

# Developing Press Sites for Media Departments and Public Relations in Universities in Context of the Internet Environment

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The media and communications map in light of digital communication has brought about near-radical changes in the priorities of the press institutions and the masses, being present and distinguished in this communicative coverage has become a priority for countries, societies, institutions, groups and individuals. The digital characteristic of most human societies, including those of developing countries, therefore, means investing in the online environment has become a part of communicative postulates to achieve contact and communication with the mass. The media and public relations departments in universities have official websites, social pages, and electronic accounts, but the problem lies in the extent to which the internet environment and its websites are invested in gaining support for the target audience's satisfaction on the one hand and achieving its goals on the other hand. This study has a vision to develop the performance of the media and public relations departments in universities by investing the internet environment in three areas, the first is to open a group of electronic portals related to the overall activities of universities and the needs of different societies; the second is to invest the internet environment to achieve interactivity with the university's activities and the third is to enable journalists, both professionally and technically, to market the university's activities in the context of the Internet environment.

**Key words:** *Development, press websites, university media, internet environment.*



## **Introduction**

The digital age of digital communication indicates that the receiver has become an active user practitioner as an effective communicator and recipient, and has a cultural background in the fields of diverse knowledge; therefore, the communicators have been thinking in a different way to enable their communication channels to spread and attract the new user. The new digital communications reality is packed with communication channels that contain data, information, photos, videos and multimedia, so it is witnessing a feverish competition that exceeds the usual perceptions and the user's ability to communicate and share.

So how do the famous communication institutions face difficulties and sufferings in keeping up with the changes of the new communication reality and the renewed needs of the user; how is the case to inform universities?

## ***Problem***

The university media, in light of the internet environment and its multiple problems, has a limited opportunity to influence, due to fierce competition and the many options available to the user, calls for the search for new ideas to enable it to interest the user, and to take precedence in the areas of communication work. Therefore, the problem of the study lies in the following question: How to invest the internet environment for the development of press sites of the departments of media and public relations in universities to enable them to approach a variety of effects on users in multiple communities?

## ***The Importance***

The importance of the research topic is that it is looking to find new tasks and roles for the Department of Media and Public Relations in universities to enable them to achieve a unique character in their future communication activities; these departments enable them to invest the digital environment in carrying out their communication activities.

## ***The Aims***

The aim lies in identifying ways to invest in the digital internet environment to develop journalistic sites for media departments and public relations in universities, including the following:

- Designing electronic portals that enable the marketing of the entire activities of the university and increase its effectiveness and integration with the corresponding universities in various societies.



- Achieving interactivity with the various activities of the university in the online environment of universities and societies.
- Developing workers in press sites for media and public relations departments in universities of the Arab world.

### ***The Methodology***

This study is considered as an example of one of the descriptive research methods, it was used to observe the tool through the communication activities of the departments, divisions and units of media and public relations universities in the Arab world to identify weaknesses and strengths in their communication activities, in order to develop a scientific method that contributes to the development of its performance in the digital space.

### ***Previous Studies***

This study is considered an example of leading and specialised research on the subject of media development and public relations in universities through the investment of communication capabilities in the internet environment, so, by monitoring previous research in this field, the researcher found a few relevant studies, , including:

#### ***University Media in Iraq ( Zrezib. 2012).***

The research subjected three variables to research and analysis through the use of questionnaires, distributed to workers in the departments and units of university media in three universities, namely, University of Baghdad, University of Kufa, and University of Babylon. Several conclusions were reached, including that the media in Iraqi universities suffer from professional and administrative pressures, and that the responsible departments The university media department has limited powers, it has no scientific perceptions about the local communities, and its communication messages are close to those of the media institutions.

#### ***Media Administration for University Press in Iraq ( Zrezib, 2012).***

This paper researched and analysed the variables of the media administration through the use of a questionnaire distributed to the employees in the departments and units of the university media in three universities, namely the University of Baghdad, the University of Kufa and the University of Babylon, and several conclusions were reached, including that the media in those departments suffer from the narrowing of freedom of opinion and expression. They control the communication activities of the university media departments.

***Study: Daraghmeh (Daraghmeh,2011).***

The study aimed to research the effect of the independent variable, which is the activity of public relations departments and their role in Palestinian universities, on the dependent variable, it is the views of university students. It was also interested in finding out the general characteristics of the respondents affected by the public relations activity, which is gender, age, college, academic year, grade point average, place of residence, and degree. It reached several conclusions, including: decreasing the public relations departments in Palestinian universities in their role attracting high school students, decreasing the role of public relations departments in Palestinian universities in building a positive image for students enrolled in them for the following subjects: participating of students in the activities by the university's public relations department, conveying the truth image of the university, measuring internal public opinion periodically, the student's love for his university and his pride in it, motivating students to undertake volunteer work, conveying students' opinions and suggestions to the university's administration, and its role towards students enrolled in the university, and the shortening of public relations departments in Palestinian universities in its role in maintaining a positive image among graduate students in the following subjects: communicating with graduates by various means, and inviting graduates to participate in university activities, and it provides a database for communicating with graduates.

***Study: Abu Salim (Abu Salim, 2006).***

The study aimed to identify the extent to which the public relations department has achieved its goals in the technical colleges in the governorates of Gaza in the viewpoint of workers, and to identify the differences in the study of the extent to which public relations management achieved its goals in technical colleges according to a variable: gender, educational qualification, field of work, years of experience, and college. It reached a set of results, the most important of which are: the public relations department works to enhance the affiliation of employees in the college with an average degree, there is a deficiency in the qualifications of a public relations man from the viewpoint of employees, the public relations department in technical colleges with public and private oversight bodies is better advanced than in technical colleges with government supervision, and the public relations department in technical colleges achieve some of their goals, and ignore other goals.

***Al.Faris's study(Al-Faris, 2015).***

The aim of the study is to determine the attitudes of workers in the field of public relations within the official and private media in the city of Damascus, the study reached the following results: there is a positive trend among members of the research sample towards social electronic websites, there are no statistically significant differences between the

attitudes of the sexes (male and female) of public relations workers towards social media sites, there are statistically significant differences between the attitudes of workers in public relations according to the variable number of working years, for the benefit of those who have not passed five years, attitudes of public relations workers towards social media websites, and there are statistically significant differences, among the attitudes of public relations workers towards social media sites, depending on the type of media organisation (public / private) in favour of workers in the private sector (Adheem and Thana, 2015).

Thus, we conclude from previous studies that there are deficiencies in the communication role of university media, so how is it in a communication environment that now offers the user options that exceed his communication needs? Therefore, this study is agreed with the results of previous studies, and it is interested in reaching conclusions and recommendations that contribute to developing the performance of press sites for university information, so that they can perform their communicative message.

### **The Reality, Problems of Media and Public Relations in Arab Universities**

#### ***The Problems of Media and Public Relations Management in Arab Universities***

The media is seen in scientific and professional circles with holiness and idealism, as it seeks sincerity and seeks truth, the aim to create media messages is characterised by media ethics and strives to meet the communication needs of the prospective user. The user, in a digital communication environment that witnesses a unique form of communication competition, is suffering from an information glut that exceeds his communication capabilities and needs, therefore, in terms of communication messages for university media in the Arab world, if one wants to take a single place in the digital communication environment, it is necessary to understand the communication needs of users that are not satiated by the local, Arab and international communication spaces, and to exclusively raise ideas, reflections and various communication needs that are far from the interests of the participants in digital communication. The management of media institutions needs a full awareness of the importance of man, machine, time, space in the framework of planning and implementation, as it requires achieving better integration in performance in order to achieve the desired goals (Sahib, 2011). So, thinking about communication activities must be in a different, unique way, for several considerations, including that it comes from academic non-profit institutions that seek honesty and service to the communities, just as the communication activities are government funded, which enables those in charge of communication work to overcome some of the professional, partisan, and societal pressures and other pressures imposed by the community.

Despite these opportunities, university media in the universities of the Arab world faces several problems that can be identified with the following:



- The media, as media organisations, is close to fulfilling its communication activities with the requirements, ideas and pressures of the authoritarian media.

-The predominance of the propaganda news activity for university officials through university media outlets, such as publications, newspapers, radio and television channels, and electronic sites, and in this way the university media suffers from the phenomenon of making symbols and marketing their communication activities.

-The public relations departments in charge of public relations in universities have been delegated only limited powers that do not enable them to lead communication activities freely and professionally, by the gatekeepers who impose the requirements, interests and objectives of university officials; therefore we note the absence of investigative journalists and investigative journalism, and the dominance of advertising and marketing news activities.

-Journalists do not feel in the university media that they are treated like a journalist, they are closer to an employee of a government institution bound by laws and instructions they cannot exceed, and can be assigned to work away from communication, such as to administrative work.

-University media is infiltrated by other means of communication, its media workers act as correspondents and delegates, contributing to achieving interests and goals that may contradict or come close to the goals and objectives of university media.

### ***The Reality of University Journalism Websites in the Internet Environment***

The digital networks of the Internet have formed artificial spaces for intellectual (Delio, 2010), physical interaction, large networked societies, endless media activity, and a radical transformation in the tools of speech and expression (Abbas, 2012). These societies are closer to the information society than the knowledge society. The contents produced by internet users are shown in a variety of formats: videos, photo clips, news stories, news alerts, files, images, and movies, commenting on comments, movies, blogs, podcasts, group-based sites, Wikis, Reuters and sources. With open contributions such as Wikipedia, YouTube, and chat rooms (Bakheet, 2012).

Changes and developments in communication have put experts and specialists in the media and communication fields before scientific responsibility, which requires the need to review theories of communication and models related to all dimensions of the communication process, and in turn has made the recipient user and communicator and made the media institutions participate in constant challenges and feverish competition.

Statistical data indicates that subscribers in the digital communication environment exceeded four billion users, and communities even in developing countries have become semi-digital; therefore, investing the potential of the digital communication environment in the communication activities of the university media must be a priority in marketing its activities in the local and global domains.

By looking at the press sites of Arab universities, including the University of Babylon (<http://www.uobabylon.edu.iq/media/>), The University of Bahrain website: [bh/index.php/colleges/arts-college-ar/communicating-dept-ar/90-bsc-comm-dept-ar](http://bh/index.php/colleges/arts-college-ar/communicating-dept-ar/90-bsc-comm-dept-ar), Cairo University website: <https://cu.edu.eg/ar/Home> , Petra University website : <https://www.uop.edu.jo/ar/Pages/default.aspx>, the website of King Abdulaziz University: <https://www.kau.edu.sa/Home.aspx> , the site of the United Arab Emirates University: <https://www.uaeu.ac.ae/ar/> , The Lebanese University website as well as the sites of the previous universities: <https://www.ul.edu.lb/faculte/branches.aspx?facultyId=5&lang=1>, and others, we noticed from the above websites the following:

- Press production in the press sites for media and public relations departments in Arab universities represented by news and press reports issued daily that are not commensurate with the goals and priorities of universities.
- The great difference between the press sites of the universities of the Arab world in terms of the number, design, contents and designations of electronic portals.
- The portals of the electronic journalistic sites in the universities of the Arab world are characterised as specialised in the field of education and learning, and most of them are not open to local, Arab and international communities.
- The poor use of images and other multimedia in journalistic production in other press sites of the universities of the Arab world.
- Limited reading and viewing of press production in press websites, universities in the Arab world.
- The absence of investigative journalism urging the public to read and watch in the press sites of Arab universities.
- The weakness of interaction and coordination between most press sites of the universities of the Arab world among themselves, their home, and the developed external sites.
- The limited press capabilities of journalists working in the press sites of universities in the Arab world, and this was embodied through their press product.
- The activators in most of the products of the press sites for university sites in the Arab world are academic leaders.
- Most of the journalistic websites of the universities of the Arab world abound in the use of the paper-press method of text and photo, this does not keep pace with technical and journalistic developments in the era of digital communication.

## **The Results**

By diagnosing the weaknesses of the press sites, we were able to set a vision for investing the capabilities of the internet environment to develop journalistic websites to inform universities in achieving scientific, cultural and cultural goals through the following:

### ***Designing Electronic Portals***

- Designing an electronic portal for digital roaming virtual exhibitions about universities, colleges and research centres, symbols, places and sites of civilisation, historical, cultural, scientific and religious for local communities and its institutions.
- Designing an electronic portal for the creators of university professors, as well as political, cultural, religious and sports symbols in the local communities, in which patents and pioneering ideas are presented, and their scientific, cultural and literary achievements.
- Designing an electronic portal that includes the publications of university professors, thinkers and innovators in the local community circles, to serve as an electronic exhibition that enables the recipient to be exposed to these publications and to shop electronically.
- Designing an electronic portal for periodical publications such as scientific, cultural and literary newspapers and magazines for the university and local institutions.
- Designing an electronic portal for the university's activities such as seminars and workshops in which there will be an active presence and participation of local, Arab and international community institutions.
- Designing an electronic portal for creative professors in Arab and international university circles, and giving their scientific, cultural and literary products among the priorities of the university media.
- Customise an electronic portal for professors in Arab and international universities, including their curriculum vitae and scientific and cultural products, and the possibilities of contacting them electronically.
- Customise an electronic portal for professors in Arab and international universities that includes their biographies, scientific and cultural products, and the possibilities of communicating with them electronically.
- Customise an electronic portal to the websites of Arab and international universities, and contribute to establishing scientific, cultural and journalistic cooperation relations with them.
- Customise an electronic portal for refereed scientific journals issued in Arab and international universities, marketing of refereed journals issued in their universities, and giving priority to journals that have an impact factor.
- Customise an electronic portal for conferences and workshops in the universities of the Arab world and international universities, in an attempt to bridge the gap and establish scientific and cultural relations jointly, contribute to achieve an effective presence of

professors of universities of Arab countries in international forums and scientific, cultural and literary institutions.

- Customise an electronic portal that is concerned with monitoring and following up the activities of university professors in the Arab world through the press, TV and radio communication channels and electronic websites on the internet.

- Members of an electronic portal for research of professors, masters and doctoral theses in the Arab world and universities of developed countries in order to contribute to reducing the scientific and technical gap between developed and Arab countries.

- Customise an electronic portal for scholarships and jobs in Arab and international universities.

- Customise an electronic portal specialised in informing opinion leaders and owners of institutions in the local, Arab and international communities about the universities' plans and their various activities, and inviting them to university conferences, seminars and workshops according to their interests.

- Customise an electronic portal for graduating university students, communicating with them through the university's media sites, and involving them in the university's activities.

- Customise an electronic portal specialised in providing job opportunities for university graduates, and monitoring job opportunities available in local community institutions and Arab and international community institutions.

- Customise an electronic portal for parents of university students that provides opportunities for interaction, dialogue and inquiries about their children's scientific level.

- Customise an electronic portal with the names of the first in universities with initial and higher studies and press coverage to honour them.

- Customise an electronic portal specialising in tourist, archeological and religious places in the countries of the universities of the Arab world, which includes tourist guides and mobile electronic exhibitions for these places, and trying to invest in strengthening relations with universities in other countries.

### ***Interactive***

- Participation of university flags in the sites and forums of other local, Arab and international universities, and effective organisations, institutions and companies in the community.

- Marketing research of conferences, seminars and videos of workshops for the benefit of ministries, institutions and companies in the public and private sectors.

- Create a database on local community institutions, and invite them to participate in the university's activities such as conferences, seminars and workshops, and send a summary of them to the beneficiaries.



- Inviting opinion leaders in local communities and representatives of local governments and officials of institutions and companies in those societies to participate in the university's plans and programs, because participation is one of the priorities of effective communication; to define the problems experienced by the community and its institutions and give it priority within the university plan, subjecting it to scientific research and providing scientific solutions to it.
- Customise an electronic portal for university lectures and opinion leaders in the community.
- Customise an electronic portal specialising in complaints and other proposals of digital societies in order to improve the performance of universities in the community.
- Customise an electronic portal that includes communication messages published and transmitted by local, Arab and international communication channels to the university's activities and scientific staff.
- Customise an electronic portal for young women in the university and community circles, interested in covering their scientific, cultural, literary, religious and artistic activities, and their participation in the university's activities such as conferences, seminars, workshops and exhibitions.

### ***Superstructure and Infrastructure***

- Giving priority to the superstructure by training media staff and providing them with specialists and experts.
- Encouraging investigative journalism.
- Providing the university media infrastructure with money, buildings and technical requirements so that it can fulfil its communication message.
- Extending the powers of media and public relations managers, and changing the style of administration (it is difficult to continue the work of the central administration within the framework of the new world order), from the small administration to the middle management, and protecting the freedom of opinion and expression of journalists.

### **Conclusion**

If anyone doubts the power of the media in mobilising public opinion and formation, it is nowadays inadvisable to think this way, and does not improve the management of mature thinking, as it is a postulate of digital communication. The media is jumping the sequence of powers that govern the world's systems, sometimes becoming the first, and in times of prosperity, the rest of the authorities are allowed to take their natural place, but it always suggests that they are coming to change and move what is fixed or moving.

Now in the light of digital communication, the recipient looks at media institutions as much as their media presence, political weight, technical superiority, and their place in the minds



and consciences of the masses. In this digital communication environment, the media are facing increasing challenges in the face of the rapid changes that the world is going through today, which necessitates changes in its paths that cover all the parts of its media work in order to be able to play its communication role (Hamid, 2008).

Therefore, the entrance of investing in the digital space in the internet environment to develop universities' journalistic websites requires the following:

- Opening electronic portals that are compatible with the activities of scientific, cultural and community universities.
  - Study the expected communication needs of the masses in a way that enables them to exclusively perform their communication role.
  - Activating the roles of professors, employees, university students and opinion leaders in the university press sites.
  - Increase of video journalistic results and reduce the use of static texts and photographs.
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- We qualify the journalists working in press websites professionally and technically, to enable them to create professional and influential communication messages.
  - Promote freedom of opinion and expression for journalists on the websites of universities and all segments of the academic community.
  - Encouraging creators, including journalists, professors, employees, students and societies, by honouring, praising and supporting them.



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