


PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ACADEMIC PRESTIGE: HOW PR STRATEGIES AFFECT FRENCH UNIVERSITY RANKINGS?

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Abstract: This article explains the pivotal role of Public Relations (PR) in shaping the academic prestige and influencing the rankings of French universities, with a particular focus on Panthéon-Sorbonne University Paris 1. Effective PR strategies are essential for enhancing the visibility and reputation of academic institutions in the competitive landscape of higher education. Through strategic international partnerships, robust research initiatives, a strong media presence, and dynamic engagement with students and faculty, universities can significantly boost their global standing. The article delves into specific PR efforts at Panthéon-Sorbonne, such as the «Sorb’Rising» project and the «Bienvenue en France» program, illustrating how these initiatives contribute to the university’s academic excellence and reputation. By highlighting the successes and methodologies of Panthéon-Sorbonne, this study provides insights into the broader impact of PR on university rankings and offers a framework for other institutions aiming to enhance their academic prestige through strategic communication and public relations.

Key words: public relations, university rankings, academic prestige, PR strategies, research initiatives.

1. Introduction

University rankings have become essential in higher education worldwide (Hägg & Wedding, 2013; Rauhvargers, 2013). Most universities strive to gain top positions in global rankings because rankings provide a benchmark for comparing the quality of education, research output, and overall institutional performance. They help Universities assess their strengths and weaknesses relative to peer institutions, encouraging continuous improvement and adherence to high standards. Plus, Universities participate in rankings and pursue higher ranks to obtain greater visibility, attract higher quality students and faculty, and get more resources from stakeholders (Hazelkorn, 2015; Hazelkorn & Gibson, 2017; Hou & Jacob, 2017). Achieving top university rankings involves excelling in multiple critical factors including academic reputation, research output and impact, faculty-student ratio, internalization, employer reputation, teaching quality, research income, graduation and retention rates, alumni outcomes in ranking bodies like QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education (THE), and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). Public Relations (PR) plays a significant role in influencing university rankings by enhancing an institution’s visibility, reputation, and attractiveness to potential students and faculty.

This study focuses on the importance of PR in shaping

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university image and its role in increasing university rankings and reputations. Specifically, it aims to examine the PR systems of French universities, such as Panthéon-Sorbonne and identify the key factors that contribute to achieving higher positions in QS and other ranking systems. Panthéon-Sorbonne University Paris 1 employs a comprehensive and strategic Public Relations (PR) system designed to enhance its academic reputation and international standing. According to Denis Darpy, one of Presidents of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, «Effective communication of our research outputs and academic excellence through PR has been instrumental in attracting top-tier international faculty and students, thereby boosting our rankings in global university assessments» (Darpy, 2024).

The Public Relations (PR) system at Panthéon-Sorbonne University Paris 1 plays a crucial role in shaping its image, enhancing its reputation, and improving its rankings. This article will analyze the various components and strategies of the PR system, highlighting how they contribute to the university's success.

Panthéon-Sorbonne has a strong focus on internationalization, which is a key part of its PR strategy. The university's international relations department actively manages partnerships with over 287 institutions worldwide. This global network helps in promoting the university's brand and enhancing its reputation on an international scale. As Christine Neau-Leduc, one of Presidents of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, mentioned: «Our international strategy, supported by robust public relations efforts, is key to our success» (Neau-Leduc, 2024).

This article explores also Panthéon-Sorbonne Paris 1 university's PR efforts are also centered around showcasing its research achievements. Projects like «Sorb'Rising» (Research, 2024) are highlighted to demonstrate the university's commitment to interdisciplinary research in social sciences and humanities. In addition, organizing and promoting academic events, workshops, and conferences are key PR strategies. These events provide platforms for showcasing the university's intellectual capabilities and fostering academic exchange.

The PR system at Panthéon-Sorbonne University Paris 1 is a multi-faceted approach that integrates international partnerships, research promotion, media engagement, talent attraction, alumni relations, and event organization. These strategies collectively contribute to the university's prestigious reputation and strong position in global university rankings. This study explains the key factors of Public Relations (PR) at Panthéon-Sorbonne University Paris 1 and examines its role in achieving higher positions in global ranking systems.

2. Theoretical Background

In the context of higher education, PR plays a crucial role in shaping the public image and reputation of universities. Effective PR strategies can enhance a university's visibility, attract prospective students and faculty, and foster relationships with stakeholders such as alumni, donors, and the media. According to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Excellence Theory, successful public relations practices involve two-way symmetrical communication, where feedback from the audience is integrated into the organization's strategic planning. At Panthéon-Sorbonne University Paris 1 this strategy can be used extremely positive and friendly way by communication with students and organization by developing websites, being active in social media and building a strong contact between through social media platforms like zoom and emails. Considering benefits of PR technologies, administrative stuffs and directors of Panteon Sorbonne University employ public relations (PR) strategies to leverage positive rankings, thereby enhancing the institution's reputation and strategically aiming for higher positions to boost corporate success. Rankings are perceived as indicators of quality by the general public and policymakers, even though the actual measures they represent may be of secondary importance to consumers (Foley, 2008).

Utilizing digital public relations (digital PR) can lead to significant increases in website visitors and stronger search engine rankings, aligning well with academia's traditional use of press releases for information dissemination. Moreover, opinions about PR for rankings of Panteon Sorbonne University can also be found in the context of long-term Franco-British academic partnerships (Fraser & Lane, 2011).

The governance of public and private universities in leading EU institutions, including Sorbonne University, highlights the strategic priorities and experiences influencing opinions about PR for rankings (Borodiyenko, 2022.). This context reveals how university directors discuss and manage their standings. They can also strive to achieve higher positions by using PR strategies to build strong communication with their partners.

3. Research subject and Method

Searching for PR system of Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, including social media, websites, international projects, communications and having information with administration of the university. This study analyzes the impact of PR for ranking position of Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne university from the perspective of QS and THE to explore the methods of reputation and its effects. Through this, it seeks ways to build a relationship between the university and its partners and represent

images that interact equally with different educational groups. To analyze the structure of PR system of Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne university content, this paper applies Grunig and Hunt's Four Models of PR structure theory (Grunig & ot., 1984). This model identifies different approaches to PR, ranging from press publicity to two-way symmetrical communication. It could be helpful to categorize and analyze the strategies used by Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. By analyzing characters and basic aspects, it is possible to more appropriately understand the overall frame and positive effects of PR for the university rankings.

4. Research results

Academic prestige refers to the perceived quality and reputation of a university within the academic community and among the general public. This prestige is often measured through university rankings, which consider various factors such as research output, teaching quality, international outlook, and institutional reputation. Rankings such as those published by QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education, and ARWU (Shanghai Rankings) significantly influence perceptions of academic excellence. According to Hazelkorn (2015), rankings have become a key drivers in shaping strategic decisions within higher education institutions, as they affect student enrollment, funding, and international collaborations.

The relationship between PR strategies and university rankings is complex and multifaceted. PR efforts can enhance a university's reputation by highlighting its strengths, achievements, and unique attributes. For instance, strategic storytelling and media relations can effectively communicate research breakthroughs and academic accolades to a broader audience. Additionally, social media engagement and digital marketing can increase visibility and foster a positive perception of the institution.

The French higher education system provides valuable case studies of how PR strategies can impact academic prestige and rankings. Universities like Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris 1 have utilized digital platforms, collaborative projects, and international partnerships to enhance their visibility and reputation.

Additionally, French universities balance their rich historical heritage with modern, innovative approaches to education, creating a compelling narrative that appeals to a diverse audience.

This multifaceted PR strategy, which also emphasizes student experience and achievement, has played a crucial role in elevating the reputation and global standing of these institutions.

Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris 1 has consistently maintained an excellent position in the QS World University

Rankings, ranging from 200 to 300 from 2012 to 2024. As indicated by the chart below, the university is ranked 283rd for 2025 (Draw. 1).



(1-diagramma)

In analyzing the rankings, the university has an overall score of 37.5. For academic reputation, it received a score of 65.6. The university’s employment outcomes were rated at 74.8, its international research network at 70.3, and the international students and faculty ratio at 46.5 and 4.6, respectively (QS, 2024).

These ratings suggest that there is significant potential for improvement through the implementation of effective PR strategies and technologies. Enhanced PR efforts can increase visibility and enhance the university’s reputation, thereby attracting more international students and faculty. Improved communication and engagement with industry partners can further elevate employment outcomes and strengthen the international research network.

Especially, Panthéon-Sorbonne University (Paris 1) emphasizes its internationalization strategy through partnerships, international degrees, and mobility programs for students, professors, and administrative staff. The university’s international relations department plays a key role in managing these initiatives, ensuring robust support and integration for international participants. The university engages in numerous international partnerships and collaborative projects, which are prominently featured in their PR campaigns. Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris 1 is a member of the Una Europa alliance, a collaboration of eleven leading research universities across Europe (Una, 2024).

Besides, the university actively participates in Erasmus Mundus programs, which offer joint master’s and doctoral programs with partner institutions across Europe and beyond (European, 2024). These programs enhance academic cooperation,

provide students with diverse educational experiences, and foster intercultural understanding. And also, these include partnerships with universities in North America, Asia, and Africa, focusing on areas such as social sciences, humanities, economics, and law.

In addition to Erasmus Mundus, the university is a member of several global academic networks, such as the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the European University Association (EUA) (Pantheon Sorbonne 1, 2024). These networks provide platforms for sharing best practices, collaborating on research projects, and influencing higher education policies globally.

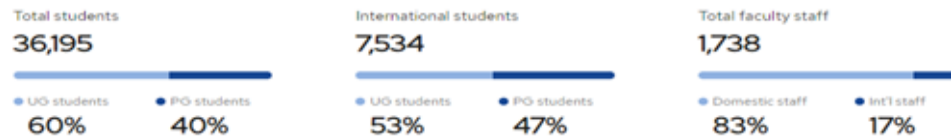
Furthermore, strategic partnerships and innovative educational initiatives, such as the Ancient Cities MOOC, showcase the potential of PR in reaching global audiences and improving a university's ranking (Blömer & Zarmakoupi, 2021). These examples illustrate the practical applications of PR theories in enhancing the academic prestige of French universities.

In terms of social projects, there is The Vergilius project, demonstrates how digitization and virtual exhibitions can promote a university's heritage and academic contributions (Carrozzino & ot., 2008). By leveraging techniques such as 3D modeling and virtual reality, the Vergilius project creates immersive and interactive virtual museum experiences. These digital exhibitions not only enhance the visibility and reputation of the university but also provide an innovative platform for educational and cultural outreach, making the university's resources accessible to a global audience.

By promoting such academic projects, Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris 1 boasts a vibrant and diverse academic community. The university enrolls a total of 36,195 students, including a significant proportion of both undergraduate (60%) and postgraduate (40%) students.

Additionally, the university is home to 7,534 international students, with 53% being undergraduates and 47% postgraduates, highlighting its commitment to fostering a global academic environment and promoting cultural diversity. The dedicated faculty staff of 1,738 members includes 83% domestic and 17% international staff, enhancing the educational experience by bringing a variety of perspectives and expertise to the university (QS, 2024) — Draw. 2.

Overall, Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris 1's student and faculty demographics reflect its status as a leading institution that values inclusivity, diversity, and international collaboration and effective PR strategies can play a crucial role in promoting these international partnerships and collaborative projects.



Draw. 2

PR efforts at Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris 1 highlight the university's research achievements and projects. For instance, the «Sorb’Rising» project is a significant PR focus, showcasing Pantheon Sorbonne’s commitment to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research in the social sciences and humanities (Pantheon Sorbonne 2, 2024). By promoting research outputs, publications, and funded projects, the university underscores its academic strength and innovation, which are critical factors in ranking evaluations.

Moreover, Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris, year 1st, participates in the «Bienvenue en France» initiative, enhancing its appeal to international students. As information, the «Bienvenue en France» initiative, launched by the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, aims to enhance the attractiveness of French higher education to international students (French, 2024). The program focuses on improving the welcome and support services for international students, ensuring a high-quality academic and social experience. By highlighting the benefits of the «Bienvenue en France» initiative, and emphasizing the supportive and welcoming environment provided under the initiative Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris 1 can attract more international students, enhancing the university’s diversity and global reach. Promoting participation in the «Bienvenue en France» initiative through PR efforts can enhance the university’s reputation as a top destination for international students. Plus, by implementing the initiative’s guidelines, the university can improve the overall experience for international students, leading to higher satisfaction and better academic outcomes — positive feedback from international students and improved services can contribute to higher rankings in international university evaluations.

5. Conclusion

Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris 1 actively manages its media presence through various channels, including official websites, social media platforms, and press releases. This strategic communication helps shape public perception and keeps stakeholders informed about the university’s achievements and initiatives. Effective branding and consistent communication efforts help build a strong, recognizable identity, which is essential

for maintaining a high ranking.

PR campaigns often focus on the experiences and successes of students and faculty. We are highlighting stories of academic and professional accomplishments creates a positive image and attracts prospective students and faculty members.

Following the «Bienvenue en France» label, which certifies the quality of actions carried out by the university to improve hospitality and integration of international students, is an example of how PR efforts enhance the university's appeal and reputation. Plus, organizing and promoting events, workshops, and conferences is another key aspect of the university's PR strategy. These events serve as platforms for showcasing academic excellence and fostering intellectual exchange, further enhancing the university's profile. By strategically utilizing PR to highlight its strengths and achievements, Pantheon Sorbonne University Paris 1 effectively enhances its reputation and maintains its position in global university rankings.

Shortly, effective PR strategies help showcase the university's academic excellence and research achievements, contributing to a stronger academic reputation and highlighting faculty accomplishments, innovative research projects, and significant publications can position Panthéon-Sorbonne as a leader in various academic fields.

In addition, PR efforts that emphasize international collaborations and partnerships can significantly enhance the university's global visibility. Participation in global networks and alliances, such as Una Europa, helps in positioning the university on the international stage.

PR initiatives that communicate the university's efforts to enhance student life and provide robust support systems can lead to improved student engagement and satisfaction. This positive perception is crucial for retaining students and ensuring their academic success (Ruffalo, 2024).

Furthermore, as it can be analyzed, effective PR strategies can strengthen fundraising efforts and alumni engagement. By communicating the impact of donations and the success of alumni, the university can foster a supportive and engaged alumni network, which is essential for ongoing financial support and networking opportunities.

Besides these benefits, PR efforts that effectively communicate the university's strengths and achievements can positively influence its position in global university rankings. Highlighting interdisciplinary research projects like «Sorb'Rising» demonstrates the university's commitment to innovation and excellence.

By leveraging these PR strategies, Panthéon-Sorbonne

University can significantly enhance its reputation, attract top-tier talent, and secure its position as a leading academic institution on the global stage.

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JAMOATCHILIK BILAN ALOQALAR VA AKADEMIK OBRO‘: PR STRATEGIYASI FRANSUZ UNIVERSITETI REYTLARIGA QANDAY TA‘SIR ETDI?

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqola Fransiya universitetlarining akademik obro‘ sini shakllantirishda Jamoatchilik bilan aloqalar (PR) ning asosiy rolini tadqiq qiladi. Strategik xalqaro hamkorlik, kuchli tadqiqot tashabbuslari, kuchli ommaviy axborot vositalari mavjudligi, talabalar va professor-o‘qituvchilar bilan kuchli aloqalar orqali universitetlar o‘zlarining o‘rnini global darajada sezilarli oshirishi mumkin. Maqolada Panthéon-Sorbonnedagi «Sorb’Rising» loyihasi va «Bienvenue en France» dasturlari kabi o‘ziga xos PR harakatlar ko‘rib chiqilib, ushbu tashabbuslar universitetning imijiga qanday ta‘sir ko‘rsatishi ko‘rsatib berilgan.

Kalit so‘zlar: jamoatchilik bilan aloqalar, Universitetlar reytingi, akademik imij, PR strategiyalari, tadqiqot tashabbuslari.

Muallif haqida:

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СВЯЗИ С ОБЩЕСТВЕННОСТЬЮ И АКАДЕМИЧЕСКИЙ ПРЕСТИЖ: КАК PR-СТРАТЕГИИ ВЛИЯЮТ НА РЕЙТИНГИ ФРАНЦУЗСКИХ УНИВЕРСИТЕТОВ?

Аннотация: В данной статье исследуется ключевая роль связей с общественностью (PR) в построении академической репутации французских университетов. Благодаря стратегическому международному партнерству, сильным исследовательским инициативам, сильному присутствию в средствах массовой информации и динамичным отношениям со студентами и преподавателями университеты могут значительно укрепить свои позиции в мире. В статье рассматриваются конкретные PR-мероприятия Пантеона-Сорбонны, такие как проект Sorb’Rising и программы Bienvenue en France, и показано, как эти инициативы влияют на имидж университета.

Ключевые слова: связи с общественностью, рейтинг университетов, академический имидж, PR-стратегии, исследовательские инициативы.

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