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ABSTRACTS

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ABSTRACT

25 years of PR in Romanian book sector: a short history of institutionalization and professionalization

Alina Dolea, PhD
Department of Communication Sciences
University of Bucharest
alinadolea@gmail.com

Raluca Moise, PhD, Teaching Lecturer
Department of Communication Sciences,
University of Bucharest
raluca.moise@litere.unibuc.ro

The book is a cultural consumption good whose adoption supposes performing a constant negotiation game between promotion industries and consumers. In Romania, book sector is highly competitive and unbalanced, as the publishing houses, the main actors, are complaining constantly of a constant and even dramatic decrease of sales. In the same time, Romania is being perceived internationally as having a 98% of adult literacy and being ranked 21st in the world with 15,000 items published every year.

Starting from these contradictory situations, this paper looks at the gradual process of institutionalization and professionalization of public relations within the Romanian book sector after 1989. The aim of this paper is to show the historical stages of PR development from the promotion of books through promotional practices (mainly ads and distribution of new titles to key cultural journalists and critiques), events (the traditional book fairs and book launches) to the current strategic use of public relations (integrated communication campaigns, new media strategies, start of CSR programs by publishing houses).

In addition, to investigate in depth the current stage of PR on Romanian book sector, we first realize a profile of the organizational communication in the case of three Romanian publishing houses chosen according to three key criteria (dimension, financial capacity, consumer perception of reputation). Using the case study method, we analyze the organizational communication of each publishing house, as it is conceived and implemented by the internal public relations specialists employed. Secondly, we conduct a comparative analysis in function of specific items: the relevance of PR for the management, the responsibilities of the PR specialist, the dominant model of communication. Considering the communication strategy as a comparative major item, we are also interested in analyzing the way that the three publishing houses address new audiences, how they relate with young publics and, most important, which is the role of research in communicating with young audiences. Our interest in young segment has become relevant as main Romanian publishing houses are complaining about the decrease of reading frequency on young readers segment (teenagers and university students). Having as basis these analyses (profile and comparison), we will draw the main characteristics of the current state of public relations in book sector.

Summing up, this paper is the first to review the 25 years PR in the Romanian book sector, establishing a typology of most used technics and instruments of book promotion and revealing the evolution in terms of understanding and practicing PR in this quarter of century on a market that is constantly growing and is key to the development of a society. Correlating

this with the general evolution of public relations as new profession and field of study in Romania, this paper allows a deeper discussion on the institutionalization and professionalization of public relations in the Romanian book sector.