

**“DUNĂREA DE JOS UNIVERSITY” OF
GALAȚI
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**



PhD THESIS SUMMARY

**EVALUATION OF PUBLIC
RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT
ON THE PERFORMANCES OF
ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS**

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Prof.univ.dr. DANIELA ANCUȚA ȘARPE**

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Keywords

public relations, performance, communication, notoriety, universities

Nowadays, we are witnessing new dynamics of higher education in Romania which is marked by the powerful competition from foreign universities, not only regarding the educational offer, but also in the communications domain, the system of public relations and of the performances in communication, respectively. In this context, the role of the public relations will be amplified and will benefit by a greater recognition of its importance within the architecture of image strategies. Therefore, the public relations domain will evolve at a dynamic and consistent pace, including in the higher education environment. The social media channels which also revolutionized the public relations industry, will contribute to identifying some new techniques and instruments of public relations that will make impact and can contribute to the efficiency of the processes within the organizations.

An overview of the higher education system offers us clues to the fact that Romanian universities are well anchored in the educational process related to the public relations process, they are willing to be competitive, are interested in

obtaining performances in terms of educational process, image, presence on the educational market, degree of satisfaction of its students etc.

In this context, an optimum strategic formula would imply an adaptation behavior based on the following aspects: real-time correct information within the educational market related to the demand of highly-qualified professionals, the stimulation of the demand for some educational programs for bachelor's, master's and PhD study programs, the diversity of the educational offer.

The strategy must also be accompanied by a specific budget, assessed without restrictions and which follows clear and precise objectives, grafted on the objectives of each university and the desired magnitude, respectively.

In the category of *priorities* which must be considered during the process of implementing the public relations strategies at the level of Romanian universities, we can indicate the following:

- The assurance of growing competitiveness from the Romanian universities;
- The professionalization of the management team and the inclusion in the organizational structure of a structure to administer the public relation process;

- The elaboration of some public relations strategies and policies with a pronounced creative character both for the internal and external public;
- Monitoring the crisis situations;
- The collaboration with a public relation specialized agency which can offer specialty advice;
- The alignment to the new communications technologies, processing methods and information transmission.

The endeavors related to the public relations within universities are sustained by the different measures taken by the management team, in order to form a frame in order to encourage the communication and the widening of the communicational horizon with beneficial effects on the efficiency of the processes carried out within the university.

The management of public relations in terms of higher education will allow real progresses to take place when it comes to understanding the particularities of these traits of communication within the higher education institutions, but also their impact on the decisions and practices of the management team.

Therefore, by adopting a new orientation, the management of the university will have to think about the organizational structure in terms of communication. In this

respect, changes can occur following the appearance of a new department, the public relations department, respectively, where activities close connected to the other elements with communicational value within the organization take place.

The public relations can lead to more efficient processes carried out within the universities, by exploiting more internal and external resources, with benefits for all public categories. Furthermore, public relations can also be regarded as a diversification method of the organizational communication process, a catalyst of the processes within the institutions, but also a promoter of communication on both internal and external plan.

The effectiveness of university public relations is also found in the programming of non-financial indicators that correlate with the financial ones to generate a profitability for stakeholders, generating measurable profitability. Non-financial indicators at a university level are defined as how stakeholders perceive credibility, relationships, reputation, and confidence.

It can be noticed that where public university relations are institutionalized as a function of strategic management, public relations tools and actions gain the necessary force to increase efficiency of the activity of the institution. Whatever the other stakeholders are: employees, students, graduates,

business community, local community, in the universities' relationship with them, reputation proves to be an important predictor.

The studies in this thesis point to the fact that as the competitiveness between universities increases, this leads to the increase of the innovation needs in this domain. The diversification process can be an advantage of Romanian universities. A challenge is given by the integration in the educational offer of some new forms of education: experiential, non-formal etc. The architecture of Romanian academic environment is marked by an optimistic prognostic in terms of number of students, number of graduates for the period between 2016 and 2020, which asks for the identification of new ways, methods and instruments for promoting the activities and educational and research projects of the universities.

Solving the problems regarding the integration of public relations into projects for promoting the educational offer and research projects of Romanian universities in European context requires the creation of a centralized structure with the following assignments: the evaluation of the higher education resources in order to increase the attractivity of foreign students; the mapping and certification of all Bachelor's, Master's and PhD study programs and the creation

of educational clusters; the organization of educational events for promoting some universities from the point of view of the attractiveness of study and research programs; the identification and mobilization of the funds for the public relations companies through state-private partnerships and through European projects.

For the future, we shall monitor the orientation of conceptual approaches and researches in public relations in terms of higher education and towards the behavioral aspects resulted in the reactions of different public categories at the new economic and social context generated by the new configuration of the international educational market. We will notice an accentuation of the dimensions related to cultural values, traditions, customs, lifestyle, the affiliation to an economic and geographical space, the ratio between national and international, all these interfering with the decisions of the management within the universities at different hierarchic levels. Moreover, the universities can have many advantages in the public relations process by making use of the social media networks, by example promoting the initiatives of the university, by providing the public and the potential students information regarding the educational and research services, the realization of a real dialogue with the public so as to improve the internal processes. Starting from the multitude of

aspects regarding the originality of this theme, the future research directions can be totally or partially established into guiding marks which can highlight the role and the importance of the public relations processes at the level of the Romanian higher education institutions.

It can be noticed that in the university environment the image is the operational result influenced by the resources that the management of the institution is willing to allocate to the PR activities, and the intensification of the latter can have a consistent impact on the performance of the university in terms of attracted funds, number of students, research contracts or collaboration agreements with the private environment.

In conclusion, we consider that the realization of the measures suggested here create the premise of a beneficial restructuring of the Romanian higher education environment, so as to perfect the activities of all the structures, including the public relations, which sustain the education and research offer in terms of performance. By considering the trends in public relations, it will be possible to accentuate their practical side and to substantiate the implementation bases of an innovative management of public relations in terms of higher education which will mediate the passing towards a competitive university.

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