GAINING PUBLICITY FOR A SCIENTIFIC PROJECT: IMPORTANCE AND PUBLIC RECOGNITION

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Abstract: The paper presents an approach for gaining publicity for a scientific project and public recognition of the achieved results. **The object** of the paper is a research project, namely "Conceptual Model for Introducing Innovation and Increasing the Competitiveness of Industrial Enterprises", financed by the Bulgarian National Science Fund (BNSF) under a competition for financial support for projects of junior researchers and postdocs. The project team consists of researchers from three scientific fields - 3.8. Economics, 3.3. Political Sciences, and 4.6. Informatics and Computer Science. Thus, the research team is designed to cover the different aspects of the examined scientific problem: on one hand, the socio-political environment in which the economic subjects operate and, accordingly, the opportunities they provide; on the other hand, the SMEs themselves and their innovation activity, and thirdly the possibility of applying ICT to innovation activity. The universality under consideration allows for the combination of scientific expertise and the achievement of high results both in the field of scientific knowledge and in the practice. **The focus** of this research is the utilization of the principles and instruments with a view to establish the scientific results and the opportunities to find better public recognition. **The aim** of the authors is to present good practices and efforts for marketing communication (especially PR) activities and thus increase the motivation of young people and researchers to elaborate projects, participate in teamwork and public recognition of their actions. This corresponds to the strategies elaborated on National and European level to strengthen the relation of the so called "triangle of knowledge" - science-business-education. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary of the current project team is a precondition for more opportunities for public relations that is in accordance with the main purposes laid in the Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialization of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020 (ISIS). The paper introduces the importance of the current scientific project and compliance with the European, national and regional research priorities. The results gathered by the statements of connected parties (i.e. professors, students, young researchers, representatives of the National science fund of Bulgaria, etc.) indicate that the teamwork and efforts are highly appreciated. Thus, the paper presents the modern methods for validation of scientific achievements, recognition by stakeholders, and high assessment of teamwork, which is a prerequisite for developing a model for public recognition of scientific projects.
Keywords: public relations, scientific project, digital marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many researchers, including some of the most popular as Grunig and Hunt (1984, p.6), regard PR as a communication management, but there are a number of differences between communication management and public relations, summarized by Stoychev and Stanev (2017). In the environment of harsh business competition, the organizations should comprehend and use with synergy advertising, public relations (PR), direct marketing, personal sales, stimulating sales (sales promotion), internet marketing and social media marketing to realize a successful communication campaign as the frame of a pre-planned communication strategy. Stoychev, Dimitrova & Desev (2019) for instance state that the goal of it all is presenting a stable and convincing image before stakeholders (all interested parties) and target markets. Furthermore, they pay attention on the fact that the managerial accents in this effort should be planning and communication (in particular developing a communication strategy) as well as evaluation of marketing communication effectiveness. This would play a control and corrective role and it should be necessary re-evaluating communication objectives (Stoychev et al, 2019).

The object of the paper is a research project, namely "Conceptual Model for Introducing Innovation and Increasing the Competitiveness of Industrial Enterprises", financed by the Bulgarian National Science Fund (BNSF) under a competition for financial support for projects of junior researchers and postdocs.

The focus of this research is the utilization of the principles and instruments with a view to establish the scientific results and the opportunities to find better public recognition.

The aim of the authors is to present good practices in gaining publicity and thus to increase the motivation of young people and researchers to elaborate projects, participate in teamwork and public recognition of their actions.

By publicity we mean the attempts for a two-way dissemination of information through different communication channels in general, not only via mass media, but also special events, direct communication, etc. The paper presents

the communication management of the team creating a scientific web site, the impact of social media activities using digital marketing campaigns, and organization of events such as a scientific forum. It includes modern methods for validation of scientific achievements, recognition by related parties, and high assessment of teamwork, which is a prerequisite for developing a model for public recognition of scientific projects.

2. PRINCIPLES AND PRECONDITIONS FOR A SUCCESFUL PROJECT PR

Lately, the *science communication* or *communicating science* is a topic, which draws the attention of scholars and institutions, which are involved in supporting scientific research (European Commission, 2014). However, the idea that science should be communicated with the public can be traced back to early years. Anne Roe very often is referred to with her statement that "nothing in science has any value to society if it is not communicated, and scientists are beginning to learn their social obligations" (Roe, 1953, p.17). Nowadays there are a numerous studies (Treise and Wigold, 2002; Burns, O'Conner & Stocklmayer, 2003; Jucan and Jucan, 2014; Little, 2019) and guides (Bowater & Yeoman, 2012; Jensen, 2016; Cormick, 2019), which address this issue and discuss the opportunities for enhancement of the science communication.

However, generally speaking, communication managers work on two levels - strategic and tactical. One deals with the organization's trends, policies, potential threats and opportunities, while others are responsible for making specific decisions in line with the strategic plan: for example, selecting the appropriate media and content for a message, organizing a special event or distributing a promotional message (Stoychev & Stanev, 2017, p.75). According the research of Stoychev et al (2019), creating a communication strategy goes through the following stages:

1. *Analysis of the micro- and macro-environment and choice of target market* - the concrete market opportunity or problem is the scientific project and the communication policy taking up the differentiation and positioning of the project results, by comparing to the competition. The elaboration of a scientific web site is not a regular practice in Bulgaria, but the efforts of BNSF staff are related to more public recognition and dissemination of the results.
2. *Placing communication objectives* - the correct formulation and observing project team objectives guarantees that the communication policy is not discerning but is synchronized with the development of the project itself. Moreover, the current team relies basically on the specific implementation of the research results and the harmonization with the necessities of the business environment especially for the wine industry.
3. *Developing key messages depending on the target groups or stakeholders* - the message has to be accessible, clear and concrete but with a different emphasis in relation to the different groups. Target groups of people that can gather a positive result from the messages are students, young researchers, postdocs, academic staff, business consultants, etc. All of them can reach the publications related to the project free of charge using different opportunities like the web site of the project, the Research Gate web site, social media channels, etc. Furthermore, the project team uses direct marketing by sending regular e-mails to stakeholders, i.e. invitations for the scientific forum, an inquiry card according participation in the online survey of the team, information about recent publications, etc.
4. *Planning and applying communication activities and tools depending on the goals, messages and target groups*. This stage is fully in connection with the official page of the project in a social media like Facebook. This is an appropriate channel to reach young people, i.e. students and young researchers that spend a lot of time using this network. The number of followers of the project's Facebook page proves the active interest and participation of the connected parties.
5. *Planning time schedules, media planning, budgeting and engaging man resources.* On this stage of the project's communication strategy, the project team manages the activities in accordance with the different scientific fields that they are specialists. The team specialist in political sciences makes the digital marketing and creates messages in the social media. The IT specialist is in charge of the special features and installation of different platforms, for instance the specialized platform for project management and for organization of the scientific forum. The economist is responsible for budgeting and managing the finances received to finance the project activities (Kostova-Pickett,2017).
6. *Measuring results/evaluation of effectiveness* is a complex process at different levels for the different communication instruments with corrective function. The high level attained is the recognition of the researchers involved in the project, as well as the quotation of their publications, that indicates the level of efficiency and dissemination of the results.

The basic aim in elaboration of a project web site is the dissemination of the scientific results and a public profile of the scientists who are involved in the project. It is structured in seven categories incl. Beginning, About us, Portfolio, Results, Calendar, Gallery, and Contacts. It has its own logo, slogan and corporate vision of the project that is unified and used in all publications. This uniqueness supports better public recognition and evaluation of the teamwork.

The social media, used by the team is Facebook. They make massive marketing campaigns that are focused on dissemination of the research results, participation in scientific conferences, etc. Using the opportunities of digital marketing, the project team gathers more and more followers. All publications are branded with the project logo and specific vision, incl. colors, style, etc.

The implementation of the project supports the view of the National Research Development Strategy 2020 that "education, research, technological development and innovation are the basis for achieving dynamic and sustainable economic growth". Based on this, the project team organizes an event, namely a scientific forum that includes a round table and a conference. The interdisciplinary of the research team gives an opportunity the IT specialist to elaborate a web site of the event that presents in a high manner the purpose and more information for the audience. The round table aims at discussing the possibilities of optimizing the wine sector through innovation. In this event are invited business representatives, academic staff, researchers and young scientists. On the next day will be held the First National Scientific Conference for Students, PhD Students and Young Scientists "Innovation and Competitiveness". The conference is focused specifically on young people in science and their interpretations of current social, economic and political problems. It includes five thematic fields, namely 1) Digital transformation of management; 2) Innovation and economic development; 3) Political environment and innovation; 4) Innovation management of national security and cyber security; and 5) Competitiveness. The event is being promoted through a website and a Facebook campaign.

The active participation of the project team in International conferences provides good opportunities for gaining publicity. The presentations and researches in accordance with the project aims are discussed with scientists from different parts of the world. The overall conclusion is that the motivation, creativity and hard work of the research team are highly evaluated by the scientific community.

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE SCIENTIFIC PROJECT

The current EU and Bulgarian strategies, in particular, are related to the coherence of research in line with European, national and regional priorities related to socioeconomic development. In this sense, on 7 June 2017, the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted the updated National Strategy for the Development of Scientific Research (NSDSR) in Bulgaria 2017-2030. The current research project is in line with the priorities set out in the European and national research development strategy and its realization contributes to the achievement of the objectives set out in the above mentioned strategic documents as the arguments for this are contained in subsections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.

3.1. Compliance with the national research priorities according to the updated National Strategy for the Development of Research in Bulgaria 2017-2030

The business-science link

Among the main weaknesses of research in Bulgaria, the strategy identifies "weak links between the research organizations and the business", but this is also seen as an opportunity to "strengthen the role of the triangle knowledge - education, research and innovation" and "science-business links strengthening and stimulating innovation on the basis of scientific results" (NSDSR, p.22).

In this context, the strategy also notes the importance of those fundamental research that can contribute to the development of "both applied research and pure fundamental research". According to the definition, they are "inspired by the clear expectation of benefit and possible long-term applications". One of the objectives of this type of research is "to enhance the competitiveness and productivity of the economy in line with the ISIS (NSDSR, p.27) thematic areas".

The results of the implementation of this project for fundamental research is the enhancement of the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the wine sector. The identification of the challenges for SMEs in the research sector and the research expertise of the team members makes it possible to offer solutions to the identified problems. A research of Angelova, Georgiev, Dimitrova, & Pastarmadzhieva (2019a) states that optimization of the collaboration "business-science-education" is a prerequisite for the increase of the competitiveness of the enterprises. In the paper they introduce a scientific solution of a practical problem through the creation of a model for informal education of specialists in the wine industry. The suggested model for informal education represents a specific innovation, which implements the known "good practices" in the strategy "Lifelong Learning".

Integrating Innovation to Improve Business Competitiveness

The National Research Development Strategy for 2020 states that "the government is aware of the need for a long-term and coherent policy in the field of research and innovation to overcome the significant lagging behind the developed European countries". Low innovation activity of SMEs has been identified, with only 0.04% of them participating in the competitions of the National Innovation Fund (NSDSR, p.9). The low innovation activity is also

pointed out as a weakness in the updated National Strategy for the Development of Research in Bulgaria 2017-2030. It shows that Bulgaria is last regarding the "index of innovation among the Member States and candidates for EU membership (also after Serbia and Turkey)" (NSDSR, p.20).

The presented project focuses on SMEs in the wine production and, on the one hand, aims to establish the extent to which innovations in this sector are applied, but on the other, to offer opportunities for increasing the innovation activity of the enterprises from the researched sector. A research of Dimitrova, Angelova & Pastarmadzhieva (2019) states that one of the directions that can contribute to increasing the competitiveness of an enterprise is increasing the innovation activity of the wine producers. In this sense, they conceptualize the role of innovation activity as an element of competitiveness, and in particular its role in improving the competitiveness of the wine industry. Furthermore, the paper of Angelova, Pastarmadzhieva, Dimitrova, & Georgiev (2019c) presents innovative practices in wine industry and the opportunities that they provide for competitiveness enhancement in Bulgaria.

ICT capabilities

Among the priorities of the Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialization (ISIS) of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020 are information and communication technologies (ICT). The implementation of the current research project will also contribute to the enriching of scientific knowledge in the field of ICTs, while at the same time aims at identifying how they could be used to innovate and increase the innovation activity of SMEs in the field of wine production. The ICT capabilities are enriched with the proposed model for informal learning of specialized employee from wine industry, elaborated by Angelova, Georgiev, Pastarmadzhieva & Dimitrova (2019b). In essence, the model represents innovation, according the lack of a specialized educational and training model. Increasing the human resource quality through using and applying appropriate methods and techniques (Life-Long Learning, etc.) contributes to the organization stability.

Interdisciplinary

The NSDR in Bulgaria 2017-2030 considers interdisciplinary as a "prerequisite for the development of all the major scientific areas in which Bulgaria can build the necessary scientific capacity" (NSDR, p.27).

The project team consists of researchers from three scientific fields - 3.8. Economics, 3.3. Political sciences, and 4.6. Informatics and Computer Science. The research team is thus designed to cover the different aspects of the researched scientific problem: on the one hand, the sociopolitical environment in which the economic subjects operate and, accordingly, the opportunities they provide; on the other hand, the SMEs themselves and their innovation activity, and thirdly the possibility of applying ICT to innovation activity. The universality under consideration allows for the combination of scientific expertise and the achievement of high results both in the field of scientific knowledge and those that could be the basis for concrete practical actions.

Supporting research conducted by PhD students

One of the specific activities to be implemented under the strategy is "substantial expansion of PhD as a first step in the scientific career". As a measure, it refers to "supporting research carried out by PhD students and the dissemination of scientific results" (NSDR, p.43). This project includes a PhD student, as the subject of the project fully corresponds to the subject of the dissertation, namely: "Competitiveness of micro and small enterprises from the Wine Industry in Plovdiv region". The work on the project already contributed both to supporting the research of the PhD student on the dissertation topic and to popularizing the scientific results and their appraisal in the subject of the research.

Publication in Impact Factor/Rank Journals

The publication in a journal with an impact factor/rank also corresponds to the National Strategy for Research Development in Bulgaria 2017-2030, which takes into account the need to increase the publications in authoritative international journals with an impact factor/rank and to increase the visibility of the published results and publications in internationally referenced scientific journals (NSDR, p.51). The team efforts are focused in high quality researches that are published in world data sources with scientific information. In this sense, connected to the realization and dissemination of the scientific contributions, the scientific publications that result from the completing of the project are published in Scopus and journals with impact factor. All of them are available online and a positive estimation for their quality is the high rate of citation from scientists abroad.

Promoting the research interest of pupils and students

In order to strengthen science's links with education and the need to raise the interest of young people in science, the updated NSDR in Bulgaria 2017-2030 encourages the "promotion of science and research by young scientists to pupils and students" (NSDR, p.58). This corresponds to the actions of the young scientists from the present project, namely the inclusion in the team of a student (subject Business management at the University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski). The active participation of the student corresponds with gathering knowledge in accordance with scientific papers (Dimitrov & Angelova, 2020) and increasing “soft skills” level based upon participation in presentations, events management, etc.

*Regional balanc*e

The NSDR in Bulgaria 2017-2030 states that "the regional balance of science will contribute to a balance in the development of the regions in accordance with the national interests of the country and with the vision of the EU" (NSDR, p.27). The current research project is in line with the ISIS of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020, which outlines the regional priorities of Bulgaria in the sphere of research. This compliance is addressed in detail in subsection 3.2.

3.2. Compliance with regional priorities in the field of scientific research

A key document defining the regional priorities in the field of research in Bulgaria is ISIS. According to it, in Plovdiv the capacity for intelligent specialization of the field is concentrated in the thematic area "Informatics and ICT" and "Industry for healthy life and bio technologies". It is stated that "the sector of the food industry is determinant for the development of the region" (ISIS, p.36).

According to the strategy, ICT Cluster Plovdiv is among the well-established ICT clusters in Bulgaria. Its scope of activity is "to encourage, support and develop the cooperation between all companies, educational institutions and state institutions in the field of ICT, to create favorable conditions for their development, to enhanced their competitiveness at national and international level" (ISIS, p.69). The stated potential of the ICT Cluster Plovdiv is used in the realization of the objectives of this project. As for the food industry, part of which is the wine production, it is no surprise that in 2012 exactly Plovdiv was chosen for the place of discussion on this topic. During this period, meetings with focus groups were held jointly with World Bank experts and topics related to the "human factor were discussed (the lack of a workforce tailored to the needs of the economy), as well as the links between science and business, the challenges facing the sectors of the economy". (ISIS, p.128). This project addresses the problems of one of the food industry segments, namely wine production.

3.3. Compliance with European priorities in the field of scientific research

This project is fully in line with the European priorities, in particular Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the EU Framework Program for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020.

According to the Europe 2020 strategy, "sustainable growth" means "creating a sustainable and competitive resource-efficient economy where Europe's leadership contributes to the process of developing new processes and technologies, incorporating Eco-technologies and speeding up the deployment of smart grids, using ICT, turns into account the networks at EU level and strengthens the competitive advantages of our business activities, especially in the production and within our SMEs, as well as, by supporting users to value resource efficiency. " (Europe 2020, p.17).

The results of the current scientific research project lead to the optimization of SMEs' activities in the sphere of wine production, focusing on innovation in these enterprises and in particular through the use of ICT. Optimizing the activity of the researched SMEs would contribute to a more sustainable and competitive economy.

Europe 2020, like the national strategy, emphasizes the need for science and business cooperation to "maintain a strong industrial and knowledge base and enable the EU to lead global sustainable development.". This cooperation is also a priority of the EU Framework Program for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, where one of the priorities is "Science with and for society". (Horizon 2020, p.17). Among the key priorities of the work program for 2016/2017 are SMEs and, in particular, their innovation activity (Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2016-2017, p. 7).

On the basis of the above mentioned, it can be concluded that the proposed project "Conceptual Model for Introducing Innovation and Increasing the Competitiveness of Industrial Enterprises" corresponds to the regional, national and European research priorities set out in the strategy papers.

4. CONCLUSION

Gaining publicity for a scientific project corresponds to the strategies elaborated on National and European level to strengthen the relation of the so called “triangle of knowledge” - science-business-education. According the statement that nothing in science has any value to society if it is not communicated, the paper discusses the opportunities for enhancement of the science communication and the idea that science should be communicated with the public. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary of the current project team is a precondition for more opportunities for public relations that is connected with the main purposes laid in the Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialization of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020. The paper introduces the importance of the current scientific project and compliance with the European, national and regional research priorities. The results gathered by the statements of stakeholders (i.e. professors, students, young researchers, representatives by the National science fund of Bulgaria, etc.) indicate that the teamwork and efforts are highly appreciated. This is a “good practice” in the field of science and can be elaborated as a model for dissemination of the results gathered by the researchers.

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Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020)

Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialization of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020 (ISIS)

National Strategy for the Development of Scientific Research in Bulgaria 2017-2030 (NSDSR)

Web site of the scientific project: https://prowis.online/

Web site of the scientific forum: https://conf.prowis.online

Facebook page of the project: https://www.facebook.com/prowis.online/