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Stages of crisis communication in public administration. case study Romanian Ministry of Transport

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Abstract. For a democratic state to function effectively, the public administration, whether central or local, must communicate with its citizens. The emergence of a crisis can attract the attention of the public and the media, and poor communication from the public administration can threaten the trust of citizens. In this paper, we analyzed how the Romanian Ministry of Transport responded to potential crisis situations, related to good practices for crisis communication suggested by theorists in the field.

Keywords. stages of communication, crisis communication, public administration, ministry of transport, Romania

1. Public administration. Theoretical approaches

From an etymological point of view, the word "administration" comes from Latin, consisting of the preposition "ad" which means "to" and "minister" which can be interpreted as "someone's helper, executor". The notion of public administration has led to a variety of definitions, influenced by factors such as historical evolution, the economic, social and political environment in which it developed.

The doctrine identifies 3 main meanings of approach to public administration: (1) from the perspective of correlation with executive activity – administration is a component of executive power, without being the only component of it; (2) functional and organic - is a set of activities and means by which certain people aim to meet a need of general interest; (3) through its purposes, its means and the specific legal regime – which involves the realization of the public interest through it with the support of public power.

The notion of public administration is a component of the notion of administration, alongside private administration. The two types of administration have in common the organizational sizing of resources and means to be used effectively. The difference between the two administrations is the goal. If the purpose of private administration is to achieve a particular interest, the purpose of public administration is of general interest, be it national or local. Public administration is "the totality of the

activities carried out, under public power, the organization of the execution and concrete execution of the law and the provision of public services, in order to satisfy the public interest” (Mățã, 2019)

The notion of public administration can be understood in two senses: material meaning and formal meaning. By material means we can understand public administration as an activity to ensure public interests by means of public power. For the formal meaning we mean a system of public entities that conduct public administration as an activity.

The meaning of the notion of public administration does not overlap with the meaning of the notion of state. Public administration can only be classified as a dimension of executive power, lacking the political component. The one who has the power to administer is the state, being an original right. The very essence of the state is to ensure the general interests of society. The state recognizes a secondary right, the power to administer public affairs, to local authorities. Thus, we identify the two subsystems of public administration: the State Administration Subsystem and the Local Government Subsystem. The system of public administration is made up of all the public bodies, authorities and institutions that carry out the activity of public administration, organization of execution and concrete execution of the law and among which are established legal relations that ensure the functionality, consistency of the system.

Public authorities implementing decisions taken in the framework of the executive activity are identified as "public administration authorities". They are divided into state (central) public authorities and local public administration authorities. In order to carry out their tasks, they have the possibility to use the public force of the State with which they are endowed.

The components of the public administration system can be grouped, according to their relationship to the state, into two subsystems: (1) the subsystem of state public administration; (2) the autonomous local public administration subsystem.

1.2 Central Administration

The government is responsible for the general supervision of public administration. The procedure for the creation and confirmation of the Government begins with the appointment of a candidate for the office of Prime Minister by the President, after consulting the party holding the majority in Parliament. The Prime Minister is responsible for directing and coordinating the work of members of the government. The government is politically responsible only to Parliament for its entire work. Ministries are organized and operate under the supervision of the Government.

The specialized central administration has two components, namely: the public administration under the authority of the Government, consisting of administrative structures under the direct authority of the Government or under the authority of ministries and autonomous administrative authorities, established in accordance with Article 117 of the Constitution. The ministerial administration consists of administrative structures under the direct authority of the Government, called ministries or other names: agencies, authorities, departments, offices, committees, councils, etc., regardless of whether their heads are members of the Government or not (in accordance with Article 102(3), the Government is made up of a Prime Minister, Ministers and other members established by organic law). In Chapter V of Title III of the Constitution, other authorities are mentioned, which carry out exclusively administrative activities. In addition to executive-specific government acts, the Government also issues administrative acts, which carry out state administration, as a dimension of public administration. The specialized central administration is carried out only as a state administration and its structure includes subordinate and autonomous governmental authorities. In turn, government authorities are divided into two categories, depending on whether their

subordination to the Government is direct or indirect (through a ministry). However autonomous the central autonomous administrative institutions may enjoy, since they are state authorities, their acts are subject to legal action, in accordance with the provisions of Article 52 of the Constitution.

Ministries

The specialized structure of public administration, which requires the resolution of government tasks in one area or another, is called the ministry. Article 116 of the Constitution lays down the principle by which ministries are organized only under the authority of the Government. Thus, the autonomous organization of ministries is inconceivable. Ministries are established and organized and operate in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and Law No. 90/2001 on the organization and functioning of the Government and Ministries of Romania. Ministries are considered to be specialized administrative bodies since they carry out their administrative authority in a particular field of activity. As part of the structure of public administration, the ministry may be qualified as a public institution with staff, material and financial means and a competence recognized by law, as well as legal capacity.

The ministry's staff includes the minister, invested with decision-making and representation altogether, and staff from the ministry apparatus, who prepare the ministry's decisions, forming the advisory administration, structured in directions, services and offices, etc. the basis of the continuity of the function of the central administration is ensured by the stability and technical training, and not by the political affiliation of ministerial civil servants. The large number of decisions that the Minister must take does not allow him to study each file in detail and is therefore obliged to appeal only to the approval given by his collaborators. According to the Constitution, ministers ensure the implementation of the Government's policy in the field or field of activity of the ministry they lead and are accountable to the Government for the work of the ministry. The leadership exercised by the Minister involves the exercise of hierarchical power over all civil servants in the ministry, whom he appoints and dismisses. This involves: - the decision-making power - to give mandatory indications, to suspend or cancel the acts of subordinates; - the power of control over civil servants in the apparatus, over their work, including disciplinary control. Ministers may delegate some of their prerogatives to subordinates, i.e. secretaries or undersecretaries of state.

Organization of ministries

The role, functions, prerogatives, organizational structure and number of posts of ministries are determined according to the importance, volume, complexity and specificity of the work carried out and approved by decision of the Government. Depending on the nature of their prerogatives, some ministries may have, in their field of activity, departments abroad, determined by decision of the Government. Ministries may set up specialized bodies under their authority, with the opinion of the Court of Auditors. Ministries may have public services under their authority, operating in administrative-territorial units. The establishment or abolition of disadvantaged public services of ministries or other central bodies in administrative-territorial units, their object of activity, the number and employment of staff, the criteria for the establishment of departments and their management functions shall be approved by order of the Minister or, respectively, by order of the head of the specialized body under the authority of which those services or bodies operate. The Minister appoints and dismisses the heads of the specialized bodies under the authority of the ministry.

2. Crisis communication of public institutions

The crisis is the event from which an unstable and dangerous situation is expected to occur, affecting either individually, a group, a community or the whole society. These are considered to be negative changes in areas such as security, economics, politics, at the social level, or in environmental issues, especially when they occur at an unexpected, unpredictable or not at all.

Excessive use of the term: "crisis" has led several specialists in the field to assert that the understanding of this term is simplistic and incomplete and that it is a commonly used term, but it is in search of a scientific definition. Cristina Coman believes that "there are no significant differences in the definition of the crisis between eco-nothing, political and social approaches. The differences are at the level of importance given to one or other of the factors that make up the crisis situation" (Coman, 2009).

In the case of public institutions, a crisis is a critical and decisive moment, and a wrong decision can cost its viability. Communication is "the main weapon in an organization, as it allows both the exchange of messages between people, the transmission of information, thoughts and feelings, and the obtaining of agreement or disagreement, manifestation and imposition of power, negotiation and consensus" (Luchenciuc, Rus, Tasește, 2020). Crises therefore occur as phenomena that can damage a public institution or organization, both in terms of material losses and in terms of social prestige, by damaging the public image. According to the literature, a crisis can trigger rapid changes in public policy, as it attracts the attention of the public and the media and threatens public confidence.

According to M.W. Allen and R.H. Caillouet, the main purpose of any crisis response program, designed and applied by public relations departments on the basis of communication strategies, is to influence the public so that the way in which it interprets that crisis can be modified. As a result, for public relations specialists, the crisis is a favorable ground for conceptualizing and applying communication strategies aimed at limiting or stopping damage.

There are two main perspectives regarding the typologies of a crisis, namely, the perspective of time and the perspective of content. The perspective of time describes the crisis as a process with three or more main phases. According to theorists, three phases describe a crisis event: pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis. The pre-crisis phase covers the pre-crisis period and preparatory measures, including environmental scanning and problem management, training of spokespeople, crisis team and communication with stakeholders about possible risks. A triggering event and the damage caused characterize the crisis phase or the "acute" phase when the organization acts and communicates to resolve the dangerous situation. Post-crisis is the phase of learning and solving. A major deficiency of process patterns is the difficulty of classifying exactly when a phase begins and when it ends.

According to the content perspective, there are one-dimensional or multidimensional typologies. The oldest and simplest typology distinguishes between intentional man-made crises and natural external causes. Another large-scale typology is based on the previous ones and classified crises as sudden (unexpected, happens overnight) or smoldering (developing). Examples of sudden crises are natural disasters, terrorist attacks, explosions, technological incidents. Crises are usually triggered by driving mistakes, quality issues, denunciations or criticism of consumers and activists. On the one hand, one-dimensional typologies are easy to understand and apply, but they cannot describe the typical complexity of crises. On the other hand, multidimensional typologies are too complex and rarely practicable.

2.2 Stages of crisis communication

During their evolution, crises can be differentiated due to factors such as: the duration of the crisis, the intensity and influence they have on public perception. In this respect, public relations specialists have methods to influence the evolution of crises and how organizations are perceived from the point of view of the public, but for all these methods to have a positive effect, specialists must first understand the dynamics of crisis situations. Resulting in the fact that any crisis situation has a cause, it follows certain patterns, becoming predictable implicitly controllable.

Crisis communication is an emerging area in applied communication studies and involves addressing mediated messages and different types of audiences at times of increased pressure. Ethical questions are important considerations when a crisis arises. In a crisis situation, corporate values that are important in times of normality and stability may not be as critical. For example, the focus on cost economy would no longer be appropriate when urgent action is needed to save lives in a natural disaster. (<https://pagecentertraining.psu.edu/public-relations-ethics/ethics-in-crisis-management/lesson-1-prominent-ethical-issues-in-crisis-situations/crisis-communication/>)

Organizations have ethical responsibilities before, during and after a crisis. At the pre-crisis stage, communication against the crisis revolves around crisis risk monitoring, making decisions on how to manage potential crises and train people who will be involved in the crisis management process. Crisis communication includes the collection and processing of information for crisis team decision-making, as well as the creation and dissemination of crisis messages. The emergency nature of a crisis against the background of great uncertainty aggravates the already difficult decision-making process, with the urgent need of management to make decisions quickly. Post-crisis communication involves assessing the crisis management effort and providing subsequent crisis messages, as appropriate. The organization must release updates on the recovery process, corrective actions and/or investigations of the crisis.

Crisis management is a critical organizational function. Failure may result in serious injury to interested parties, losses to an organization/institution or end its existence. (<https://instituteforpr.org/crisis-management-and-communications/>)

Crisis management is a process designed to prevent or reduce the damage that a crisis can cause to an institution and its stakeholders. As a process, crisis management is not carried out in a single stage. Crisis management can be divided into three phases: before the crisis, crisis-crisis response itself and post-crisis. The pre-crisis phase is concerned with prevention and preparedness. The crisis response phase is the time when management must effectively respond to a

Crisis. The post-crisis phase is looking for ways to better prepare the institution for the next crisis and fulfils the commitments made in the crisis phase, including continuity information.

Pre-crisis phase

Prevention involves seeking to reduce known risks that could lead to a crisis. It is part of an organization's risk management program. The training involves the creation of the crisis management plan, the selection and training of the crisis management team and the conduct of exercises to test the crisis management plan and the crisis management team. Experts argue that organizations are better able to manage crises when they have a crisis management plan that is updated at least annually, have a designated crisis management team, conduct exercises to test plans and teams at least annually, and design crisis messages in advance. Planning and training allow teams of specialists to react more quickly and make more effective decisions.

Initial response

The practitioner's experience and academic research have combined to create a clear set of guidelines on how to respond once a crisis occurs. Initial crisis response guidelines focus on three points: speed, precision and consistency. This imposes a great deal of pressure on crisis managers to get the message ready in a short period of time. Again, we can appreciate the value of pre-preparation and templates. The organization has the story of the key points that management wants to convey to stakeholders about the crisis. When a crisis occurs, people want to know what happened. Crisis communication experts often talk about an information vacuum created by a crisis. The media will lead the task of filling in the information vacuum and will be a key source of initial information about the crisis. If the organization in crisis does not communicate with the media, others will be happy to speak out. These people may have inaccurate information or may try to use the crisis as an opportunity to attack the organization. As a result, crisis managers need to have a rapid response. An early response may not have much "new" information, but the organization positions itself as a source and begins to present its side of the story. A quick response is active and shows that an organization is under control. The Hearit research claims that silence is passive. It allows others to control the story and suggests that the organization should not gain control of the situation. A study has been conducted that has documented how a rapid and early response allows an organization to generate greater credibility than a slow response. Pre-crisis preparation will facilitate the rapid response of crisis managers.

Post-crisis phase

In the post-crisis phase, the organization is responsible for the usual tasks, without being affected by the crisis. The crisis is no longer the focus of leadership attention, but it still requires some care. As mentioned above, the repair of the reputation may be continued or initiated at this stage. First, crisis managers often promise to provide additional information in the crisis phase. Crisis managers must fulfill those information promises or risk losing the confidence of the public who want the information. Secondly, the organization must release updates on the recovery process, corrective actions and/or investigations of the crisis. The amount of communication required depends on the amount of information promised during the crisis and the length of time it takes to complete the recovery process. Emergency managers agree that a crisis should be a learning experience. The crisis management effort needs to be assessed to see what works and what needs to be improved. The same applies to plan verification exercises drawn up from the pre-crisis phase, and it is recommended that each crisis management exercise be carefully dissected as a learning experience. The organization should look for ways to improve prevention, preparation and/or response. As most books on crisis management note, these lessons are then integrated into the pre-crisis and response phases. This is how management learns and improves its crisis management process.

2.3 Techniques for communicating with the media in crisis situations

In the information age, the media is considered one of the most important means of Communication. The effects of the press can manifest themselves in many areas of life: social, cultural, political, economic, but also religious. Due to its accessibility, the media has an important role to play in reshaping public opinions. The media can have a great influence, positive or negative, help to evolve or evolve some customs, traditions, ideas, principles, rules of life in general of civilization and can stimulate or stagnate the intellectual, spiritual and cultural man or even the whole

community" (Sandu, Taseñte, Ciacu, 2013). Crisis, in any form, is an inseparable part of people's lives, and its diversity increases over time. The media plays a special role in providing information and raising people's awareness of the situation during a crisis. The media can calm the population and encourage them to take positive action and, conversely, terrorize the population and create chaos.

The media and its tools play an important role in influencing the way we think, how it affects our emotions. In people's eyes, regardless of their level of education, the perception

that the media has an unimaginable power is widespread. Most people believe that the media can change philosophical and political views, give thoughts a new form, and guide all our actions. They show the undeniable role of the media in human societies, especially in crisis situations where they can help victims or, instead, increase problems and suffering.

With the growing presence of the media in society, management power and its role in various social situations, such as disasters, are becoming more important. The press must avoid spreading false reports and manage public opinions by producing accurate, varied and novel news. Increased information and awareness of a particular topic such as a crisis and the presentation of crisis patterns are among the preferred techniques in the media. Displaying the real needs of disaster victims, helping officials in collecting and organising humanitarian aid, and assisting law enforcement to stop looting in disaster zones are among the actions that must be the priority of the media during any disasters or crises.

Due to the media's ability to gather a large audience and its role in shaping public opinion, it plays an important role in all social, political, economic and natural catastrophes and disturbances. Working in the media in a time of crisis requires a general analysis of the factors affecting the situation, the groups concerned and the actions of other groups in relation to the crisis.

New technologies and inventions have changed the media audience, increasingly orienting it towards the online environment and selective consumption of content. As a side effect of this communication "revolution", the traditional concept of media began to lose its consistency. Experts argue that traditional media, the written media, tends to lose the meaning we know. Traditional media is quickly replaced by the online press, as follows: "the media will only change the way information is transmitted to the audience, but the essence of the message will be the same". (Taseñte, Ciacu, 2011)

Communication of public administration with the media can be achieved through the following means: direct (verbal), central/local radio or television broadcasts, interviews, conferences and press releases, local newspapers, official newsletters, the Internet.

Press release

This is an important form of communication, which aims to transmit information to a specialised audience, media editors or reporters, and this is the main means of communication of a public authority with the media. In the design of a press release, it is necessary first of all to ensure the transmission of all the information desired by the organization or public authority, and with all the information collected journalists must create a material of interest. The main requirement of the press release is that it should be clear and unambiguous. The way in which the event is presented is influenced by the author of the press release, it can direct the opinion of the media and therefore that of public opinion.

Press conferences

Press conferences have become a common method that has also proven to be extremely effective in transmitting information to the press. They are convenient when it is necessary for the spokesperson to inform the public about unprecedented events or when an important or controversial issue arises, which may generate questions from journalists. Before the press conference, in special cases on sensitive topics, it is recommended to organize a briefing setting out what to tell journalists and how to answer questions that may arise from them. The introductory speech should be short, especially if many questions are expected to be asked. Journalists present at press conferences have expectations about news from the organization's work, honest, prompt, clear, concise, direct information and an appropriate form of written messages.

Telephone discussions and requests for information

Another beneficial practice in the communication of public administration with the media is identified by the request for public information. Such discussions take place in situations where journalists wish to obtain information, in addition to those provided during press conferences.

Participation in radio and television broadcasts

Participation in radio and television broadcasts may take the form of a dialogue between the representative of the public authority and the citizens (if the situation permits) or an interview conducted by the a journalist or moderator of the show. This is another good practice that can be reported in the communication of the activities of public authorities.

Spokesperson

The position of the spokesperson can be established at organizational level and the press and the public expect formal and credible information from the spokesperson. The spokesperson is requested in certain situations, such as lack of time for the head of the institution, his absence from the country, aversion or fear of press or communication in general. The spokesperson has many tasks, being the person directly responsible for everything that involves the image of the institution: public appearances, interviews, conferences, meetings with the press, official meetings, etc. The spokesperson shall also be responsible for statements on the institution's positions in emergency situations and for announcing the various events during public meetings. There is a tendency to promote in the positions of spokesperson of people coming from the media, which gives an advantage to the institution and is likely to ensure a good relationship with the representatives of the media.

3. Methodology

3.1. Objectives

- O1: Analysis of all media and social media appearances of the Romanian Ministry of Transport and identification of potential crisis situations;
- O2: Analysis of the articles that can generate crisis situations within the Romanian Ministry of Transport and the way in which the ministry managed to manage or not the crises;
- O3: Analysis of reactions and feelings generated by the online audience.

3.2. Working methods

In order to achieve the objectives of the research, we have analyzed a number of media appearances that have been the main topic of the Ministry of Transport, which can be considered

to generate possible crisis situations or the actual presentation of existing crises. The monitoring period was for a period of one month, i.e. between 10 September and 10 October 2019, and the tool used for data centralization and analysis is Zelist Monitor, a platform for monitoring and analysis of media and social media.

The performance indicators analyzed in our study were: (1) the number of media appearances in which the Ministry of Transport is mentioned; (2) the selection of articles which may give rise to an image crisis of the Ministry of Transport; (3) the typology of the media information channels where the information transmitted has been taken over; (4) the geographical regions of Romania where the information was disseminated and the percentage by region; (5) the biological gender and age criteria of the public viewing information from the media about the Ministry of Transport, (6) the communication channels that generated the largest number of readers.

3.3. Centralization and analysis of data

3.3.1. Press appearances of the Ministry of Transport that can generate image crises

Date	Source	Link	Content	Viewership
11/09/2019	MediaFax	https://www.mediafax.ro/economic/ministerul-transporturilor-va-face-plangeri-penale-impotriva-celor-vinovati-de-starea-lotului-3-de-la-autostrada-lugoj-deva-18394682	The Ministry of Transport will file criminal complaints against those guilty of the condition of Lot 3 on the Lugoj - Deva Highway	7500
12/09/2019	Adevarul	https://adevarul.ro/economie/stiri-economice/autostrada-lugoj-deva-api-acuza-transporturile-manipulari-grosolane-circ-mediatic-prezinta-fisuranu-circula-2024-1_5d7a34a0892c0bb0c6879624/index.html	Lugoj-Deva highway. API accuses Transports of "gross manipulations" and "media circus": It has a crack where it will not circulate until 2024	8055
15/09/2019	cugetliber.ro	https://www.cugetliber.ro/stiri-economie-comunitatea-maritima-avertizeaza-romania-navala-risca-sa-inceteze-sa-mai-existe-si-8221-384097	The maritime community warns: "Naval Romania risks ceasing to exist!"	5070
16/09/2019	Antena3	https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/social/angajatii-cfr-protest-la-ministerul-transporturilor-ce-vor-sindicalistii-537724.html	CFR employees, protest at the Ministry of Transport. What the unionists want	4620
29/09/2019	RomaniaTV	https://www.romaniatv.net/petru-movila-initiatorul-legii-autostrazii-unirii-cere-audierea-ministrului-razvan-cuc-in-parlamente-492160.html	Petru Movila, the initiator of the Union Highway law, demands the hearing of Minister Razvan Cuc in the Parliament	6000
02/10/2019	Ziarul Financiar	https://www.zf.ro/autostrazi/sorin-scarlat-directorul-cnair-pana-in-prezent-sunt-finalizati-21-de-kilometri-de-autostrada-din-cei-100-de-kilometri-promisi-de-ministrul-transporturilor-18428603	Sorin Scarlat, CNAIR director: So far, 21 kilometers of highway have been completed out of the 100 kilometers promised by the Minister of Transport	7500

08/10/2019	Stiri TVR	http://stiri.tvr.ro/se-scumpeste-calatoria-cu-trenul-cfr-creste-tarifele-pentru-rezervari_851223.html#view	Traveling by train becomes more expensive. CFR increases booking fees	5070
10/10/2019	Click	https://www.click.ro/news/bucuresti/un-om-fost-prins-intre-usi-si-tarat-de-metrou-ce-conditii-se-circula-subteran	A man was caught between the doors and dragged by the subway. Under what conditions does it circulate underground	3000

In the article posted by MediaFax on 11 September, the decision of Minister Razvan Cuc to make criminal complaints against those who, in his opinion, are guilty of the status of lot 3 of the Lugoj-Deva motorway is presented. This decision was preceded by the termination of the contract with the Spanish motorway manufacturer following the identification of 60 non-conformities such as earthworks or longitudinal and transverse cracks.

Article entitled "Lugoj-Deva Highway. API accuses Transports of "gross manipulations" and "media circus": Presents a crack where it will not run until 2024" can represent a possible crisis situation for the Ministry of Transport, because the Pro Infrastructure Association claims that the technical problems could be solved by the builder, which is impossible following the termination of the contract with the manufacturer by the Ministry of Transport. Also in this article, the API stated that this decision of the Ministry of Transport will affect the circulation by 2024.

An article on 15 September 2019, published in the online newspaper cugetliber.ro, shows the alarm signal fired by significant organizations in the field of shipping. Dissatisfied with the current situation, three maritime organizations - the Naval League Romanian, the Employers' Organization "Constanța Port Business Association" and the Free Union of Navigators - addressed to the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, the Prime Minister at the time, Viorica Dăncilă and the Minister of Transport, Răzvan Cuc, a letter calling as a matter of urgency "rescue of the naval sector". In the letter they state that: "Without a coherent, realistic and agreed strategy by all parties involved in the shipping industry, naval Romania risks ceasing to exist". They draw attention to several worrying aspects such as: lack of political interest in this area, disappearance of the Romanian flag, continuity and quality of the marine education system, and impossibility of providing students with a minimum of 12 months of practice on board ships before the patent examination. The main suggestion is the creation by the state institutions of a national naval vision of Romania whose main objective is to transform our country into a regional leader of naval transport (sea and river) in the Black Sea area. However, after a period of 2 months following the submission of the letter, none of the recipients replied. This can cause an image crisis at the level of the Ministry of Transport, because both the signatories and the general public can feel incredulous and ignored: "But their silence says it all. From this attitude it must be understood that the naval problem simply does not interest them".

The following day, 16 September 2019, another article was published by the online press in which the protest of CFR employees is mentioned, unhappy with the situation of the CFR passenger fleet and its repairs considered of poor quality. This protest was organized to raise the alarm regarding the current state of the Romanian rail system, which has not benefited from investment for a very long time.

Another crisis-generating article was posted on romaniatv.net on 29 September 2019, in which it is stated that Petru Movilă requested a hearing of Minister Razvan Cuc in the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure of the Chamber of Deputies, accusing the latter of "mismanagement" of the implementation of the investment of the Iasi - Tg. Mureș Highway,

also called the Union Highway. Petru Movila also claimed that the Ministry of Transport was irresponsible and did not get involved in this investment.

On 2 October 2019, another online article posted by the Ziarul Financiar can be considered a possible creator of the image crisis of the ministry. In this article, the director of the National Road Infrastructure Management Company (CNAIR) presented the number of completed motorway Kilometres, namely 21 Kilometres of motorway out of 100 Kilometres of motorway promised by the end of 2019 by the Ministry of Transport. After this statement by the director of CNAIR, in response, the minister said that this number of Kilometres is only a target but there was no reason that could lead to the postponement of the promised number of Kilometres of motorway, but if this number of Kilometres could not be achieved in time, the reasons would be meteorological.

On October 8, 2019, TVR News published an article announcing price increases for reserved seats in compartments, as well as the cancellation of discounts for online ticket purchases. This article had a viewership rate with a value of 5070 views, which means that the public was interested in the new changes to the CFR.

An article that can cause an image crisis of the Ministry of Transport was published on October 10, 2019 by www.click.ro. This article presented the case of a Bucharest resident who suffered a cranial trauma and a broken leg following an accident that took place in a metro station due to congestion. Such unforeseen situations occur due to the delay of trains in the stations, which determines the large number of passengers waiting in the stations. They can be avoided with the help of new measures adopted by the management of Metrorex, such as: investments to streamline pedestrian traffic, comply with train operating schedules at stations, accelerate the expansion of the network and easily request and use annual funding from Ministry of Transport.

3.3.2. Demographic and geographical data of the target audience

In this chapter we analyzed the demographic and geographical data of the issuers, namely persons or publications that during September 10-October 10, 2019 published various types of social media content (articles / posts / tweets, etc.) in which reference was made to monitored expression. There are two categories of broadcasters: broadcasters - individuals (owners of blogs, Twitter accounts) and broadcasters - publications (online press, groups and public Facebook pages and forums). Demographic data (gender and age) and geographical data are provided for personal broadcasters and only geographical data are provided for broadcaster publications (except for forums).

Demographics

For the presentation of demographic data we used the variables: gender and age. Thus, the number of male issuers is 92.6%, considerably higher than the number of female issuers, with a rate of 7.4%.

For the Age variable, we can see that the most interested in this topic was the group aged 35-39 years, with an index of 44.0%. Followed by the 19-24 age group with an index of 30.0%. With an index of only 8.0% we find 2 groups: aged 45-49 years and 50-54 years. With an index of 4.0% are groups aged between 40-44 years and 30-34 years. In last place is the group aged 55-59 years with an index of 2.0%.

Geographical data

The most issuers reside in Bucharest (29.5%), followed by Moldovan issuers (18.6%) Transylvania (14.6%). The lowest representative numbers for issuers come from Banat (3.6%), Maramureş (1.9%) and Crisana (1.4%).

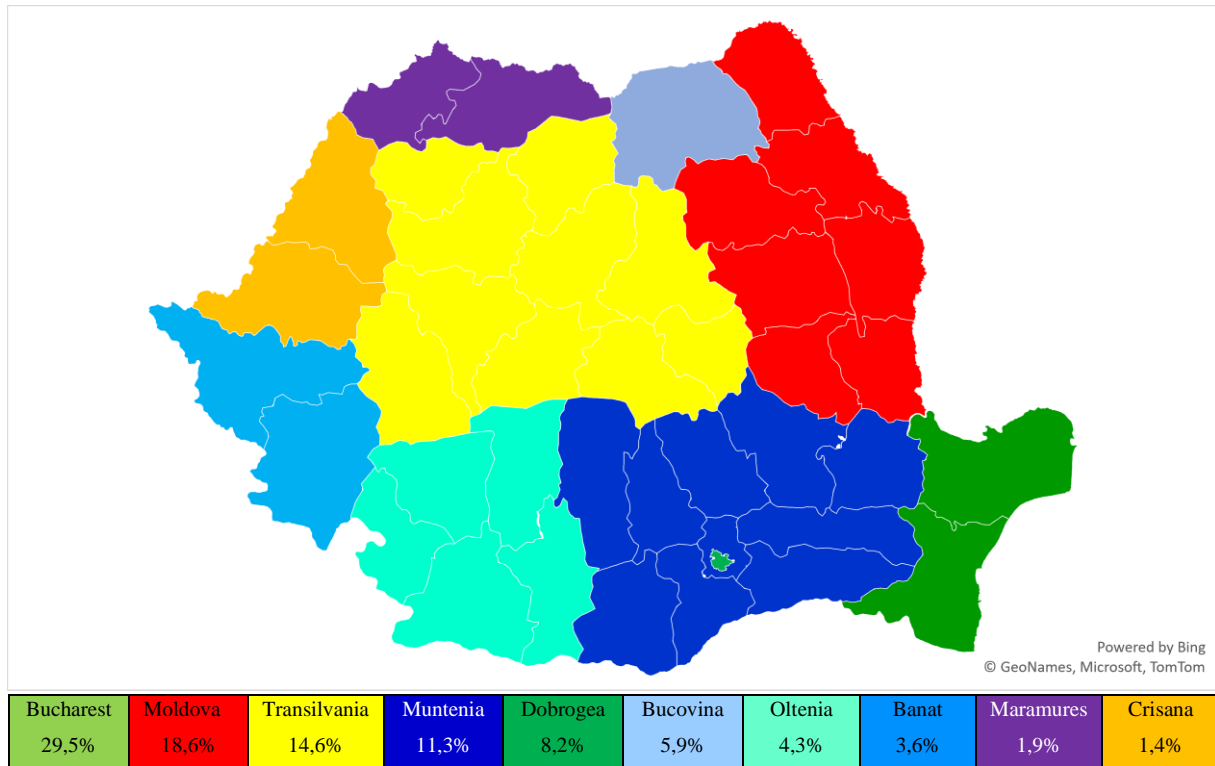


Figure 1 – Geographical data

The evolution of viewership in the media

During the monitored period, September 10 - October 10, 2019, the appearances in the online press had the greatest impact on the target audience. From the chart below we can understand that the main source of information to the public about the monitored phrase "Ministry of Transport" is the online press, followed by social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

Following the viewership of the online press, the highest progress of the index was recorded between September 20-22, 2019 (approximately 300k viewers) and between October 4-6, 2019, with the highest viewership rate recorded during monitoring , with a number of 400k viewers.

In order to understand the increase in the value of viewership in such a short time, we analyzed the appearances in the online press. Following a serious accident in 2019 in Romania, in which 10 people died and another 7 were injured in a collision between a minibus (in which there were 17 passengers) and a truck, which entered the opposite direction, the Minister expressed the decision to intensify the controls of the trucks in traffic. Only one press article entitled "Minister of Transport, Răzvan Cuc, announces that retinal scanning devices will be introduced to assess the fatigue of truck drivers", published on October 5, 2019, recorded a rate of 11048 views . The vast majority of articles that focused on the minister's statement had a high viewership rate.

Immediately after the minister's statement, the public's interest increased even more, which is due to the articles that were published, having as subject the answer of a Romanian truck driver for Minister Razvan Cuc regarding the measures announced by the government.

Only the article posted by romaniprinlume.info was viewed by 166103 people and the title was: "The message of a truck driver for Minister Cuc. "You claim but do not offer anything! " Let's make it heard!" Let's make it heard! " The truck driver reminded that the intensification of the controls performed on the shooting drivers is not a sufficient measure for the current situation of the internal traffic and the lack of road infrastructure and rest areas should not be neglected. Such situations can represent crises in the image of a public institution because the public can lose confidence.

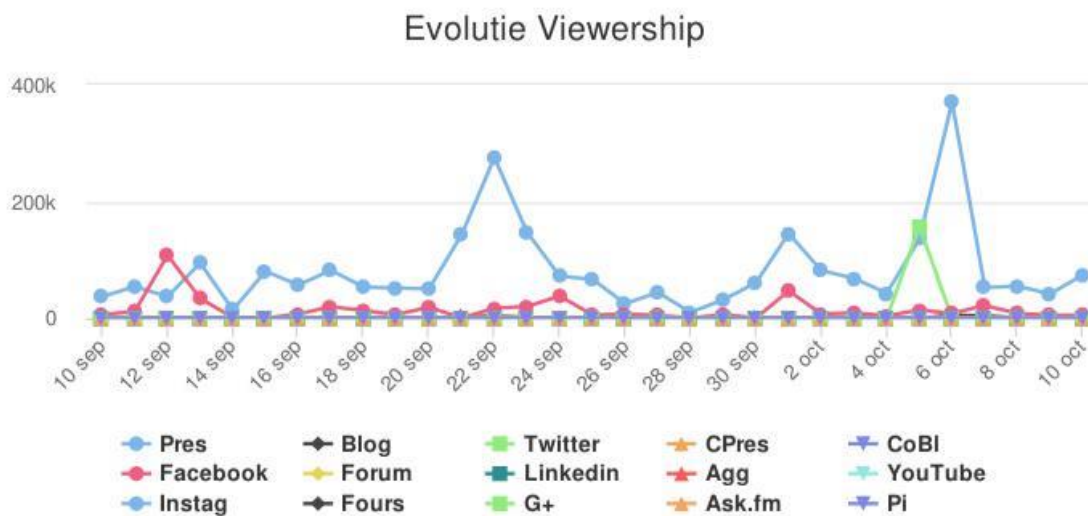


Figure 2 – Viewership evolution

Analysis of sentiment among public opinion

Using the statistical data in Figure 2, we can see that the public who had a reaction in the 10 September - 10 October 2019 response to the monitored expression had a total percentage of 47.6%. Of this percentage, 16.5% represents the audience that had positive reactions and with a higher number, 31.1%, the audience that generated negative reactions. Persons who have chosen not to express any reaction regarding the "Ministry of Transport" are 52.4%. We can say that the "Ministry of Transport" did not arouse interest in the target audience during the monitoring period. The number of people who have had a passive attitude and that of people with negative reactions amounts to a very high percentage compared to the number of people with positive reactions, which determines a negative value of the sentiment index, i.e. -0.31.

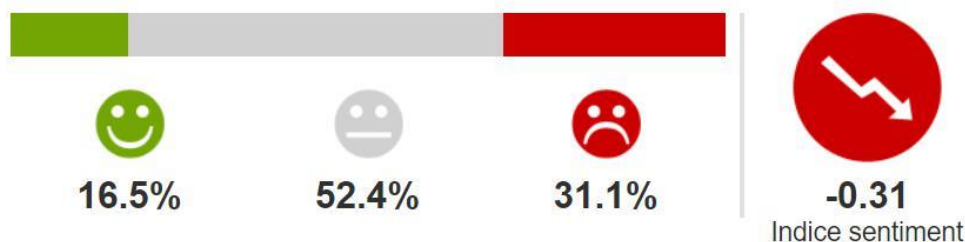


Figure 3 - Analysis of the sentiment index

As can be seen in the positive and negative bar chart in Figure 10, during the 30 days of monitoring, the sentiment index did not have an evolution or involution but rather the index had both negative, positive and neutral values.

As of 10 September, the sentiment index was negative but shortly after, on 14 September it had a positive value for a single day following stagnation, indicating that the public did not record reactions to the posts with the phrase "Ministry of Transport". The following period, 16-21 September was marked by negative reactions following a sudden increase in the sentiment index to an approximate value of +0.3. But that positive value of the sentiment index lasted only one day, with a setback that led to stagnation, implicitly at neutral values. On the 26th there was a significant drop in the sentiment index, with a rate of -1 but also for a short period of time, as the value rose again to +0.3. The most important increase occurred from 1 October when from a value of -0.5 increased to about +1, representing the highest index value of the period monitored, the public reacted in a positive way to the monitored expression, but immediately followed by the highest negative sentiment index -1, the same value recorded on 26 September. Also, the most important aspect that should not be neglected is the fact that the periods when the sentiment index was negative have a higher number of days compared to the number of days when the felt index was positive. Last but not least, the impotence to mention is also the fact that the highest degree of the negative index reached a value of 1-, while the highest value for the positive index has hardly managed to reach +0.5.

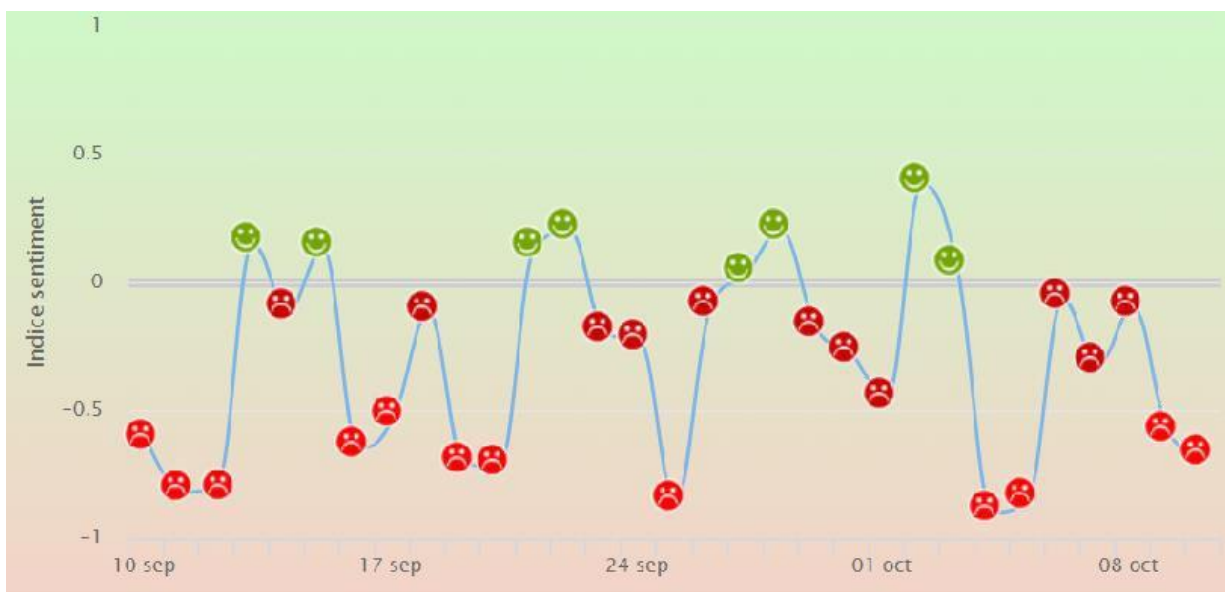


Figure 4 - Positive and negative bar chart of the sentiment index

Conclusions

In general, communication in the public sector is intended to attract sympathy from the public in order to achieve political goals. But it must be remembered that there is a major difference between politics and public administration. As far as public administration is concerned, communication is intended to inform citizens, but at the same time, on the basis of communication, the image of a public institution can be built or damaged, especially in situations such as crises. It is necessary to give more importance to crisis situations in public administration, as they require a specific communication process.

In this paper, for a good understanding of "crisis communication in public administration", we have established what a crisis is and its typologies, we have identified the

steps that a public institution must go through in the crisis communication process and the best methods of communication with the media. Thus we were able to carry out an analysis on the media appearances of the subject of research, "Ministry of Transport".

Comparing the theoretical notions with the communication of the representatives of the public institution, from 10 September to 10 October 2019, it appears that the Ministry of Transport did not have a well-established communication plan, facing in a way that is not contrary to crisis situations and implicitly with the image crisis. This statement is supported, first of all, by the feedback of the articles that appeared during the monitoring period, the sentiment index of the target audience, namely, citizens, recording a negative value of -0.31. In order to highlight the mistakes made in the way the institution communicates in times of crisis, I will recall some situations that have negatively influenced the image of the Ministry of Transport. A good example is the letter from important maritime organizations, addressed to the President, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport, which recalled the worrying situation of Romanian shipping and calling urgently for measures that would be helpful in this regard, however none of the recipients responded, especially the representative of the ministry whose competence depends on the shipping sector. Another relevant example in the research is the statements of the Minister of Transport following a serious road accident caused by an international freight truck announcing new control measures for drivers. This statement has produced reactions from the drivers directly targeted, recalling that the decisions taken by the minister are inadequate and that they do not address the real problem, the lack of infrastructure. It is only from these two examples that it is apparent that, without a well-developed crisis communication strategy, the image of an institution is even more fragile, and can be jeopardised by both a few inappropriate words and their absence.

In conclusion, communication conveys and highlights the mission of a public institution, which is the main goal in its relationship with citizens. These aspects transmitted through communication channels complement his identity, i.e. the public image. The communication strategy for crisis situations and relations with the press can influence the perception and credibility of citizens on the public institution.

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