

## **Ripple Effects of Strategic Public Relations: Analysing Societal Change through the Lens of the Lions Community in Lithuania**

Efecto dominó de las relaciones públicas estratégicas: análisis del cambio social a través del prisma de la comunidad Lions en Lituania

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Recepción: 29/10/2025 Revisión: 30/11/2025 Aceptación: 23/12/2025 Publicación: 29/12/2025

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5783/revrrpp.v15i30.922>

### **Abstract**

This study thoroughly examines the interaction between strategic public relations (hereinafter referred to as strategic PR) and its ripple effects in fostering societal change. The Lithuanian LIONS Clubs District (hereinafter – Lions)<sup>3</sup> serves as a case study to illustrate how effective strategic PR can mobilise individuals towards a common goal, foster community engagement and collective action, and influence attitudes and behaviours in a way that embeds changes within the community or society. Our primary goal is to gather profound insights into the Lions' strategic PR efforts and reveal how these initiatives generate ripple effects that drive societal transformation. This study employs semi-structured interviews, as well as thematic and content analysis, applying Communicative Rippling as the theoretical framework. This study reveals that strategic PR within the Lions in Lithuania fosters profound ripple effects by cultivating a sense of ownership among community members, promoting specificity in messaging, structured plans, and expanding collaborative networks that deepen community engagement. These findings provide a more nuanced understanding of how strategic PR can drive societal change. As communities navigate increasingly complex global challenges, the lessons learned from the Lions' initiatives provide valuable insights into the power of collective action and the transformative potential of effective PR strategies.

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<sup>3</sup> The Lithuanian LIONS Clubs District, with 36 Lions Clubs active in different cities across Lithuania and more than 800 members, is part of Lions Clubs International, the world's largest non-political social club organization. There are almost 50,000 Lions Clubs worldwide, with over 1.4 million members. Lions Clubs International operates through Lions Districts in different countries worldwide, comprising Lions Clubs in different cities and towns (local communities).

**Keywords:** Strategic Public Relations, Societal Change, Community Engagement, Ripple Effects, Social Impact.

### Resumen

Este estudio pretende examinar en profundidad la interacción entre las relaciones públicas (RRPP) estratégicas y los efectos dominó en el fomento del cambio social. El Distrito Lituano de Lions Clubs (en adelante, Lions) se toma como caso de estudio para ilustrar cómo las RRPP estratégicas y eficaces pueden movilizar a las personas hacia un objetivo común, fomentar la participación de la comunidad y la acción colectiva, e influir en las actitudes y comportamientos de manera que se generen cambios en la comunidad o la sociedad. Nuestro objetivo principal es recopilar información detallada sobre los esfuerzos de comunicación estratégica de Lions y mostrar cómo estas iniciativas generan efectos en cadena que impulsan la transformación social.

Este estudio utiliza entrevistas semiestructuradas y análisis de contenido sistemático, aplicando el marco teórico de Communicative Rippling.

Este estudio revela que las RRPP estratégicas dentro de Lions en Lituania fomenta profundos efectos dominó al cultivar un sentido de pertenencia entre los miembros de la comunidad, promover la especificidad en los mensajes y ampliar las redes de colaboración que profundizan la participación de la comunidad. Estos hallazgos contribuyen a una comprensión más matizada de cómo las RRPP estratégicas puede impulsar el cambio social.

A medida que las comunidades se enfrentan a retos globales cada vez más complejos, las lecciones aprendidas de las iniciativas de los Lions proporcionan información valiosa sobre el poder de la acción colectiva y el potencial transformador de las estrategias eficaces de RRPP eficaces.

**Palabras clave:** relaciones públicas estratégicas, cambio social, compromiso de la comunidad, efecto dominó, impacto social.

### Summary

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### Sumario

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic communication is a systematic approach that aligns messaging and actions with organisational objectives and stakeholder needs (Heath, 2022; Zerfass & Volk, 2020; Volk & Zerfass, 2020; Falkheimer & Heide, 2022). This multifaceted approach encompasses public relations, advertising, and marketing, emphasising its vital role in fulfilling organisational missions. It ensures precise and consistent messages are conveyed through various channels, effectively influencing stakeholders (Hallahan et al., 2007). At the core of this framework is the concept that individuals engage in intentional communication practices on behalf of

organisations, causes, and social movements, highlighting the significance of reputation management – a common element within strategic PR (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014).

Understanding the interplay between individual relationships and community dynamics is essential for grasping the social aspect of strategic PR, while the societal perspective encompasses broader contexts that inform these interactions. By integrating both viewpoints, organisations can drive systemic or social change through effective PR strategies. Strategic storytelling enables organisations to raise awareness about critical issues, inspire action, and cultivate grassroots movements contributing to enduring cultural and societal change.

Strategic PR plays a particularly crucial role for organisations like Lions in Lithuania. It raises awareness of social issues, mobilises volunteers, and builds community partnerships to enhance the quality of life for vulnerable populations. The Lions carry out health, education, humanitarian, and environmental initiatives, mobilising volunteers and resources through events, workshops, and programs. Their strategic objectives prioritise community engagement, awareness-raising, and collaboration with key institutions, fostering the sustainability of their initiatives through a culture of giving and active community involvement.

Existing research has documented the impact of strategic PR on engagement or societal change. However, exploration of its ripple effects remains limited. Investigating the interaction between strategic PR and the ripple effects that drive societal change is essential for a more nuanced understanding of how proper strategic PR influences community dynamics and behaviours. Iba et al. (2024) state that strategic communication advances organisational goals. It facilitates societal change by shaping perceptions, nurturing support, and encouraging community engagement, thereby transforming societal structures, norms, values, and behavioural patterns. Research on the interaction of strategic PR and the ripple effects, leading to societal change, reveals the mechanisms through which organisations can effectively mobilise support, inspire action, and foster engagement. By uncovering these interactions, organisations can refine PR strategies, enhance their impact, and address pressing social issues more effectively, ultimately contributing to a more informed and engaged society that thrives on collaboration and positive change.

This study examines the interaction between strategic PR and its ripple effects, ultimately leading to societal change. Our primary goal is to gather valuable insights into the impact of the Lions' strategic PR initiatives and uncover how PR efforts generate transformative ripple effects that drive societal change.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. The Interaction of Strategic PR, Community Engagement, the Ripple Effect, and Societal Change**

The intricate role of strategic PR in fostering societal change has been substantively explored in existing literature, establishing a connection between PR activities, community engagement, and societal transformation (Tench & Yeomans, 2017; Fawkes, 2021; Golob, 2024; Fehrer et al., 2022). A conceptual model for understanding this interaction posits that

effective strategic PR catalyses community engagement, which subsequently triggers a ripple effect leading to broader societal change.

In this model, strategic PR transcends the mere dissemination of information, serving as a dynamic vehicle for raising awareness, enhancing knowledge, and influencing public attitudes on critical social issues. By empowering individuals and communities to participate actively in the change process, strategic PR facilitates the emergence of collective action (Iba et al., 2024). As stakeholders engage with PR initiatives, they become integral to the communication process, thus reinforcing the importance of relational dynamics in shaping societal outcomes.

The enhancement of social awareness surrounding political, environmental, or social issues is crucial in this context. PR harnesses both traditional and social media to foster dialogue and disseminate information widely, thereby increasing the potential for the ripple effect, where small, localised initiatives can gain traction and lead to significant societal shifts. This shift from one-way communication to a more interactive, strategic framework (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Dozier & Broom, 1995) emphasises the necessity for organisations to prioritise stakeholder engagement, fostering trust and responsiveness (Elgueta-Ruiz & Martínez-Ortiz, 2022).

By focusing on dialogue and collaboration, strategic PR cultivates relationships that enhance community ties and legitimacy. PR professionals play a critical role in informing, educating, and engaging stakeholders (Kent, 2023; Heath, 2022), facilitating an environment where the potential for social change is maximised. As such, the strategic integration of stakeholder perspectives into organisational decision-making processes is essential for fostering lasting community engagement and, subsequently, societal change.

## **2.2. A Framework for PR Strategies: Catalysing Societal Change Through Engagement**

To effectively catalyse societal change, a well-structured PR strategy informed by rigorous planning and execution is paramount. An effective social campaign requires meticulous planning and a robust PR strategy to ensure that messages reach the intended stakeholders, promote societal change, and align organisational goals with stakeholder needs (Zerfass & Volk, 2020; Volk & Zerfass, 2020).

As stated by Iba et al. (2024), selecting the appropriate communication channel is a key element in designing a successful campaign that can resonate with the target audience through various channels (traditional and new) and create a significant impact. Social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have become essential for organising campaigns, addressing injustices, and influencing public policy (Iba et al., 2024). Moreover, effectively sharing information can catalyse meaning creation and promote social change (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014). Crafting clear and compelling messages is also vital.

With a stakeholder-centred approach, strategic PR utilises diverse techniques while ensuring consistent messaging across platforms (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014), ranging from purchased media space, owned media (such as websites and blogs), to earned media, including publicity and social media interactions. Effective stakeholder segmentation is crucial in delivering tailored and relevant messages, as stakeholders belong to multiple networks, each reflecting a distinct identity. A nuanced understanding of these groups and their engagement networks is crucial for effective PR (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014). Identifying key stakeholders who can

influence the desired social change is crucial, as it involves reaching beyond merely a large audience.

Dialogue and collaboration among different stakeholders are critical for achieving sustainable societal change. Engaging various partners, including government bodies, civil society organisations, minority groups, and the private sector, can lead to more equitable and inclusive solutions (Iba et al., 2024). Collaborative efforts among these entities can generate innovative responses to community needs and boost the success of social initiatives (Iba et al., 2024).

A multi-channel PR strategy is essential for engaging diverse groups and broadening outreach. Through traditional and digital media, campaigns can effectively connect with diverse demographics, targeting both tech-savvy individuals and those who prefer traditional media (Iba et al., 2024). Finally, the significance of evaluation and measurement is paramount. This phase measures the campaign's effectiveness, assesses message reception, and permits strategic adjustments (Iba et al., 2024). Systematic feedback review enhances overall campaign impact and refines approaches.

In summary, a well-structured PR strategy that incorporates alignment, diverse channels, stakeholder collaboration, clear messaging, and ongoing evaluation is crucial for effectively implementing social campaigns to drive meaningful change.

### **2.3. Evaluating the Transformative Impact of Strategic PR**

The complexity of evaluating the societal impact of strategic PR initiatives necessitates a shift in the paradigm of how practitioners approach measurement. Often, there is an overwhelming focus on outputs and immediate outcomes, neglecting the broader, transformative societal impacts that can occur. Frameworks like the AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework, which emphasises the interaction among outputs, out-takes, outcomes, and impacts, along with the Communication Value Circle (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017), recommend focusing on the organisational impact of communication. Although these frameworks are primarily intended for business contexts, the fundamental concept behind these models also applies when discussing the impact of social initiatives.

Social impact is frequently conceptualised in terms of "positive" change (Stephan et al., 2016), encompassing not only initiatives that generate beneficial social externalities but also those that actively mitigate negative consequences (Bartling et al., 2015; Crilly et al., 2016). According to Stephan et al. (2016), social impact refers to the positive outcomes resulting from prosocial behaviour that benefit both the target group and the broader community. Alomoto et al. (2022) emphasise that measuring social impact is crucial for gauging the effectiveness of a strategy. This measurement focuses on achieved outcomes, trust and legitimacy, service delivery quality, and efficiency, enabling organisations to identify better stakeholder needs (De Pieri et al., 2022).

Additionally, it addresses contract-related challenges by enhancing transparency and accountability, fostering trust among collaborators and citizens (Tropeano et al., 2024). Key elements of social impact measurement include accountability, decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement (Tropeano et al., 2024). Scholarly literature

employs concepts such as "outcomes" (immediate results), "impacts" (medium- to long-term consequences), and "effects" (long-term systemic changes) to elucidate the causal links to positive social outcomes (Wry & Haugh, 2018; Ebrahim & Rangan, 2014).

Utilising this comprehensive understanding of social impact, PR practitioners can better articulate the effectiveness of their strategic initiatives in fostering community engagement and stimulating broader societal transformation. Refining the interconnectedness of strategic PR, community engagement, the ripple effect, and societal change through a rigorously structured theoretical framework enhances our understanding of how PR efforts can operate as mechanisms for meaningful social improvements. A conceptual model emphasising these interactions provides a robust foundation for both academic exploration and practical implementation in the realm of public relations.

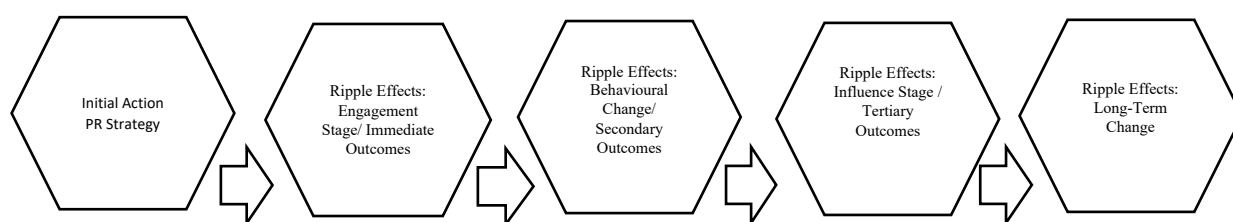
### 3. METHODOLOGY

In the context of this research, the term "effects" encompasses long-term systemic changes, particularly as illustrated by the ripple effect. This phenomenon has attracted considerable scholarly interest in recent years (Dolgui & Ivanov, 2021). This concept is distinctly recognised across various disciplines and is frequently referred to as the "domino effect" or "snowball effect" (Mishra et al., 2021). As articulated by Ivanov, Dolgui, and Sokolov (2025), the ripple effect exemplifies how a seemingly minor change or event can engender profound impacts, initiating a chain reaction that resembles a pebble disrupting the surface of still water, thereby creating expansive ripples.

Within this study, the Ripple framework is employed as a conceptual tool to elucidate the mechanisms through which an initial change or intervention, when strategically supported by PR, precipitates immediate, secondary, and tertiary outcomes that collectively influence individuals, families, organisations, communities, and societal norms over time. A comprehensive understanding of communicative rippling is pivotal for the assessment of both the potential and actual impact of the Lions' initiatives on societal transformation.

**Ripple Effects Mapping.** Employing a qualitative and participatory methodology, ripple effects mapping encapsulates the dynamic interplay of initiatives and their corresponding elements and impacts. This mapping technique is instrumental in identifying changes while revealing their implications for diverse stakeholders. Accordingly, communicative rippling encompasses the capacity of strategic PR to instigate societal change both directly and indirectly, contingent upon how these PR efforts are perceived, interpreted, and acted upon by community members and the larger society (refer to Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Communicative Rippling**



Source: own elaboration

### 3.1. Research Design and Data Collection

To analyse how strategic PR generates ripple effects that drive societal change, using the Lions as a case study, we formulated three research questions:

1. What specific PR strategies do the Lions employ to mobilise community engagement in societal change efforts?
2. What are the perceived impacts of the Lions' PR efforts on community attitudes towards societal issues?
3. How does the Lions organisation evaluate the ripple effects of strategic PR in terms of community engagement and societal change?

The research methodology is structured in several essential phases, commencing with the documentation of all pertinent information without bias towards its importance. This is followed by a rigorous analytical process that entails the comparison and synthesis of data without preconceived hypotheses, ultimately leading to the formulation of generalisations that elucidate the interrelationships among the documented elements.

**Sampling Logic.** The sampling strategy adheres to purposive sampling principles, aiming to select a diverse group of informants who possess relevant experiences and insights into the PR initiatives of the Lions. A total of 40 individuals, comprising 36 leaders or members and four board members within the Lithuanian Lions, were strategically chosen to ensure a comprehensive representation of perspectives related to the research questions.

This methodological approach was employed because the Lithuanian LIONS organisation comprises a network of 36 clubs across the entire country of Lithuania. Consequently, the sampling logic is predicated on the objective of capturing insights representative of all affiliated clubs. Additionally, four informants selected for this study hold positions on the board of the LIONS organisation. Although these individuals are also members of their respective LIONS clubs, their perspectives as board members are particularly valuable, providing a broader strategic and organisational context beyond the regional parameters of their clubs.

**Interview Process.** The intention behind this sampling was to facilitate rich, open dialogues centred on the strategic PR's role in promoting societal change. Semi-structured interviews were conducted as the primary data collection method to elicit qualitative insights regarding the Lions' strategic PR initiatives and their ripple effects on societal change. These interviews were executed remotely through the MS Teams platform, ensuring accessibility for informants located across various cities in Lithuania. The use of video conferencing enabled the capture of cognitive responses and emotional expressions, thereby enhancing the depth of qualitative data. Each session was recorded using a mobile device, with the explicit consent of the informants.

**Thematic Analysis.** Inductive and deductive methods were used in the coding process. The data were analysed using thematic analysis according to Hennink et al. (2020): transcripts were prepared to ensure accuracy (Alvesson, 2023), and a continuous comparative method was applied. Inductively identified categories (e.g., PR channels, engagement mechanisms,

examples of the ripple effect) were deductively verified according to the theoretical model; coding was performed iteratively in two stages.

Content analysis of internal documents (e.g., newsletters, reports, marketing materials, social media content, internal channel, website content) produced by Lions yielded deeper insights into the PR strategies and communication tools employed by the organisation. The content analysis involved creating a coding scheme covering categories according to relevant topics.

**Ethical Considerations.** The research strictly adhered to ethical standards, ensuring informant confidentiality and the integrity of findings. Participants were assured that their identities would be anonymised, and identifiable information would be rigorously excluded from any presentation of data. Ethical approval for the study was obtained prior to data collection, reinforcing the commitment to uphold ethical research practices throughout the investigation.

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1. Multifaceted PR Strategy for Rippling**

In response to RQ1 regarding the PR strategies employed by Lions to engage the community in societal change, it is evident that they utilise a diverse approach that aligns with their mission. One key strategy is delivering specific messages, such as "support for an identified family," which can boost motivation by a factor of four. Additionally, they emphasise member ownership of initiatives, suggesting that individuals need to feel personally invested in their projects. Lions also employ a multi-channel communication strategy that encompasses platforms such as Facebook, traditional media, and storytelling to expand their reach. The involvement of well-known personalities further amplifies their impact. To ensure accountability and effectiveness, they continuously evaluate their efforts through feedback and key performance indicators (KPIs), which have contributed to an increase in membership growth.

Empirical data indicate that the Lions's PR strategies are meticulously aligned with its mission, thereby ensuring that initiatives resonate with the communities served. This strategic alignment is imperative, as inconsistent communication can undermine the objectives of outreach efforts. The primary mission of the Lions, which focuses on effecting meaningful change in individual lives and global society, necessitates consistent reflection in all initiatives and communication strategies. "This must be reflected in each of our initiatives and, of course, first and foremost, in our communication". (...) "Otherwise, you may lose sight of what you are trying to achieve with your initiatives and the desired outcome". Clarity in mission enhances message credibility, thereby fostering stronger connections with community constituents. An informant articulated this concept by stating, "When you clearly understand your mission, you can invite others to join you more confidently". Such insights underscore the importance of a well-defined mission in galvanising support and participation.

Central to the Lions' PR strategy is an analytical emphasis on stakeholder needs, which facilitates the development of precise and targeted messaging. The findings underscore that specificity in communications is crucial, as vague appeals, such as "family support", fail to engage potential contributors. One informant compellingly noted, "When we know what our



support is for, we are four times more motivated to collect it". This highlights that specificity fosters trust and motivates community engagement by framing contributions as vital to identifiable and tangible outcomes.

Additionally, the active engagement of internal stakeholders is identified as a foundational element of the Lions' strategy. The organisation fosters a sense of ownership among its members, which is critical for encouraging active participation. An informant emphasised, "They need to feel that they are the owners of the initiatives. If community members become passive observers rather than initiators, creators, and implementers of initiatives, such an organisation will fail". This perspective reinforces the notion that involvement is directly correlated with a commitment to the initiative's success, as stakeholders who contribute are more likely to advocate for and promote their initiatives. Another informant stated, "If people come and start judging whether the event was a success or a failure, it is already a failure. If people are involved in the event and have contributed, you have already achieved success, as they will always say it was a good event".

The external engagement strategy employed by the Lions exemplifies a commitment to collaborative and inclusive practices. By extending invitations for participation to community members, families, and external organisations, the Lions establish a collaborative network that enhances the impact of their initiatives. An informant remarked, "We can do a lot independently, but we can do much more by joining forces with other organisations and businesses. It is essential to involve as many organisations as possible, starting with local authorities, the government, politicians, and other non-governmental organisations". This inclusive approach amplifies community outreach and fortifies the initiatives aimed at societal change.

The effective implementation of these PR strategies is contingent upon clear and documented action plans. The Lions prioritise the meticulous mapping of strategies, articulating specific timelines and delineating responsibilities for participants. An informant asserted, "Everything must be very clearly laid out. The most important thing is to have a plan that is written down. If the plan is only in your head, it is just a dream". This structured approach mitigates ambiguity and establishes measurable benchmarks. The sentiment expressed by another informant, "If there is a first step, you prepare for the second step immediately after the first step. Let us remember our mission – to make a change", – reinforces the necessity of detailed planning in evaluating the impact of initiatives.

The formulation of clear and consistent messaging across diverse communication channels constitutes a critical component of the Lions' PR strategy. Cohesive narratives that resonate with target audiences effectively communicate the significance of initiatives and highlight the collective impact of community involvement. The adherence to message consistency enhances understanding and cultivates affective relationships with the community, thereby driving increased participation. As one informant noted, "The formulation of the message is essential so that it touches people and is correct". This insight emphasises the vital role of tailored messaging in mobilising community engagement for societal change.

The Lions implement a comprehensive communication strategy that facilitates engagement across a wide demographic through diverse communication channels. This strategy

encompasses both internal platforms, such as the internal Facebook group, and external avenues, including social networks and websites. The involvement of influencers, politicians, and public and non-governmental organisations is integral, as much communication is facilitated through word of mouth.

Moreover, the incorporation of innovative content forms, particularly storytelling, is pivotal in enhancing audience engagement. Informants emphasised the significance of "stories, videos, and visual material", suggesting that these elements are crucial for establishing relatability within communications. The provision of comments to media outlets "on television and radio" further exemplifies the strategic integration of diverse media channels.

The strategic engagement of notable figures and influencers has been indicated as one of the key factors contributing to the momentum of communication efforts, with informants stating, "By involving famous people and influencers, communication gained tremendous momentum – our information was shared through all possible channels". Ultimately, the utilisation of storytelling is affirmed as beneficial, reinforcing the assertion that "storytelling always pays off". This extensive and varied approach to communication underscores its importance in fostering community involvement and enhancing the overarching impact of the messages disseminated.

The Lions places a substantial emphasis on evaluating the societal impact of its initiatives. This involves regular monitoring and assessment of community feedback, thereby enabling the organisation to measure the effectiveness of its PR strategies. Crucially, the Lions prioritise stakeholder engagement to gather diverse perspectives, thereby enhancing the validity of their evaluations. Reports indicating societal shifts and heightened awareness of the Lions' efforts suggest that the community recognises and is influenced by their initiatives. The iterative process of evaluation and adaptation facilitates the organisation's responsiveness to community needs and perceptions.

Prior to each event, the Lions convene with partners and invite journalists to participate in roundtable discussions. Following these events, partners are often invited to express Lions gratitude for their involvement and are asked to share insights on potential areas for improvement. This external perspective is frequently more objective, as internal stakeholders may become too entrenched in their work; external partners can thereby provide valuable suggestions.

Trust emerges as a critical currency for the Lions. By maintaining transparency in PR concerning financial accountability and the outcomes of their initiatives, the organisation cultivates trust among community members and the broader society. As articulated, "Society needs to know what is happening, what the club is doing, how much money it has raised and where it goes. There can be no secrets". This trust, in turn, enhances community engagement, reflected in the community's increased willingness to participate, donate, or inquire about joining the organisation. The linkage between heightened visibility and public reputation is evident, as indicated by the feedback, "When you are more public, you gain more trust".

The Lions report increased confidence in soliciting support from entrepreneurs, who often help proactively due to the organisation's established reputation for impactful work. The directive remains clear: "Do not do anything that could make people distrust you". The

effectiveness of the Lions' PR strategies is underscored by tangible outcomes, such as membership growth and the establishment of new clubs in previously unrepresented areas. The clear communication of their achievements and the demonstrable impact of community contributions have catalysed new members' interest in joining the organisation, driven by an awareness of the positive change they can contribute to, as reflected in the feedback. "After all these initiatives, new members joined our club. They say: We see how much you are doing here".

The Lions' PR strategies are characterised by a robust alignment with their mission and goals, a stakeholder-centred approach, meticulous action planning, ownership of initiatives, consistent and precise messaging, multi-channel communication, innovative content forms, and ongoing evaluation. Trust and accountability are integral components of this strategy, functioning synergistically to create a dynamic environment conducive to societal change.

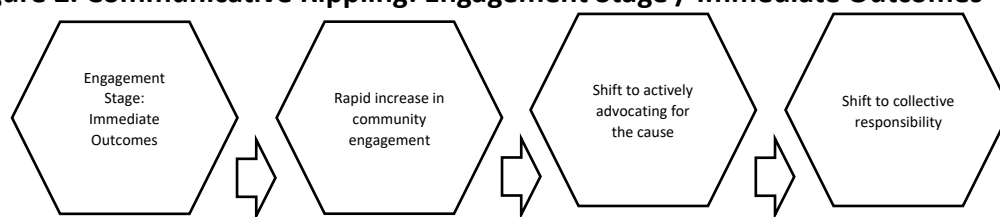
#### 4.2. Perceived Ripple Impacts

When considering the impact of the Lions' PR efforts on community attitudes toward societal issues (RQ 2), the Ukrainian fundraising initiative serves as a prime example of the positive ripple effects created by Lions PR. This initiative not only showcased direct involvement but also contributed to a significant shift in public opinion. The PR strategy employed included a thorough situation analysis, well-defined objectives, identification of key stakeholders, multi-channel communication, and assessment of key performance indicators (KPIs).

**Immediate Outcomes.** The analysis indicates that the implementation of a strategic PR approach by Lions has catalysed a significant enhancement in community engagement regarding societal issues. Specifically, the urgency stemming from the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine mobilised community members to participate actively, illustrating an immediate and heightened responsiveness to pressing global challenges. This initial surge in engagement is not merely a reflection of external circumstances; instead, it evidences the efficacy of the PR strategy in shaping community dynamics. Subsequently, participants transitioned from being passive recipients of information to active advocates, suggesting a profound shift in community attitudes toward collective responsibility (Figure 2).

Findings demonstrate that Lions' PR efforts have effectively fostered a culture where community members are not only informed but motivated to become actively involved in the cause and its organisational aspects. Their outreach strategies have instigated a broader commitment to local social issues, thereby transforming individual engagement into a collective endeavour. This transformation highlights the Lions' role in fostering an environment conducive to ongoing community activism.

**Figure 2. Communicative Rippling: Engagement Stage / Immediate Outcomes**



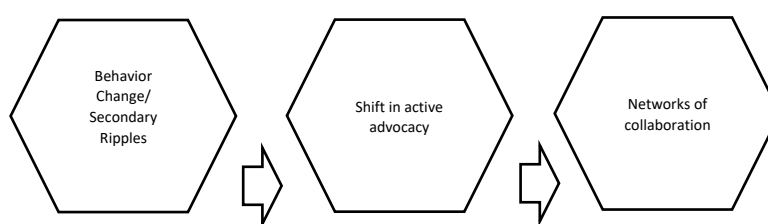
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**Behaviour Change/Secondary Ripples.** The active participation fostered through Lions' strategic PR initiatives has initiated secondary ripple effects that extend beyond immediate advocacy efforts, significantly reshaping community attitudes and behaviour over time. A pivotal outcome of these engaged advocacy efforts is the establishment of collaborative networks that further promote community involvement in societal issues (Figure 3). The transition to active advocacy, coupled with the formation of these networks, serves to illustrate the broader implications of Lions' PR strategies.

An illustrative example of this ripple effect is the organisation of a large-scale charity event in the capital city, which not only garnered participation from high-profile figures but also inspired similar initiatives across various Lions clubs throughout Lithuania. This replication of successful events exemplifies how strategic PR can elevate pressing social issues within public discourse, fostering a culture characterised by solidarity and collective action.

This pronounced shift toward collaborative engagement underscores the evaluative measures employed by Lions to assess the ripple effects of their PR strategies. The establishment of an engagement model, energised by effective PR and community participation, initiates a feedback loop whereby other clubs are inspired to engage actively in social initiatives. This dynamic reinforces the initial research question, affirming that the perceived impacts of Lions' PR efforts manifest as a transformation in community attitudes toward proactive engagement in social issues, thereby contributing to broader societal change.

**Figure 3. Communicative Rippling: Behaviour Change/ Secondary Ripples**



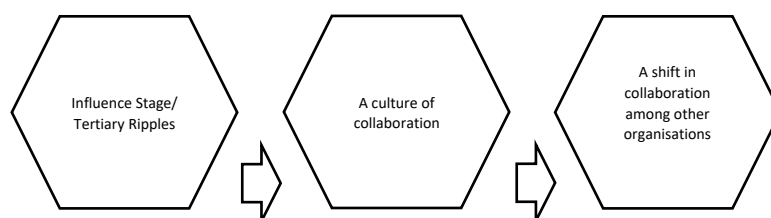
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**Influence Stage/ Tertiary Ripples.** The results highlight a significant transformation in community attitudes stemming from Lions' strategic PR initiatives. This transformation is characterised by the emergence of a culture of collaboration, which has been substantiated through evidence of enhanced collaboration among various organisations, as depicted in Figure 4. The analysis delineates the direct link between the adoption of collaborative networks (secondary ripples) and the overarching behavioural changes observed within the community.

A salient example in this context is the partnership between Lions and Rotary in organising a joint charity concert aimed at supporting Ukraine. The concert not only served as a platform for generating awareness about pressing social issues, specifically the conditions faced by Ukrainian soldiers, but also facilitated a unifying response from the community. The involvement of high-profile figures, including the Chairwoman of the Lithuanian Parliament and public endorsements from notable personalities like the Ukrainian President's wife, serves to amplify the credibility of the initiative. Such instances highlight the effectiveness of strategic PR in raising the community's awareness of critical social issues.

The effectiveness of Lions' PR efforts can be delineated by the proactive engagement observed within the community, reflecting a shift from passive awareness to active participation. This indicates an increased recognition of the community's responsibility to address societal challenges, thereby fostering a culture of solidarity. The engagement metrics gathered underline the extent to which community initiatives, catalysed by Lions' campaigns, exemplify sustained local action in response to social issues, aligning with the research question regarding the perceived impacts of Lions' PR efforts.

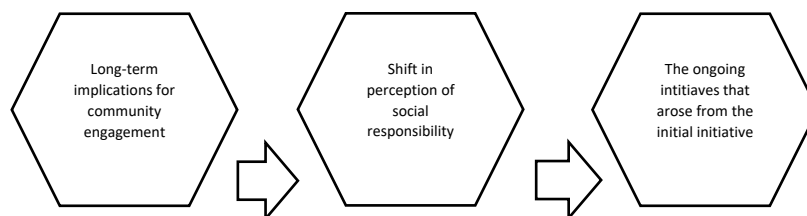
**Figure 4. Communicative Rippling: Influence Stage/ Tertiary Outcomes**



Source: own elaboration

Long-term Implications for Community Engagement. The long-term implications of Lions' PR initiatives reflect a substantial shift in community perceptions of social responsibility. The Lions's targeted messaging has cultivated an elevated awareness and active discourse among community members concerning key social issues. Regularly conducted campaigns and community forums have established a continuous dialogue, thus reinforcing collective responsibility and engagement in societal challenges. The ongoing initiatives which have emerged from Lions' foundational efforts signify a robust response mechanism to community needs, as illustrated in Figure 5.

**Figure 5. Communicative Rippling: Long-term implications for Community Engagement**



Source: own elaboration

In response to the research question of what the perceived impacts of the Lions' PR efforts are on community attitudes towards societal issues, the perceived impacts are substantial, manifesting in increased engagement, enhanced collective responsibility, and fostered collaboration. The strategic PR initiatives, particularly during the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, mobilised community members, effectively transforming them from passive recipients to active advocates. This shift illustrates a fundamental change in community perceptions, where societal issues are recognised as collective responsibilities demanding proactive involvement. Additionally, the establishment of collaborative networks as secondary ripple effects signifies a sustained commitment to and engagement with social issues, demonstrating the efficacy of Lions' outreach strategies. Partnerships forged with organisations such as Rotary further highlight the role of strategic PR in amplifying community efforts and promoting a culture of solidarity. Overall, Lions' PR efforts have effectively

cultivated a more engaged community, reinforcing the transformative potential of PR in shaping attitudes toward societal issues.

#### **4.3. Evaluating the Ripple Effects**

In response to RQ3, which examines how Lions evaluate the ripple effects of strategic PR in terms of community engagement and societal change, the findings show that Lions systematically evaluates the ripple effects of its strategic PR efforts to enhance community engagement and drive societal change. By employing a diverse array of key performance indicators (KPIs), the Lions measure immediate outcomes, behavioural transformations, and long-term implications of their initiatives.

Evaluation of Immediate Outcomes. Metrics such as the reach of various communication channels – including face-to-face interactions, social media engagement, and website traffic – along with increased event attendance and media coverage, provide robust evidence that community members are actively seeking to engage with socially relevant content. This increasing engagement correlates with a deeper understanding of societal issues and a collective willingness to participate in decision-making processes, thereby reinforcing the notion that Lions' strategic PR not only informs but empowers the community.

Evaluation of Behaviour Change/Secondary Ripples. To measure behavioural changes of the communicative rippling, the Lions use a variety of KPIs. The number of individuals participating in initiative-related events directly measures community engagement. Increased attendance at Lions events indicates success in fostering interest and ensuring community members feel connected to the cause. The emergence of spin-off projects inspired by original initiatives serves as a qualitative indicator of behavioural change, reflecting the organic growth of community-led actions addressing social issues and signifying a shift in attitudes and collective community behaviour. Pre- and post-campaign surveys are essential tools for quantifying changes in attitude, awareness, and behaviour resulting from Lions' initiatives. Participants' testimonials further enrich this analysis by providing personal narratives that highlight their transformation and motivate others to engage.

Evaluation of Influence stage/ Tertiary Ripples. Comprehensively evaluate the influence of these changes in communicative rippling, Lions employs a variety of metrics. They facilitate the assessment of participation levels, community engagement in initiatives, and partnerships established as a result of PR efforts. The collaboration between Lions and Rotary exemplifies how effective PR can catalyse broader community engagement, resource mobilisation, and the pursuit of shared objectives.

The number of community initiatives inspired by Lions' original actions is a critical metric in evaluating broader societal change. The sustained collection of donations for Ukraine exemplifies how initial projects can lead to ongoing and multifaceted community responses. By tracking the frequency and scale of these initiatives, the Lions can evaluate the extent to which their PR efforts inspire sustained local action.

Lions clubs undertook regular collection efforts to target specific needs identified by Ukrainian representatives. This strategic alignment between community capabilities and external humanitarian needs showcases effective PR. It underlines the adaptability of the Lions organisation in responding to feedback and social cues from the community.

Evaluation of Long-term Implications for Community Engagement. By consistently gathering data through surveys, feedback forms, and focus groups, Lions assesses the long-term implications of communicative rippling. These community response metrics offer empirical insights into the effectiveness of messaging strategies and the level of community engagement achieved. Moreover, community feedback is integral to evaluating the impact of Lions' initiatives. Various platforms have been established to elicit residents' perspectives, offering valuable insights into evolving attitudes toward social responsibility. These insights are pivotal for refining PR strategies to ensure they resonate effectively with community members and align with broader societal values.

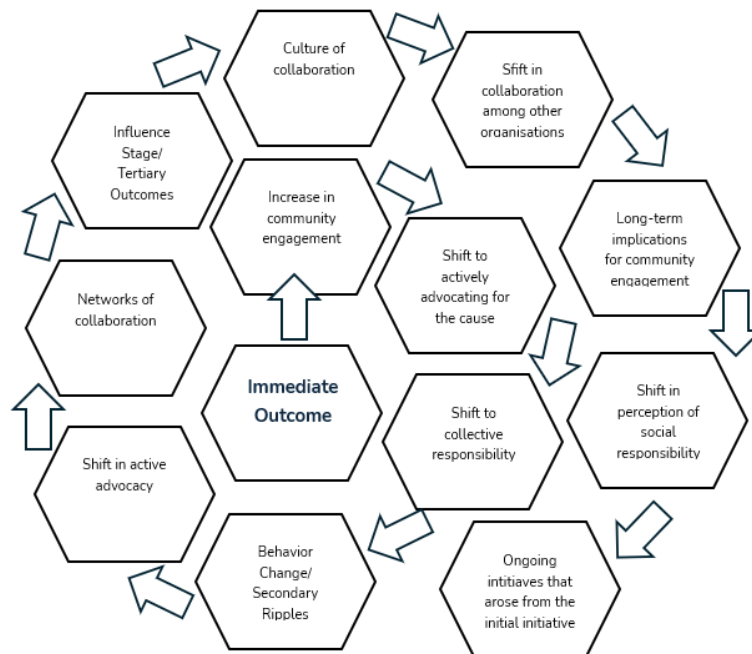
Finally, tracking behavioural changes in relation to social issues constitutes a critical component of assessing PR impact. Analysing participation rates in initiatives, event attendance, and levels of volunteerism provides tangible evidence of the community's shift towards enhanced social responsibility and engagement.

The evaluation of the Lions's strategic PR demonstrates a comprehensive approach to understanding its ripple effects on community engagement and societal change. By leveraging KPIs to assess immediate engagement, behavioural shifts, and long-term impacts, the Lions effectively gauge the resonance of their initiatives within the community. The emergence of spin-off projects and sustained community actions underscores the organisation's ability to catalyse broader social responsibility. Furthermore, the continuous collection of community feedback and participation metrics reveals a significant correlation between Lions' PR efforts and an enhanced collective commitment to addressing social issues, thereby affirming the effectiveness of their strategic PR.

In summary, the communicative rippling (Figure 6) shows that the primary initiative became part of other initiatives, fostering lasting changes within the community and society. The Lions' PR efforts have had a profound impact on the community's attitude towards social issues, fostering empowerment and collaborative engagement. Through systematic evaluation of their strategic PR, the Lions can measure community response and behavioural changes, thus facilitating broader societal change. The long-term implications of their community engagement initiatives signify a transformative approach that aligns community values with actionable social progress.

The findings of this research elucidate that Lions' strategic PR efforts have profoundly transformed community attitudes toward societal issues, engendering a culture of proactive engagement characterized by heightened awareness and collective responsibility. This evolution is evidenced not only by the immediate surge in community involvement in response to the humanitarian crisis but also by the sustained behavioural changes that have emerged over time, indicative of a shift toward collaborative advocacy. Furthermore, the evaluation framework employed by Lions, encompassing a diverse array of key performance indicators, effectively quantifies the ripple effects of their initiatives. Metrics related to engagement levels, participation rates, and the growth of collaborative networks underscore the interconnectedness of community dynamics and strategic PR efforts. Thus, Lions exemplifies a model of best practices in leveraging PR to foster a transformative impact on societal attitudes, simultaneously reinforcing the imperative for ongoing evaluation to sustain and amplify these beneficial ripple effects within the community.

**Figure 6. Communicative Rippling**



Source: own elaboration

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1. Theoretical contributions

This study enhances strategic PR theory (Tench & Yeomans, 2017; Iba et al., 2024) by empirically validating the Ripple framework in the context of Lions. The sense of ownership transforms stakeholders from being passive recipients to active co-authors, thereby challenging the traditional stakeholder model (Fawkes, 2021). Notably, the significance of specific messages – particularly targeted calls to action – can increase motivation fourfold, building on the insights of Holtzhausen & Zerfass (2014). Additionally, partnerships cultivate a culture of collaboration, reinforcing the dialogue presented by Iba et al. (2024), while structured plans concretise the concept introduced by Zerfass & Volk (2020). The practice at Lions showcases a cascading effect: PR efforts lead to direct involvement, which ultimately results in systemic changes within the community.

### 5.2. Practical implications

The results provide clear guidelines for improving PR efforts. PR specialists can significantly contribute by developing targeted content, fostering member ownership, and leveraging multi-channel communication, especially through well-known personalities. For NGO leaders, forming partnerships, like those with Lions and Rotary, alongside structured planning, can



amplify their impact threefold through a ripple effect. Additionally, assessing key performance indicators – such as an increase in attendance, positive feedback, and growth in membership – ensures accountability and effectiveness.

### **5.3. Limitations of the study**

This study is focused on Lions Lithuania and includes insights from 40 interviews. It is important to note that our analysis does not incorporate any quantitative measurements. Furthermore, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine adds a specific context to the findings.

### **5.4. Conclusions**

The primary contribution of this study is the demonstration that strategic PR, when coupled with a sense of ownership and specific messaging, creates ripple effects that transform community behaviour and perceptions of social responsibility. The practices of Lions in Lithuania provide empirical validation for the Ripple framework by showcasing how PR interventions yield direct results, such as increased engagement, lead to secondary effects like enhanced partnership networks, and result in tertiary changes that foster a culture of solidarity. This not only enriches existing PR theory but also presents a replicable model for other NGOs: specific messaging can quadruple motivation, partnerships can triple impact, and KPIs assessments can ensure accountability.

From a practical standpoint, the findings emphasize the significance of clarity in mission, member ownership, and multi-channel communication – especially during crises such as fundraising efforts for Ukraine. However, the study does have limitations, including a small sample size (with only 40 interviews from Lions Lithuania) and its qualitative nature, which restricts broader generalization.

To enhance future research, it would be beneficial to quantitatively evaluate the Ripple framework across a wider range of NGOs, conduct cross-cultural comparisons between regions such as Europe and Asia, assess long-term impacts through 3 to 5-year longitudinal studies, and utilize AI analytics to gauge social media sentiment. These efforts will help expand the potential of Lions' practices into a universal PR strategy aimed at fostering societal change.

## **6. AI STATEMENT**

The Grammarly tool was used for proofreading and language improvement, and DeepL Pro for primary translation of the abstract into Spanish. The author assumes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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