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The Social Value of Public Relations in the Romanian Book Sector

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Abstract: The aim of the present article is to identify the social and cultural value of Public Relations in the Romanian book sector. Our approach overpasses the functionalist perspective of Public Relations as an organizational discipline and considers Public Relations as a discipline that institutionalizes relationships and discourses that are commonly practiced in the society by mutual and tacit agreement. We investigate the current communication practices used by three Romanian publishing houses in order to generate and to increase the symbolic value of the book. In order to analyze the uses and practices of Public Relations of generating literary sociability at the level of Romanian society, we analysed the communication management through owned new media (websites, blogs, Facebook) that three of the publishing houses in Romania have developed since their foundation. We analyzed the conversational competency in the online environment, using a complex methodology: starting from three Romanian publishing houses, selected on the basis of dimension, financial capacity and consumer perception of reputation, we have analyzed the content produced on the main owned-media channels used for public communication (websites, blogs, social media pages and accounts – Facebook, Twitter) between June – October 2014. We also analyzed the quality of interaction, by taking into account the number of positive reactions to a post, the number of replies and the number of comments.

Keywords: book, symbolic good, public mandate, literary sociability, publishing houses, public relations.

1. Introduction

Books have always been seen and perceived as highly symbolic goods, by being historically included in high culture (Gans, 2008) as a type of dominant culture (De Certeau, 1980). A literary field is the creation of modern societies whose level of crystallization depends on two main factors: the degree of economic liberalism and the degree of political liberalism (Bourdieu, 2012 [1992]). Books have been integrated into a production and marketing system, therefore becoming a cultural mass good and generating a symbolic network populated by specific actors. In the same study, Bourdieu considers that the roles of these entities are to maintain the symbolic capital of books, through cooperation and fair competition, and by creating spaces and means of literary sociability.

Just as A. Rogojinaru considered (2015), Public Relations has been historically linked to the business sector, more specifically in the corporate practice of the private industrial trusts or companies. At the level of its applied legitimacy, “PR always served as an instrument of the liberal economy and private business, being meant to assess the business performance in society

or in particular public spheres (by means of different types of profitability: financial, social, relational etc.)” (Rogojinaru, 2015, p. 25). A second perspective is brought to light, and that is the perspective of Public Relations as the discipline that investigates publics, public sphere and public opinion. Rogojinaru states that the process of appropriating Public Relations as a tool for business as singular and dominant paradigm in understanding its role impoverishes the interpretation of any public event of interest for our discipline.

Our approach will comprise both dimensions, even if they could be perceived as being antithetic. We will investigate in the present article the role of Public Relations, starting from its role as an organizational discipline and as an instrument for the publishing houses’ business performance in the society to the function of Public Relations as a discipline which, by its social and philosophical nature, can generate and enhance public participation towards a societal need.

Pierre Bourdieu, in a study suggestively named “The production of belief: contribution to an economy of symbolic goods” (Bourdieu, 1980), acknowledges another relevant trait to the artistic goods universe: the co-existence of two logics, the economic and commercial one, and the anti-economic logic, performed by disinterested behaviors towards the mechanics of the first logics. From this antinomy, yet reciprocal, the symbolic capital is put forward: “«Symbolic capital» is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, mis-recognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a «credit» which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees «economic» profits. (...) In short, when the only usable, effective capital is the (mis)recognized, legitimate capital called «prestige» or «authority», the economic capital that cultural undertakings generally require cannot secure the specific profits produced by the field (...) unless it is reconverted into symbolic capital.” (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 262). Therefore, the sociologist continues, the best solution that an author, a literary critic or editor can use in the economy of symbolic goods is to become a relevant name with a distinguishable reputation, that to be defined as a capital of consecration. Reputation, with discourse, story and image, builds a unit of meaning of the public man that can be retraced in a historic manner (Rogojinaru, 2013).

2. Related Work and Problem Statement

The Public Relations discipline, by its social fundamentals and functions, consolidates the social value of books and, therefore, by its instruments, it creates and develops a public space that encourages interaction and relations between various agents of the editorial book sector. The field has generated two dominant logics of production that have been developed around the book: the activity of material fabrication of the object-book and the activity of producing the value for the fabricated object. In this sense and following the perspective of Public Relations as a business discipline, we state that Public Relations is valuable in order to sustain the second logics of action. Just as two other cultural theoreticians considered, “today, an editor or a director of a cultural review has to appear as totally something else than a simple executive, to be publicly recognized as a valid cultural agent and it is extremely important that it should be built a space, inseparably literary and editorial, inside of which this recognition could be possible and effective.” (Durand & Winkin, 2000, p. 440). And, yet, our perspective does not reduce Public Relations to an instrumental function; we consider that its role in the literary field and for publishing houses, as key actors, is fundamental in the meaning of “institutionalizing relationships and discourses that are commonly practiced in the society by mutual and tacit agreement” (Rogojinaru, 2013).

Our interest is to identify and analyze the complex ways in which communication (specifically Public Relations) generates social value to the book. Accordingly to Oana Boca-Stănescu (2014), publishing houses are business with a specific regime, because their activity and mission imply a substantial public mandate to a societal level, mainly the social and cultural impact to a society. Producing value to and for books is a two-way process, manifested univocal or simultaneous. First direction is the focus towards itself, meaning through a process of positioning that generates intrinsic value to the product (a positioning of branding format); the second direction implies an organizational effort to generate value through a focus towards its audiences, and that is the process of gaining and generating intellectual capital.

The first direction of the process for generating value to books is the most frequent domain of communication that private sector develops, namely branding. This aspect is consolidated by two relevant aspects: the main trends in corporate and private communication in Romania and the classifications of Romanian publishing houses made by practitioners taking into account the dominant format of organizational branding. The first dimension is presented by Adela Rogojinaru (2009, p. 606) who considers that „the private corporate groups and organizations admit public relations practice more and more as an integrated strategy for learning and development. Two dimensions seem to be at issue: programs of corporate identity, by using blended public relations and advertising techniques or even more integrated programs of branding campaigns, and reputation management, making reference to crisis public relations and issues management, concepts which are applied with the same meaning as in the international literature (see Haywood, 2005)”. The technical level is dominated by two instruments that have a long standing tradition in Romania, namely media relations and events management.

Our second objective is to reveal the complex value of Public Relations for today’s Romanian book sector, by investigating, in depth, the current stage of PR on Romanian book sector. Our main dimension of analysis refers to the value of Public Relations as a discipline that facilitates dialogue and generates symbolic value to the book-object in the Romanian cultural space.

3. Concepts and Terms

The relationship between branding, the value of brand and the reputation of an organization is one of complementarity and inclusion. There is a very rich literature that has the purpose of clarifying the differences between the concepts of image, reputation and brand; we consider useful for our study the differentiation that Tom J. Brown, Peter A. Dacin, Michael G. Pratt and David A. Whetten propose as such: a) the intended image is represented by „mental associations about the organization that organization leaders want important audiences to hold”; b) the construed image is formed by „mental associations that organization members believe others outside the organization hold about the organization”; c) reputation means „mental associations about the organization actually held by others outside the organization” (Brown; Dacin; Pratt; & Whetten, 2006, p. 102). The construed image holds on specific symbolic pillars, the same images that the organization includes in the branding process: history, leaders, authors, coordinators of collections, translators, collections. The symbolic level is extremely important for this organization, the branding process having the specific role of enhancing the prestige (as reputational dimension) of all the persons representing the publishing house. We may consider that the individual prestige becomes an extremely important and relevant dimension of the organization’s construed image and reputation. The link between reputation and the external

perceptions of a corporate brand holds in the relevance of non-economic portion of reputation. Just as Fombrun (1996) considers, the cultural components are, for external audiences, much more relevant than the financial power and authority; the cultural components are values such as credibility, reliability, trustworthiness, and responsibility. We will also show that for most of the audiences, in the case of two of the publishing houses under analysis, the cultural values were so much more relevant, that the financial and economic power was for many audiences irrelevant or unknown.

The reputation of an organization is highly challenged by the appearance and the use of new media, specifically by the social media. Rogojinaru considers as extremely relevant and important the paradigmatic shift that new media, and more specifically social media, have generated in terms of reconfiguring the public sphere. As Adela Rogojinaru pointed out, “in opposition to that belief, the digital sphere could be defined as unlimited but not entirely open, nor more democratic if compared to the conventional territories ; its e-citizens are more inclined to express their opinion much more in the form of beliefs and less by critical arguments. The cognitivist approach of managing public communication seems to be dethroned by a relativistic one, which gives exclusive importance to the free expression of the local values of these virtual communities (or tribes)” (Rogojinaru, 2015, p. 50).

In the same study, A. Rogojinaru (2015) advances a typology of e-publics as popular publics which is extremely relevant for the way in which organizations interact with e-publics through social media. The first category is represented by the «prosumers» or the digital producers & consumers, meaning publics that produce information *per se* or sustain information industries; they are active audiences, seeking continuously information or producing it and they are, possibly, the single real public in the digital sphere. The second category is represented by the buzz creators. They are classified taking into account the conversational influence they have on their peers and social networks: there are *Alphas*, meaning informed, attentive and innovative persons, as well as influencers and *Bees*, rapid adopters and connectors («bees are your broadcast platform», Salzman et al., 2003, p. 51). Buzz creators are the conversational publics whose role is to create an atmosphere and to initiate relationships. Another type of digital public are the twitters and the respective followers (on tweets), meaning conversational publics whose role is to respond and create reputation. They represent, as A. Rogojinaru considers, probably one of the most effective forms of digital endorsement; also subcategorized in «top fans», «promoters» or «evangelists» (Comm & Burge, 2003, p. 125). There are also the blogger and the blog «visitors» (commentators of news defined by the newsworthy character of their visit, significant in business blogging), the activists (or the *media publics* as they presence is connected to pseudo-events and large media coverage), the non-publics or traffic users (commentators with no conversational stake, whose presence is inconceivable in classic tales and stories or conventional storytelling) and the «I» public, specific to large networks of friends like MySpace, Facebook, or LinkedIn, or to individual non-corporate bloggers, they define and promote their own profile, write for massive audiences, solitary people sharing the illusion of being heard by vast populations in the virtual space.

Likeability is a concept used traditionally in organizational communication literature as an individual attribute. The relationship between likeability, trust and reputation describes a process of interpersonal perceptions: “Trust, then, can be assessed on the basis of personal interaction, and is limited to a specific small group of people; the larger this group, the fewer personal relationships employees have established that impedes knowledge sharing (Connelly &

Kelloway, 2003). Reputation can signal an assessment based on trust, made by others, as an indication of whether trust should be extended. Likeability, however, is the strongest predictor of whether an individual will accept the implicit assessment of trustworthiness provided by reputation, because individuals who are concerned with being likeable, are motivated to compensate against charges of being untrustworthy by keeping promises (Miller & Myers, 1998; Miller & Major, 2000). Together, a likeable person is expected to be trustworthy, and to develop a reputation for being trustworthy, and thus to both encourage and participate in knowledge transfer.” (Serenko, Bontis & Hardie, 2007, p. 616).

We consider that the same process and relationships between concepts can be applied to organizations, specifically in the digital communication using social media channels. Social media channels encourage a socializing and informal communication, therefore the audiences that use them are the «I» publics (Rogojinaru, 2011) who define and promote their own profile, write for massive audiences, solitary people sharing the illusion of being heard by vast populations in the virtual space. Thus, organizations become likeable through a savvy digital communication strategy and, through its social responsible actions, trustworthiness.

As our study will show that each publishing house uses a specific format of digital communication, creating and enhancing certain roles of digital publics. We will therefore identify the dominant format of digital communication taking into account the main role of Public Relations, namely that of addressing specific issues.

4. The Outline of Research

The research was carried out between June and October 2014 and aimed to profile the way that publishing houses in Romania address their audiences and value the role of Public Relations. In order to do so, we analysed the communication management through owned new media (websites, blogs, Facebook) that three of the publishing houses in Romania have developed since their foundation. We tried to analyze the conversational competency in the online environment as well.

4.1. Three Case Studies

We have selected three publishing houses, based on key criteria that are presented as relevant for any approach that would aim profiling an organization (Vlăsceanu, 2003; Gagnon, 2005): dimension, financial capacity and consumer perception of reputation. We consider these are the key criteria that could support a comparative analysis of multiple dimensions of the online communication management. Romanian book sector and literary field are mainly composed of medium-sized publishing houses (Radu et al., 2013), stock-joint companies. Our three selected publishing houses differ in terms of dimension, financial capacity and consumer perception of reputation.

Humanitas Publishing House is currently a unit of a greater editorial holding which comprises legally independent small firms, but with obvious existent links: Humanitas Publishing House, Humanitas Fiction Publishing House, Humanitas Multimedia Publishing House, the Society of Distribution Humanitas Bookstores, Humanitas Digital. Founded in 1990, right after the 1989 Revolution, by a privatization process of a state publishing house (Political Publishing House),

Humanitas is one of the private publishing houses that has succeeded to develop a successful business model and to become, also, a leader of book market. The Humanitas Holding currently reports the biggest profits from sales and is continuously capable of integrating significant changes that the book sector has been challenged with during last decades. For 2013 (the last financial year for which the Humanitas Holding has declared its profit), Humanitas Holding has reported a sales figure of 7.35 million euros, with 8.4% more profit than the last financial year. From this turnover, the Humanitas Publishing House only has reported a sales figure of 3.23 million euros, with a 7.8% increase than 2012.¹

Nemira Publishing House is a middle-sized firm, with limited responsibility. This organizational format implies the existence of a small number of associates (individuals or legal entities) and it can be managed directly by these associates, but it can also trade stocks becoming a joint-stock company. In the case of Nemira Publishing House, it has been founded in 1991 by a Romanian writer and it is currently owned and managed by his family. Nemira also integrates a national distribution chain, currently seven Nemira bookstores placed in the most important towns in Romania. The sales figure reported for 2013 (the last financial year for which the firm has reported the turnover) is almost 1.500.000 euros, considering the fact that in 2009, the publishing house had to go through a restructure internal process, due to the international financial crisis.²

Vellant Publishing House is a small-sized firm, with limited responsibility. A very young publishing house, being founded in 2008, Vellant has reported in 2013 a turnover of almost 93.950 euros, with five employees, of which one is an officer in charge with Public Relations and events management.³

4.2. *Online Analysis and Reputation as Indicator of Institutionalization*

We investigated the online owned media, providing an analysis of the organizations' format of online communication and of the degree of interaction that the organization engages through these channels. For each publishing house, we first identified the organizational channels used for public communication (websites, blogs, social media pages and accounts – Facebook, Twitter). We used as first research method the content analysis as we considered it relevant for establishing the main type of communication (asymmetrical or symmetrical), the online channels being interactive by nature. We also analyzed the quality of interaction, by taking into account the number of positive reactions to a post, the number of replies and the number of comments.

At this level, we applied a *functional benchmarking* as a process and method to achieve a comparative picture of the corporate *conversational* competence in dealing with critical issues

¹ Barbu, P. (2016). În 2013, cifra de afaceri a grupului editorial Humanitas a crescut cu 8,4% / In 2013, the turnover of Humanitas Holding raised with 8.4%, Forbes Romania. Retrieved June 12, 2-14 from <http://www.forbes.ro/2013-cifra-de-afaceri-editurii-humanitas-crescut-cu-78-21247>

² Doingbusiness.ro (2015), Nemira Publishing House SRL, Financial Analysis for 2009-2013. Retrieved February 21, 2016 from <http://doingbusiness.ro/financiar/raport/1385838/nemira-publishing-house-srl/>

³ Doingbusiness.ro (2015), Vellant Publishing House SRL, Financial Analysis for 2009-2013. Retrieved February 21, 2016 from <http://doingbusiness.ro/financiar/raport/974077/editura-vellant-srl/>

for the Romanian book sector. We chose to use an assessment grid¹ in order to select the comparable processes, both *quantitative* indicators that increase and enhance organizational *visibility* (the number of positive reactions to a post, the number of replies and the number of comments), and *qualitative* indicators to measure: the degree of *innovation* in public relations processes (strategic vision, complexity of tactics, the influence of involved entities, the pertinence of channels), and the *reputational* strengths of the company (brand equities, level of public trust and publics' closeness to organization, etc.).

5. Analysis of Results

5.1. Linking Online Communication and Organization's Profile

Our field of analysis is represented by the online owned media, specifically corporate media channels (websites and blogs) and social media channels owned and managed by the three selected publishing houses. The choice of the online environment for this analysis lies on the heavy use of owned online media (organizational websites, organizational blogs and organizational social media channels), a use that could reflect a mature phase of communication management. The blending of traditional techniques or strategies with online engagement and even the replacing of certain communication dimensions that used mainly direct and interpersonal communication methods with online mediated forms of interaction is a key finding that we could observe in the case of all publishing houses under analysis. In analyzing the online communication, we were interested in three indicators: the organizational visibility, the degree of *innovation* in public relations processes and the *reputational* strengths of the company.

As first finding, we could observe that based on the internal organizational structure and the leadership nature, the publishing houses integrate the online communication into the holistic communication strategy. Our second finding is that based on the value that organizations attribute to their own history (incorporating history as a value of organizational culture), the reputation (in terms of legitimacy) is relevant for their audiences. We consider that the reputational level is the most relevant and includes the two previous indicators, therefore we will proceed by analyzing the relationship between the existent online channels (as owned media) and the quality of use of these channels taking into account the first two indicators: visibility and degree of innovation.

5.2. Consolidating the Organizational Reputation - Humanitas Holding

Humanitas Holding owns and manages an impressive online network: three organizational websites and 14 Facebook pages. One website presents the holding, one website presents the Publishing House and one website presents the Humanitas Bookstores, including an online bookshop. The online network also includes 14 organizational Facebook pages: the online newsroom of Humanitas Holding, each sub-entity of Humanitas Holding addresses digital audiences in a segmented way (Humanitas Publishing House, Humanitas Fiction, Humanitas Multimedia, Humanitas Bookstores), almost every Humanitas bookstore has a Facebook page.

¹ First developed and used by A. Rogojinaru, A.-L. Zaharia & Raluca Moise (2015). Using benchmarking to evaluate public relations effectiveness through social media. In A. Rogojinaru (Ed). *Public Relations: A revolutionary discipline* (pp. 67-85). București: Tritonic.

This impressive number of Facebook pages owned and managed by Public Relations specialists would generate the impression of a very conversational format of digital communication that the organization performs.

Our analysis took in consideration only the website of Humanitas Holding, the website of Humanitas Publishing House and the Facebook institutional page and posts referring to Humanitas Publishing House activity: Humanitas Book Store.

We consider, after analyzing the digital content published by the organization on the website and the Facebook pages, that the organization develops a monologue type of communication, lacking the enhancement of conversation and the involvement of the e-publics in the life of organization. The organizational website respects the requirements in terms of communication functions that the Public Relations responds to: “an organization’s website is the basic foundation block for projecting a favorable image, building trust and establishing credibility.” (Wilcox, 2009, p. 18).

For the Humanitas Publishing House, the organisational reputation has been built upon the image of its director, a renown philosopher, Gabriel Liiceanu, and on the foundations of an ideological involvement of its director in the civic movements that defined the Romanian society during its transition. Gabriel Liiceanu is a reputed and consecrated philosopher, writer and intellectual that has founded, in 1990, with other Romanian intellectuals, the first independent NGO, the Group for Social Dialogue whose purpose was to sustain the function of critical societal thinking and action. The Group for Social Dialogue edits a monthly cultural review that sustains the broad attitude and perspective of the Group. These extended social values and traits that Gabriel Liiceanu has acquired after the 1989 Revolution have consolidated the organizational reputation of Humanitas Publishing House. Gabriel Liiceanu has consolidated the image of the intellectual publicly involved and engaged responsibility which is rooted in the Socratic era and has a contextual enhancement and specificity after the fall of communism in Romania; if the Western 60’s saw rising “the type of politically and morally activist, left-wing intellectual, who had an impact on public discourse and protest far beyond the borders of classroom and campus (...)” (Zanker, 1995, p. 1), due to the historical specificities in Romania, the rising intellectual after the Revolution was actually right-wing focused, believing in its social role as a model for other social classes and categories. Thus, Gabriel Liiceanu founded the Humanitas Publishing House which is Western-continental influenced (based on humanities and philosophical translations and publications) and he developed a valid and reputed school of thinking in the Romanian cultural field. He published Romanian authors who could strengthen his view of what the publishing house should have become. These authors were intellectuals integrated in the same school of thinking and they become real cultural brands. Gabriel Liiceanu’s continuous presence in the public space and sphere raised the organization’s credibility, visibility and positioned it as a model of business in the book sector.

Facebook pages sustain this vision and this type of organizational culture; the monologue format of digital communication that I have mentioned before is visible through content that emphasizes the organizational images. For example, the Facebook posts are not mainly informative, but formative and educational, representing either quotes from books or famous authors, fragments of media interviews that well-known authors or translators have had in cultural mass-media. The digital communication uses the symbolic dimension of individual prestige in order to generate and enhance organizational reputation.

For example, the Facebook page Humanitas Book Store has a current number of 22.336 likes. We have analyzed its content and the level of engagement during 5 months, during June and October 2014 (Table 1). We have used as engagement indicators the number of posts, the number of replies, the number of comments (of which are them are positive) and the number of shares.

Engagement / Months	June	July	August	September	October
Number of posts	17	5	3	11	8
Number of replies a post	360	120	92	327	259
Number of comments / positive reactions	4 / 4	0	1/1	4/4	1/1
Number of shares	58	53	36	61	81

Table 1.
Humanitas Book Store Facebook page –
Types of engagement (June–October 2014)

Our main results show that there is a strong unbalance between the production of online communication and the needed engagement from their online audience. The online audiences react strongly and positively through replies (likes) and shares, which is a strong signal of their need and desire of engaging with the brand. Analyzing the relationship between the content and the reactions of online audience, we could notice the highest level of engagement (through shares or replies) being manifested in the case of those posts presenting or promoting a Humanitas brand author (such as Mircea Cartarescu, Horia Roman Patapievici, Gabriel Liiceanu etc). Also, the visual content had the most impact (videos from book fairs, photos from book fairs, book covers, events posters).

The consumer audiences that are activated through the online owned media are the Alphas, the Bees, the blogger and the blog visitors and, when addressing specific social issues, activists. We analyzed the flow of a shared post and we could observe how a Facebook post announcing a public reading hosted by one of the most relevant Romanian authors and reputed Humanitas author, Mircea Cărtărescu, has generated shares from Alphas who had a relevant number of influenced persons (the bees) who, at their turn, diffused the post in an informal way. We could also identify as digital audience for the online communication that Humanitas Publishing House challenges the blogger and the blog «visitors»; the main events having as headlines the main Humanitas authors always generating news in the online media and in-depth interviews with authors. We can therefore consider that the organization uses the main actors of the process of diffusion, and unfortunately it is not interested in generating and encouraging reaction and interaction.

5.3. Building a Reputation - Nemira Publishing House

For Nemira Publishing House, its founder has also been a known writer of theater plays who also had the public function of the general director of the national television. Valentin Nicolau is not known as an intellectual, but more as a public man and entrepreneur. The organization did not use the reputational capital of his owner in a public manner. At Nemira, since its foundation, well reputed Romanian writers and intellectuals have started their career. At the present moment, the publishing house has developed a business strategy that is based on specialized collections, aiming niched audiences, which is a fact sustained by the impressive portfolios of organizational websites and blogs. The main organizational websites are designed as marketing tools, as virtual or electronic bookstores and on these websites a visitor could not find detailed information about the organization. Instead, Nemira Publishing House owns and manages a media website, an online newsroom apart from the main organizational websites. The network of blogs comes to develop a constant interaction with the readers, creating therefore virtual spaces where the readers and the fans of a certain literary genre already form communities. This strategy is extremely efficient, as the organization facilitates, through a specific online space, the interaction and socialization between the fans of a certain literary genre (like science-fiction) or of a certain title (like translated bestsellers, as it is the example of the series *Game of Thrones*). Facebook pages sustain the same high level of interaction and engagement with their digital publics. Just as Humanitas, Nemira also owns and manages an impressive number of Facebook pages: the organizational one, the online newsroom, the Facebook accounts of some of the Nemira bookstores and the Facebook account of Nemira community of readers (the book club).

We analyzed for 5 months (June-October 2014) the Facebook institutional page, Editura Nemira, with a current number of 57.333 likes (Table 2).

Engagement / Months	June	July	August	September	October
Number of posts	39	47	63	51	48
Number of replies a post	2568	2172	6626	2357	1557
Number of comments / positive reactions	47	64	76/75	54	24/24
Number of shares	101	338	301	71	124

Table 2.
Editura Nemina Facebook page –
Types of engagement (June-October 2014)

Our first results show us a very powerful and diverse content from a visual point of view (photos from book fair, book covers, tweets captures from authors' Twitter accounts, images from

movies based on books translated and published at Nemira). Also, the posts are carefully conceived, as they do not look alike, addressing specific topics of interest for audiences and using different styles of communication (content marketing). We also noticed that the Nemira publishing house engages its online audience through its Facebook page by asking members from the audience to fill in a satisfaction questionnaire, therefore asking for their opinions regarding a specific collection. In terms of the quality of their audience, fans' comments are content-related, meaning they refer very often to the content of books, revealing really savvy and interested fans of a certain author or a certain literary genre.

The main format of the digital communication is very different in terms of interaction and engagement of audiences. The first finding is that the content is different and adapted to audiences' needs, informational or socializing expectations. The informative function is present, just as was the case of Humanitas, many posts being newseries (information about collections, promotions or book launches). This informative communication is always completed and improved by an interactive and community driven accent; many posts focus on finding consumers' opinions about certain titles or authors, or even involving audiences in the process of decision-making regarding the cover for a title.

The digital consumers that Nemira Publishing House address through its online network are the communities of fans of specific literary genres which are included in the twitters and the respective followers (on tweets), meaning conversational publics whose role is to respond and create reputation. Even if Nemira does not manage a Twitter account, the communities of fans of certain titles and literary genres, who interact through Nemira blogs or Facebook pages represent, probably one of the most effective forms of digital endorsement and can be subcategorized in «top fans», «promoters» or «evangelists» (Comm & Burge, 2003, p. 125). In the campaigns of branding a collection or a title, the publishing house also addresses to bloggers and the blog «visitors». Another type of audiences, maybe the most relevant for the relational marketing approach, is the «I» public who defines and promotes their own profile, writes for massive audiences, solitary people sharing the illusion of being heard by vast populations in the virtual space.

5.4. Positioning on the Market - Vellant Publishing House

Vellant Publishing House is a young publishing house, developing a strategy of positioning through differentiation from the others publishing houses. Its brand statements published on the organizational website refer to the organization as marginal and encouraging marginal culture and reading interests; its dominant format of communication is represented by basic marketing, lacking the dimensions of relational or interactive potentialities. The publishing house translates books that encounter a diversity of reading interests and it did not develop a focused strategy of branding titles or collections. It is more relevant because it also publishes young Romanian writers and, therefore, it addresses young consumers. Its online communication is based on the organizational website, which functions exclusively as a virtual bookstore, a Facebook page where the newseries about promotions, discounts are dominant and a Twitter account where the communication is not adapted, the content being almost identical to Facebook content.

We analyzed for 5 months (June-October 2014) the institutional Facebook page of Vellant Publishing House, a page with currently a number of 2.290 total likes and without any activity for 2016 (Table 3).

Engagement / Months	June	July	August	September	October
Number of posts	3	3	1	4	10
Number of replies a post	43	14	6	20	99
Number of comments / of which positive reactions	-	-	-	-	3/3
Number of shares	1	-	-	1	2

Table 3.
Vellant Publishing House Facebook page –
Types of engagement (June-October 2014)

In terms of its online visibility, Nemira Publishing House has the greatest number of fans on Facebook, followed by Humanitas but it has the lowest degree of visibility. We can observe from the data presented above that in terms of online content production (the number of posts), Nemira Publishing House (Table 2) leads with a relevant communication in terms of topics and style of communication, addressing the appropriate audiences. Also, if we analyze the production of online content and the reactions of Facebook audiences (in terms of replies), Nemira Publishing House is also leading the online communication by creating relevant engagement with their audiences and by generating real interest from their consumers. We also analyzed the degree of visibility in function of qualitative indicators - the quality of interaction, and the order remained the same. The organization's conversational capacity defined by the constitution of communities and relational groups, the organization's ability to create and encourage the literary sociability (in the online environment) depends, as we have already seen, on its identity, image (intended and construed) and reputation.

5.5. Reputation as a Relevant Indicator of Public Relations Institutionalization in the Book Sector

A third finding of our research was that the online communication of each publishing house reflects the stage of its organizational development and the focus on a specific component of the organizational reputation; Humanitas consolidates its reputation already established and legitimized by its audiences, Nemira focuses on consolidating the organizational brand, emphasizing brand values, and Vellant focuses on building an organizational image.

The analysis of the online communication allowed us to understand how the publishing houses address their online audiences' expectations. We have described so far why and how publishing houses are businesses with a specific regime, their activity and mission implying a substantial public mandate to a societal level, mainly the social and cultural impact to a society. We have also affirmed that producing value to and for books is a two-way process, manifested univocal or simultaneous, the first direction being a positioning through the format of organizational branding. The second direction supposes an organizational effort to generate value through a focus towards its audiences, and that is the process of gaining and generating intellectual capital.

We already mentioned that a publishing house's public mandate requires the increase of cultural societal level and, more specifically, the increase of educational degree of reading. This societal holistic responsibility is reaffirmed by the Publishers' Association in Romania, on its website: "The Association's mission is to promote especially quality book reading and writing, to facilitate readers' access to books, from a material and informational point of view, therefore contributing to a free ideas circulation, as well as to the inclusion of Romanian culture and language into the global circuit of values."¹

This responsibility becomes difficult when a society goes through a cultural crisis due to the transitional status that becomes almost an *état de lieux* in Romania. For almost 10 years already, there has been identified the formation of a public opinion regarding the low and decreasing degree of reading at young people, especially highschool students. The dominant discourse accuses the loss of interest in reading of young generations and, associated to their educational trajectory, the loss of relevant competencies. An important entity in the production of this discourse are Romanian publishing houses and the Publishers' Association in Romania which frequently publish the results of sales following national bookfairs and the results of quantitative studies made by the Association in partnership with private actors. The quantitative data that are always highlighted in the discourse regarding the decreasing interest of young people towards reading emphasize the stage of book production, the stage of sales and the stage of consumption.

To address this transitional and, yet, alarming situation that deepens progressively, Romanian publishing houses have developed platforms that target the young segment of market (through specific products and services) and have planned and implemented social responsibility campaigns that have as broader objective the increase of interest for reading fiction books. There are only two research studies carried out that evaluate the efficiency of measures taken by the publishing houses in terms of initiating specific products and services and to encourage youngsters' interest for reading. A. Buzatu (2014) identified the possible limitations of the current dominant discourse and measures taken by the publishing houses and their distributors concerning. Therefore, she considers that the current solutions are not efficient and they do not respond to the actual and real public's problems. The growing visibility of books (by an increasing presence of books in supermarkets), the amplification of the current discussion about the dramatic decrease of book consumption and the technical solutions taken to make the product more aesthetic (covers more appealing, multiplying the material book support etc) and the marketing campaigns of books as added value to another product lack, in the practitioner's opinion, credibility and efficiency when addressing the decreasing teenagers' and youngsters' interest in reading.

¹ The Status of Romanian Publishers' Association, art. 5. Retrieved February 12, 2015 from http://www.aer.ro/AER_Asociatia_Editorilor_din_Romania-4-1.

From this point of view, both Humanitas and Nemira publishing houses practice a really careful strategy regarding the quality of books (at technical and material level), including the digitalization of books (as we have already mentioned, Humanitas Group has an legally independent division that offers digital products and services – Humanitas Multimedia). Buzatu considers that the efforts performed by the publishing houses to respond to such issues, strictly from a business point of view, are not sufficient. She also offers communication strategies that would be more efficient, from her perspective: to enhance the direct utility of books in the daily life, to improve the skills of storytelling and the emphasis of the social value that reading has for teenagers' socializing life. Actually these are communication strategy axis that are used in order to plan a campaign (Gregory, 2010) and we cannot qualify these solutions as strategic organizational strategies that could respond to the problems Buzatu raised.

We agree with the practitioner's analysis of measures that the publishing houses took and implemented, with no relevant success for teenagers and young people, but we do not consider the solutions she advances for the problems identified as being relevant. The problems are of business and marketing nature, the solutions she advances are possible axis of communication in the planning of campaigns. Therefore, we think that, at the level of products and services that aim a younger segment, the best solutions are, just as we already have mentioned in the introductory part of the article, creating and consolidating spaces of literary sociability. At this level, both Humanitas and Nemira have created, for young people, physical spaces to enhance the socializing dimension of reading; Humanitas has opened, for two years already, a special concept bookstore for young people and Nemira has developed a literary club. At digital level, the creation and encouragement of literary communities is also a dimension of communication strategy that enhances the literary sociability.

The dimension with a greater efficiency is social responsibility; the social responsibility campaigns that are implemented by publishing houses or by other private actors, in partnership with publishing houses, have long-term objectives and make use of various communication strategies. Anca Anton (2014) did a chronological mapping of CSR campaigns implemented by other private actors (specifically corporations from other business sectors) but implemented in partnership with Romanian publishing houses. These campaigns have as objectual referees the book and the act of reading. In her approach, Anton used the classic classification of Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee (2005) into six broad categories: cause promotions, cause-related marketing, Corporate Social Marketing, Corporate Philanthropy, community volunteering, socially responsible business practices. Her results are relevant for our analysis. We could observe that the Humanitas Publishing House is the main partner in CSR campaigns developed by companies in telecommunications or banking; its prestige and high reputation (as we have already described previously) attract strategic partnerships with other companies. Also, the dominant two types of CSR practiced by companies from other fields are cause promotions and Corporate Philanthropy.

First of all, these results prove the capacity of Humanitas publishing house to engage and to be engaged in strategic partnerships in order to sustain its stakeholders' expectations. Humanitas is not a singular case; most profitable publishing houses (Boca-Stănescu, 2014) initiate or are involved in CSR campaigns that aim to encourage teenagers and youngsters (even children, more recent) to read and to develop this habit. But Humanitas is a special case, because its profitability is actually overpassed by its prestige and reputation in the selection process that companies do when they propose and address an invitation for partnership. It is involved in this

type of activity, as organization (Humanitas is a partner in CSR campaigns since 2008) or in initiating CSR campaigns increased the organization's digital likeability.

We analyzed the degree of likeability (organizational visibility and social media attractiveness) of Humanitas and Nemira. Humanitas Publishing House and Humanitas Bookstores developed a CSR campaign (cause promotion) entitled *Blind date with a book*. From our analysis of the online media coverage (including social media), we could find out that the campaign engaged interested users of Booktopia website and that they formed a reading community facilitated by this campaign. The campaign engaged users who were also bloggers who covered the campaign in the online environment. Another CSR platform through which Humanitas Publishing House responds to teenagers' needs and expectations is the national competition "Humanitas in highschools", competition which evaluates the general culture knowledge of highschool students. Based on the results of each edition published on the competition's website and the online communication dedicated through a social media page, we could find that the competition has become a relevant challenge for highschools and teachers, but also for parents and students. This consolidates the organizational reputation that we have already described previously.

Nemira Publishing House is not such a profitable firm as Humanitas, but the public's expectations are the same if we refer to its public mandate. We have already pointed out that the dominant format of marketing and branding communication has already shown its limitations, because the audiences expect more from each publishing house and that it has a proactive role in the cultural and educational level of young people. The publishing house has launched a CSR campaign entitled "The Super-booksellers" that would consolidate the interaction between the reader and the bookseller. The campaign has been launched at the end of May 2014 and it generated a relevant interest from audiences of bloggers activated in the campaign and from readers and consumers on the Facebook page.

All these examples show the organizational efforts of publishing houses to be market leaders, to sustain their public mandate, their actions generating expectations that extend at the level of entire book sector. Therefore, the medium sized firms, with a long tradition in the Romanian book sector, are expected from their audiences to add social value to their business. It is the process through which market forces are leveraged to speed the transition to sustainability. Yet, we can identify two limitations: all current CSR projects are short-term campaigns that do not ritualize (besides few examples of CSR platforms implemented and developed by Humanitas); their recurrent objective (to generate and increase teenagers' interest in reading and increase educational and cultural level) cannot be achieved with campaigns that can, at the most, generate awareness regarding a certain issue.

These examples also show the organizational efforts to develop a conversational capability in relationship with their audiences and to transform them from digital consumers to digital publics (empowered and engaged). Again, besides few examples, the dominant digital communication is commercial and generates a general impression of an organization un-likeable and not disposed to develop a real dialogue. The impressive number of social media pages (Facebook, for instance) does not trigger implicitly or directly the performance of a digital communication matching the audiences' expectations and users' perception of the channel.

6. Concluding Remarks

This paper has reflected on the applied value of Public Relations in the Romanian book sector, emphasizing the role of Public Relations as a discipline that institutionalizes relationships and discourses through mutual and tacit agreement. We investigated the complex ways in which Public Relations is managed in order to produce social value for a fabricated object, namely the book.

Our main hypothesis is that producing value to and for books is a two-way process, manifested univocal or simultaneous. First direction is the focus towards itself, meaning through a process of positioning that generates intrinsic value to the product (a positioning of branding format); the second direction involves an organizational effort to generate value through a focus towards its audiences, and that is the process of gaining and generating intellectual capital.

We have therefore analyzed the online communication of three selected Romanian publishing houses. As our study has shown, each publishing house uses a specific format of digital communication, creating and enhancing certain roles of digital publics. We therefore identified the dominant format of digital communication taking into account the main role of Public Relations, namely addressing specific issues. Thus, organizations become likeable through a savvy digital communication strategy and, through its social responsible actions, trustworthiness.

We can resume our results as follows: 1) based on the internal organizational structure and the leadership nature, the publishing houses integrate the online communication into the holistic communication strategy; 2) based on the value that organizations attribute to their own history (incorporating history as a value of organizational culture), the reputation (in terms of legitimacy) is relevant for their audiences; 3) the online communication of each publishing house reflects the stage of its organizational development and the focus on a specific component of the organizational reputation; Humanitas consolidates its reputation already established and legitimized by its audiences, Nemira focuses on consolidating the organizational brand, emphasizing brand values, and Vellant focuses on building an organizational image.

We could also observe that, for Humanitas, the digital communication uses the symbolic dimension of individual prestige in order to generate and enhance organizational reputation, whereas for Nemira, the focus is on creating virtual spaces where the readers and the fans of a certain literary genre already form communities and Vellant is interested in becoming visible. The reputation becomes the keyword in our analysis and it seems that for the organizations, the value of Public Relations is to generate a strong reputation and the online audiences enhance, by their reactions, this strategy. And yet, the reaction of online audiences also showed us that their expectations towards a more social and cultural proactive role from the organizations is vital. Thus, two actions (with social values associated) have become field practices through Public Relations: enhancement of literary sociability and social responsibility. We can therefore conclude that audiences respond positively to the branding strategy that the organizations have developed, but this format of communication is not sufficient anymore. The audiences expect organizations to become responsible in terms of nurturing their passions and generating literary sociability practices, as well as developing an active role as social actors.

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