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**Managerial Strategies in Promoting
the Image of a Public Institution**

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Abstract: The aim of the research is to investigate the attitude of the population towards the Romanian Gendarmerie. To analyze the perception of the public image of the Romanian Gendarmerie, a questionnaire was developed, including various questions on the institution and the image perceived by the population. The answers received revealed that a favorable image and a good reputation mean more support and respect from the population.

Keywords: management; public image; strategy

1. Introduction

The Romanian Gendarmerie is a specialized institution of the state, with military status, which is responsible for defending public order and peace, protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, as well as preventing and discovering crimes and other violations of the law. It cooperates with other components of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as with other public and private organizations and institutions. The Romanian Gendarmerie has a well-defined organizational structure and performs various duties, including ensuring public order, protecting important objectives and personalities, intervention in emergency situations and international missions. Also, the gendarmerie participates in actions to prevent and combat terrorist acts, ensures the protection of the environment and natural resources, and has the role of applying legal sanctions according to the law. The Romanian Gendarmerie operates in the interest of citizens and the state, respecting military principles and acting for law enforcement.

We propose to answer the question *What is the public image of organizations?* and we provide an operational definition of the concept. According to some authors, the notion of image denotes the reflection of reality, regardless of whether a new element appears through the representation or that the representation is invested with meaning in its reception by a subject, capable of assigning it a meaning.

The term public image refers to how the public perceives the organization based on what it does and says about itself. In other words, the image is a public reflection of an organization's reputation, personality, or identity.

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The management of the organization's image is conceived as a function of its management. Through this management, communication dysfunctions between the organization and its external environment are avoided. Among the frequently used forms of communication we should mention: advertisement, publicity and public relations. The former mainly aims at selling products and services, while the latter aim at strengthening the organization's reputation. We can also identify differences in terms of the reflection of the truth. Thus, advertising, and to some extent publicity, positively distorts the message of communication, while public relations, based on honesty, reflects the accuracy of the message (it does not accept a distortion of the reality-message correspondence).

The image of the organization depends on a lot of factors, only a part of which belongs to the organization, its ability to fulfill its mission and adapt to changes. Among the internal factors that contribute to the aggregation of a favorable image, we mention efficient management, organizational ethics, product quality and ethics, personnel policies, good internal and institutional communication. The external factors that influence the image include various aspects of the organizational context: geopolitical, economic, technological, legislative, demographic, cultural factors, etc.

2. Research Method

The purpose of the research was to assess the attitude of the population towards the Romanian Gendarmerie. In order to achieve this objective, we have formulated several hypotheses regarding the perception of the public image of the Romanian Gendarmerie. We have designed a questionnaire that includes various questions about the institution and public image that we shared online. We have collected the responses and then interpreted them.

3. Results

The results of the survey in which the opinions and perceptions of the respondents regarding the Romanian Gendarmerie were assessed are presented as follows:

- 95.9% of the respondents recognize the Gendarmerie as an institution with duties in ensuring public order and safety;
- 82.8% of the respondents state that they know the duties of the Gendarmerie;
- 80.8% of the respondents are satisfied with the activity of the Gendarmerie;
- 93.9% of respondents believe that the presence of gendarmes in public space discourages acts of violence;
- 47.5% of the respondents consider the intervention of the Gendarmerie necessary in a certain situation;
- Only 28.3% of respondents believe that an inappropriate approach of a gendarme crew influences the opinion of the entire institution;
- 65.6% of respondents feel safe or very safe in the public space in Romania;
- 68.7% of the respondents consider that the presence of the Gendarmerie is necessary or very necessary;
- 82.8% of respondents consider the presence of gendarmes at rallies or other street activities very necessary;

- Only 30.3% of the respondents believe that the harsh intervention of the Gendarmerie was necessary in certain protests;
- 57.6% of the respondents believe that the media coverage of force interventions does not influence the population's perception of the Gendarmerie;
- 50.5% of respondents believe that the presence of gendarmes at religious activities is necessary;
- Only 55.6% of the respondents believe that the military uniform and the performance of the people who wear it have a big impact in smoothing out some situations;
- 89.9% of the respondents believe that the settlement of a conflict depends a lot on the communication method of the gendarmerie crew;
- Only 45.5% of respondents believe that the gendarmerie must resort to force in situations of extreme violence;
- Only 1% of the respondents made verbal or written complaints about the inappropriate behavior of a gendarme;
- 71.7% of respondents read news about the activity of the Gendarmerie or events within this institution;
- 18.94.9% of respondents use the Internet.

An analysis of these results shows that there is an increased trust in the institution of the Gendarmerie and the image perceived by the respondents is a positive one.

4. Conclusions

The Romanian Gendarmerie is an elite weapon with historical traditions and vast experience in public order missions and, throughout history, it has been present in important moments of Romanian society and acquired a fair and honest image in the eyes of the community. However, maintaining a favorable image is difficult and can be affected by criticism and denigration from former employees or people using online anonymity.

A favorable image and a good reputation mean more support and respect from the population. It is undeniable that the gendarmes are proud of their belonging to the brand called the Romanian Gendarmerie and contribute, in one form or another, to the growth of the institution's reputation. Paradoxically, few of them, once they no longer have this quality of gendarme, resort to criticism and denigration of the system from which they left, launched predominantly in the online environment that ensures their anonymity. These negative reactions, probably generated by personal frustrations or professional failures of former employees, existed in any organization/institution and will probably continue to exist, but we must be aware that, now, in the age of the Internet, information circulates very quickly and remains posted, potentially producing effects over time against the background of the lack of a strategy to continuously strengthen the image.

In the paper we have conducted the research to evaluate the public's perception of the Romanian Gendarmerie and found that most respondents recognize the institution, are satisfied with its activity and believe that the presence of the gendarmes contributes to deterring acts of violence. The research results suggest that confidence in the Romanian Gendarmerie is generally high, and the image perceived by the public is positive.

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