



**Communications Leaders Breakfast Roundtable: Spotlight on Russia**  
**08.40am, 05 July 2018**  
**Marx Room, Quo Vadis Club**  
**Soho, London**



**Meeting Notes**

**Attendees List**

Alexander	Kalinin	VP, client services	Deutsche Bank
Anastasia	Tole	Marketing and new business manager	Hanover





Andrey	Dobrynin	Russian tech entrepreneur	/
Clare	Durnford	Communications Director	Grace hotels
Iain	Bundred	MD in charge of EMEA	Ogilvy PR
James	Carnegie Brown	Senior Consultant	CSR Connect
Marina	Khatibi	Director, Global Advisory; Associate Director Saatchi Institute	M&C SAATCHI
Matt	Cartmell	Deputy Director General	PRCA
Patrick	Hanso Lowe	Ex CMO of various places, consultant	ICCO
Quintin	Keanie	Associate Director	MSL Group
Yazan	Neme	Director (UK and Europe)	Seven Media
Mélanie	Chevalier	CEO and Founder	Creative Culture
Paul	Duncanson	Managing Partner Non Executive Director	Creativebrief Creative Culture
Emmanuel	Teale	PR Executive	Creative Culture

### Introductions

Paul Duncanson opened the event, welcoming all, setting out the agenda and introducing the following:

Matt Cartmell welcomed everyone on behalf of co-sponsor PRCA/ICCO, explaining why this subject was of particular interest to PRCA/ICCO and its members.

Melanie Chevalier then welcomed the guests on behalf of their host, Creative Culture, outlining Creative Culture’s role in promoting and developing more effective cross-cultural communications. And finally, guest speaker, Andrey Dobrynin.





## Andrey's Overview

In setting the scene and providing an overview of Russia, Andrey outlined the major events that are influencing the country in 2018: the FIFA World Cup, the upcoming presidential elections, and the Winter Olympics. Andrey added that the Winter Olympics have historically been of major interest. He also emphasised that Russia being banned from participating in the 2018 Winter Olympics was a major talking point.

He briefly mentioned that Russian society is polarised, with the majority of the population supporting the government (successfully communicating both online and offline and arguably the most effective digital communication player in the country). He also talked about the country's economy, touching on various subjects such as the depletion of its cash reserves (sovereign fund) over recent years and that in 2014 the currency collapsed resulting in a 50% decrease in value. He added, however, that some Russians credit Putin for implementing structure to the country's economy.

Andrey emphasised that the present Russian state is only 26 years old and that most of the people over 40 years old still have a Soviet mindset: they haven't travelled a lot and they trust government propaganda aired on TV, especially in the countryside. In terms of the economic depression, in much of Russia most people (apart from an educated, urban minority) blame the West and they often believe that there's a conspiracy against Russia. Russians are very proud of their past and very patriotic.

## General Discussion Points

Over the past decades, Russian people have become more adventurous and have wanted to travel to see the rest of the world.

It's important to understand that each city in Russia has its own set of rules, they're different markets in themselves. Russia cannot be treated as a whole and this contributes to Russian culture being complex to understand.

Furthermore, there's a big difference between urban and rural Russia. Much of rural Russia is characterised by displaying different social characteristics, education and culture. Added to this, the rural, non-centric economy is in a depressed, dire state.

Russians, in general, are resistant to political change.

Most communications, especially from a brand perspective, therefore target people in the major urban conurbations as they are the only ones who can afford discretionary goods and services.

The reality is that the addressable Russian market probably numbers just 40 million out of a population of around 140 million. Therefore, most communications target the middle class, urban professional sectors. Generally, the priority is given to cities of over 300,000 inhabitants.





Family is an interesting topic because the government is trying to protect traditional, family values whilst Russia has one of the highest global divorce rates. Homosexuality is still taboo in the country.

Another important point to note is that the birth rate in Russia is decreasing rapidly and is amongst the lowest in the world. In other words, the population is decreasing but at the same time it is not ageing because people die young. Russia has one of the world's lowest male life expectancies.

It should be noted that many professionals are happy to work and live in urban Russia. Moscow, as an example, is a stimulating and exciting city to work in for educated young people. In Russia, if you have the capabilities/education you can experience a better lifestyle and have more disposable income than in London.

Whilst the market for 'luxury' goods and services is relatively small, (perhaps only between 5-10% of the overall population), this remains an attractive and engageable market. But, utilising traditional ATL and media communications is often ineffective and wasteful – much of the advertising and messaging seen on media channels is regarded as biased and often unreliable. Key opinion leaders are seen as being more trustworthy and are often a better investment for brands than traditional media.

Whilst Russians like VIP experiences, they are not keen on signing up to loyalty schemes (data sensitivity) and other promotional vehicles.

Russian media comms can be expensive. For example, when organising press trips, journalists tend to request to bring family and friends. It is also common practice to produce articles before attending the actual press trip. The latter is considered as a kind of reward.

In Russia, brands and agencies focus on press/ media and social activation and there is less focus on corporate communications and reputation. However, brands particularly in regulated industries such as banking are hugely scrutinised at an international level and must prove that they comply with corporate standards.

In terms of social media, Russia is one of the few markets in the world where Google is not the top search engine (Yandex is the leader). This situation is not due to censorship but rather the result of a choice operated by consumers. Russia also has its own social networks, namely VKontakte (VK) and Odnoklassniki (OK) which have a larger share of the market than Facebook or Instagram (although the latter is now gaining considerable use and penetration).

It is worth noting that Facebook is appropriate when targeting well-off audiences as it is mainly used by educated and upper-class people.

Telegram – a secure instant-messaging service – is also used as a social network. Although it has smaller communities than OK and VK, there is a lot more engagement from the users. Amongst others, journalists and influencers are present on the network. Additionally, Telegram is secure and offers confidentiality as





users can only see each other's nicknames.

Historically, Russians have always loved everything foreign, and even local brands position themselves as being international.

### **Conclusion**

Paul Duncanson and Matt Cartmell thanked all for attending, especially considering the tricky weather, and hoped all found this engaging, useful and stimulating.

The meeting concluded at 10.15am.

