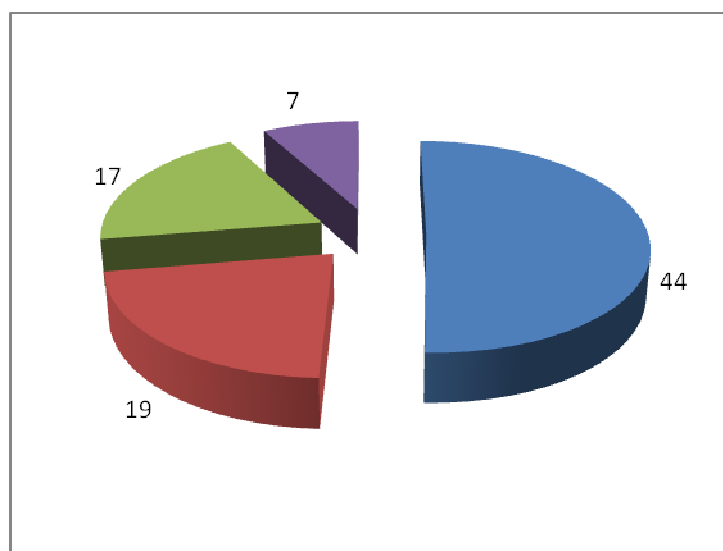
Chart 5: Distribution of articles in Russian media according to the topic



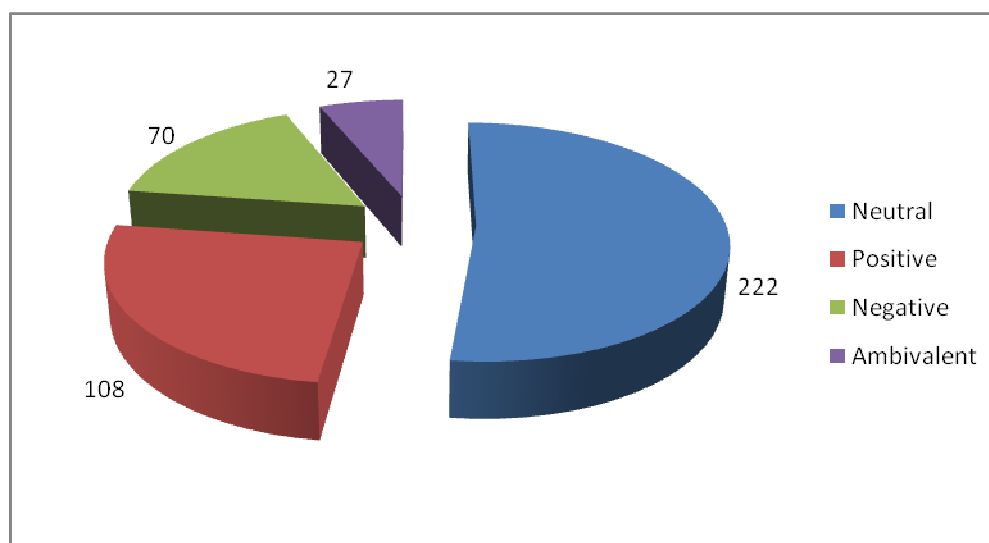
Source: Own research

The media audit results showed clearly that the majority of the articles published in both BBC and Russian media were neutral (50 per cent of the articles published in BBC and 52 per cent of the articles published in Russian media). Articles with a positive attitude accounted for 22 per cent in BBC and for 25 per cent in Russian media, while negative articles accounted for almost 20 per cent in BBC and for 16 per cent in Russian media. The analysis of the positive and negative articles showed that the positive articles were almost exclusively related to sport while negative articles dealt mainly with political topics such as frauds and corruption, discrimination of Roma population, and in case of Russian media also to the dispute on students' visa. Following charts compare the media audit's results for BBC and Russian media.

Chart 6: Distribution of articles in BBC according to the attitude



Source: Own research

Chart 7: Distribution of articles in Russian media according to the attitude

Source: Own research

Conclusions

The research results showed that sport is the main topic related to the Czech Republic that was covered by media during the research period. Politics did not play such important role with the only exception which was the first half of the year 2009 when the country held the presidency of the European Union. Sport was also the main topic of the articles with a positive attitude in both BBC and Russian media while politics mainly accounted for neutral or negative media coverage.

In total the majority of articles published had neutral attitude, round 23 per cent of the articles were positive and less than 20 per cent of them had a negative attitude to the topic. We could therefore conclude that the Czech Republic was presented in the media in a slightly positive light and the media coverage could have helped to change the perception of the country in a positive way.

The comparative analysis of the research results for BBC and Russia did not show any significant differences when it comes to the attitude but there were some differences related to the topics. Russian media informed more about Czech companies and personalities and also about some specific Czech- Russian topics (such as the visa dispute and the anti- missile radar) while BBC covered some society related issues such as stag parties in Prague, prostitution, corruption or Roma discrimination that were not covered by Russian media at all.

For further research we plan to continue the media analysis of BBC and Russia to obtain data for longer period of time but we also plan to add other media into the analysis, such as the CNN and selected German media (as Germany is the main trade partner of the Czech Republic). This broader approach should help the research team to bring even more relevant findings from the analysis.

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BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

Appendix: The list of Russian media that were used in the analysis

Name of the media	Index of popularity ⁴	Number of visitors	Number of views of web page
www.mail.ru ⁵	108 876	69 434 785	1 394 656 818
www.rbc.ru	91 763	12 286 995	176 493 836

⁴ Index of popularity- this figure is calculated from different categories that shows popularity of the web page, based on the data of visits and clicks

⁵ For the research its news part was taken www.news.mail.ru, although the data presented is for www.mail.ru

www.lenta.ru	91 019	8 213 789	108 907 093
www.rian.ru	89 255	13 056 243	85 633 651
www.sportbox.ru	88 944	3 761 493	111 954 166
www.kp.ru	87 833	11 802 065	74 741 894
www.championat.ru	87 381	3 818 934	113 474 991
www.news.rambler.ru	87 031	10 834 795	128 288 867
www.infox.ru	86 996	6 582 220	30 480 134
www.gazeta.ru	86 299	6 581 003	55 591 276
www.news.ru	86 191	4 482 308	42 972 984
www.gzt.ru	83 819	7 163 284	22 787 229
www.vesti.ru	82 548	7 990 374	33 971 632
www.1tv.ru	81 715	3 594 651	25 040 423
www.inosmi.ru	80 854	3 087 469	27 566 456
www.izvestia.ru	79 341	2 032 289	13 679 342
www.pravda.ru	77 895	4 684 851	24 351 963
www.sport-express.ru	77 064	716 748	12 586 761
www.vedomosti.ru	77 837	2 961 847	15 675 772