

## THE IMAGE OF AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: WEST UNIVERSITY OF TIMISOARA

**Anamaria FILIMON-BENEA, Ioana VID**

West University of Timișoara, Romania

**Abstract:** The goal of this paper is to analyse the image, a public relation perspective, of an educational institution - West University of Timisoara. The image concept is a key concept in public relations and the sociology of mass communication. The image of an organization is based on creating elements that characterize identity that gives the uniqueness factor. These are the goals, objectives, structure, the staff and organizational culture and their translation into the external environment. The external environment is the general public, clients/customers, suppliers, partners, and not least by the media (Vid 2016, p.29). The image is the representation: "which was formed as a sum of beliefs, attitudes, opinions, prejudices, experiences and expectations to groups of people or within the public opinion on a natural or legal person, institution or organization" (Iorgu 2011). According to Roger Mucchielli picture is "a representation or an idea which is formed by individuals of an environment or of a segment of the public – due to reception of information about a social object. In the image case, it is about an opinion or an attitude whose roots are mostly irrational" (Iorgu 2011). We analyse the current image of West University of Timisoara. The overall objective of the analysis is to identify all the instruments that UVT uses to communicate with its public. The adequate tools for studying such an approach are the following: observation and content analysis.

**Keywords:** image; public relations; education; institution; digital communication.

### 1. Introduction

The activity of the organization can be perceived only in one way: through (done in an organized act of communication, because every organization communicates with the public and its environment. Communication can be spontaneous, conscious or guided way).

The images about the organizations arise as a result of the communication process that takes place within and beyond the organization; while the images are created, they impose the dominant character of the type of communication.

### 2. The image of an organization

Their images in the extra-organizational environment, are due primarily because of the processes that are taking place within the organizations (processes of socialization, training, sedimentation and internalization of the organizational culture), but also because of the ways in which people and organizations receive and process information about these processes. (Vid 2013, p. 134).

"An image-building strategy includes the following elements: purpose and suggested items, the main components of the organization's image, target audiences, the communication channel of the message in relation to the specific characteristics of the receiver, deadlines for completion of the planned activities, material resources that are needed to fulfil the task and the preparation and implementation of PR programs to implement the strategy for image creation." (Vid 2013, p.134).

For an accurate assessment of the organization's image, there are different methods:

- **studying the notoriety** - refers to the degree of familiarity that the public has with the organization;
- **institutional trust** - refers to the public's expectations, based on its reliable relationship between investors and recipients;
- **semantic differentiator** - is a method of measuring and analysing the semantic connotations of the social concepts used by people in relationships or interactions;
- **overall assessment** - is a comprehensive method that considers the issue of consistency and image meaning (positive or negative). The overall picture of an organization may include: *the image of the population* from an area relevant to the organization, *the image of state institutions* and the parliamentary parties, *the image of extra parliamentary political parties and non-political organizations*, *media image*, *opinion leaders image* and *the self image of the organization*." (Vid 2013, p.135)

The image is the representation: "which was formed as a sum of beliefs, attitudes, opinions, prejudices, experiences and expectations to groups of people or within the public opinion on a natural or legal person, institution or organization" (Iorgu 2011). According to Roger Mucchielli picture is "a representation or an idea which is formed by individuals of an environment or of a segment of the public – due to reception of information about a social object. In the image case, it is about an opinion or an attitude whose roots are mostly irrational" (Iorgu 2011). There are three types of image: the image of the politician / individual image, the image of an organization and the brand image.

The image acts as a mediator between people and organizations, between people and institutions, between organizations and institutions. The images are required in the communication process by guiding people's opinions, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and actions in the social and non-social environment. The image of the organization becomes a component part of the organizational patrimony and a component part of its performance reproduction process.

Images about your organization are very important for the performance of people in organizations. If supported and validated by objective reality, images become a reference system for the organization's staff, motivating and emotional in the work of people (Halic, p.10).

Messages issued by the organization should seek: *information* on the status and performance of the organization as a whole and all its constituent elements; *the enhancement* of the information generated by the organization's functioning, first of all, of the messages with the greatest weight in the formation of its positive images; *explaining* the meaning of the organization's public activities, both specific and novel;

*diminishing* the negative impact of crises and *dysfunction* messages; *keeping* the vital issues of the organization in the public eyes.

The image of an organization / a company is the perception that the public has on the organization. Therefore, we can say that the image of an organization is the totality of perceptions that the public has about her, but it may be different from reality, if unknown, understood or communicated incorrectly. In an organization we encounter three types of image: the real picture (objective), the earned picture (subjective), that is how the institution is perceived and the desired image that is how the institution should be assessed. (Vid 2016, p.30).

### 3. Case study

Having this theoretical concepts, in our study we analyse the current image of West University of Timisoara. The overall objective of the analysis is to identify all the instruments that UVT uses to communicate with its public.

West University of Timisoara doesn't collaborate with a PR agency, because it has her own PR department. The Department of Communication, Imagery and Institutional Marketing (DCI) is a structure of the West University of Timisoara, meant to ensure institutional transparency, communication with stakeholders, promotion of the university image and strengthening of institutional identity.

The main purpose of the department is to promote the West University of Timisoara by generating a better visibility of the institution and creating and maintaining a positive image both internally and externally.

DCI actions take into account the following components:

- creating and developing communication relationships with various target audiences interested in the university's educational and research offer
- informational inter-institutional communication, creation and development of communication relations between the faculties and departments of the West University of Timisoara
- information, creation and development of communication relations with other institutions relevant to the university's policy and vision: public administration, embassies, other educational institutions, media companies, non-profit associations and organizations, private companies
- creating and developing communication relationships with media representatives ([www.dci.uvt.ro](http://www.dci.uvt.ro))

Speaking in a University meetings, conferences, graduation ceremonies, alumni conferences, etc. provides an opportunity for experts to demonstrate their expertise to potential public/ students. Nevertheless, the right speaking engagement puts the organization in front of a good target audience and offers networking opportunities for generating customers leads.

In this paper we will present some important events which contribute a lot to construct the image of West University of Timisoara.

First of all, we must mention some elements of internal communication: institutional e-mail ([surname.name@e-uvt.ro](mailto:surname.name@e-uvt.ro)), the newsletter and the email which the institution sends every day – Communication and imagery West University of Timisoara.



Figure 1. Institutional e-mail

As external communication, UVT has a lot of events.

Being in the process of internationalization but at the same time deeply concerned by a relevant anchor in the life of the local community, UVT proposed, a year ago, a new series of special meetings. The heads of diplomatic missions accredited in our country are invited to sustain conferences at UVT. November 2016 opened the series of these meetings, being a very full one, truly dedicated to diplomacy at the highest rank.

The list of ambassadors: Hans Klemm, US Ambassador; Stella Ronner-Grubačić, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; Kisaburo Ishii, Ambassador of Japan; Paul Brummell, Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Ramiro Fernández Bachiller, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain etc.



Figure 2. Newsletter



Figure 3. Ambassadors to UVT

The UVT Excellency Gala - publicly recognizes some of the personal values with an echo in academic life in a broad sense. The event brings to the foreground, this year, the merits and performance of those who, through their work, outline the image of a strong, valuable university and respected for what it means in the city it represents, but also at a national level.

The series "Success Stories in the Aula" will periodically bring prestigious graduates from the West University of Timisoara, who will hold lectures and questions and answers sessions for students from Timisoara. The distinctive

qualities of the current generation of students, their need to be intellectually stimulated, to express themselves creatively and to freely communicate their opinions inspired the restructuring of our promotion strategy.



Figure 4. The UVT Excellency Gala

The event aims to facilitate direct contact between students and graduates of the West University of Timisoara who have a story to tell, professional discoveries to reveal and shared learning. We are convinced that these meetings offer only unique learning opportunities, but also contribute to the history of the university and the preservation of its cultural heritage.



The first guest was Robert Șerban, a graduate of the Faculty of Arts and Design of the UVT. Other alumni: Radu Pavel Gheo, Mezzo-soprano Aura Twarowska, Ciprian Jichici etc.

Doctor Honoris Causa ceremonies. Next title will be offered to Maia Morgenstern, Theatre and film actress, Director of the Jewish State Theatre of Bucharest.



Figure 5. Success Stories in the Aula

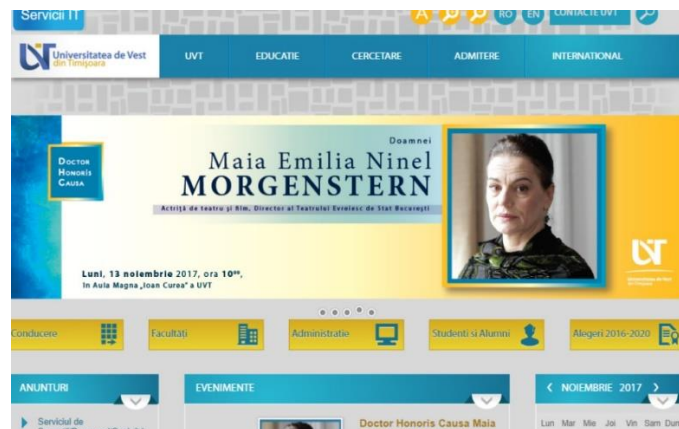


Figure 6. Doctor Honoris Causa events



Figure 7. Univibes

Timisoara. Last year it was diffused on Tele Europa Nova.

“Univibes - Occupy the University again!

On the first day of the academic year, we spend the only party taking place in a Romanian university with 4 scenes, live-acts, DJ-sets and good vibes. Open doors for everyone. Without entries, without restriction, entry is free. “

([www.facebook.com/univibestm](http://www.facebook.com/univibestm))

West University of Timisoara has her own television. It's an important instrument to promote all the events and the news about UVT. UVT -TV is the weekly program about West University of Timisoara: interviews, round tables, news, reports with students and teachers. All the videos are uploaded on a YouTube page and the entire program is diffused on the local television, TVR

#### 4. Conclusions

Public relations in educational institutions are used to manage the communication between the organization and its audiences in order to capture their attention, to establish and to promote effective partnership between organizations and the community. The educational institution must receive information at least at the same level as it receives and, furthermore, determine the needs of its audiences and try to satisfy them. Nowadays, the public relation activity and the digital communication from the perspective of the collaborative communication management are a real necessity for the educational institutions. The Universities must adapt their communication (internal/external) to the actual society and to their public. It seems that West University of Timisoara does a lot of this.

#### References

1. Halic, B. A. 2004. *Analiza imaginii organizațiilor*. București: Editura comunicare.ro.
2. Iorgu, M. 2011. *Aspecte psihosociale ale gestionării de imagine în mediul organizațional*. Available at <http://www.unibuc.ro/studies/Doctorate2011> [accessed January 2018].
3. Vid, I. 2013. "Communication in Cultural Organization" in *Studia UBB Ephemerides* LVIII(1): 133-144.
4. Vid, I. 2016. "The Image Crisis of the Organization" in *Professional Communication and Translation Studies* 9: 27-34.

#### Webography:

1. Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara: [www.uvt.ro](http://www.uvt.ro)
2. Departamentul de Comunicare, Imagine și Marketing: [www.dci.uvt.ro](http://www.dci.uvt.ro)
3. Pagina de Facebook a Universității de Vest: [www.facebook.com/uvtromania](https://www.facebook.com/uvtromania)