Anişoara PAVELEA Andreea Nicoleta VOINA

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN THE EVE OF THE 4.0 INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Presa Universitară Clujeană

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International Students' Conference on Communication

(ISCC)

-Sixth EDITION –

26-27th of April 2018

Cluj-Napoca, Romania

EDITORS:

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2022

Volumul cuprinde lucrările prezentate la Conferința Națională „International Students' Conference on Communication", ediția a VI-a, 26-27 Aprilie 2018, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
Organizator: Centrul de Cercetare în Comunicare și Inovare Socială (CORE)

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ISBN: 978-606-37-1452-8

Design: Pavel BĂCILĂ

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FOREWORD

Communication challenger in the eve of the 4.0 industrial revolution is a comprehensive volume including papers presented within the International Students' Conference on Communication, organized by the Department if Communication, Public Relations and Advertising, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, between the 26th and the 27th of April 2018. The topics of the papers are related to nowadays communication science and reflect upon the interests of the current students in communication science majors.

The first chapter focusses on Offline and Online Media Communication and includes five papers. Ștefania Cucu investigates the news satire in Romania focusing on the three main actors Cațavencii, Kamikaze and Times New Roman. Using frequency analysis, Ștefania shows that the main purpose of news satire is not to make a mockery of someone, but rather to criticize and to highlight some irregularities, to preserve and assert a national identity, using language in a playful way, and to facilitate mobilization. And most importantly, news satire tends to be perceived as a tool or expression of democracy.

Based on interviews and focus-groups with teenagers, Ioana Pelin, Ana Simerea & Ana-Maria Strugari examine teenagers' perception on anti-drug media campaigns and shows that even though most of the teenagers stand against drug use, spend most of their time on the Internet and with friends, and are influenced primarily by friends and parents, they are unconsciously influenced by campaigns to which they were previously exposed. Regarding the visual concept of the campaigns, teenagers opt for the use of dramatic images and messages to remind the consequences of using drugs, and they also opt for well-argued and long messages.

Dragos Braha & Ioana Stoian show that net neutrality ban could have extended consequences, affected freedom of speech, and led to discrimination, disinformation, and social divide based on financial resources.

Adelina Aaniței shows how difficult it is to analyze reactions to clickbait. Likes and dislikes might be misleading when assessing these eye-catching and attractive titles, but the simple fact of clicking on them makes these instruments useful for the monetization of the content.

Cora Lupaș develops an experiment to test whether self-promoting through direct self-disclosure will have a larger reach among the audience and will generate a higher number of reactions than indirect self-disclosure. The result show that indeed direct self-disclosure is more effective in gaining fame and popularity on Facebook.

The second chapter is dedicated to Humans and Challenges in the Social Context. In their article entitled Humans and rationality: How dogs affect their owners' choices in crisis situation, Avram, Caramalău & Cîrșmari emphasize the psychological and physical benefits of owning a pet and come to the conclusion that he human-animal bond is developed in time and it may influence owners' choices in crisis situations.

Analyzing volunteering as social exclusion, Laura-Andreea Avram-Nagy, Alexandra-Maria Chinciușan & Denisa Dumitru state that the discrimination amongst volunteers and non-volunteers does not come from the volunteers' side, but rather non-volunteers being misinformed about all the aspects of practicing volunteering. It is a bilateral misunderstanding and according to them, better communication on volunteering activities could be a powerful tool in reducing discrimination.

The main goals of Lorena Ladăr, Mihai Mărcuț & Diana Nedelcu's research was to identify the difficulties encountered by first-year students hosted in the Hașdeu campus in their adjustment to student life. The study confirms the results of Miller, Rozin and Fiske (1998), that food can become a social binder between students, and shared meals can be seen generally as an opportunity to get closer to each other, even as a proof of intimacy.

The third chapter concentrates on Advertising and Creative Communication. Agnes Gergely focuses on gender stereotypes and gender norms, by looking at how men and women are represented in Cannes and Effie winners' advertising campaigns. Based on a qualitative approach, including 75 commercials, ranging from 2011 to 2017, stresses upon the idea that festival-winning commercials are different from those we are exposed to daily. Traditional role portrayals are rare, and challenges to what is considered conventional are present and acute.

Through content analysis and creativity measuring scales, Daria Zamă's study examines some of the most popular and widely known IKEA advertisements to see whether their world-wide success and appreciation is based on their one-of-a-kind creative character. Undoubtedly, IKEA has become a genuine love mark among its consumers by keeping up with trends and creating unconventional context advertising.

Ciliana Tudorică analyzes the subtle placement of Dr Pepper in anime and based on an opinion survey of Japanese students, concludes that the presence of Dr Pepper is not considered a distraction from the main plot, but rather an indicator of realism within the universe of the anime.

Adriana Potrache investigates the way in which animals (specifically dogs and cats) are portrayed in commercials by Romanian brands.

The fourth approaches topics related to Branding in the 4.0 Era and consists of two articles. In the first one, after examining the motivational factors that can affect employees, Kinga Krippan looks at which loyalty builder programs work best for IT companies. IT managers are fully aware of the fact that work can no longer be seen as a simple exchange between performance and pay, therefore they pay increased attention to the community, to mission and value system and last, but not least, to the workplace environment for creating a loyalty culture.

In the second paper, entitled Political branding, symbolic interactionism, and leadership in postmodern democracy, Iulia Medveschi looks at the political branding process and her paper help us understand the dynamic relation established between politicians and voters, by drawing on a combination of literature on relational and authentic leadership. As she says: "What matters in the construction of brand relationships is not only the image projected by politicians towards the electorate, but also a conscious effort to gain a shared sense of purpose".

Though divergent in interests, all the papers previously mentioned are related to communication sciences domains, such as advertising, media studies, political communication, or organizational communication. They reflect students' preferences in approaching theoretical concepts from an empirical perspective and enable them to get in contact with the world of research. We encourage them to take full advantage of the experience of participating in student conferences and to share their work with their peers.

The Editors

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The news satire in Romania
Case study: Cațavencii, Kamikaze, and Times New Roman

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Abstract

This paper approaches the subject of news satire in Romania, being focused on three well-known contemporary cases – Cațavencii, Kamikaze, and Times New Roman. The purpose of this study is to sketch a general and actual image of the Romanian news satire and to identify in which manner it contributes to the democratic process. The first part consists of a detailed introduction of the topic and the literature review, which aims to explain and clarify major key concepts used in this study. Also, in the same section, there is a synthesis of research and studies related to the perception of the public towards news satire. The second part of the paper represents the research itself, thus the analysis of the three main actors of the Romanian news satire, and the comparison between them, to examine the potential tendencies, patterns or, of course, differences in their approach. Therefore, the content analysis is carried out on their online articles – 442 in total – from a limited period (1st of November 2017 – 12 of December 2017), the focus being on the frequency of their subjects. The results offer clues about the way the society – media relation works and the role of the news satire in the Romanian democracy.

Keywords: *news satire, Romania, media, society, democracy.*

Introduction

Information continues to play an essential role in contemporary society, and even acquires another magnitude due to the new media where it can be propagated. The dispersion of information helps the individual to be aware of the current state of the society, the country, or even the whole world. An uninformed person cannot function properly in a certain context because he or she may lack essential knowledge, such as rules that help avoid the violation or endangerment of people's freedom.

The transmission of information is materialized by the press and all the elements of the mass-media. It has become the most complex and efficient *tool* of information as it reaches most people, in one form or another. When meeting the term *"press"*, the first natural association is related to the written press. However, as the need for information remains, but the medium and the channels keep changing, it is much more relevant today to talk about the *online press*. People continue to search for information about society, politics, weather, events or even celebrities, and the online press provides them all in a quick and accessible way. This can easily be deduced from a simple observation of the large number of online users, especially on social networks, where the press is more and more active.

Nevertheless, the press is not always a fair reflection of reality, as it is built around a series of influences (political, ideological, cultural etc.). The press is very influential, succeeding to instill ideas or values in the minds of a large crowd of people. Thus, the press not only informs the individual, but also shapes a person to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the trust level and other contextual factors.

The news satire, although it appears on the surface as a fun alternative to present the information, is a source of major influence in the society, as exactly the act of choosing to satirize an event, person, or idea makes it acquire a certain nuance. While the common or traditional media should present an objective picture of reality, the satirical perspective builds the image so that it highlights certain points – usually negative and moralistic. In this way, an objective statement can remain at the stage of information, without forming a particular opinion, but the same statement, satirized, has a very good chance of inducing a certain opinion in the mind of the individual.

All, the topic of this paper, which is online news satire in Romania, requires more attention and a greater place in the media research, due to its power of influence. It is important, therefore, to see what news satire means, what implications it may have, and what kind of information is being transmitted through this influential medium, so that a conclusion with a general picture of the news satire in the current context can be drawn.

Literature review

The current situation of the satirical press cannot be fully understood without looking into the major concepts, its course in time, and the possible implications. To accomplish this, this study provides an analysis of the specialized literature, being focused on those scientific articles or books whose subjects are relevant to the theme of this paper.

The media can be seen as a platform for influential people – journalists, public relations specialists, politicians, people working in advertising, opinion leaders etc. –, which offers the opportunity to inform, educate, persuade, and influence the public (Golan, 2010). Thus, the mass media have multiple roles, and it is present in many aspects of an individual's life. The news media have always been (and still are) a large part of this platform, mostly because of their informative function. It implies the dissemination of information to a wide audience, focused on the current situation in politics, economy, culture, society, or even individual cases. Information should be relevant to as many people as possible and serve them to function and to integrate in the society at a given time, but also to simply understand the current situation of the world. The education of the public can also be achieved through the news media – certain values, ideas, behaviors, or people serving as an example for the population can be promoted, and information can be disseminated to help enrich general knowledge. The persuasion and influence functions are much subtler, and come as a secondary feature, hidden behind the articles or the information. These may, of course, be both positive and negative, depending on the purpose they are meant to pursue.

All these classic news media functions contribute to a much greater role that it plays in the society, namely the promotion of democracy and the freedom of expression. Media has made significant contributions to the strengthening and affirmation of ideological pluralism, but also to expressing the desire to openly challenge the authorities (Georgiadis, 2004). That is why the press is often considered *"the fourth power of the state"* or *"the Fourth Estate,"* and its activity ensures a permanent connection between the authorities (state) and the public (citizens).

There are many cases, nonetheless, where the press loses its independence and becomes a tool for those in power. Usually, this happens in countries with a totalitarian regime, as was the case of Romania between 1948 and 1989. However, the press control continued even after the overthrow of communism, consolidating a form of authoritarianism – the power concentrated in the hands of the president – under a democratic face (Carey, 1996). Thus, it can be noticed that the sudden change of an ideology does not necessarily bring an equally abrupt change in the structure and institutions of the state. The news media did not have the opportunity to move immediately to a democratic approach, due to financial pressure that affected a large part of the private sector (Georgiadis, 2004).

Moreover, those in power wanted to continue controlling the press, to model a nation recently escaped from a totalitarian regime, that is, in fact, a crowd of confused and vulnerable people. A controlled or weak news media not only violates many of the definitions of democracy, but also distorts the decision-making process by denying or eliminating necessary and genuine information (Carey, 1996). However, if the situation of the Romanian press immediately after '89 was precarious, it is now transitioning to a press characterized by democratic principles and independence. Mass media presents the signs of a change towards diversity, responsible journalism, and freedom of expression (Georgiadis, 2004).

The press is, therefore, very important for both the individual and the society. Its functions have always been approximately the same, although there are cases where they have been given a positive and constructive nuance, and other cases where they have been negative and harmful to the public. Although the functions or roles are quite fixed, the manifestations of the press have undergone a process of evolution and development over time, through a series of significant changes. Currently, there is a state of *"media chaos,"* given that the number of available media forms has increased exponentially (Harrington, 2012). The Internet, an expression of the technical revolution, is a key factor in provoking this *"chaos,"* as it seriously diminishes the control function once with the rapid distribution of information (Harrington, 2012).

The emergence of the Internet has therefore marked a new stage for the press, for a new environment where information can be distributed has emerged – one with new and unique features. As mentioned, information control is significantly reduced due to the high speed with which a particular article, for example, gets to be shared. If the number of printed newspapers is controlled by a particular editorial staff, the number of distributions of an article on social networks depends on the users who interact with it, whether they choose to pass on the information, sometimes even modified by their own vision. Besides the freedom to share an article with anyone, the opportunity to add comments and real-time feedback on that subject also emerges.

There are both positive and negative opinions about this change, namely moving the press online. In a study from 2010, respondents believe that the Internet offers a much greater openness to journalism, so it comes with an increase of opportunities. Moreover, they see online news as a prompt source of information, important in making decisions in the contemporary world (Kovačič, Erjavec, & Štular, 2010). Because the world nowadays is changing very quickly, it is important that certain news come as soon as possible to the public so that people can act knowingly. Although there are various channels through which news is being distributed, people rely heavily on the Internet to gather information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000).

However, even if the Internet adds speed and accessibility to the news, it also has a set of disadvantages. The development of the Internet has meant the increase of the *"online fraud"* and misinformation phenomena (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Thus, what appears to be an advantage, that is the multiplication of opportunities for journalists, can at the same time turn into a downside of the online environment, as anyone can create, transmit, or modify news. The sources multiply very quickly and it becomes difficult to select that information that respects the accuracy and objectivity principles. Articles are no longer written by specialized journalists and editors, but by any individual with Internet access.

No matter what type of press (printed, televised, online), to have an effect and a certain influence on the public, it must be credible. Credibility depends on many factors, and they can be linked both to the media itself and to the public's mindset. Thus, the success or failure of a news source often depends on the general perception of the public and the degree of credibility or trust in the media (Golan, 2010). That is one of the reasons why the credibility of the press is a common topic in media research. There is a tension between traditional and online media, and many studies have tried to identify the reasons why some prefer to trust one and not the other. 2010 research shows how *"the more people use the internet, the more their trust is diminished"* (Kovačič, Erjavec, & Štular, 2010). A greater credibility is given to the classical press, therefore, because an important element for the respondents, who are journalists, is tradition. This is due to the fact that the printed press, for example, has a significant historical course, during which it has gained a certain reputation of credibility and quality (Kovačič, Erjavec, & Štular, 2010). Hence, once again, the argument of traditional media control over the content is brought back, without allowing anyone to alter or distort the original form of an article.

A significant number of studies bring a different perspective, though, that favors the online environment at the expense of traditional media. Many internet users, especially those with a medium to advanced level, see the online press as a credible news source, as they can easily check the information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). A study made on journalists supports the same point of view and adds that users can always check the subject of an article, the journalist who wrote it, and even the source itself through which the information is transmitted (Kovačič, Erjavec, & Štular, 2010). This constant check by the online community is doubled by the possibility for users to comment, to reply, or to notify possible irregularities. The journalism tools are becoming more and more accessible to the public, allowing for the development of a community that sees erroneous information very quickly and makes it known for other readers. This model of the *"online"* community serves the common interests of the public more effectively than the traditional press, which is accessible only for the elites and journalists (Kovačič, Erjavec, & Štular, 2010), and where the interaction with the public is minimal or even non-existent. There are even older studies, carried out when the Internet was not as developed as today, claiming that the online press has much greater credibility for readers (Johnson & Kaye, 1998).

If the classical media are credible because of their tradition, reputation, and control over the information, other people believe that online media are more reliable because of the possibility of verifying in detail both the subjects and the source. However, credibility may be based on the subject alone, giving no importance to the channel of transmission. The more a person is interested in a particular topic, the less interest in the credibility of the source. When someone is not interested in the subject, the ideas receive little attention, but the peripheral characteristics (the image and the credibility of the source) gain value (Gunther, 1988). Other studies show that trust can also be given depending on the nature of the news. Greater trust is given to political news than to those in other categories (Johnson & Kaye, 1998).

Now that there is an overview of the press and its importance, the focus can be moved on what the satirical press means and what role it has in society. Satire can be defined as an *"aesthetic* *category in the sphere of comic, criticizing somebody or something with violence and caricature"* (www.dex.ro, 2018). The news satire refuses the linearity of the classical press, which auto-positions itself on a superior and privileged level – it provides information, it does not interact with the public, which remains only a passive receptor of the transmitted truths (Baym & Jones, 2012). Thus, it can be considered that the news satire is a public reaction or practice that calls for a common challenge to query the central authorities (Baym & Jones, 2012), or to answer them with the public's own point of view. The public enjoys this opportunity to speak or to respond with its own vision to information received from the press, especially those of national interest. The more a society makes use of democracy, the greater the desire to be more involved in the process and the flow of the information. Satire is a form of resilience; in short, it is a way to *speak* to those in power. In Western cultures, usually, satire acquires the same role that journalism is supposed to play (Cutbirth, 2011). Therefore, satire comes as an element of balance between the state (power/authorities) and the public (citizens), giving the latter the opportunity to transmit information.

The news satire is not only distinguished by its position towards the authorities, but also by the different approach of the news. It is by far more ambiguous than the classical press, which is based on clarity and objectivity. Several socio-psychological studies have demonstrated that individuals process information much easier if they consider it beneficial to them, and that they tend to see just what they want to see when information is ambiguous (LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009). Consequently, the ideas presented in the satirical form are more likely to be perceived by a certain audience, but they can get different nuances due to subjectivity and ambiguity. Another factor contributing to the fast reception of the information is the funny characteristic of the news. Humor makes a piece of information be memorable and it encourages the receiver to forward the idea further, usually through oral speech (Cutbirth, 2011).

In addition to the high perceptiveness of the information, the satirical press also proves to be credible to the public, as traditional speeches are no longer seen as a sufficient source of information. The credibility of the news satire is due to this *"guard dog"* function, by which it monitors and expands the excesses and artifacts of the classical press (Baym & Jones, 2012), hidden under the traditional idea that the press only conveys the truth.

In Romania, satire has its origins in literature, but has also developed rapidly in the press, largely because of the foreign policy factors. The prerequisites of the satirical literary writings were created by the threat of introducing the Hungarian language into the curriculum of schools in Transylvania, the danger of the Russian expansion, the appearance of the first forms of political parties, and so on (Teodoraşcu, 2015). Afterwards, the lack of freedom of the press pushed the public to express their desire to voice their opinion, especially against arbitrary and abusive acts or against scandalous and vicious public figures (Teodoraşcu, 2015). This is the public reaction mentioned above, coming from the people who do not want to remain a mere passive receiver of the press information, especially when the situation of the society or the country is unstable. Satire has become in the Romanian society, therefore, a way of criticizing events, deeds, people, or institutions that do not resonate with the interests of the public good. Thus, the idea is not to *"provoke"* or *"mock"* certain people, for example, but rather to criticize (Bardan, 2012), and to highlight some irregularities. Moreover, satire also serves to preserve and assert a national identity, using language in a playful way, with which some ideas are conveyed, or others are criticized (Baym & Jones, 2012). Humor facilitates mobilization and contributes to the formation of a sustainable and resilient culture (Armanca, 2017).

The specialized literature therefore shows that the press is an important factor within society, sometimes being an expression of democracy and other times a tool for totalitarianism. Moreover, it is notable that the emergence of the Internet has a great impact on the press, bringing both benefits and obstacles. However, the efficiency of the press is mostly linked to its credibility, determined by factors such as tradition in the classical press, or the possibility of verifying the source for online media. The satirical press has also proved to be an essential pawn in the society, usually fighting for freedom of speech, and regulating certain relationships between those in power and ordinary citizens. If the classical press presents – or *should* present – the objective reality, the satirical press shows and supports the public opinion about the current situation of a society and is seen as a *"playful distortion of reality"* (LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009).

Methodology

Research design

The analyzed studies outlined a general picture of the satirical press in Romania, but to formulate a relevant idea for its current situation, it is necessary to focus on significant and actual publications. Thus, the next part of the study features the content analysis research method, which is already very popular in media studies. This method complements the information obtained by reviewing the literature and allows for an objective and systematic analysis.

A classic analysis method, namely *frequency analysis*, was used to find out what topics are the most popular among the articles and therefore to deduce the media agenda, which reflects today's society. The recording unit is the *article* taken for its content, which will be put into a category chart, depending on its main theme.

The satirical press is present all over the world in different forms, depending on the free speech limitations, but this study is focused only on the case of Romania, because it is much more accessible and less studied than Western media of this sort. Therefore, the most relevant names in the Romanian satire press were selected (Cațavencii, Kamikaze, and Times New Roman) to obtain a set of results with a higher degree of generalization and representativeness. Indirectly, this study also includes the readers of the targeted media, as they play an important role in the distribution of the articles, in the prestige of an online newspaper and its image.

The publications were analyzed in the online environment, more precisely on their Facebook pages, where they are the most active. Alongside their popularity, which is an obvious feature, another selection criterion for the sample was the number of Facebook *likes* of those pages. Although reading the satirical press has been possible mostly through newspapers, today we can easily find it in the online environment. Satire newspapers continue to exist, but the impact and visibility of their articles are greater in the virtual environment. The two common directions that an online newspaper can exploit are social media and websites. This paper is focused on the first approach – social media – because of their nowadays popularity, and because they allow the appearance of phenomena such as virality, they allow feedback in real time from the readers, and they are, anyway, interconnected with the websites.

A brief presentation of the evolution of satirical press in Romania is necessary for a clearer picture of the subject. However, to have actual and relevant results, the study targets only the articles from a fixed period of time (November 1st to December 12th, 2017), in order to obtain actual results that may provide an overview of the present and the current context of the Romanian society.

The press developed substantially over time, resulting in the multiplication of sources through which information can be transmitted to the public. In news satire, a branch of the press –

characterized by irony and humor – news can be based on reality, with only a few aspects being satirized. However, in other cases, the content of the articles is completely fictional. The nature of the content is the element that differentiates the classical press from the news satire, along with its moralizing role. Satirical articles are meant to highlight certain negative or defective features of the society and encompass a teaching or a moral that the reader deduces at the end of the reading. The first satire magazine chosen for content analysis is *Caţavencii*, a big name in the Romanian press, self-entitled *"the youngest and at the same time the most important weekly satire magazine in Romania."* It has its origins in *Academia Caţavencu,* a consecrated satire newspaper, created in 1991, but is currently held by the Adevărul Holding media group. Various administrative changes, however, caused part of the editorial team to break away from Academia Catavencu, as they could no longer resonate with the principles and ideals that came with the new patronage. The magazine contains 16 pages and has a price of 4 lei. The online presence is manifested through the website (*www.catavencii.ro)* and through the Facebook page of the newspaper, where their daily activity, except for weekends, when no articles are usually posted. The editor-in-chief is Doru Buşcu, and some names that contribute to creating the articles are Mircea Dinescu, Patrick Andre de Hillerin, Isaac Ionescu, Mihai Radu, and Dan Panaet.

The second brand to be analyzed is *Kamikaze*. It was founded in 2010, also coming from Academia Caţavencu, from a first split caused by internal problems. In the print version, Kamikaze is also a weekly issue, it has 16 pages, and can be found at the price of 3 lei. The website, (*www.kamikazeonline.ro*) and the Facebook page (Revista Kamikaze) ensure online presence and boost the popularity of the articles. Marius Bortea, the editor-in-chief of the magazine, works with people like Marian Turosu, Gabriel Drogeanu, Andrei Manţog, Alexandru Căutis, or Augustin Julea.

The third choice is *Times New Roman*, which has a special status among the analyzed papers. It does not have a printed newspaper, but an *almanac* that encompasses the best articles of the editorial board. A very good description for Times New Roman is the one formulated in their motto: *"Independent Daily Newspaper of Volunteer Humor."* The online presence is very strong, both on the website (www.timesnewroman.ro) and on the Facebook page. The Times New Roman team is a young, dynamic and nonconformist team and includes names like Călin Petrar (founder), Ionut Foltea, and Ovidiu Eftimie.

Thus, the Romanian news satire manifests itself through these three entities, active in the online environment, that continue the tradition of a different approach to news coverage and reporting. Although the popularity of print media has declined in Romania, online articles remain a major source of information to the public, thus being a relevant topic of interest for the Romanian society.

The research question of this paper is the following: *Is the news satire in Romania a democracy tool for the large public?*

Results

The first Facebook page analyzed is *Caţavencii*, which is currently liked by 244,921 persons. From November 1st to December 12th, 2017, 201 articles were posted on this page, categorized after identifying the main theme and keywords. Out of these, almost 30% (59) of the articles are part of the *politics* category, the category with the most elements. Among the most common keywords are *PSD, Dragnea, Tudose, protests, government,* and *Iohannis*. There are 28 items identified in the culture category, i.e. about 14% of the total. This is due to the writers who constantly contribute to the articles (writers such as *Florin Iaru*) and articles with subjects such as

The Gaudeamus Fair, Mircea Cărtărescu, film reviews (both Romanian and international), and *book reviews*. Another quite popular category is *celebrity,* which contains 25 articles. These articles have as their main subject a certain celebrity or personality, with several types of public figures (actors, celebrities, politicians, athletes etc.). Some examples of such people are: *Stela Popescu, Gigi Becali, Oana Zăvoranu, Codrin Ştefănescu,* or *Vadim Tudor*. Then, 15 of the articles analyzed fit into the *history* category, where there are subjects such as *Communism, Dacians,* or *The Great Union*. A total of 14 articles belong to the category of *administration*, where the articles related to *The Bucharest City Hall* are predominant, as well as news about other mayors or county councils in the country. Also, 8 articles with *international* themes (*Trump, France, Catalonia, Brexit*) and 6 articles from the *sports* category were identified. The rest of the articles, i.e. about 23% or 46 articles, have been introduced into the *various* category. The remaining topics and themes varied and they do not repeat themselves to form a category in itself. Among these, topics such as *Uber, Christmas Fair, digi24, shepherds, Romanian Post, Vaslui,* or *taxi drivers* can be identified.

The second Facebook page analyzed is the *Kamikaze Magazine* (Revista Kamikaze), which has posted 47 articles during the period investigated, and is liked by 2,528 people. The category with the most articles, encompassing about 47% of them (or 22 items), is *politics*. Keywords most often mentioned are *PSD, Tudose, Dragnea,* and *DNA*. A total of 8 articles belong to the category of *celebrities*, where we find names such as *Stela Popescu, George Soros, Ştefan Hruşcă, Gigi Becali,* or *Cătălin Botezatu*. Only 4 articles can be categorized as *culture*, and they usually refer to *The Royal House* and the Romanian culture in general. The remaining ones, that is, 13 articles, belong to the *various* category, where numerous themes and topics are approached: *medicines, Black Friday, Danube Delta, Vaslui, pupils,* etc.

The last Facebook page analyzed is *Times New Roman*, which is liked by 555,986 people, with 194 articles posted in the time frame studied. The category with the highest number of articles (97, or 50%) is *various*, as Times New Roman creates many articles based on imagination and not necessarily inspired by real news, which justifies a wide range of themes and topics. Some examples of topics in this category are: *students, Hungarians, Las Fierbinti, Vaslui, student hostel, Bitcoin, Bucharest, Black Friday, corporatists, vegans, Saint Nicholas, gendarmes, blondes.* The following category by number of articles is *celebrity*, which represents about 19% of the total (36 items). Among these, we find the names of politicians (*Ion Iliescu, Gabriela Firea*), TV stars (*Cătălin Măruţă*), actors (*Alexandru Arşinel, Stela Popescu*), singers (*Puya, Delia*) and others. A number of 26 articles have been featured in the *politics* category, with key words such as *PSD, protests, government*, or *Tudose*. Of all the articles, 9 are in the *international* category, as we find topics related to *Russia, USA, EU, Austria*. We identified seven items for the *religion* category, which typically refer to *the Patriarch Daniel, the Cathedral of Salvation of the Nation,* or *BOR* (The Romanian Orthodox Church). The *business* category counts 6 articles, in which keywords such as *Dacia* and *TAROM* have been identified. A total of 5 items are in the *administrative* category, and 5 are in the category of *culture.* In the *sports* category there are only 3 articles, and their subjects refer to *football, matches* and *Meme Stoica*.

Discussion

The three analyzed Facebook pages show both similarities and differences. Although they are all part of the news satire, each has a special approach, its own structure, and certain predominant themes. A first remark can be made on the number of posts in the chosen period for research. While Times New Roman and Cațavencii have around 200 posts (194 and 201 respectively), Kamikaze has only 47 articles, which indicates a weaker online presence. Times New Roman has a daily activity, but Caţavencii is limited to weekday posts (Monday-Friday).

Regarding the content of the articles, common categories of the three pages can be identified, but also articles that are specific to each of them. Political articles are present in all three subjects of analysis, even representing the most popular category for Cațavencii and Kamikaze. Times New Roman places *politics* on the 3rd place in the categories but approaches the same topics as the other two*: PSD, Liviu Dragnea, Mihai Tudose, protests, government*. The presence of politics in articles denotes the current state of the Romanian society, in which more and more people start to express their dissatisfaction with the country's leadership. Satirical articles highlight corruption and thievery, two phenomena that can be associated with today's political figures, but also emphasize the incompetence or amateurism of politicians.

Another category with many articles on all three pages is about *celebrities* and their lives. The satirical compound has as a main objective to highlight human defects - so it has a moralizing purpose, but it can also be a way of criticizing an action or ideas launched by a certain public person. Cațavencii is abundant in articles from the *culture* category, but this is not as dominant in the other two cases. As mentioned, some of the writers of the Caţavencii articles are even writers (more specific poets) and they formed a certain tradition of cultural articles. Other categories found in all the three sources are *international* and *sports*, but not many articles are allocated.

Besides these, each page has many articles in the *various* category, where it is easy to identify the differences between Cațavencii, Kamikaze and Times New Roman. Cațavencii is focused on creating satirical articles based on actual and real ones, adding new elements, or exaggerating certain aspects, all to bring about a critique or a reaction to the initial news. Kamikaze also uses real-world news to create satirical articles, but there is also news whose content is not necessarily up to date, but it is aimed at identifying and reporting problems and irregularities (an example would be unexploited tourism). The third page, Times New Roman, has a slightly different approach. Although there are articles inspired by current and real news, most of the articles are invented, containing a basic idea of reality but presenting imagined scenarios, characters, and phenomena. The purpose remains the same, namely, to identify and highlight the problems in the Romanian society, to criticize certain ideas, facts, persons, or institutions and to offer a new perspective which, through humor, transmits a subtle moral.

Conclusion

The results of this analysis show how often articles from a certain category appear and how the Romanian satire press resonates with the great mass of people and not with those in power. The articles seem to be a very good instrument of public opinion, by making the wishes of Romanians and some of their opinions visible. Thus, an affirmative answer can be offered for the research question, as the news satire is a tool/expression of democracy.

All things considered, a general conclusion is that both the literature and the actual study conducted through content analysis emphasize the major importance of the press in society. The Romanian news satire is a tool of democracy through which Romanians manage to speak their minds and prevent unilateral communication coming only from the central authorities. By criticizing facts, ideas, or people, people show that they are not easily manipulated, and that power is in the hands of the people. Moreover, the satirical press plays a role as a moderator not only in the political world, but also in the daily life of the members of the Romanian society, as it identifies and senses any artifice or abuse, making them known to the public.

Although the results provide a relevant picture of the news satire in Romania in the current context, this study is not enough to describe it in a comprehensive manner. Thus, other studies in this area are welcome, especially structured for a longer period, to also observe an eventual evolution of the publications and to see if there are certain trends or processes that repeat at a given time. The articles can also be studied in a more detailed way, to identify their nuances and possible influences behind them (as political, social, cultural, or other influences).

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Teenagers’ perception on anti-drug media campaigns

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Abstract

Illicit drug use is a present-day problem, especially among teenagers who represent a vulnerable age group. The main aim of this study is to obtain useful information that can help create an anti-drug campaign addressed to teenagers who form the target group. The subjects of the current study are high-school students aged between 15 and 19, from Cluj-Napoca city of România. The sample is one of convenience, as the subjects were not randomly chosen. The research methods used are the semi-structured interview and the focus group, and the obtained data is mostly qualitative. The study is based on the following research questions: Do teenagers spend more time on the Internet, watching TV, or do they prefer to directly interact with others? Who has a significant influence on the way they think and behave: appreciated friends, family members, or public figures? Which are the psychological and social factors that determine teenagers to use or to abstain from using illicit drugs?. The main conclusions of the study show that the majority of the teenagers stand against drug use, they spend most of their time on the Internet and with friends, and they are influenced primarily by friends and parents. Regarding the visual concept of the campaign, most of the teenagers opt for the use of dramatic images and messages to remind the consequences of using drugs, and they also opt for well-argued and long messages. This data reveals the fact that teenagers are unconsciously influenced by campaigns to which they were previously exposed.

Keywords: teenagers, Cluj-Napoca, illicit drugs, media campaign.

Introduction

The topic of this study refers to an actual important problem, relevant and occurring on a national scale; it is an issue that emerges especially in the largest cities of the country, Cluj-Napoca being one of them. Through the campaign based on findings from this study, the authors aim to bring to teenagers’ attention the negative consequences of using drugs and, therefore, to help reduce the number of those who start consuming them. The realistic and suggestive approach of the visual materials would be a new element that the campaign brings so that the public feels targeted.

By analyzing primary and secondary data, the authors aim to provide answers to the following research questions: Do teenagers spend more time on the Internet, watching TV, or do they prefer to directly interact with others? Who has a significant influence on the way they think and behave: appreciated friends, family members, or public figures? Are teenagers willing to try new things or are they more reserved regarding extreme actions? Which are the psychological and social factors that determine teenagers to use or to abstain from using illicit drugs?

Therefore, the main concepts tackled in this paper are the use of illicit drugs, teenagers, and media campaigns. The use of illicit drugs is understood as the use of any type of drugs, at least once in a lifetime. Cannabis, new psychoactive substances, named "ethnobotanicals," cocaine, LSD, ecstasy are among this kind of drugs, and they are also the most encountered drugs in Romania according to a document published by the National Anti-drug Agency (National Anti-drug Agency, 2017a, p. 29). "As conceptualized by the stress and coping theory, substance use can be a form of avoidant coping with stressful life events," several studies show (Carliner, Delker, Fink, Keyes, & Hasin, 2016). People may choose to use drugs in order to "relieve anxiety, depression, or alienation; to avoid actively dealing with stressful life events; or to escape from current or remembered stress and trauma" (*ibid.*). Of course, these are not the only reasons why teenagers try to use drugs. "Teenage represents a period of vulnerability regarding drug usage" (National Anti-drug Agency, 2014, p. 1). Therefore, oftentimes people start consuming them during this period of life. "J. Piaget considers the teenager period ranges between 15 and 18 years old (...). Other researchers split the period from 11 to 20 years old in four stages: preadolescence, early adolescence, middle adolescence and late teens" (Sion, 2003, p. 190).

Mass-media represents the means through which "information or messages are conveyed to large numbers of people simultaneously" (Montagne, 2011, p. 851), in other words "the channels of mass communication" (Balaban, 2009, p. 19). These channels are, among others, television, radio, print media, movies, or the internet. "Media interventions are defined as organized and purposive activities that utilize a variety of media channels to inform, persuade, or motivate populations" (Bou-Karroum *et al.*, 2017, p. 2). Media campaigns represent such an intervention, especially in the field of public health communication, as they inform or change people's attitudes and behaviors.

There has been visible growth of the number of people, especially teenagers who use drugs during the last years, this constituting a problem "in every developed and under-developed country in the world" (Hussain cited in Khalid & Kausar, 2016, p. 116) in Romania in 2016, which generated a growth of experimental recent and actual use of drugs compared to the situation from 2013 (National Anti-drug Agency, 2017b, p. 3). The use of illegal substances is influenced by socio-demographic factors (such as age or gender), as well as by psychological and social factors. The most used drug in Romania is cannabis, especially among males (National Anti-drug Agency, 2017a, p. 29); youngsters aged between 14 and 19 years old are the category found on the second place regarding the starting age of consuming cannabis (34% from all of those who consume cannabis started when they were between 14 and 19 years old) (*ibid.*). According to a study conducted in Pakistan, religiosity, the relationship teens have with their family, friends, and the community where they live, or the way they perceive and face problems constitute categories of psychosocial factors influencing drug-related behaviors (Hhalid & Kausar, 2016, p. 118).

Even though in Romania the rate of drug usage is lower than in other developed European countries, the country faces a large number of people affected by the HIV virus as a result of injecting different types of drugs (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2017, p. 20). Therefore, in 2016, from the total of 654 new individuals infected with HIV, 100 (15%) had consumed injectable drugs (National Anti-drug Agency, 2017b, pp. 7-8). Thus, one can argue that drug use has quite serious consequences at a national level, and, therefore, the implementation of programs and ad campaigns suited for the target group is an utter necessity.

The main activities of prevention of drug use conducted by the National Anti-Drug Agency, as it is shown in the analyses they carried out for 2016, consisted in "informing, educating and raising awareness" regarding this type of substance use among the beneficiaries of the projects, but also in "developing attitudes and practices (...) by orienting target groups towards social desirable recreational activities, as an alternative to drug usage" (National Anti-drug Agency, 2017b, p. 4).

Comello (2013) compared the results of two anti-drug campaigns, arguing that one highlighted the negative consequences of drug usage, whereas the other placed emphasis on "increased personal autonomy and other positive consequences of avoiding substances, such as being able to pursue career goals or exciting activities" (p. 37). As the author concluded from his analysis, the first campaign did not generate the desired results, whereas an evaluation of the second campaign showed a predicted downsize of marijuana use (*ibid.*), which might substantiate the idea that the approach of the second campaign is more efficient. There is research showing that an approach that refers to a feeling of fear "may have weaker desirable effects than expected and potentially harmful unintended effects" (p. 38). The "Above the influence" campaign was more efficient as it used more positive messages, as opposed to the previous campaign, "My anti-drug." However, the emotional tone of the ATI campaign had a more negative rather than positive tone, which leads to the idea that a balance between positive and negative emotions expressed through campaign materials must be found (pp. 43-44). Kelly, Swaim, and Wayman's (1996) experiment shows that a campaign promoting a more optimistic theme can be more efficient (p. 248).

Factors that determine teenagers not to use drugs are known as protective factors (Hhalid & Kausar, 2016, p. 117). These factors that have a positive influence on teens come from the relationships with peers and from the individual domain, from the familial domain, and from the domain linked to the community (Benard cited in Hhalid & Kausar, 2016, p. 117). Self-esteem, religious identity, good academic results are part of the individual category factors (p. 119), a close relationship with parents and family, the possibility to contribute through one's actions to family activities, and to be rewarded for them are part of the familial domain, whereas the possibilities to take part in positive activities in the community and to be rewarded for them are part of the third type of factors (Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency cited in Hhalid & Kausar, 2016, p. 118). The way individuals face problems has a protective role as well.

The primary socialization theory shows that interactions with family, with peers, and with school contribute to the shaping of a behavior linked to drug use (Oetting, Deffenbacher, &

Donnermeyer cited in Hhalid & Kausar, 2016, p. 119). Therefore, interaction with peers who do not use drugs has positive effects among teenagers, because they "value the opinion of their age fellows as compared to their parents" (Hhalid & Kausar, 2016, pp. 130-131). The teenagers' relationship with family is also important, Kaffka and London (cited in Kelly, Swaim & Wayman, 1996) showing in their study that the use of illegal substances is influenced by the open communication between teenagers and their parents, and that even the existence of one single parent open to dialogue towards the child can lead to reduction of the use of drugs (p. 242). An effective campaign from the experiment conducted by Kelly, Swaim and Wayman is the one with which the young people could easily identify easily, which emphasizes through its media content "the social and physical risks of drug use" (p. 248). Moreover, the media campaigns have to be adapted according to the target group's specific characteristics.

Method – subjects and participants

The subjects of the research carried out in this paper are teenagers aged between 15 and 18, residing in Cluj-Napoca, young people who are in a vulnerable development phase and may be prone to drug use. In this survey, two research methods were engaged: the interview and the focus group. The interview guide was administered to a total of 10 teenagers (6 females and 4 males) in the central area of Cluj-Napoca. The interviews were conducted individually and recorded with the smartphone after the participants allowed it and confidentiality was agreed upon. There were three focus groups, each with 8 teenagers aged between 15 and 16 years old. The focus groups encompassed 24 participants, out of which 10 were female and 14 were male. These lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, were recorded with smartphones, and confidentiality of personal data was also agreed upon. At the end of each focus group, the teenagers filled in a final form in order to obtain some exact details. The obtained data were predominantly qualitative, as the two research methods are rather qualitative methods than quantitative ones, because the aim of this study was to find in-depth data to help launch an effective anti-drug campaign. The costs involved were minimal. The research activities lasted from November 2017 to March 2018, with established breaks between the actions. The sample of convenience, the non-randomized way of selecting the subjects, and the more qualitative methods make the study a non-representative research endeavor, whose results cannot be generalized for all adolescents residing in Cluj-Napoca.

Results

Following the implementation of the two research methods, both similarities and differences could be drawn from the opinions of the teenagers regarding drug use, and a potentially effective anti-drug campaign could be strategized.

Interview analysis

Five out of ten teenagers declared they were against drug use or that this was a harmful behavior, four of them declared they did not agree with drug use, but they were not against it, and two other teenagers mentioned that it depends on the type of the drug, as they did not agree with addictive drugs. Just one subject declared that, although being aware of negative consequences of drug use, she had no opinion about it. Three teenagers have taken light drugs, two of them declared that they have not taken drugs, but they know people who did, three others declared they were tempted, and the others responded negatively.

Asked if they spend more time on the internet or watching TV, most of them responded that they spend more time online. Six of the interviewed teenagers reported spending more time with friends than with family, other three said that they spent time both with friends and family, and just one teenager responded that he spent more time with family than with friends. The subjects interviewed find out most of the information about drug use from the internet, source mentioned by six of them, whereas three interviewees say that they also find out this kind of information from friends or people they know, and two other teenagers mention the specialists, whereas just one person mentioned their parents as a source of information regarding drug use.

Asked about who are the people holding power of influence over how they think and behave, fix of the interviewees declared that parents were those kinds of individuals, five of them reported the group of friends as influential entities, and other three mentioned education/school/teachers; two interviewees stated that just themselves, and just one person said that nobody and nothing can influence him. Eight out of ten teenagers declared themselves open to new things, and the other two mentioned that they were open, but it depends on the type of things.

Inquiring about what would make them consume drugs, six of them responded that there is nothing that can make them consume drugs, while the others mentioned reasons as life (troubles in life), curiosity, knowing that they are not addictive. To the opposite question regarding the reasons they would resist the temptation to consume drugs, most of them declared reasons like knowing the consequences, caring about their own health, or negative examples of such behavior. One person said that her mentality would stop her from trying drugs and only one said that there is no reason which would stop her from trying to consume drugs. Seven teenagers, a majority, come from bi-parental families with both parents at home, one comes from a bi-parental family but with the father gone abroad, and two other teenagers interviewed come from mono-parental families, being raised by their mothers. Asked if they considered themselves people who respect Christian rules, three of them replied affirmatively, other three asserted respect for Christian rules but not entirely, two of them declared they rarely respect these norms, and only two replied negatively to this question.

The question that put the interviewees in a difficult position was the one regarding the way anti-drug campaign images should look like. Five teenagers went with the idea of some dark and dramatic images, three of them advanced that it should be violent and look like images on cigarette packs, while one of them said it must be a story behind the images to persuade through the story. Two teenagers declared that images should be soft and more real to be believed. Other two interviewees said that “to do” or “not to do” examples or testimonials would be very good. One teenager said he would be convinced by video spots with actors known by the young generation which should talk about drug use. Regarding the messages, most of them declared that the message of the campaign should state the consequences of drug use, the assumed risks like destroying your own health, your own future, and your interpersonal relationships. One person said it should be dramatic and two others that it should be positive, even gentle. Also, two teenagers suggested that the message should be long and well-argued. Regarding the distribution channels of the anti-drug campaign, all interviewees mentioned the internet, two of them declared that it should be distributed on all the channels and only one mentioned the TV.

Focus group results

The first focus group was attended by five males and three females. The most developed activities by them are spending time on the internet, listening to music, relaxing, and doing sports. Of the proposed options – time on the internet, watching TV, time with family, and going out with friends, all chose going out with friends, just one of them mentioning time with family besides of going out with friends. To the question regarding one important person in their lives that could influence them in certain situations, five out of eight mentioned their parents or only their mother. One teenager answered that his mother and his best friends can influence him, and one teenager declared that only her best friend.

Asked if they were open to new things, two of them answered affirmatively, four mentioned that it depended on the type of new things because they would inform about it first, and two teenagers declared they were reluctant to do new things. Three of those who responded affirmatively declared that new or extreme things they would do are lying for friends or parachute jump. Their opinions about drug use are similar, a vast majority being negative. Subjects did not agree with drug use for many reasons: it is addictive, it destroys the future, the health, it is expensive, or it can lead to early death. Focus group participants say people start consuming drugs for the following reasons, or in the following situations: big life problems, the death of a dear one, family or financial issues, depression, entourage, curiosity, the desire to stand out, or the lack of a life purpose. The most frequently mentioned were life or family problems by five of them, entourage by four of them, and curiosity by three of them.

When they were asked if there was a situation in which drugs would represent a solution, and if they would try it, seven of the participants responded that they would not try drugs unless these are medically prescribed for a serious illness and only one person said she would never consume drugs. All teenagers declared the internet as their information source about drug use, two of them also mentioned TV, four of them found out information from friends or people they knew, one from adults, and one person mentioned the informative flyers. When they were asked what could make people resist drug temptation, all answered the same thing but in different ways: being aware of the consequences. The consequences they mentioned are: addiction, health damage, physical change, personality change (people become more aggressive and violent). A teenager also mentioned an external cause: fearing their parents.

The imagination exercise about a persuasive anti-drug campaign in which teenagers are the team creating the campaign led to both similar and different opinions. Regarding the image for a poster, a teenager said it must illustrate an individual addicted to drugs displaying specific physical signs, to scare those who see the poster. Another teenager gave the idea of a parallel showing the same person but in one image that person is a drug addict and in the other image the person is cured. Four other teenagers agreed with this idea. Another focus group participant also advanced the idea of the parallel, but between a young man with plenty of chances for his future, and the same man after becoming a drug addict and homeless. The idea of a teenager was to illustrate, using this parallel strategy, how life without drugs would be, and how it is in the present, with drugs. A teenager said that the parallel can be also drawn from the perspective of the person addicted to drugs before and after he or she became a drug addict, for example the image of the city in warm colors versus in cold colors.

In regard to the message, six out of eight participants said they would choose to convey the negative consequences of drug use, and an aggressive tone in order to scare the target. Only one individual said she would choose messages illustrating both negative consequences of drug use, and positive consequences of the lack of drug use. Moreover, just one teenager said she would only capitalize on showing the positive consequences of abstinence from drug use. Some participants gave some concrete examples of messages like “Don’t play with your life!,” “Do you want to become like that? Say NO to drugs,” “Drugs change everything.” Three of the teenagers would introduce the concept of happiness in the message to show that real happiness is the one felt if one is not a drug addict or after quitting drugs, as opposed to when one is consuming because that one is just illusory. When it comes to colors they would use in the campaign’s visual materials, the subjects chose dark colors or black and white contrast and mentioned that for the offline environment they prefer strident colors to capture the attention of the audience. They also talked about creating a video material showing the story of a successful person who gets lonely and homeless because of drugs. They agreed that the video should tell real stories about real people, maybe famous people previously addicted to drugs. One teenager said he would make the video animated. The tonality was also described as aggressive, inspiring fear through the music and the whole atmosphere. Regarding the distribution channels, everyone declared that the internet should be one of them, because young people spend a lot of time on social networks, and also on movie websites. Four of the participants mentioned the channels teenagers watch on TV like music channels, and three others declared the offline medium, meaning posters exposed in places they visit, such as coffee shops.

The second focus group was attended by four females and four males. Seven individuals participating in the study said they spent a big part of their time on the internet and other activities, such as reading, going out with friends or with pets, sports, writing. Seven out of eight participants declared they would choose going out with friends and only one said she would choose to spend time online. Also, when they were prompted to mention a person that can influence them, seven out of eight declared parents, especially the mother in case of five teenagers, and especially the father in case of the other two, and a teenager mentioned his brother. Four participants responded they were open to new things without any other mentions and the other four declared they are open but they would be informed before trying that thing. Two of them gave the example of parachute jumping.

Regarding their opinion on drug use, they all declared against it or they said it was not something beneficial. Just one teenager said it can be okay if one only hurts himself by consuming drugs. The causes of drug use they mentioned were life problems (by six of them), entourage (by five of them), the desire to experience something new or to stand out (by three of them), not being aware of consequences (by two of them), or accidentally (by one of them). Asked if they would consume drugs in a situation in which it would seemingly represent a solution, four of them answered negatively, other three individuals declared it depended on the situation, and a teenager said it depended on the type of drug. All focus group participants declared they used the internet as a source of information regarding drug use, six of them mentioned TV, and two of them said they also found out from other people. The reasons they and other people can resist temptation to consume drugs are knowing the consequences (five respondents), talking with an adult (two participants), the lack of friends' bad influence or the existence of a positive influence (two individuals), and knowing someone who has gone through it (only one subject).

Regarding the anti-drug campaign, they would start, two teenagers declared that the image should illustrate a drug addict person with the specific characteristics, other two teenagers advanced the idea of the parallel, but in different ways: one would illustrate a family life of a person before and after drugs, and the other would illustrate just one person before and after drug use with green color before and red color after drug use. A teenager would make a photo collage telling the story of a person from a successful and healthy person to a sick one and would use colors from warm and happy colors to dark and sad ones. Other three participants declared it should be something significant and attractive, even without displaying people in the images. Most of them gave examples of messages like: "Drugs lead to addiction, violence, and disease," "Do you want to become like that?," "Try today to regret later!," "Don't ruin your future happiness!," "Live your life carefully." Two focus group participants said the message should be short and have an impact and another one said it must be long. Regarding distribution channels, six people mentioned internet (social networks), five mentioned TV, whereas one pointed to the radio, one to offline events, and another one brought the idea of a book with life issues.

In the third focus group, three females and five males participated. They declared usually going out with friends, doing sports, walking, or having hobbies like playing the guitar. Between watching TV, surfing the internet, going out with friends, and spending time with their family, all eight participants chose going out with friends. Four teenagers mentioned parents as people who can influence them, two others mentioned good friends, whereas one talked about his brother, one about his grandparents, and one of them exceptionally mentioned God. Six teenagers declared themselves open to new things and the other two said they are more cautious.

All participants generally expressed a negative opinion about drug use, mentioning the following reasons: it is addictive, it does harm to your health, it is expensive, and can lead to death. Four of them said people start consuming drugs because of depression, three mentioned personal problems, two blamed it on the entourage, and one mentioned the unsuccessful life. Seven out of eight participants declared they would never consume drugs unless they were medically prescribed, and only one teenager said he would consume drugs if somebody offered him a large sum of money. Asked from where they found information about drug use, four declared that the internet was their source, while four mentioned TV. The reasons they would resist drug temptation were: knowing consequences on their health and future (six participants) or being happy with their life as it is in the present (two).

Regarding the campaign, all participants declared they would use happy and warm colors. One teenager says he imagined some abstract forms on the posters of the campaign, another would illustrate a happy landscape meaning life without drugs, and another one furthered the idea of the parallel between two individuals with different lifestyles: one being a drug addict and the other not being a drug addict. All of them agreed that the message should be short and attractive. Some of them gave examples like "Don't risk your health for some crazy moments!," "Drugs will not get you out of trouble." The distribution channels they preferred are the internet (six of them), offline environment (two), or TV (one of them).

From the final forms they completed at the end of every focus group, it was found that twenty of the participants lived in the city, and twenty of them came from bi-parental families with both parents at home, and the internet and TV were the most mentioned channels of distribution for the anti-drug campaign. They also mentioned using the following social networks: Facebook, YouTube, Instagram.

Discussion and conclusions

Through the interviews and focus groups results, the authors were able to answer the research questions from which they started, and to find out a majority view of an impactful anti-drug campaign, which largely attained the scope of the study.

The results obtained through the two research methods complement and support each other. Most of the subjects declare themselves against drug use because drugs are addictive, affect health, and can destroy the future. All adolescents interviewed said that, in their daily lives, they spent a lot of time online and with their friends, and the choice of all the focus group participants was going out with friends as opposed to spending time online, watching TV, or spending time with family. This confirms their need for social life and social acceptance, and also that entourage plays an important role in their lives. Despite this, both interviewees and focus-group participants declared that parents held a major influence over them, and some of them also mentioned friends. From here results that family, as a first factor of psychological development, puts its mark considerably on the teenagers, but the group of friends is also very important.

The result according to which adolescents “value the opinion of their same age friends compared to their parents" (Hhalid & Kausar, 2016, pp. 130-131) turned out to be quite true in the case of teenage population interviewed in Cluj-Napoca, because they mentioned friends both as “protective factors” (p. 117) and as elements that lead to drug use for some interviewees, especially because teens spend more time with their friends. Other drug use causes are life problems, curiosity, or the desire to experience something new, to stand out. The reasons why they would resist temptation, or “protective factors” are: the importance of health, negative examples, knowing all kinds of consequences drugs have (on their health, on their physical appearance, or on their personality). These reasons and the elements with large power of influence can form the basis in conceiving anti-drug campaign strategies. The subjects of the study said they would never consume drugs except for medical reasons.

Also, most of the participants at this survey declared themselves open to new things, but mentioned that it depended on other aspects, and before trying some new thing, they would inform themselves about it. The majority found out information about drug use from the internet or friends. The interviewees agreed the images of an effective anti-drug campaign should be dark, violent, inspiring fear. The focus-group participants support to a large extent the interviewees’ ideas saying they would use dark colors in creating images. Still, the latter offer ideas of images and the most popular is the idea of a parallel between life with or without drugs in many contexts like family, future, or just drug effects on health. In this case, they would use happy colors to represent the life without drugs and dark colors to represent the life of a person addicted to drugs.

Regarding messages, most of them choose to illustrate the negative consequences of drug use, using an aggressive tone. Despite that, in the study assessing two anti-drug campaigns discussed in the theoretical section, the authors found that the first – and negatively framed – campaign did not have the desired results, but the second one illustrating the positive consequences of abstinence from drugs, a type of campaign mentioned by a minority of Cluj- Napoca’s teens, led to better results. Most of them prefer short messages, but in an almost equal measure, there are teens that prefer long messages. One can easily see the fact that adolescents are unconsciously influenced by other anti-drug campaigns to which they were exposed. The favorite distribution channel for the campaign is the internet, especially social networks, followed by TV and offline advertising. Participants said that the campaign should be broadcast on TV only on channels followed by teens, such as music channels, and posters should be exposed offline only in places visited by their peers, like coffee shops. Gender, environment of origin or types of family they declared were not valid criteria in the analysis of the results, because the sample is not a representative one for the teen population of Cluj-Napoca.

This research also presents errors and limitations. There can be errors regarding the framing of certain questions, but also subjects’ understanding of the questions. In focus groups, adolescents may be influenced by others' opinions or may have given socially desirable responses. The sample of convenience does not allow generalization of the results for the entire teen population from

Cluj-Napoca. The present study can, however, be a starting point for more elaborate research with more representative results.

Finally, this study found out that teens are aware of consequences of drug use, declare they are against drug use, and regarding the way they see a convincing anti-drug campaign, they have many interesting and useful ideas, even if some of them are influenced by other existing campaigns. However, the obtained data combined with secondary data obtained from the scientific literature can form a solid basis for an effective anti-drug campaign.

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Net Neutrality Ban: Bias towards social classes

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Abstract

Net neutrality has been around ever since the internet started growing and gaining popularity twenty years ago. It is the thing that makes the internet a tool with incredible possibilities. The recent situation in the USA concerning net neutrality has led people to believe that this freedom of using the internet is starting to end. The main research question is "what effect would the Net Neutrality Ban have upon the people of USA?" In theory, this paper argues possible outcomes of the net neutrality bill being passed by the Federal Communications Commission. Using the content analysis method, this paper was able to identify the main problem with Net Neutrality Ban, which is that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) would gain more power and control over the contents and freedom of choice on the internet. Information would be limited, and access to knowledge would be determined by financial status. Although the outcome might seem like it is strictly of economic nature, this paper approaches more negative effects of the Net Neutrality Ban. The extended consequences would affect freedom of speech, leading to discrimination and disinformation. History has demonstrated that this is the premise of social divide. With this control in sight, the population will be divided into two main groups: the people with a positive financial status, who will have greater access to the contents of the internet, and the people with a modest financial status, who will not afford to gain access to the same content. Starting a conflict between the middle class and the upper class, the Net Neutrality Ban would inevitably lead to a bias towards social classes.

Keywords: net neutrality, freedom of speech, social classes, discrimination, economy.

Introduction

The internet has proven itself to be one of man's greatest tools; starting off as a tool for military services, it became available to everyone, and since four decades ago, it has become a vast connection of millions of computers around the world. The concept of the internet and its benefits stands in the possibilities and opportunities that occur by sending files from one computer to another, media streaming, linking people, institutions, and governments around the world. The internet was never controlled by someone, it is not a device that has a base somewhere in the world, and from where all the servers run, from where each datum is being analyzed before it is posted, and from where the speed is decided. The internet is, as it was mentioned above, a connection between many computers that share data. One person can post a photo, a video, some news or pieces of art over the internet, and anyone in the world is able to see this post. There are many companies out there who rely on the internet to grow, to have much more success. For example, Netflix has packages available for consumers to buy so they can enjoy more movies and TV series, and the prices for these packages vary depending on what the consumer wants.

Many people would not agree to pay a price for a package that contains five movies, when someone else is paying a lower price for the same package. This concept is called "differential pricing," meaning that different consumers will pay different prices for the same services, depending on who is the highest bidder. All the internet services come from the companies known as Internet Service Providers, or ISPs. These companies have the possibility to offer their clients internet access, at an advanced speed, necessary for everyone's comfort. The ISPs companies have always been conditioned in the USA by the Federal Communications Commision, or FCC, which represents a control base for interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable in all 50 states. ISPs cannot change the rules without the FCC's approval, which is why until recent events nobody ever feared that the freedom on the internet would be removed. Since the recent rumors that the FCC would impose a new law, which will ban the freedom of the users over the internet, debates started regarding this possible problem. But all these rumors came true, when on December 14 2017, the Commision, led by Chairman Ajit Pai, voted to partially repeal the 2015 Open Internet Order, which means Net Neutrality was going to be banned on the territory of the USA. Certainly, this change is a great advantage for all ISPs companies, meaning that they will gain the freedom to choose which client gets the best service, and the fastest speed, and most importantly, they will decide what price to pay for these services, without repercussions. At this point, this paper introduces the concept of price discrimination, which means that all ISPs would set a different price for their clients, even though every client benefits from the same services. This change would be a great disadvantage for all categories of clients, whether they are regular clients who benefit from a simple service for their daily wellbeing, or companies who rely on internet services for their growing success. All these clients will have limited access to the internet, depending on how much they are willing to pay to use more, therefore answering the research question: What effect would Net Neutrality Ban have upon the people of the USA? The people and companies who can pay more will thus have greater access to the contents of the internet, therefore enabling growth and prosperity, and the people who cannot pay whatever price the ISPs demand will be limited in all opportunities the internet has to offer, and also, they will have limited access to the information posted online.

Net Neutrality means the freedom for all to benefit from the contents of the internet, and to benefit from the opportunities the internet has. Each person is free to access any part of the internet, to create websites, and to use social websites without any restriction. Because of Net Neutrality, the internet has become a great and powerful tool, having millions of users from all over the world. Almost anything can be possible with the use of the internet, and these possibilities exist for everyone due to Net Neutrality. This neutrality means equal access for every user, and equality means that everyone will pay the same amount of money for a service, therefore removing discrimination from the equation. This paper's working theory is that if Net Neutrality is banned in USA, meaning that the internet will be controlled depending on the price each client has to pay, then the ISPs will have more power and control over the contents of the internet, will decide which websites would work, which idea to be published, and which ideology to be shared. And above all else, the ISPs will decide what price the client is required to pay in order to get better internet access, this price varying between high and low, depending on how much they want their clients to pay, and nobody could stop them. This being said, the society under this new law of controlled internet will divide into two categories: the people and companies with a positive financial status, who can afford whatever price the ISPs demand, and who will have greater access to the internet and its information, and the people and small businesses with a modest financial status, who will be limited to less internet contents, and who will have less access to the information posted online. This kind of discrimination is serious and has grave consequences.

The current problem was chosen as research subject to ensure that every person knows what effects the Net Neutrality ban could have if the law passed in the USA. This paper is entirely theoretical, because it cannot predict accurately that the result of the research will be positive or negative. The objective answer is that it depends. But, according to the results of this research, it can be argued that the American society will indeed be divided, and with this divide, massive consequences will follow. The chosen research method is content analysis, and the reason behind this method is the fact that not only does this paper support this theory, but many people and companies in the USA, with great influence, also support and explain this theory. People like Barack Obama, Bernie Sanders, Mark Zuckerberg, and companies like BBC News and Wall Street Journal are against banning Net Neutrality.

Literature review

The First Amendment of the US states that "Congress shall make no law […] abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press" (U.S. Constitution, Amendment I) which means that the First Amendment clearly protects the right of free speech, of free beliefs, enabling people to express and to be exposed to a wide range of opinions and views, wherever this information comes from. The Amendment protects not only the speaker, but also the recipient of the information. The right to read, hear, see, and obtain different points of view is a First Amendment right as well (Leonard, 2014). Therefore, the same rules apply for internet use. Ever since it was revealed to the public, and granted free use for everyone, the internet has become a place where people can grow, can stand out, and can freely share any type of information. After the internet became popular in the USA, "on February 13, 2008, Representatives Ed Markey and Chip Pickering introduced legislation to explicitly make the Internet "neutral." The purpose of the proposed legislation, entitled the Internet Freedom Preservation Act, is to assess and promote Internet freedom for consumers and content providers. Additionally, the Act wants to establish broadband policy and direct the Federal Communications Commission to conduct a proceeding and public broadband summit to assess competition, consumer protection, and consumer choice issues relating to broadband Internet access services. Essentially, proponents of the bill hope to encourage "openness, competition, innovation, and affordable, ubiquitous broadband service" for everyone in the country" (Newman, 2008, 159). From that point onward, the internet became more beneficial, and the people took advantage of it and felt freer to do anything through the internet. Many businesses have become possible, many goals have been achieved, and the economic and cultural progress find themselves in a continuing growth ever since.

What will happen if Net Neutrality is banned stands in contradiction to what the First Amendment states. Freedom of expression will be limited by financial advantages, which will lead to discrimination. According to the Cambridge Business English Dictionary, the word "discrimination" means the practice of treating particular people, companies, or products differently from others, especially in an unfair way. This includes treatment of an individual or group, based on their actual or perceived membership in a certain group or social category. „The net neutrality debate is largely about whether access providers have the right to give some data preferential treatment over other data – and then charge content providers for prioritization and other enhanced services made possible by the technological ability to discriminate among data packets. Content providers could either pass a share of that surcharge for priority delivery onto their customers or use the enhanced capacity to generate revenue in other ways – say, through advertising" (Hahn & Litan, 2007, 598).

Banning Net Neutrality will lead to a divide among the consumers: those who can pay extra in order to benefit from certain services, and those who cannot afford to pay for the standard package. But is this differentiation legitimate? After all, everyone knows that a product or service is chosen according to everyone's personal budget: the bigger the payment, the better the service. However, the internet is not just a simple service. Unlike a dress or a loaf of bread, the internet itself is not covered by the consumer's protection laws precisely because of the strong implications it has within society. This was the interest from the very start, and the neutrality of the internet was enshrined in a series of laws and acts. "The Commission's proposed nondiscrimination rule would seem to prohibit three distinct forms of economic conduct that should be evaluated separately. First it would prohibit Internet service providers ("ISPs") from charging different prices to content providers for the provision of different levels of service ("differential pricing"). Second, it would prohibit ISPs from charging different prices for the same service ("price discrimination"). Third, it would prevent ISPs that vertically integrate into the provision of Internet content from offering superior terms of service to affiliated content providers than to nonaffiliated content providers" (Weisman & Kulick, 2010, 2). That is why it can be said that this differentiation is not legitimate, nonessential, and disproportionate. But what is the subject of the discrimination? The most obvious answer is the quality of services and speed anyone could use to connect to the internet. But it is not the only negative effect. Consequences can be massive, and of great impact, whereas if the quality of the services is affected, then the information access will be affected as well. "For example, an ISP might grant prioritization of transmission to its own content or to affiliated or favored content – in the process (relatively) degrading the transmission of unaffiliated or disfavored content. Such prioritization and degradation can be implemented by providing separate physical or logical channels for different types of data (sending preferred data over a lightly used connection, reserving capacity or bandwidth for preferred data, or sending disfavored data over a heavily trafficked connection)" (Nunziato, 2009, 22).

According to data provided by Lumen Learning, "a team of sociologists recently posted that there are six social classes in America. In this model, the upper class (3% of the population) is divided into upper-upper class (1% of the U.S. population, earning hundreds of millions to billions per year) and the lower-upper class (2%, earning millions per year). The middle class (40%) is divided into upper-middle class (14%, earning $76,000 or more per year) and the lower-middle class (26%, earning $46,000 to $75,000 per year). The working class (30%) earns $19,000 to $45,000 per year. The lower class (27%) is divided into working poor (13%, earning $9000 to 18,000 per year) and underclass (14%, earning under $9000 per year). This model has gained traction as a tool for thinking about social classes in America, but it does not fully account for variations in status based on non-economic factors, such as education and occupational prestige. This critique is somewhat mitigated by the fact that income is often closely aligned with other indicators of status; for example, those with high incomes likely have substantial education, high status occupations, and powerful social networks." In other words, 40% of the American population belong to the middle class, 30% to the working class, and 27% to the lower class. That means more than half of the American population, exactly 97%, lead a decent way of life, with a modest financial status. The majority of people belonging to these three classes will not afford to pay extra for better services. Through banning the neutrality of the internet, more than half of the American population will be deprived of access to information. It is a well-known fact that the US is facing the problem of poor professional training, under-qualification, because of the fact that access to education is jeopardized by the high tuition fees of universities. Lowering the access to information even more through banning Net Neutrality will strongly hit the middle, the working, and the lower class, who even though can barely afford a college, will not have access to the internet as much anymore. As mentioned above, the reason why the internet is neutral is that, from the beginning, it granted every citizen access to an unending area of knowledge in order to help society prosper. A new study says that "the American upper middle class is separating, slowly but surely, from the rest of society. This separation is most obvious in terms of income – where the top fifth have been prospering while the majority lags behind. But the separation is not just economic. Gaps are growing on a whole range of dimensions, including family structure, education, lifestyle, and geography" (Reeves, 2015).

Methodology

The current issue of Net Neutrality created a mass reaction among people making themselves heard, whether they are regular people or people with great influence. Using content analysis, it was possible to identify that each of these people or companies, with great social, economic, and political influence, support the idea that between the negative effect of removing net neutrality stands discrimination. The hypothesis is that once Net Neutrality is banned, which will limit the access to internet for certain people, society will divide into two groups, which will lead to discrimination between the social classes. From the majority of oficial statements, certain videos were selected, through which certain people and companies of influence described the problem; we analyzed them and drew conclusions, those videos being necessary for regular people to understand what is happening now, and what could happen next. These videos were uploaded on YouTube and Facebook, and these being public web sites, it means that permission for analyzing is not required. As a quantitative/qualitative method, through the content analysis guide it was possible to create tables including the analysis content units, in order to prove the veracity of the research.

Video Title	We need free and open internet
Uploader	U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders
Video Length	3:46
Publication Date	July 30, 2017
Number of Persons	1
Main Characters	Senator Bernie Sanders
Main Character's behaviour	Calm, Serious.
Video Message	„Let's stand up, let's fight back, and let's protect net neutrality."
Video Theme	People need to stand and fight for the freedom of the internet.
Keywords	FCC, Net Neutrality, Corporate Control, Internet, Discrimination
Key sentences	„Since its inception, the internet has been an extraordinary tool of democracy", „[...] ending net neutrality protections would be devastating", „The internet [...] remained a tool by which small businesses had the same opportunities, as large multinational corporations"
Video Views	2.6 Million views
Likes/Dislikes	17 k likes
Website	Facebook

Table 1: Bernie Sanders

Source:https://www.facebook.com/senatorsanders/videos/10156185834497908/?q=senator%20bernie%20sanders%20net%20neutrality

Video Title	-
Uploader	Mark Zuckerberg
Video Length	6:56
Publication Date	May 5, 2015
Number of Persons	1
Main Characters	Mark Zuckerberg

Main Character's behaviour	Calm, serious.
Video Message	Hystory tells us that helping people is always a better path than shutting them out
Video Theme	More people out there need free internet for growing and opportunities
Keywords	Free internet, Net Neutrality, Education, Preventing poverty
Key sentences	„At its core, Net Neutrality is about preventing discrimination", „Acces equals opportunity", „It's not an equal internet if the majority of people cannot participate", „Providing free acces to education and health information is just the right thing to do"
Video Views	1.5 Million views
Likes/Dislikes	60k Likes
Website	Facebook

Table 2: Mark Zuckerberg

Source: https://www.facebook.com/zuck/videos/10102067763746671/

Video Title	President Obama's Statement on Keeping the Internet Open and Free
Uploader	The Obama White House
Video Length	1:56
Publication Date	November 10, 2014
Number of Persons	1
Main Characters	Barack Obama
Main Character's behaviour	Calm, serious.
Video Message	If the people of USA do not stand up, they'll lose the internet as the know it
Video Theme	The President is rallying the people to fight for net neutrality
Keywords	Openness, fairness, freedom, net neutrality
Key sentences	„The idea of net neutrality, has unleashed the power of the internet, and given innovators the chance to thrive.", „Abandoning these principles would threaten to end the internet as we know it."
Video Views	1,024,836 views
Likes/Dislikes	15k Likes/1k Dislikes
Website	YouTube

Table 3: Barack Obama

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKcjQPVwfDk

Video Title	What is net neutrality and how could it affect you? - BBC News
Uploader	BBC News
Video Length	4:43
Publication Date	December 14, 2017
Number of Persons	1

Main Characters	BBC News Representative - Female
Main Character's behaviour	Calm, serious, interesting
Video Message	The net neutrality ban affects everyone, from small businesses, to regular people.
Video Theme	Presenting the problem and consequences if net neutrality is banned
Keywords	Net neutrality, ISPs, quality,
Key sentences	"Without Net Neutrality, your Internet Service Provider or ISP, such as BT or Comcast could influence what you see, and how quickly you see it", "Net Neutrality demands that ISPs should treat all web traffic the same", "You could end up paying more to browse your favourite sites"
Video Views	665,971 views
Likes/Dislikes	13k Likes/ 763 Dislikes
Website	YouTube

Table 4: BBC News Anchor

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zq-2Yk5OgKc

Video Title	Net Neutrality Explained
Uploader	Wall Street Journal
Video Length	2:45
Publication Date	February 26, 2015
Number of Persons	1
Main Characters	Wall Street Journal Representative - Female
Main Character's behaviour	Calm, serious, slightly amusing.
Video Message	Explaining through detailed and illustrated information what is net neutrality.
Video Theme	Net Neutrality and its benefits and what could happen if it is banned.
Keywords	The Telecommunications Act, Net Neutrality, ISPs, free internet, faster lanes
Key sentences	"All content on the internet should be treated equally.", "Comcast slowed Netflix's streaming speeds until Netflix payed for smoother streams." ,"Companies regulated under Title II of the Telecommunications Act, can't discriminate what services they are providing to the consumer."
Video Views	523,325 views
Likes/Dislikes	5.6k Likes/ 783 Dislikes
Website	YouTube

Table 5: *Wall Street Journal representative*

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p90McT24Z6w

Video Title	Net Neutrality Explained | The New York Times
Uploader	The New York Times
Video Length	3:04

Publication Date	May 15, 2014
Number of Persons	1
Main Characters	The New York Times Representative - Male
Main Character's behaviour	Serious, energic, calm.
Video Message	Explaining through detailed and illustrated information what is net neutrality.
Video Theme	People will end up paying more for the same services.
Keywords	Net Neutrality, experience online, Netflix
Key sentences	"Who gets to go fast and who gets to go slow?", "What Net Neutrality means is that all packages must be deliverered at the same rate"
Video Views	40485 views
Likes/Dislikes	282 Likes/ 11 Dislikes
Website	YouTube

Table 6: The New York Times representative

Souce: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2psly3euy78

Consequences of the Net Neutrality Ban: Discussion

Owing to the freedom of speech and expression over the internet, many relatively new ideologies have grown in popularity because people from all around the world managed to find out that these ideologies exist, and many of those people started supporting these ideologies because that is what they believe in. So, with the help of the internet and the people, many of these young ideologies have become stronger and more popular. One relevant example would be that, with the help of the internet, the LGBT community grew in popularity, and has gathered more supporters than ever before. Another example would be the feminist movement, which with the help of the internet managed to gather more followers and people with the same belief from all over the world, and unite them to support the same cause, which is equal rights between men and women. This being said, if any ISP company has a majority of members or leaders that do not share the same vision as the LGBT community, every website, every campaign and effort of this community could be blocked on the internet, therefore blocking their voice from being heard in this world. The same thing can happen with feminism. If the majority of employers at an ISP company, or even the CEO, believes that a man will always be superior to a woman, or thinks that men and women will never be equal, then all the hard work the feminist movement has done will be in vain, because none of their content will be shown online, therefore drastically reducing their chances of being heard on a global scale. These are only two examples of cultural and moral consequences that could occur if the ISPs gain power through banning Net Neutrality.

A negative effect, but of different nature is how will this affect the economy. Many small companies or start-up businesses who have innovative ideas need the internet to launch themselves into the market, to make themselves known to new clients. How could these small companies and businesses ever compete with companies like Amazon or Microsoft? Internet access will be limited to companies depending on how much they can pay; how much they can afford to invest in order to grow. Many of them will not have a choice but to shut down, close shop, or merge with bigger companies, therefore limiting their potential under the great shadow of big corporations.

Another example of negative effects involves the political view. In the last few years, political candidates started to rely on the internet to sustain their political campaign. Nowadays, each candidate pays a certain sum of money to have online promotion for their campaign. This sum is relatively equal, depending on how much the candidate wants to promote himself or herself online. Some candidates still promote themselves using television or radio. Once Net Neutrality is banned, and the ISPs decide what to allow on the internet, political situations could turn into another direction. If a candidate is willing to pay large sums of money to the ISPs, then they will have priority over the other candidates and their campaign will be promoted online, therefore the other candidates, who do not want to invest as much in the online domain, will be ignored and reduced to silence. This could lead to an undesired result for the citizens. Another example of political influence over the internet could come from the members of a certain ISP company. More accurately, the ISPs may have most employees or even a CEO that support a certain political ideology, or a certain political party, therefore allowing a certain ideology online more than the others, that will influence the population to believe and vote according to what they see, therefore influencing the results of the election.

All these consequences and effects mentioned above, and many others could happen if Net Neutrality is removed, and these consequences can change society in a way that nobody will recognize anymore.

Conclussion

In the light of previous statements, analyzing the consequences of the Net Neutrality ban, and the official public statements of people and companies of influence in USA, this paper can conclude that, for sure, once Net Neutrality is banned, society will be divided into two main groups: the people and companies who will have enough money to invest for a better access and quality over the contents of the internet, and the people and companies who will not afford to invest that much money. This divide, this bias towards social classes, will lead to discrimination on a national level, which can result into the majority of the population of the middle and lower class being deprived of their rights for information, freedom of speech and expression, innovation, and cultural growth over the internet. This situation is dramatically against the laws and rules that concern human rights, like The First Amendment, The Telecommunications Act, and the Internet Freedom Preservation Act. Unless the people stand up and fight to keep the internet neutral for all, this might easily be the downfall of the internet as we know it.

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Clickbait on Youtube. Why, how, and does it work?

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Abstract

Today, many people struggle to be seen. To be heard. To make a living. In the media field, one vicious trend has developed, to encourage, and, maybe, speed that process. Clickbait. But what is clickbait, you might ask? It is the process of constructing a partially false (or entirely, or not at all), eye-catching, attractive title, meant to get more clicks from users. Titles such as "You won't believe what happened yesterday in (...)" must ring a bell. This study aimed to find out more about how clickbait works in one specific medium, Youtube, what structural methods are used to form such titles, which are more efficient, and what effects they have on a Youtube channel's image. In this predominantly qualitative research, a survey that obtained 55 responses from all around the world showed that whether they are aware of it being used or not, users give in to clickbait due to pure curiosity, while an analysis which compared the reception of clickbait-using Youtube titles to average data of the channels that uploaded them proved the common belief of clickbait's positive effect over the number of views obtained, however, it did not entirely prove connections to clickbait usage and a Youtuber's negative image. Overall, users seem to be aware of clickbait, but are not outspoken about it in video comment sections, thus, it is difficult to analyze reactions to it.

Keywords: Youtube, clickbait, views, comments, likes, dislikes.

Introduction

The evolution of the internet has brought about many new elements to one's daily life. From animations to makeup tutorials and unboxings, music videos and vlogs, Youtube is now the main source for anything video. Now, Youtube has a total of one billion users, getting to youngsters in the United States easier than any TV network from their country (Youtube, 2018). Moreover, the site is not only dedicated to the general public, but also to its creators who have truly made Youtube the platform it is today: the number of channels that earn thousands of dollars from their videos rises every year, whilst the company puts studios where they can film, at their disposal (Youtube, 2018).

In a place so big, where billions of hours of video are watched every single day (ibidem), there is competition. Many channels earn their living from their activities (Kaufman, 2014); whether it is from AdSense (earning money through ads placed around or before the videos play, the user's direct interaction with them being the main factor), sponsorships, selling merchandise, signing contracts with agencies, publishing books, collaborations with traditional media etc. In 2016, the highest earners on Youtube made a total of 70 million dollars (Pimentel, 2017).

With that in mind, among Youtubers, there must be a constant battle of popularity, of trying to be seen, which might lead to clickbait (Kjellberg, 2016). Why? If you take the two words 'clickbait' is made from and reverse them, add a preposition, you get 'bait for clicks', which explains exactly what it means. Clickbait is a title made to attract one's attention, to convince them to click. Once the user has clicked on the video, he is one step closer to clicking on the ad that appears with it, which, for the uploader, can turn into money (Frampton, 2015). How? Usually, these titles omit details and are ambiguous, or express something surprising, shocking, they aim at playing with one's curiosity, they have that 'click and you'll find out'-type factor.

Let us explore the first element of this paper's title: why? Clickbait is notoriously known as a despicable way to gain more views, by fooling viewers (Griffin, 2017). One possible explanation to its rapid development on Youtube is the large number of changes the company has made in past years: earning money through AdSense wasn't always easy. Youtube's partner program, that gave bigger creators the opportunity to earn money from their videos, was formed at the end of 2007, and was kept exclusive to select channels (Biggs, 2007).

A few years later, in 2011, the exclusivity was removed, and any user who had over 1,000 views[1] on their videos and turned-on monetization on their account could earn money from their creations; thus, views became a big factor. However, recently, Youtube has gone back to its origins, and brought back the partner program. A year ago, The Sunday Times made a study meant to find out to what extent monetization can be taken. What the paper found out shocked the public and, most importantly, the brands whose ads were displayed on Youtube: ads can appear alongside any type of video, even those made by terrorist or neo-nazi groups (Mostrous, 2017), among others.

In response to the major scandal brought by The Sunday Times' study, which led to advertisers pulling out their ads from Youtube (Davies, 2017), the company implemented a series of new rules for monetization, the main point being advertiser-friendly videos, to be specific, videos which can not affect viewers emotionally, and which are given the green light by advertisers for their ads to be displayed with them (Youtube, 2018). Furthermore, starting February 2018, creators are required to have over 1,000 subscribers and 4,000 hours of video watched in order to be in the partner program, which might stimulate the battle for views even more.

Among these restrictions, longtime users can observe changes in terms of creator visibility. On a website where 300 hours of video are uploaded every hour (Statistic Brain, 2016), it is obvious that many have no visibility, and obtaining more views depends more and more on luck – a random user can not entirely judge the quality of a video before watching it, and if the title or the thumbnail are not stimulating enough, or if they are unfamiliar with the uploader, what other reasons would they have to click on it? Such users might pass on the average video if the title will not play to their curiosity.

These changes mentioned earlier started with the cover-up of the subscriptions page: back in the day (http://www.internetriot.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/youtube.jpg), a logged-in user's home page used to highlight new videos from the channels to which they were subscribed, followed by other type of content. But that focus has shifted to that other type of content instead. The subscriptions have been moved to a separate page (https://imgur.com/sk51s8L) while the home page features recommendations based on what the user has been watching. This change makes it harder for users to see new uploads from the channels they are subscribed to, as they are faced with a mind game: what is easier? Searching through the subscriptions page for something interesting to watch? Or clicking a recommendation tailored for them, from the main page? One's habit of choosing the second option has led to Youtube introducing the notification bell, a button which a channel's subscribers can click to get notified of their new uploads and updates (Youtube, 2018). In fact, Youtubers often ask their viewers to click this button (https://youtu.be/gzErMKGgUK4?t=1m12s). Overall, this shift is leading to a struggle to be seen, as being subscribed to a channel does not guarantee viewership anymore.

With all of this in mind, this paper aims to find the mechanism used for efficient clickbait, which, to be more specific, would bring more views and higher earnings. In order to achieve that, I have conducted a research meant to answer the following questions: "What effect does clickbait have over the number of views, likes and dislikes on Youtube?," "What are the tactics used in the making of a clickbait title?," and "What are people's reactions to clickbait?," through a questionnaire and a content analysis.

At the same time, I will test this hypothesis: "If a Youtube video title contains clickbait, the user will click it out of curiosity;" alongside the following: "If a Youtube video title contains clickbait, then it will get more views and reactions," in which the word reactions refer to the number of likes, dislikes, and comments, to see the influence of clickbait in numbers.

Personal experience has led to the discovery that those who recognize the usage of clickbait on Youtube tend to mention that in the video's comment section, either accusing the channel of using clickbait or saying the title is inaccurate, compared to the contents of the video, usually with negativity; therefore, I will also test the following hypothesis: "If a Youtube channel uses clickbait, it will get negative reactions," in which the negative reactions will be counted by the number of dislikes and the number of comments about clickbait from the video's top comments (or those with over 50 upvotes, as popular channels get thousands of comments).

The 4th and last hypothesis were also derived from a personal discovery. What can be often seen is Youtubers with a positive image and a large, loyal, teenage following, get excused for using clickbait - their viewers either don't recognize it, or they don't voice it, if they do. Thus, the 4th hypothesis will be: "If a Youtuber has a positive image, then they don't get negative reactions when they use clickbait."

Clickbait was chosen as the main subject for this paper because of personal knowledge and experience as a Youtube user, through which I could observe the evolution of the website itself, its creators, and their personalities, alongside video themes, the most popular channels, trends, and, of course, the evolution of clickbait as a means of gaining views. This paper aims to test out previously observed clickbait tactics, from exaggerations, to ambiguities and even lies, first, by reviewing papers on clickbait in the online press, then testing out the facts presented by them through the research methods mentioned earlier.

In fact, this type of theme is a novelty in itself: as explained earlier, changes in the past 3-4 years stimulated the evolution of clickbait on Youtube, and it keeps on doing so, as Youtube keeps updating its algorithm and smaller creators' visibility is losing face. Most scientific studies, as readers will soon see, are based on clickbait in the online press, whilst studies about it on Youtube are scarce, if any at all, which proves its novelty as a concept. We may say that it is a fascinating subject, as it involves psychological factors, such as what phrases and word combinations catch one's attention and convince them to click on something.

Literature review

An interesting but very accurate definition of clickbait was given by Jon Stewart, a comedian and the moderator of The Daily Show, in an interview for NY Mag: "I scroll around, but when I look at the internet, I feel the same as when I'm walking through Coney Island. It's like carnival barkers, and they all sit out there and go, "Come on in here and see a three-legged man!" So, you walk in and it's a guy with a crutch" (Smith B., 2014 *apud* Smith, 2014). Through this statement, Stewart shows that clickbait tells you something ambiguous, sensational, and meant to catch your attention and make you click a title; however it's something disappointing, false.

Clickbait has been in the press for a very long time. In fact, its first appearances were in the late 19th century, in the U.S, where it was called yellow journalism. It is defined as reporting sensationalism over actual facts, which sounds a lot like today's clickbait. The term came about from the rivalry between Joseph Pulitzers' New York World and William Randolph Hearst's New York Journal, which initially started as a fight over a comic strip character known as the Yellow Kid and which eventually developed into a fight over the leadership of New York's press market, leading to the usage of outrageous, sensational titles. These titles aggravated international issues at the time, being named as one of the causes of the war between the U.S. and Spain in Cuba and the Philippines (United States Department of State, 2018).

Thus, we may say that the main objective of clickbait, even in its earlier forms, is attracting the public's attention. One of the most famous headlines from the published press is one of the most iconic proofs of clickbait: in 1983, Vincent Musetto, an editor from The New York Post, came up with the following title: „Headless body in topless bar" (Fox, 2015).

The article was a news story about a man who was drinking at a bar from the Jamaican side of Queens (New York) and who fought with the owner, Herbert Cummings, whom he eventually shot dead. He then took two women hostages, one of whom he raped, and the other he forced to chop Cummings' head off (*ibidem*). Back in 2012, it was revealed that Musetto insisted on using "topless bar" in the title, even though they were not entirely sure if it was so. What was considered enough proof for the title to be printed was a "topless bar" sign seen from the outside (Pompeo, 2012). The title became an icon of pop culture: it appeared on t-shirts, in a movie from 1995, and in a book, "Headless Body in Topless Bar: The Best Headlines from America's Favorite Newspaper" (Fox, 2015).

Meanwhile, on the internet, novelty is a key point. The internet tends to "take back" titles not long after they are up: not many read articles that are over one day old (Hamblin, 2014), which might also apply to Youtube, as the site introduced a "New" tag users get for freshly uploaded videos in their recommendation's sidebar. In fact, users always want something new. Journalists are often made to write multiple articles even in the same day, which is not an issue when there is news to report, but it is when there are none. This leads to worthless articles, which are made just to be made (Hamblin, 2014).

An interesting issue with clickbait nowadays, however, is that people are getting more and more aware of it, but they can't resist and still click (Gardiner, 2015). There are lots of factors that justify this phenomenon. For instance, one of them is psychological arousal, which points to a certain emotion being activated by a stimulus. In his book, Jonah Berger (2013) found that negative emotions such as anger and anxiety raise the number of shares of content on the internet. Statistics are avoided and people's emotions are targeted: it is easier to convince people when they're directly told that polar bears are dying (Berger, 2013, in Barr, 2015).

In addition, one study shows that the articles that get the most attention are those where the emotions are extreme, either negative or positive, whilst neutral articles are less popular. However, of course, negative articles are the most popular and have the most reactions, regardless of their type (Reis *et al*., 2015).

When talking about clickbait's characteristics, one tactic can be often seen in the press, but also on Youtube. George Loewenstein (1994) names it the information gap: one is more inclined to satisfy their curiosity if it fills an information gap, an uncertainty (Loewenstein, 1994). How do you use that in clickbait? It's easy. These titles give you a piece of information, then they ask you to find out what happens next. Their format, to be specific, sounds like this: "Someone did something, you won't believe what happens next" (Gardiner, 2015). That unknown element, that the user has to open the article to find out about, is the information gap.

Many clickbait-containing titles are composed this way; an article gives the following examples: "A Man Falls Down and Cries for Help Twice. The Second Time, My Jaw Drops", "9 out of 10 Americans Are Completely Wrong about this Mind-Blowing Fact", "Here's What Actually Reduces Gun Violence." In fact, the same study found out that Business Insider uses clickbait on 51% of their articles, while Huffington Post, The Independent, BuzzFeed, and Washington Post on 40%, which proves how widespread clickbait has become (Potthast et al., 2016).

A study from 2016 analyzes specific morpho-syntactic structures that are used in clickbait in the online press, all of which can be seen on Youtube as well. One of the main characteristics is addressing the readers directly, asking them questions or asking rhetorical questions, following the "How about you?" format. An example of this sort, given by the study mentioned, is „Billion, trillion, quadrillion. What's the highest number you know?" (Palau-Sampio, 2016), which is like titles such as „Cool Hearing Test: Are You a Superhuman?" on Youtube, by a channel called BRIGHT SIDE, which frequently uses such clickbait titles.

One other characteristic is the use of vocatives: „Meet the DIY guru who has revolutionized the Internet" or "Save a forest from the supermarket queue," which can be considered an attempt at a call-to-action. Something similar to this is the use of anecdotes in parenthesis, such as: „Guide to the good use of a microwave (in fact, you do it badly)" (Palau-Sampio, 2016), which can further stimulate the reader as it directly tells them they are doing something wrong, and they have to find out how to correct it. Alongside these, colons and other punctuation signs are used to form complex sentences, meant to be dramatic: „My knees hurt: what sport I can do and what is forbidden," or „Hooray for the shorter workday! (And last but not least, it makes you slimmer!)" (Palau-Sampio, 2016), both of which add some mystery that, to the average reader, seems to only be discovered by clicking the titles.

Another aspect is the use of deictic forms, especially this: „This is what happens when you do not change your sheets" or „This is the man most desired on television" (Palau-Sampio, 2016), which adds a degree of mystery from the very beginning, as readers would want to find out what this is supposed to be. The following examples of deictic forms, also given by Palau-Sampio (2016), can be often seen on Youtube, on channels such as the previously-mentioned Bright Side, or a similar one, The Richest, the fact-giver type channels: "Your child wastes his time in dance class", "11 key ideas in order not to be ripped off on the Internet, according to hackers" (Palau-Sampio, 2016), among which the second title "according to hackers" alludes to the article's degree of truth being proven by an authority.

The author also mentions the use of sayings and idioms, such as "5 fillings that are better than the bread itself," "Tell us where you bathe and we'll tell you how to wash your bikini," or the use of hyperboles, adjectives, and adverbs, meant to amplify an emotion: "A strange green lunar-beam captured in the Canary Islands," "The amazing and controversial life of Hope Solo in six points," or "5 reasons why this is the most envied life on the Internet" (Palau-Sampio, 2016).

As for the morpho-syntax, the author found that many titles simply use conjunctions to cover the use of a verb: "Smiles, tears and memes," meant to keep the titles simple. Alongside this, verbs are depersonalized for list-type articles: "6 tips from 'A penguin' in case you get stuck in the lift," "18 conspiracy theories to watch TV with different eyes," or the titles are split into sentences, such as: "Ten epic videos of accidents of pop stars on stage," or "The daily life of Swedish fathers during their paternity leave." Finally, one frequent strategy is starting a title with the subject and continuing with a piece of information about it, such as: "Juliette Binoche and Kristen Steward, two stars that do not follow the script" or "King Fury, the Hitler film that is sweeping through Youtube" (Palau-Sampio, 2016).

All of these aspects are specific to clickbait in general and, even though most of the papers cited and the examples given are based on the press, many of them apply to clickbait on Youtube as well. Next, these aspects will be tested out, along with their efficiency and effects.

Methodology

To test the hypotheses mentioned earlier, but also to answer this paper's research questions, the author used two research methods: the sociological inquiry, based on a questionnaire, and the analysis, with 3 analysis grids.

The **questionnaire** was based on people's reactions to clickbait and what effects certain formulas have, to test the first hypothesis. It contained 13 questions and was shared on Facebook, Twitter, and the website functionlove.net for 24 hours, between February 4th and 5th 2018, obtaining a total of 55 responses, mainly from youngsters (80% between the ages of 18 and 24, 10% between 13 and 17, 7% 25-34 and 1% 35-44) from all around the world: 54% from Europe, 21% from the Americas, 20% from Asia, and 3% from Africa. The respondents were random.

First, most of them (60%) use Youtube, on average, for 2-4 hours a day, whilst the other 40%, divided almost in half, use it for over 4 hours and under one hour, the higher percentage being for the first option. In terms of the video categories watched, with no surprise here, knowing their dominance in views (Weatherby, 2017), the most frequently chosen category was music, chosen by 92% of the respondents. The runner-ups were comedy & entertainment, chosen by 87% and education/tutorials, at 54% (the respondents were able to choose multiple options, and to add extras, if any). The categories most known for clickbait were in the middle: gaming at 29%, vlogs at 45%.

The respondents were asked what makes them click on a Youtube video, and the responses were not surprising: 81% chose the title, 78% chose the uploading channel (this question also gave them the freedom to choose as many responses as they wished, in case there were multiple factors involved in their choice). 41% said they click on it if they knew of it beforehand, either from the press or current trends. Surprisingly, only 38% also chose the thumbnail, 20% the number of views, while Youtube's new „recommended for you" and „new" tags from the suggestion sidebar beside the video one is watching got 38% and 7%.

Respondents were also asked what emotions clickbait gives them: over 70% said they are more inclined to click a video if the title stimulates them an emotion (makes them feel something), these emotions being happiness at 75%, excitement at 68%, and hope at 41%. As for negative emotions, anger got 34%, sadness 26%, and fear 12%.

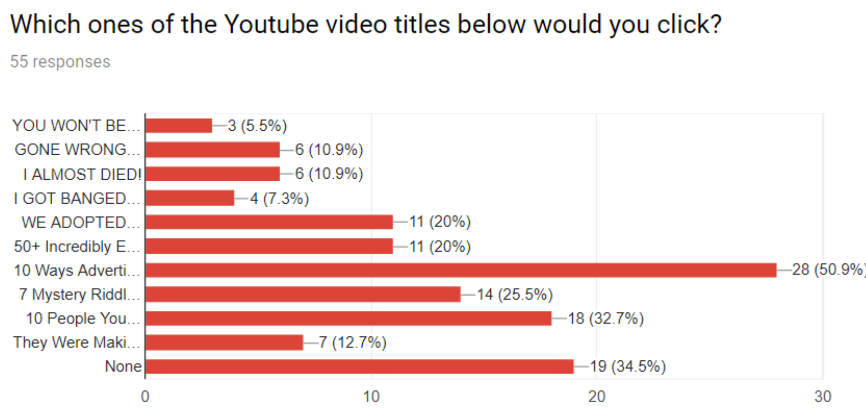

Fig. 1: Distribution of Youtube videos respondents would click

The next question (Fig. 1) tested out which formulas are more efficient. The respondents were asked to choose on which titles they would click, from a list of real Youtube titles. Unsurprisingly, the most frequently chosen were list-type videos, with „10 Ways Advertisers Are Tricking You Every Day" at 50%, followed by „10 People You Won't Believe Actually Exist," where directly addressing viewers can be observed. Titles that contain lies or exaggerations, often used on Youtube, mainly by vloggers and gamers, scored the lowest ratings: „I ALMOST DIED," and the famous „GONE WRONG/GONE SEXUAL" structure, used by prank channels, were chosen by 10%. The lowest rating went to the most often-seen structure: „YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS" was only chosen by 3 out of the 55 respondents, which might be explained by it being out of context. In contrast, despite it being more efficient with a given context, „WE ADOPTED A CHILD?" was chosen by 11 respondents. What was more interesting was that the same 19 respondents who chose 'none' at this question went on to say they recognized clickbait and that they saw it as a negative thing. When asked what made them click on the titles chosen, most respondents said 'curiosity,' which proves the importance of the information gap.

The thumbnail's relevance was also tested: 43% of the respondents say no specific element of it determines them to click on a video. The most frequently chosen elements were people/people's reactions at 38%, something covered up, meant to be revealed in the video, at 23%, and a key word at 20%. The most often seen ones, use of emoji, neon backgrounds, and nudity only got 3.6% and 14%, showing their lack of efficiency.

Finally, concerning clickbait directly, 69% of the respondents say they do recognize it, 21% only partially, and 9% cannot. Among those who can, 44% said it doesn't make them feel anything, whilst 30% are annoyed, and 26% are amused by it.

Therefore, among these respondents, one can see that the more efficient clickbait strategies are not also the most frequently used – the sensational, lie-type ones –, but those that are meant to catch one's attention, such as the list-type titles, that were chosen the most frequently and that all contained an information gap. For instance, seeing "10 People You Won't Believe Actually Exist" would make one question that could be so special about said people, and they would click to find out. In the open question following the titles one, the author asked respondents to say, if they may, what would make them click the titles chosen. 21 respondents answered it, among which 50% said 'curiosity,' which validates the first hypothesis.

The **analysis grids** were designed to quantify users' reactions to different clickbait titles. The first grid was made in December 2017, to test the second hypothesis. 7 different titles, from different Youtubers, were chosen, and their views, likes, like to dislike ratio, and number of comments were compared to each Youtuber's average numbers, to see if clickbait gives higher numbers.

The first title used, I GOT BANGED WITH A TOOTHBRUSH: STORYTIME, by Tana Mongeau, where the story was about untrue rumors spread about her, got 1 million more views than average, and 3,000 more comments. TAKING CARE OF OUR NEW BABY!! by David Dobrik, where the baby was a pineapple, got 6.5 million views more than average, but less comments by 7K, the other numbers remaining similar. Our Surrogate Story: The Truth | Gigi by Gigi Gorgeous, where she talks about the birth of a friend's child, although it initially seemed that the child was hers, got 200K more views, less comments by 7K, and a much larger like to dislike ratio (18K to 23K). WE'RE ADOPTING A BABY! by Joey Graceffa, where he joked that he'd adopt his nephew, got more views by 2 million, less likes, though, a similar like to dislike ratio, and less comments by 60K.

The famous DELETING MY CHANNEL by PewDiePie, where he deleted his second, rather inactive channel, got more views by 27 million, 40 times more comments, the like to dislike ratio remaining the same. Almost Died Today! by Roman Atwood, where he had been filming a production and was joking around about his special effects makeup that made him seem hurt, got 5 million more views, a lower like to dislike ratio, favorable to dislikes, and less comments. you won't believe what happened to us... by Jake Paul, where nothing major happens, gets 9 million more views, less comments, but a similar like to dislike ratio.

Therefore, this grid proves that only a part of rating elements is affected positively by clickbait: in all the cases, we saw a rise in views. However, besides PewDiePie and Tana Mongeau's videos, the videos got less comments, while the like to dislike ratio did not change significantly, aside from Gigi Gorgeous' video, whose title was too misleading. In conclusion, the second hypothesis is validated partially.

The second and third grids were made in February 2018 and were meant to test the last two hypotheses. A total of 10 Youtubers who use clickbait frequently were chosen, the first 5 being positively viewed (with no major scandals and a loyal, mainly teenage following, chosen from the author's own subscriptions list, based on previous knowledge as a viewer): Joey Graceffa, Connor Franta, Superfruit, MyLifeAsEva, and PointlessBlogVlogs. The next 5 were Youtubers with a neutral image: Shane Dawson, Tana Mongeau, PewDiePie, Ricky Dillon, and Exility (out of which, PewDiePie has been accused of anti-Semitism (https://www.wsj.com/articles/disney-severs-ties-with-youtube-star-pewdiepie-after-anti-semitic-posts-1487034533), Shane Dawson of racism (https://splinternews.com/white-male-youtube-star-enjoys-blackface-and-is-sick-of-1793844750), similar (http://nymag.com/selectall/2017/02/youtuber-shames-other-youtuber-for-n-word-also-uses-n-word.html) to Tana Mongeau). Three clickbait-containing titles were chosen from each of these channels, comparing their numbers of likes and dislikes, and counting the instances of clickbait being mentioned in their comments as a negative aspect.

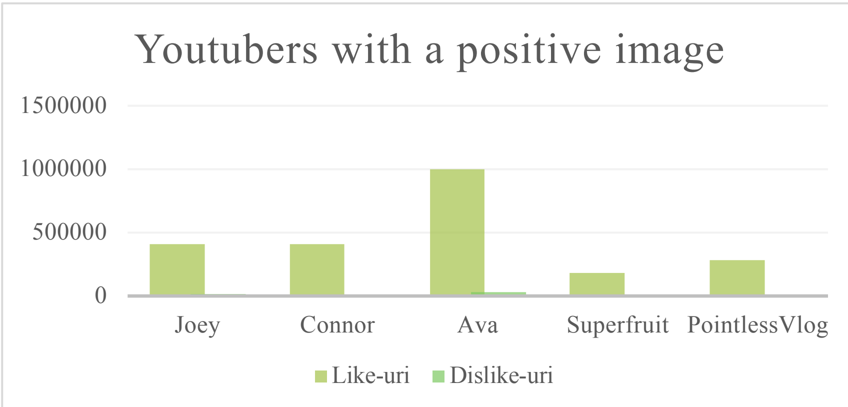

Fig. 2: Distribution of Youtubers with a positive image

The positively viewed Youtubers did not get more than a total of 11 negative comments, which was only obtained by MyLiveAsEva, which can be explained by the overall large reaction to the video, and it being a collaboration with fellow popular Youtuber Caspar Lee. Besides her, Joey Graceffa and PointlessBlogVlogs had none, Connor Franta had a total of two, whilst Superfruit had four. What was observed while counting comments was that many viewers could tell that the titles are not 100% genuine, but they were not upset. In Fig. 2, you can see the high like to dislike ratio, in favor of likes. The only title with more dislikes was THE NEXT CHAPTER | MYLIFEASEVA & CASPAR LEE by MyLifeAsEva, at 14K, compared to 300K likes. Therefore, the third hypothesis is validated.

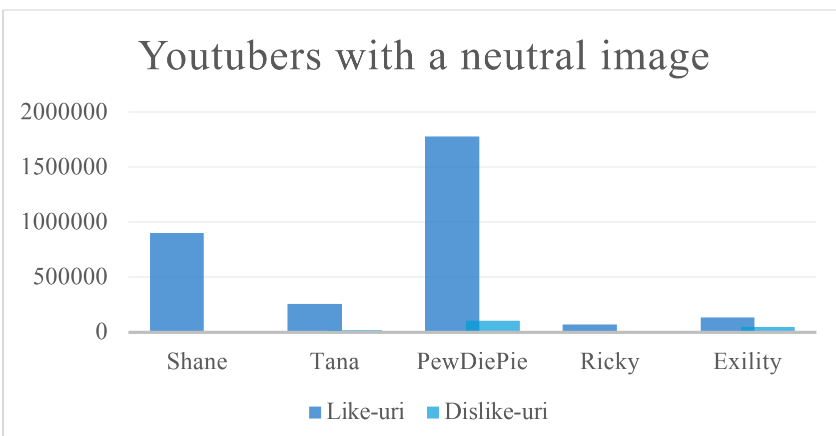

Fig. 3: Distribution of Youtubers with a neutral image

Surprisingly, the neutral image Youtubers do not get entirely different results. Besides Exility, the like to dislike ratios do not get much lower, as in, the number of dislikes does not increase by a lot. PewDiePie's DELETING MY CHANNEL AT 50 MILLION boosts his total number of dislikes in the grid, but the video's like to dislike ratio is 91.4%, 1.4% higher than his average of 90%. In terms of negative comments, Tana gets a total of 18, Ricky 6, Shane just 1, while PewDiePie and Exility get none. Here, besides Tana's video, the comments barely mention the usage of clickbait. Therefore, the last hypothesis is not validated, as it seems that many viewers either did not recognize or did not acknowledge the fact that the titles contain clickbait, or they did, but they did not express their reactions in the comments, thus making it hard to tell if viewers reacted badly to clickbait, the number of dislikes being the only clear clue.

Discussion and conclusions

One very interesting, yet funny aspect of clickbait on Youtube is it being used as satire. PewDiePie and Jacksfilms, for instance, have often made entire videos where they expose the vicious habit that is clickbait. PewDiePie made a video where he searches frequently used clickbait formulas, like those mentioned in this paper, he shows and laughs at his findings, and then he opens some of them to test the truthfulness of the titles, discovering that many of them were lies. What I found interesting was the accuracy by which the Youtuber knew to search clickbait titles – he already knew, as a Youtube user himself, what the most common clickbait title structures are, and then he went on to show how widespread each of them was, and how certain channels abused this tactic.

Jacksfilms, similarly, had used clickbait as satire many times, usually imitating the tactics of those who use it, to show how ridiculous they are. There are several examples to give here, one of them being "There's something I need to tell you", with a thumbnail showing Jack seemingly crying and wiping away a tear from his eye. In this video, he parodies Youtubers who make sad videos, either a story-type video or an announcement, specifically those where whatever was happening was not as upsetting as it seemed, and the creator exaggerated the emotion to get more clicks. Another example is an episode from his series called "YIAY" (Yesterday I Asked You), where he had given his followers a series of simple sentences or statements to turn into clickbait titles. The result was hilarious but very realistic, as it proved how well-aware Youtube users are not only of clickbait itself, but also of the tactics and formulas used for it.

With PewDiePie and Jackfilms' satirical analysis of clickbait in mind, the author chose to conduct this research to test out, among those I was aware of as a Youtube user myself, the structural tactics they observed and laughed at, and to see which ones are more efficient, if they are efficient at all, and how people really react to clickbait, as common knowledge would make one automatically believe that everyone views it negatively. What the author discovered was both surprising and not at all. Clickbait indeed helps with views, but reactions are difficult to observe: there is no guarantee that every viewer who recognizes clickbait would react directly with a dislike or a comment, as most of them might not directly react at all, and they would simply get mildly annoyed, as a respondent to the questionnaire said.

Also, as expected, list-type videos are a favorite because of their sensationalism and constant ability to attract one's attention. However, in cases such as „WE ADOPTED A CHILD?" clickbait's efficiency is hard to test: a user who has been following a vlog channel for a long time and who has an emotional attachment to the channel's members is more likely to click on such a title, as it marks a possible major life event. But a user who does not know them at all might not. Thus, for such titles, gathering a group of people who watch a specific channel and testing titles that allude to the Youtubers' life events would lend more accurate results. Thus, clickbait also relies on users' emotions and the videos' personal and non-personal aspects.

Overall, clickbait is a widely spread method of making more views on Youtube, which this study has proven. Even if it doesn't influence other aspects positively – likes, the number of comments – for monetization, the views, clicking on the video itself helps the most. Of course, this research is not entirely representative, as the sample of respondents obtained was small and not varied enough, and the analysis being kept fairly subjective, as the channels analyzed were chosen from the author's own subscriptions and previous knowledge. Negative reactions can also be measured using social media, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, where many Youtubers are also present, although, as mentioned before, they are difficult to quantify, therefore, the numbers found in this research might not describe the true reactions to the videos, in entirety. In addition, the titles were all chosen subjectively, based on previous knowledge and observations, although they did fit the scientific studies found. Further research on this subject could try to detect reactions more accurately, alongside clickbait's influence over other data, such as the channel's number of subscribers or their profit, aspects which were not discussed in this paper. Generally, clickbait is a very interesting and fascinating subject, which should be studied more, as it is becoming a bigger part of our daily lives, in this modern day and age.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: *Analysis grid 1*

	Tana Mongeau	4,368,040	89K	24K	17,891
	David Dobrik	10,046,111	262K	1K	7,230
	Gigi Gorgeous	813,469	18K	23K	4,578
	Joey Graceffa	5,079,629	103K	12K	13,545
	PewDiePie	32,304,376	1M	254K	213,542
	Roman Atwood Vlogs	9,886,435	81K	5K	5,996
	Jake Paul	16,496,096	450K	33K	140,493

A: Channel; B: Views; C: Likes; D: Dislikes; E: Comments.

1: I GOT BANGED WITH A TOOTHBRUSH: STORYTIME
2: TAKING CARE OF OUR NEW BABY!!
3: Our Surrogate Story: The Truth | Gigi
4: WE'RE ADOPTING A BABY!
5: DELETING MY CHANNEL
6: Almost Died Today!
7: you won't believe what happened to us...
Note: All the data is as of 9 December 2017.

Each Youtuber's average numbers, from Social Blade:
PewDiePie: Views: 6M; Likes: 319K; Like to dislike ratio: 90%; Comments: 59K
Tana Mongeau: Views: 3M; Likes: 100K; Like to dislike ratio: 95%; Comments: 14K
David Dobrik: Views: 3.5M; Likes: 278K; Like to dislike ratio: 99.4%; Comments: 11.5K
Gigi Gorgeous: Views: 600K; Likes: 150K; Like to dislike ratio: 95%; Comments: 11.4K
Joey Graceffa: Views: 3M; Likes: 512K; Like to dislike ratio: 97.6%; Comments: 73K
Roman Atwood: Views: 4M; Likes: 300K; Like to dislike ratio: 98.4%; Comments: 77.5K
Jake Paul: Views: 7M; Likes: 3M; Like to dislike ratio: 70%; Comments: 505K

Appendix 2: *Analysis grids for positive image Youtubers, then neutral*

Youtuber	**Dislikes**	**Likes**	**Negative comments**
Joey Graceffa	14K+2K+1K	157K+147K+107K	0
Connor Franta	1K+957+3K	203K+135K+72K	2
MyLifeAsEva	14K+8K+10K	337K+409K+379K	11
Superfruit	3K+622+256	83K+65K+35K	4
PointlessBlogVlogs	836+1K+1K	70K+153K+61K	0

Youtuber	Dislikes	Likes	Negative comments
Shane Dawson	5K+1K+8K	477K+221K+197K	1
Tana Mongeau	6K+5K+7K	65K+106K+86K	18
PewDiePie	16K+86K+3K	531K+1M+244K	0
Ricky Dillon	294+12K+459	7K+29K+37K	6
Exility	1K+41K+7K	11K+58K+67K	0

Titles chosen:
Joey Graceffa: WHY WE BROKE UP; I'M GETTING MARRIED; CATCHING MY BAE CHEATING ON ME
Connor Franta: Doing Drugs with Kian&Jc; Why I Never Had Boyfriends; I'm Not Gay
MyLifeAsEva: THE NEXT CHAPTER | MYLIFEASEVA & CASPAR LEE; WE'RE HAVING A BABY; The Boyfriend Tag! | Mylifeaseva and WeeklyChris
Superfruit: ARE WE DATING?; SEEING EACH OTHER NAKED; NO MORE SCHOMICHE?
PointlessBlogVlogs: Camera Down My Throat!; Getting Married? BISH WHET; WE'VE GOT SOMETHING TO TELL YOU
Shane Dawson: I ADOPTED A CHILD!; KICKED OUT OF WALMART; I'm Sorry
Tana Mongeau: I GOT ARRESTED & BANNED FROM LONDON: STORYTIME; I WAS ARRESTED FOR DRUG POSSESSION FELONIES: STORYTIME; I almost died in an Uber... no clickbait (LIVE FOOTAGE): STORYTIME
PewDiePie: THE RICH LIFE OF PEWDIEPIE; DELETING MY CHANNEL AT 50 MILLION.; MY NEW GIRLFRIEND
Ricky Dillon: I'm sorry I kept this from you; why i'm no longer friends with jennxpenn; My Secret...
Exility: please don't watch this alone; I Can Find Your Name In 1 Minute; Kids Can't Hear This Sound (Can You?)

Look: It's me, myself, and I!
Self-disclosure as a self-promotion tool on Facebook

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Abstract

The need to build relationships with others, to be part of a group, and to be appreciated often drives people to engage in self-presentation to influence how they are perceived by others. Any type of information shared can directly or indirectly expose the characteristics of the person. On social network sites, individuals can easily manipulate the information they share by hiding features that might disadvantage the self or enhance positive ones.

One of the most frequently used self-presentation forms on social media is self-promotion. Many people self-promote and some even became famous. There are blog and magazine articles on how to become popular on social media and get a lot of likes, but no scientific research was found on this topic.

We developed an experiment of exploratory nature to test strategies of self-promotion and find whether the degree of self-disclosure can influence the engagement of an audience on these platforms. We hypothesized that direct self-disclosure is more effective than indirect self-disclosure in gaining fame on Facebook.

Friends and followers and friends of friends will be participants in the experiment. We exposed them to the stimuli represented by the content posted on the profile. We measured the results in the number of likes, comments, and shares, the effectiveness being given by the highest number of reactions. We also considered the nature of reactions (positive/negative).

The experiment confirmed our hypothesis in terms of the total number of reactions generated by each type of posts, for positive emotions and comments, but not for negative reactions and shares.

Keywords: social network sites, self-disclosure, self-promoting, Facebook, fame

Introduction

According to Schlenker (1980), each individual balances rewards and costs in the attempt to shape the impressions others form about them and presents himself or herself differently based on social context: job interview, at a bar, at dinner, and on who he or she is talking to. According to Goffman (1959), people monitor how others react when they present themselves and they plan their future behavior based on those reactions (Rosenberg, 2009; Marwick & Boyd, 2010).

In the online medium, people have the same behavior in what impression management is concerned. Social Network Sites allow the individual to present himself or herself, lowering communication barriers such as space and time. Users can shape and display a desired image of the self to a large audience (observers/receivers). This environment is optimal for creating awareness around the self and engaging the audience in providing reactions that can gratify needs of self-esteem and belonging. Many people engage in self-promoting behavior as a way of self-presentation.

Whether it is self-generated content or content from other users or external sources, if it directly displays the self or is general interest information, everything a user shares on Facebook can give cues to certain traits of the person behind the virtual profile. No relevant research has been found on the relation between the degree of self-disclosure and the engagement of the audience.

In this paper, the author examines self-promotion behaviors and analyzes, based on an experiment, what kind of posts are the most efficient in self-promotion via Facebook. We evaluate the efficiency of various types of content based on the number of reactions they generated. We choose a public Facebook profile, and we expose the audience to different types of content shared. We aim to examine the way participants react to the different categories of stimuli in terms of reactions: the number and the nature of those reactions; if it was positive or negative; and what emotion it aimed to convey. An explicit relation between the degree of self-disclosure and the popularity, and patterns in behavior by age generation, are expected to be found.

This study provides valuable information in marketing and psychology. Influencers, or those who want to become influencers or celebrities, can improve their strategy in creating, increasing, and maintaining their community. As a starting point for future research in marketing, theories of brand and location affiliations on social network sites can be supported. Also, patterns of online behavior for age generations and gender can be valuable for companies. In the psychology field, this experiment provides data regarding the relationships people form in their network and show patterns of behavior by the type of connection (close friend, friends, acquaintances, and so on) and self-esteem driven behaviors can be examined. The framework can easily be replicated and customized based on certain marketing or psychology goals.

Literature review

Needs, uses, and gratifications

According to Maslow (1954), individuals have a hierarchy of motivational needs that he classified in a 5-level pyramid (known as *the hierarchy of needs theory*). At the base of the pyramid, there are basic needs such as food and shelter. The second level represents stability, safety, and security needs. Needs of love and belonging are situated on the third level. People need to build relationships with others. Esteem needs are situated on the next level of the pyramid. Every individual needs to be appreciated by other people with whom he interacts. The last level is represented by self-actualization needs, aspirations, and self-fulfillment (Cao *et al.*, 2012; Heylighen, 1992; Noltemeyer *et al.*, 2012; Wahba & Bridgell, 1976).

The uses and gratifications theory (henceforth U&G, 1944) indicates that people use media to satisfy certain needs. Research shows possible uses and gratifications of media as information seeking relationship maintenance, pass-time or routine (Ballard, 2011). Initially developed for traditional media, the U&G theory was applied in new media. Tosun (2012), Raacke and Bonds-Raake (2008), Barker (2009), Smock et al. (2011), and Park et al. (2009) examined the motives for Social Network Sites (henceforth SNS) use and found relationship initiation, relationship maintenance, information seeking, entertainment, professional development, social interactions and self-status seeking (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Bateman, Pike & Butler, 2011; Rui & Stefenone, 2016). SNS offer potential for satisfying self-esteem and sense of belonging needs by building relationships and achieving recognition from virtual friends (Chen, 2010; Krämer & Winter, 2008).

Social comparison and impression management

A natural part of the human experience is social comparison (SC). People evaluate themselves by comparison with similar others in two ways: upward comparison, when an individual identifies with someone considered to have desirable traits, and downward comparison when comparing with people inferior to the self. Engaging in upward comparison can highlight your own failures and generate negative feelings while downward comparison enhances self-esteem.

Vogel et al. (2015) conducted research indicating that the use of social media is directly related to high social comparison due to the opportunities provided by SNS (Vogel *et al.*, 2015). Many other studies showed the relation between the use of SNS and social comparison behaviors. Mehdizadeh's (2010) survey research among Facebook users indicated that low self-esteem is tied to the amount of time spent on Facebook. Zuo's (2014) research among 417 undergraduate students showed that the more time an individual spends on Facebook, the more likely he is to be engaged in social comparison. Haferkamp and Krämer (2011) surveys and experiments concluded that women who looked at beautiful users experienced a more negative body image than those who were exposed to less-attractive users, and that men exposed to profiles of successful others presented higher discrepancy between the actual and the desired career status than those confronted with less-successful males (Mehdizadeh, 2010; Zuo, 2014).

According to Festinger (1954), humans have a basic aspiration to get information in order to evaluate themselves through SC. As friends and strangers can interact with the content one posts on Facebook displaying like, love, angry, sad, wow, laugh emotions by clicking a button, leaving a comment or sharing that post, they offer public feedback to the user who can evaluate the impressions he makes online (Mehdizadeh, 2010; Vogel *et al.*, 2015). People put a lot of effort into self-presentation. They want to make a favorable impression on others to influence how they are perceived and evaluated by them.

According to Jones and Pittman (1982), there are five types of self-presentation: self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation. Studies show that self-promotion (enhancing and promoting one's positive traits) and ingratiation (imitation, addressing compliments in order to get others to like the individual) are the most frequent forms of self-presentation in the online environment (AliAlassiri *et al.*, 2014).

Self-promoting and self-disclosure

Online self-presentation is different from in-person presentation, as it allows the individual to manipulate the information published. SNS such as Facebook offer the tools to feature the self in a desired way to show physical and personality aspects that enhance the way they want to be perceived by others. Like celebrities, promoting the self or "self-branding" is often a self-presentation strategy even in ordinary people's life (Marwick, 2015; Van Djick, 2013; Krämer & Winter, 2008; Vogel *et al.*, 2015). In SNS, every user has an "imagined audience," or observers, to whom he addresses the messages. While private messages are directed to a specific person, status updates are directed to the entire network of the user, a group of people who may or may not see the posts. To construct the image of the audience, people rely on the number of friends or followers they have (Choi & Bazarova, 2014; Marwick & Boyd, 2010; Marwick, 2015). Chen's (2009) research on YouTube amateur performers indicated the use of self-promotion tactics in order to achieve a larger audience who can recognize and admire their competences.

The observer's reactions to an individual's posts may affect the way he is perceived. Walther *et al.* (2008) found that comments made by one's Facebook friends impacted the profile owner's rating of social attractiveness and credibility. Another study by Tong *et al.* (2008) found that the more Facebook friends a profile owner had, the more socially attractive he or she was perceived to be. SNSs provide the users with tools to quantify and evaluate the impressions they make online by counting the number and the type of reactions that a shared information generated. They can also compare themselves with other users in terms of physical attractiveness, financial and relationship status, and popularity. All the feedback collected influences the degree to which the individual engages in self-presentation tactics. Kik (2017) conducted two focus group studies on Malaysian society to find the influence of self-praising posts on the audience on Facebook. Self-praising posts are defined as "deliberate updates (pictures or writings), which published and shared on social media, are heavily conveyed with the positive self-images or self-focusing messages" (p. 2). The results showed that the main reason people publish self-praising posts on Facebook is to set up a popular self-image. An important factor influencing this behavior is recognition from the public of the social network, represented by likes and comments. A large part of the young receivers (aged below 25) stated they have given fake likes as a polite response, which did not reflect any explicit emotions or authentic admiration, but social support, loyalty and friendship. The same pattern was found between commenters. For adults aged 25 and above, the "like" was a serious action representing personal agreement and admiration toward the poster and gave more expressive comments (Kik, 2017).

On his Facebook wall, a user can post various types of content. He can share information from other users, or he can create its own content. No matter the type of content published, the message communicated can give the audience clues about the self. Weather is a news article to which the individual agrees or not, a funny video, music or personal information such as an image representing the self (photo, video or gif), a check-in at a certain event, an exotic destination they traveled, presents received, relationship status or professional achievements, it can shape a persona. Revealing personal information when communicating with others is called self-disclosure. It requires the willingness to reveal not only obvious characteristics of the self, but also intimate thoughts and feelings. Studies indicate that individuals tend to disclose more positive than negative experiences on Facebook than in real life (Błachnio *et al.*, 2015).

Utz et al. (2012) study results indicate that the need for popularity can predict SNS behaviors such as grooming, strategic self-presentation, and self-disclosure. According to Oxford Dictionaries, popularity is "the state or condition of being liked, admired, or supported by many people". Diefenbach and Christoforakos' (2017) surveys on individuals in Germany, Austria and Switzerland concluded that people reported self-promotion and self-disclosure as their reasons for taking selfies (Williamson *et al.*, 2017). A selfie has been defined as "a self-portrait photograph of oneself (or of oneself and other people), taken with a camera or a camera phone held at arm's length or pointed at a mirror, which is usually shared through social media" (Sorokowski *et al.*, 2016).

No relevant research has been found on which are the more effective self-promoting ways to achieve popularity and get reactions from the audience in order to support and to enhance the desired self-presented on SNS. When searching on Google "how to become popular on Facebook," many articles suggest getting nice pictures and to "develop a persona by posting opinions, discussions, and things that are important to you. People should feel like they know you, so make it easy to understand who you are and what you care about." (https://www.wikihow.com/Become-Famous-on-Facebook-and-Get-a-Lot-of-Likes, 2018). Other tips are to make a lot of friends and plan carefully the time of the posts. Affiliations with famous people, creating awesome photos, applying filters to make the photos more appealing are recommended.

In the social media environment, we have identified two types of self-disclosure. Sharing other user generated content, with or without expressing own emotions and agreement on the topic, will be considered indirect self-disclosure content. Sharing images such as photos, videos or gifs representing the self, emotions, such as happy, excited, sad, angry, and so on, actions such as "traveling to," "playing," statements and other information that clearly presents a trait (physical attractiveness, professional/financial/relationship status, educational level, achievements, popularity) are considered direct self-disclosure. Possessions and locations of self, affiliations with celebrities, influences or brands will also be considered direct self-disclosure. The present research aims to find if direct self-disclosure content is more engaging than indirect self-disclosure content, in certain circumstances on Facebook.

Methodology

This research is an exploratory experiment created with the purpose to find patterns in the behavior of one's audience on Facebook, about direct self-disclosure and indirect self-disclosure content posted by that user. It will be conducted online, on the Facebook profile of the researcher (www.facebook.com/lupas.cora). The audience is represented by other users in the network, and they will be participants in our experiment. They will be exposed to different stimuli that are the content posted on the user's profile to present a digital self. The reactions participants have to each stimulus will be analyzed by number and nature.

Four types of stimuli will be used, based on the type of content: news, educational, entertaining, and personal. News posts must meet the criteria: the story is important or well-known, it happened at the time of posting, in the immediate past or it announces a future event, is unusual or special in some way, it concerns and affects directly or indirectly humans. It involves topics such as: IT/technology, cultural, politic, scientific, travel, and professional. Educational posts are meant to inform and to educate readers in various topics: cultural, financial, politic, professional, scientific, lifestyle, well-being, IT/technologic, and so on. Funny, inspiring, relaxing, and humorous content such as jokes, games, music, movies, videos, pictures, and memes represent the entertaining category of posts. These three types of content will be shared from other users or external sources. Personal posts consist of self-generated content such as pictures, gifs, videos of the user, event attendance, check-ins, product review and other status updates that directly expose a trait of the individual.

News, entertaining and educational posts are meant to display a desired self indirectly, as by sharing a song means the user likes that song, check-in at a concert or an event attendance directly discloses music and lifestyle preferences. Therefore, news, entertaining and educational posts represent indirect self-disclosure content and personal posts will be considered direct self-disclosure content.

Our hypothesis is that a larger number of participants will react to personal content than to the other three types of stimuli, therefore self-promoting through direct self-disclosure will have a larger reach among the audience and will generate a higher number of reactions than indirect self-disclosure.

Variables

Stimuli (content posted), the day and time the audience will be exposed to them, are independent variables as they are planned and manipulated during the experiment. A post from each category will be published, by rotation, on the same day of the week, at the same hour, for 16 weeks.

The imagined audience is a dependent variable. The number of individuals that will see the post depends on their availability online now the post was published and also on the behavior of other users that might react to the post and generate more reach among participants. Their reactions to the stimuli are also dependent variables as they cannot be predicted or controlled but they occur in certain circumstances depending on the audience size and reactions in response to the independent variables. A quantitative and qualitative analysis will be made on the reactions each post generated. The possible reactions one can have to another user's post can be a like, an animated emoticon (laugh, love, angry, sad, wow), comment and share.

To establish the day and hour of the post, a content analysis was made on the owner's profile. June 2016 marks a change in user's behavior on Facebook. All posts from June 2016 to December 2017 were evaluated by the number of reactions they generated and the ones that performed best in the number of likes, feeling animations (laugh, love, wow, angry, sad), comments and shares, determined the day of the week and time of posting for this experiment. When choosing how many times a week we should post, we considered two issues: first, posting too much on Facebook may irritate the audience and it will negatively affect the amount of engagement each participant may offer to this user, second, the user usually posts 2-3 times a week, and did not want a significant change in her behavior. The author decided to post 4 times a week: Tuesdays at 11:57 (55 reactions), Wednesdays at 16:29 (34 reactions), Fridays at 12:46 (48 reactions) and Saturdays at 16:24 (95 reactions). These will be the time chosen for the posts in the experiment, ± 1-2 minutes due to slow internet connection or website/app malfunctions.

Participants (The imagined audience)

The profile is public; thus anyone can see the content and react. Facebook friends and followers will be considered the "defined audience." When a user reacts to another user's post, the action will be visible to its own audience who may or may not see it and decide whether to react or not. They will be considered the "undefined audience" (will also be referred as outsiders). All of them are part of the imagined audience as they presumably see the posts and can react.

A content analysis of user's friends and followers was made to identify the participants to this experiment. They will be structured by gender, location (country they live in) and age generation they are part of. When segmenting the audience for this study, the author will define the generations in terms of media and technology. Kundanis (2003) defines baby boomers as the idealistic generation born between 1943 and 1960. The dominant media was the television, and it came to people via one-way communication as they could not talk back to their TV sets. They dreamed about an interactive media, but it was the next generation that grew up with it. Generation X was born between 1961 and 1981. They experienced cable television, videocassette recorders (VCRs) and computers. Generation Y, also called Millennials, are born after 1982. They have not experienced the world without personal computers and interactive media, video games and satellite television (Kundanis, 2003). According to The Center for Generational Kinetics, Gen Z, also called iGen, are born in 1996 and after (http://genhq.com/igen, 2018). They are technology trendsetters, and get familiar with smartphones, Social Network Sites, and apps from childhood (http://jasondorsey.com/igen-gen-z/, 2018). Of all friends and followers in the network of our experimental Facebook Profile, 99% are from European countries where the age of majority, when a young person may be considered an adult, is the age of 18. Also, the age of 25 marks the time of graduating college or master's program and the starting point of independence, finding a job, and financially self-sustaining. The author is thus dividing Gen-Z into teenagers (14-18 years old) and young adults 19- 25 years old). This research is interested only in people that are 14 years or older, as this is the required age to create a Facebook profile. Therefore, it will have five categories of participants: Gen Z teenagers (age ranged between 14-18 years old), Gen Z young adults (19-25 years old), Gen Y or Millennials (26- 35 years old), Gen X (36-56 years old) and Baby Boomers (people 57 years or older).

There are 805 members in the defined audience: 36% (289) followers and 64% (516) friends. From those 805 members, 94% (759) are persons and the rest are businesses and unidentified (no picture, location, or relevant name to make a description), therefore the author will consider that the audience is constituted of 759 individuals: 322 males and 436 females. During the 16 weeks of the experiment, eight new friend requests were accepted. Most of the audience (88%, 665 individuals) is in Romania, the rest of them, a maximum of 2% each, are from various countries from Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa and North- America. The location could not be identified for seven females and four males. The distribution of participants by country, age and gender can be found in Appendix 1. Three letter codes were used as abbreviations for countries (International Organization for Standardization) (see https://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/ctycodes.htm).

The experiment

The start date is December 26, 2017, and the end date is April 14, 2018. Due to some error of the researcher, changes of time and day for posting were made. On weeks 4, 6, 10 and 15 Sundays at 14:36 were introduced instead of Saturdays. On weeks 11, 12, 13 and 14, on Wednesdays, the content is published at a later hour (17:03 instead of 16:29). On week 14, on Saturday, the hour at which the stimuli had to be published was delayed (18:49 instead of 16:24).

The user is a female from Cluj-Napoca. The age (32 years) and relationship status (in a relationship) are not directly disclosed on the profile, but some members of the audience have this information. Profile and cover photos have a larger reach among the audience as they are always there, meanwhile other status updates are pushed lower on the timeline as other new posts are being published. Facebook's "tag" function allows a user to mention the presence of another user (in a picture, check-in, or other content posted). When someone is tagged in another person's post, the post will appear on the news feed of their own audience and, depending on the settings applied to the profile, it can even appear on that person's wall. Therefore, no tags will be allowed during this experiment. It is allowed to use hashtags and mention places or brands as we consider such affiliations as self-promotion tactics.

Facebook allows the user to respond to a post in three ways: expressing emotions through a like or a feeling animation (laugh, love, sad, surprised/wow, angry), to comment, or to share. Reactions such as likes, and emoticons can be placed in a comment. For each post we will analyze the number of reactions generated and their nature. First, we examined and compared the total number of reactions for each type of post. We also compared the average number of reactions for each category of stimuli with the general average number of reactions. We also looked separately at the number of likes, animated emoticons, comments, and shares. We also examined whether the reactions the participants gave show any patterns in terms of generations and gender.

Results and discussions

During the 16 weeks of the experiment, the author gathered 739 reactions. Personal posts scored higher than other stimuli: 474 reactions compared with 103 for entertaining content, 89 reactions for news content and 73 for educational content. The average number of reactions generated by the stimuli is 11. The average number of reactions each category of stimuli generated is higher than the general average only for personal content (29) while for the other categories is significantly lower (six for entertaining posts, five for news and four for educational content).

Likes and animated emotions

By the number of likes, love and wow emotions, personal posts generated a higher number of reactions than other stimuli. In terms of laughter, entertaining posts scored higher meanwhile sad and angry emotions were attributed to news content. One might argue that the negative feelings (sad and angry) are not addressed toward the publisher as three participants expressed their sadness/anger for the news post about illegal deforestation and one participant expressed sadness regarding the illegal hunting of the Lynx in Romania.

Comments

Personal posts received the highest number of comments compared to the other three types of stimuli. Comments for personal and entertaining posts expressed positive feelings of approval, amusement or asking for more details on the topic while comments for educational and news content mostly showed anger, indignation, and sadness, not towards the publisher but with regard to the topic discussed.

Shares

Six posts were shared by 13 participants. Three news posts of civic interest regarding politics were shared by six members of the defined audience and five outsiders. An educational post about grammar common mistakes was shared by two people from the defined audience. One personal post representing an event attendance was shared by a user in the network that also participated at the event. Three participants that shared our posts could not be identified due to their privacy settings, therefore the author assumes they are part of the undefined audience. The complete list with the number of reactions for each stimulus is presented in Appendix 8.

Audience patterns

A total of 197 participants reacted to the stimuli during the experiment. Most of them (70%) are Millennials (85 females and 53 males), 15% of them are Generation Z young adults (7 males and 23 females), 10% are Generation X-ers (8 males, 11 females) and 4% are Baby Boomers (2 males, 5 females). The rest of 1% is represented by a Generation Z teenager female and people that could not be identified by age.

All generations reacted mostly to personal content. From the total number of reactions, Generation Z, gave more than 80% to personal content. More than a half of the reactions were to personal stimuli for Millennials, Generations X, and Baby Boomers. Participants from each generation used mostly likes as reactions, Female Generation X participants mostly engaged with personal posts in terms of likes and animated reactions, but they preferred to share news posts. Male Generation X showed the same interest in personal, educational, and entertaining content and less interest in news posts. They reacted mostly with likes for personal stimuli and shares for entertaining ones. Baby Boomers and Generation X women shared news posts while men from the same generations shared entertaining posts. Generation X females and Millennial men engaged reacted with comments to all the four categories of stimuli, meanwhile other generations did not comment or did only on personal content.

Outsiders and unique reactions

There were 28 reactions from participants outside the network, 17 participants from the undefined audience. Personal content received 46% of the reactions from outsiders, news content 36%, entertaining 14%, and educational 4%. Participants that reacted only once during the whole experiment are considered unique reactions. There are 76 unique reactions, 53 of them at personal stimuli, 8 at news content, 6 at educational content and 7 at entertaining ones.

Conclusions

The experiment confirmed the hypothesis according to which direct self-disclosure is more effective in gaining fame and popularity on Facebook. Friends and followers in the network reacted more on personal stimuli than on educational, news, or entertainment. This result appears for the total number of reactions and also for likes, positive animated emoticons (love, laugh, wow) and comments. Direct self-disclosure content published also attracted the highest number of reactions from people outside the network compared with indirect self-disclosure content, thus making the user more popular. In terms of negative emotions (angry, sad) and shares, news and educational content scored higher.

Regarding the audience patterns, the author found that all generations reacted more to direct self-disclosure than indirect self-disclosure content. Only for Generation X males the pattern was not maintained as they reacted in almost equal measure to all the types of stimuli.

Limitations and recommendations

Slow internet connection and website/app malfunctions intervened with our experiment as it sometimes delayed the publishing of the content within one or two minutes after the planned hour of posting. Due to the alterations made to the initial schedule of posting, we do not have the same number of stimuli from each category published at the same hour and day of the week, and results might not apply in other circumstances.

To gather a larger amount of data to identify a pattern, more days of the weeks and different hours should be examined. The day and hour established to post were selected by the larger number of reactions generated by the post published in the last one year and a half, with no regard to the content. An in-depth analysis of the past posts, considering their nature and the number of reactions could be made when selecting the best time to post.

Given the fact that Facebook users do not have the same audience characteristics and behavior, the results of this research cannot be applied to all of them but replicating the experiment in other circumstances might show some similar results.

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Humans and rationality: How dogs affect their owners' choices in crisis situations

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Abstract

The way our pets (mostly dogs) influence our well-being was proven by numerous studies throughout the time. But this paper follows another path: how animals can influence one's reasoning. Moreover, we started from the theory that pet owners from Cluj-Napoca, made to choose between the life of their own dog and the life of a foreign tourist, would choose their dog's life. Firstly, we applied online surveys on 194 subjects. After interpreting the results, our theory was confirmed. To understand why dog owners are more likely to make irrational decisions than those who do not own a dog, an expert gave us an insight on the subject. This paper will also prove that dog owners put their own dog's needs above themselves.

Keywords: pets, reason, man-dog relationship, experimental ethics, prosocial behavior.

Introduction

People are more and more receptive to the idea of owning a pet, the latter being frequently considered "a man's best friend." Numerous studies show that a pet has a positive impact on both our physical and mental health. Our study is focused on the psychological side, trying to create a connection between irrational choices, emotions, and empathy. The quote "a dog is the only animal in this world that can love you more than it loves itself" (Billings) sustains our thesis, showing that love does not only come from people, but also from dogs.

The research is based on numerous theories, for example the reciprocity of the man-dog friendship, the importance of a dog for its owner, the bond between pets and owners. The idea of having a dog as a pet is more and more known these days and the psychological changes on humans are numerous and complex, most of these changes having a positive impact upon man's life.

The bond created between humans and animals is highly important. The main purpose of the paper is finding dog owners and applying surveys to find how important a dog is to them. It is easy to notice that there really is an unbreakable bond between humans and pets. They make a man's life more interesting, happy, and enthusiastic. The presence of an animal plays an important role, being a support for lonely people, for example, but mostly for old people. An animal can bring them happiness, peace, optimism, and a feeling of fulfillment.

Literature review

Prosocial behavior is the type of behavior known as positive within the company, a behavior that brings in the well-being of a person (Wispe, in Bentu, *n.d.*). People act prosocially on a voluntary basis, intending to make good, and not expecting to receive a reward for their deed. Prosocial behavior is best observed in empathetic people. In this category, one can find people who love animals, who are used to feeling love for a "thing" (in this case, love for dogs), being more prone to feelings of empathy (Bentu, *n.d.*).

An experiment carried out by Harrison's Fund ("Harrison's Fund Advertising Experiment…," February 2015) shows the fact that people express much more empathy for dogs instead of human beings. Set to choose between donating money for helping human beings, or donating money for helping dogs, they chose the latter. The subjects were shown two pictures, one of a baby, named Harrison, and the other of a dog with the same name. In this situation, the feeling of empathy was more prominent towards the dog, and the decision was easier to make.

Levin and Arluke (2013) build on the study presented above and reinforce the idea that people feel much more empathy for a dog instead of a human being. In their study, the subjects were shown three pictures displaying victims of a baseball bat attack (a one-year-old child, a 30-year-old grown-up, and a dog). Subjects perceived the dog as a "fur baby," that is why they showed more empathy for the dog presented in the picture. Although perceived as a baby and among the victims was a real baby, people removed the idea of saving the human being, considering that a dog is more helpless than a baby.

The bond between a dog and its owner is formed when the dog gets into their life and starts growing continuously. Studies conducted show that the role of a dog in one's life is not only having a play partner, but its presence brings great benefits to one's health, helping owners to relax and to lead a more active life. Because the stress level increases significantly, the presence of a dog is essential, being much more relaxed around our quadrupeds (Stregowski, *n.d.*).

Studies conducted so far show the fact that quadrupeds assimilate aspects from the behavior of their owners and that of human beings in general. Dogs can recognize different facial expressions, of showing empathy, and watching television. Another study shows that just like humans, dogs suffer from short-term memory. Dogs' capacities, young or grown-up, to retain tasks are studied, and then these capacities are verified months later to check if they are still present (Wei-Haas, *n.d.*).

The bond between humans and dogs lasted for thousands of years and even determined how our brain developed (Nagasawa, Mitsui, En, Ohtani, Ohta, Sakuma, & Kikusui, 2015). All our canine partners affect us in a surprising manner, from stimulating our immune system (Desai *et al.*, 2012) to ameliorating dementia (Perkins, Bartlett, Travers, & Rand, 2008). With all the benefits dogs bring to humans, it is not even surprising that they are called "man's best friend."

Dogs can have an enormous impact on the development of children. A 2012 study from the Pediatrics Journal (Bergroth *et al.*, 2012) shows that children who grow up with a dog are less susceptible to illness than children who do not own a dog.

The bond between a human and his dog proved to be extremely strong as a human not only sees his dog as just a friend, but also as a real refuge: "When there are big changes in our lives, we design our emotions, anger or excitement on the dog. The dog becomes our mirror" (Millan, 2013). Also, people see the dog from the complementary "half" missing emotionally, so Millan presents the following scheme: "People = story + emotions + energy + discernment + past / future, while dog = truth + mirror of human energy + lack of discernment + present." (*ibid.*). That's why humans tend to consider the dog as part of themselves, a part they would not be willing to give up.

In their *Social Psychology* handbook, Kassin, Fein, and Markus (2011) speak about helping others. They mention that, in situations of varying degrees of risk, people will resort to "kin selection" to decide who to help and who not to. The kinship selection refers to "[p]referential support of genetic relatives, resulting in the survival of genes that have a higher common attractiveness" (p. 395). Using this knowledge, Fitzgerald (*apud* Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2011) conducted a study in 2009 presenting three situations to participants and asking them to choose whom they would help: a friend, relatives, or close family members. The results showed that in low-risk situations, people choose to equally help a friend or family member. Instead, in the case of a high-risk situation, family comes first, then the relatives and then, finally, friends.

It has also been shown that people have a greater predisposition to helping those to whom they resemble (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2011, p. 425) and their loved ones, be they family, lovers, or friends (p. 426). One reason behind this would be people creating strong relationships on a sentimental level with relatives, feeling somehow responsible for providing them with safety and help when needed.

This research is a re-adaptation of the original study by researchers Topolski, Weaver, Martin, and McCoy (2013). They used the concepts of "Hot Emotional System" and "Rational Cold System" demonstrated by neuro-scientific studies as the two opposite systems of the brain. Over time, it has been shown that if individuals are faced with personal dilemmas, more intense activity is exercised in areas of the hot brain system. In most situations, the part of the hot brain system is associated with irrationality, thus the actions of the individual are problematic from an ethical standpoint. Interestingly, the difference in proportions in the activity of the two brain systems changes according to the dilemma conditions (Topolski *et al.,* 2013). This topic was also debated in studies of artificial intelligence and its implementation on cars. One of the research projects that discusses the theme of human irrationality is "Autonomous vehicles require experimental ethics," conducted by Bonnefon, Shariff and Rahwan (2016). This research stems from the desire to create algorithms that, once implemented in the future, would be able to minimize the number of victims in an inevitable accident. And here, the decisions of the individuals studied were different depending on the context of the dilemma: in some situations, individuals are adept of the principle of utilitarianism (the good/happiness of the whole society is above the good/personal happiness: "The utilitarian standard (...) is not the greatest happiness of the agent, but the greatest amount of happiness in general," (Mill, 1994, p. 32), even accepting to sacrifice himself; sometimes they put their own good above others, which could lead, if this type of reasoning to intelligent machines and artificial intelligence in general, to a planetary disaster (Bonnefon, Shariff, & Rahwan, 2016).

Methodology

For the present paper, based on the influence of dogs on people's rationality, the authors chose as the main research methods survey research and specialized interview. As far as the questionnaire is concerned, it was administered to friends, family, but also strangers, the vast majority being dog owners (only 5.2% of intended interviewees said they were not dog owners). The age group of the respondents ranges from 10 to 57 years, and a large majority were 22 years old. The authors did not make ethnical or educational differences, so our participants were not asked to answer questions about the socio-demographic aspects above (ethnicity, education). As far as the interview is concerned, it was a specialized one, administered to a psychologist who is, in turn, a dog owner. By asking for a specialist's opinion, we could find out more about this connection between humans and their quadrupeds.

To implement the questionnaire and the interview, the authors used the online resources: Facebook, but also Yahoo Mail. All participants' personal data remained anonymous, and they were informed of this. The authors used the Google forms platform to create the questionnaire, as it is easy to use by both researchers (simple interface, easy to enter questions, provides accurate statistical data) and respondents. A pilot test was indisputably needed, initially conducted on 5 respondents; following the pilot test, the authors made changes and brought improvements to the questionnaire.

Results

The research team first employed the survey method. The questionnaire was administered on a population of 194 people. The age of those who answered the questionnaire ranges between 10 and 57. Most respondents are in the 22-year age group, i.e. 16 of them. 92.1% of those responding to the questionnaire are female and only 7.9% are male. Most respondents are unmarried (64.6%), and identify as extroverted (32.3%), ambivalent (26.6%), introverted (19.3%), living in an apartment (60.7%), and employed (74%). As a study about dogs, the first question was whether the respondents had pets, to which 94.8% responded affirmatively. 89.5% of those who answered the questionnaire have been dog owners for more than 1 year, 79.8% of them saying they had pet animals in their childhood, of which the dog (80.8%) and the cat (62.9%) are the first answers. Other pets named by respondents were parrot (38.4%), hamster (37.7%), turtle (2%), and rabbit (1.3%). Asking if having a pet helps create a better image in the eyes of others, 43.4%

answered affirmatively, 30.2% answered negatively, and 26.4% responded with a don't know/won't answer. 88.3% of our participants spend more than one hour a day with their dog. As for the dog's weight, 40.6% have average-sized dogs, 35.6% small ones, and 23.9% large.

Asked if their quadrupeds show signs of happiness when they spend time with them, 98.9% responded affirmatively. To the question of sufficient attention given to the dog, 49.4% responded that they considered that they were paying enough attention, while 46.1% said they did not consider giving enough attention to the dog. 48.6% consider that they dedicate enough time to the dog's education, while 43.6% do not consider it at all. A large percentage was also recorded on the question "Is your dog able to execute simple orders?", 78.1% of which answered positively. 71.9% responded that their dog was subjected to the respondent, 66.1% responded that the quadruple spends the most time with that person, and only 31.1% responded that the quadruple spends most time with another member of family.

Inquiring whether respondents take their dog to the vet, 98.3% responded affirmatively, and 72.5% answered that they take their dog to the veterinarian periodically (once every 6 months). In the questionnaire, the authors bring the issue of community dogs, and 93.4% consider it a problem in our country. 82.3% consider that this problem can be solved by promoting their adoption both nationally and internationally, 81.8% by sterilization, and 59.1% by building more shelters. However, 90.8% of respondents disagree with the solution of sterilization of community dogs, and 89.2% would be willing to adopt a community dog. Asked if their dog stays alone, 92.8% answered yes, 50% saying they are alone less than 6 hours a day. 96.7% feel the dog's absence when being away from home for longer, 88.5% get used to the situation, and 69.1% do not take their dog on vacation. 85.1% of the participants' dogs ran away from home, with 83.9% missing less than a day, and 41.9% reported, 29% waited, 22.6% rewarded, and 9.7% refused to answer.

Asking the participants to evaluate on a scale from 1 (total disagreement) to 5 (total agreement) six dog-related assertions, most of the assessments scored 5s. Given the choice between purchasing an object for himself or for the dog, 68.9% chose the latter. 60.2% of respondents first deal with the dog's routine, and then with their own. As expected, 87.9% responded that the dog's life is of high importance. 73.6% of respondents felt that if their life were in danger, the dog would be willing to sacrifice in order to save them. Wanting to find out if the dog owners are affiliated with other people who have dogs, the authors inquired how many of their respondents' friends are also dog owners: 38.3% state that a majority, 33.9% a small part, and 20.2% nearly half of their friends. When they are around other dogs, the owners said that their own dogs play with them (56.4%), are curious about them (55.8%), are afraid (17.1%), are indifferent (16.6%), or become aggressive (20.4%). However, the dogs are curious (53%), want to play (47.5%), are quiet (37%), and just a few become aggressive (4.4%) around kids. Around strangers, the dogs are curious (59.8%), bark at them (29.6%), seem suspicious (17.9%), indifferent (15.1%), and aggressive (7.8%). The empathy towards the pain of the suffering dog was 99.4%. The key question of the research: "Imagine the following hypothetical situation: A bus runs on a crowded street. Your dog comes in front of him, risking being killed; in the same situation is a tourist you do not know. Because you can only save a single being, whom do you save?”, shows that 68.3% would save their own dog, 25.1% chose the don’t know/won’t answer option, and only 6.6% would save the tourist.

The second research method, the interview, lent in-depth perspectives on the results of the questionnaire. A graduate of the BBU College of Psychology and Education Sciences explained in an individual interview via e-mail the main conclusions this paper reached after administering the first method. She explained, both from the point of view of an expert, and from the point of view of a dog owner, the fact that people prefer to own a dog as a pet because they can have more varied interactions, unlike a cat. They can play, hug them, run with them, take them for walks, or take them on vacations. In addition, dogs can learn people’s language more easily, because they are more submissive than other domestic species. Also, the fact that the respondents stated that they put the needs of the quadruple above personal needs is something to be expected. Anthropomorphizing dogs, people come to see them as friends, furry children, and if they know they can give joy, they buy them anything. It is a natural behavior for someone who has the responsibility of caring for someone else or loving someone. The other’s needs become more important than yours.

The results of the central question of the survey were also addressed by the psychologist, explaining that it is natural to want to save someone you love instead of a stranger, even when it comes to different species. Losing someone hurts more than losing an unknown individual for whom you have no feelings, but maybe emotions.

Conclusions

To conclude, between pets and their owners there is an unbreakable bond, a bond that determines the way dogs behave, but also how the owners behave. The surveys and the interview helped this paper show that pets behave the way their owners tell them to (e.g. owners who value friendship will teach their pets to be friendly when surrounded by other pets/humans). This way, the owner has a major influence on their own pet. As expected, results show that humans feel more empathy towards dogs than mankind.

Although the surveys were administered to a variety of people considering age (10 to 57 years old), social status, the authors came to the same conclusion for all groups included in the study: when it comes to their dogs, the owners will always put their dog’s needs first and their own needs come second. Moreover, dogs bring various benefits to humans and the quality of life, both psychological and physical. As a conclusion, through this study the main finding is strengthening the argument that humans can form emotional bonds with other species.

As for the research limitations, this paper is rather quasi-experimental, due to organizational errors. There were errors in the construction of the questionnaire (order and framing of questions), and errors related to the respondents. The authors also recognize the disadvantages of using online surveys, as this manner of research implementation creates confusion among respondents, which is why we found six incorrectly filled questionnaires – later excluded from the statistics. The authors also recognize the pilot test error: they applied it to a small number of respondents, which is why, when the questionnaire was filled in by 76 respondents, it revealed an important error in its construction, forcing the authors to dismiss all of the previous answers, rebuild the questionnaire and re-apply it. The results obtained from this research can be reviewed and improved by further research, adding other research methods, and improving the research methods already used.

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Volunteering as social exclusion:
The discrimination amongst volunteers and non-volunteers

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Abstract
The present research is based on factors of discrimination amongst volunteers and non-volunteers and the ways one can overcome it. As research methods, the authors used the survey and the interview, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The respondents to the questionnaire were chosen by convenience, being of different ages and education levels. For the interview, the participants were selected non-randomly, of ages between 19 and 23, all of them being university students. The results of this study revealed no social exclusion between volunteers and non-volunteers, but rather a misunderstanding coming from the non-volunteers' side. Also, a subsequent conclusion is that this misunderstanding can be minimized by a more efficient effort of informing subjects on this topic.

Keywords: volunteering, social exclusion, discrimination, misunderstanding.

Introduction

The reasoning behind the selection of this topic stands in the authors' status of active volunteers, as well as members of an anti-discrimination movement. Thus, the subject tackled in this paper would encompass both aspects. The research question from which the study started, *whether there is any discrimination between volunteers and non-volunteers?* led the authors to the purpose of this research, namely, to provide answers to the following questions: Do volunteers feel discriminated by non-volunteers? And vice-versa: do non-volunteers feel discriminated against more than the volunteers?

According to the Romanian language thesaurus (n.a. *Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române*), the term *volunteer* is defined as "a person acting voluntarily on his own initiative, under no constraint from anybody, consciously." Although there is no term for a *non-volunteer* in the thesaurus consulted, the authors further use this term with the meaning of "a person who does not practice volunteering." The concept of *social exclusion* is defined as "the process in which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from the society in which they live" (Hickey & du Toit, 2013:135).

The research was carried out between November 16th and December 29th, 2017. The time frame for completing the questionnaire began on November 24th and ended on December the 9th, 2017, and the instrument was filled in by randomly selected people; the interview took place on December 16th, 2017 with individuals chosen non-randomly, all subjects being active volunteers.

Literature review

"The notion of *social exclusion* was developed in industrialised countries, most notably France, in the 1970s to describe the processes of marginalisation and deprivation which can arise where processes of economic and social transformation render traditional systems of welfare and social protection inadequate or obsolete. Defined as *the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from the society in which they live*, the term entered into international development circles via a research programme at the International Labour Organisation in the mid-1990s" (Hickey & du Toit, 2013: 135).

A study published in 2007 recalls seven experiments in which people were manipulated by being told that they would end up alone and rejected by their community. "Social exclusion caused a substantial reduction in prosocial behavior. Socially excluded people donated less money to a student fund, were unwilling to volunteer for further lab experiments, were less helpful after a mishap, and cooperated less in a mixed-motive game with another student. The implication is that rejection temporarily interferes with emotional responses, thereby impairing the capacity for empathic understanding of others, and as a result, any inclination to help or cooperate with them is undermined" (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007, pp. 56-66).

According to a different study, "the most severe forms of exclusion – such as pregnancy under 16, exclusions from school or rough sleeping – affect a fraction of 1% of the population. But approaching 10% suffer significant problems – for example, 9% of 16- to 18-year-olds were not in learning or work in 1997; 10% of young men aged 18 to 24 were alcohol dependent; 7% of men born in 1953 had served a prison sentence by the age of 46" (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001, p. 5). As a means of preventing social exclusion, the British Government tackled tactics such as supporting families and the development of young children, attempting to reintegrate certain groups, and improving skills of children.

"Socially excluded people are more aggressive even toward innocent targets, are less willing to help or cooperate, engage in self-defeating behaviors like risk-taking and procrastination, and perform poorly on analytical reasoning tasks. Narcissists show a higher level of aggression after rejection, and self-esteem has no effect. Aggression after rejection can be prevented under some circumstances, usually when the target may provide some social acceptance (when further interaction is expected, or when the target is not too low- or high-status). Thus rejected people may be engaging in defensive denial of emotion, a cognitive state which might explain the negative consequences found across these studies" (Twenge & Baumeister, 2005, pp. 27-46).

According to the Romanian language thesaurus above mentioned, the term volunteer is used to define “a person acting voluntarily on his own initiative, under no constraint from anybody, consciously.” Although there is no term for a non-volunteer in this dictionary, as mentioned before, it is used in this paper intuitively, with the meaning of people who do not practice volunteering activities.

Another study (Cnaan *et al.*, 2010) emphasizes the motivational differences amongst active volunteers, occasional volunteers, and non-volunteers. The study sample was formed by 4000 students from five English-speaking countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. One of the conclusions of the study shows that people, especially young adults, have the tendency to transcend from being active volunteers for a long period of time to short-term volunteering experiences that will satisfy their immediate needs. The authors categorized the motivations and benefits behind volunteering in social and altruistic motivations and benefits and developing a more attractive résumé. The results of the study show that the most important motivation for active volunteers, occasional volunteers, and non-volunteers is the altruistic one, they want to help other people. However, a crucial difference was noticed regarding this motivation, as 90.2% of active volunteers selected it, 85.7% of occasional volunteers, and 79.2% of non-volunteers declared themselves holders of this altruistic drive (p. 75). The same study pointed out a large difference in the motivation of developing a more attractive résumé, occasional volunteers and non-volunteers being more drawn to this than active volunteers.

“Volunteering is a foundational block in the formation and sustainability of civil society across the world” (Hustinx et al., 2010: 349). As this study states, volunteering is a personal decision, influenced by oneself. Also, the study, analyzing the responses of 5794 students from six countries, concludes that besides personal motivations, people volunteer out of motivations like helping others and being altruistic, which is consistent with previous research discussed.

Volunteering is an activity in which a person dedicates his or her free time to help another person, a group, or a cause. Volunteering is sometimes confused with activism. Even though volunteering and social activism developed separately, the two concepts have a lot in common. The gathering of data about volunteering from national samples was started approximately a quarter of a century ago. The volunteering rate for the United States has hence been constant or, over the past few years, some studies show that it has been decreasing (School of Public Policy, 2018).

Other theories are trying to emphasize the individual factors of volunteering, indicating the role of social resources, especially in social relationships and organizational activity. Support was found for all theories, but a lot of aspects remain unsolved. Differences like age, gender, and race inside the volunteering sphere can be mostly explained through highlighting the differences between self-understanding, human capital, and social resources. Not much attention was given to the contextual effects on volunteering and while the evidence is unclear, the impact of organizational, community, and regional characteristics on the decision of being a volunteer remains an optimal area for research. Examining the idea that volunteering is good for the one who is helped, but also for the one that helps, literature tackles the impact of volunteering on subjective and objective wellness. The positive effects can be seen in life regarding satisfaction, self-esteem, self-evaluated health, educational and professional performances, functional abilities, and morality. In addition, studies amongst young adults show that volunteering reduces the possibility of developing problematic behaviors such as skipping school and drug abuse (Wilson, 2000: 215-240).

Volunteering is, generally, more popular amongst youth than adults or elderly. Even though the rate of volunteering is difficult to measure, lately, research has shown various estimations, mostly because of the several methods of carrying out such measurements. "Young people generally report greater levels of volunteering than their adult counterparts. According to the report the *Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait*, during the spring of 2002, 15- to 25-year-olds reported volunteering at the rate of 40.2% over the previous 12-month period compared with a national volunteering rate of 31.7%" (Lopez & Marcelo, 2007: 6). Moreover, the study reveals the areas of volunteering that are more practiced: medical-sanitary area, social assistance area, and protecting the environment.

Research design

Method

The research question from which this endeavor started, namely *whether there is any discrimination between volunteers and non-volunteers?* perfectly describes the problem that posed when tackling this research topic. The negative factors involved during this research project, the mismanagement of time, concern with other personal activities, the frequent deviation from the given subject, the varying levels of concentration powers from one team member to another, have negatively influenced the smooth operation of the initial research plans.

The sampling engaged for implementing the questionnaire was random, whereas the one for the interview was convenient. As research methods, we chose the survey, using the questionnaire as a tool to highlight the quantitative side of volunteering, and the group interview to obtain more detailed information, which is its qualitative aspect. The questionnaire contained 21 questions, and a pilot study of the questionnaire was conducted by administering it to a few people to identify possible errors. We then refined the questionnaire by considering the observations of the pilot study respondents and we distributed it through Facebook and WhatsApp. The survey was active for two weeks, and at the end it recorded a total of 91 responses.

For this research method, independent task variables were present, namely the fact that the questionnaire took place online, and questions that were not understood could not be explained or rephrased; although the time for completing the questionnaire was estimated by us to be around 10-15 minutes, it could have been filled out in a shorter period of time, but it could also take longer, depending on the level of knowledge of the subject.

Then, the semi-structured interview guide was prepared, and a meeting date with the participants was set. The variables encountered through this research method were environmental variables, such as the existence of an IT component in the room where the interview took place, which produced a noise that interrupted the participants' speech, or the fact that towards the end of the interview the room temperature was higher than it was at the beginning of it, potentially influencing the comfort level of the subjects. Both for the questionnaire and the group interview, the ethical rules were respected and the confidentiality of the personal data provided was kept.

Participants

The first method used was the survey, using as a tool the 21-item questionnaire, filled in by 91 individuals, from which we extracted 90 viable answers (63 women, 25 men, and 2 people who did not declare their gender). The questionnaire was self-administered on an online platform, being addressed to all age groups. The second approach was the group interview, using as a tool the semi-structured interview guide. This interview was attended by 8 people (5 females and 3 males). The interviewees were chosen in a non-random manner, coming from different backgrounds in which the authors of the study are active.

Instruments

For conducting the study, the following materials were used: four laptops, four phones, paper sheets, and pens. The questionnaire was created using the *Google Docs* platform and was distributed on Facebook and WhatsApp. The interview guide was designed, and the interview was conducted face-to-face in a university space.

Results

Ninety questionnaires out of 91 completed were fully filled, thus valid. The resulting data shows as follows: 88.9% of the respondents were involved in volunteer activities, while the remaining 11.1% have never practiced this kind of activity. The subjects who filled in the questionnaire confessed that the reasons for their involvement in volunteering are the following: helping the community (30%), professional experience (22%), personal development (14%), social networking (14%), passion (8%), and below the threshold of 8% different responses were found (note that similar answers were given to this question from many respondents). The 11.1% of people surveyed who were not involved in volunteering stated their main reason to be the lack of time (40%), and then disinterest in relation to this area (20%) and lack of opportunities (20%), and the last aspects were selfishness (10%) and lack of motivation (10%).

The following three questions focused on individuals who volunteered. The popular areas among the respondents were: education (47.8%), culture and arts (44.4%), and social/community (44.4%), while a minority of under 40% was involved in the following areas: social services and assistance, medical and healthcare, sports, religion, and environmental protection. A vast majority of respondents were active in NGOs (61.1%) and the rest of them in associations (38.9%), educational establishments (37.8%), foundations (18.9%), and other entities (6.6%). Asked how much time they devoted to volunteering, 19% declared having practiced volunteering for under 1 year, 16% for 3 years, 12% for 2 years, 11% for 4 years and less than 10% had practiced volunteering for periods such as: 1 year, 5 years, 7-10 years, over 10 years, and an unspecified time.

At the time of contributing to this research, 52.2% of respondents were not involved in volunteering and the remaining 47.8% were actively involved. Of the total respondents, 66.7% consider that non-volunteers are not discriminated against by those who are involved in volunteer actions. A minority of 10% believe that non-volunteers are discriminated against by those who do volunteer. On the other hand, 73.3% of individuals who completed the questionnaire consider that volunteers are not discriminated against by non-volunteers, while only 11.1% believe that volunteers are discriminated against by non-volunteers.

Questions 8 and 10 were devoted to people who do not practice volunteering. Of these individuals, 41.1% have never felt discriminated because of this, and 10% did feel discriminated against on this basis. Also, 53.3% of non-volunteers believe they did not discriminate against those who engaged in volunteering activities, but 2.2% confessed they did so.

Questions 9 and 11 were designed for people engaged in volunteering. Here, 72.2% did not feel discriminated against, while 12.2% felt. A wide majority of 86.7% responded that they did not discriminate against non-volunteers, and 4.4% confessed that they discriminated against them.

Among the main reasons for discrimination in the context of volunteering are differences of mentality (21%) and misinformation (12%), and 38% of respondents chose not to answer. As a result, the most common type of discrimination was indirect discrimination (44.2%), followed by multiple discrimination (33.7%), and direct discrimination (22.1%).

Asked whether discrimination in regard to volunteering can be combated, respondents answered positively (43.3%), while only 6.7% answered negatively. Ways to combat discrimination have been identified as follows: information (12%), communication (11%), the power of example (8%), while only 2% have mentioned education, and barely 1% thought of violence. When asked why discrimination cannot be tackled, respondents to our questionnaire mentioned reasons such as: the impossibility of changing people's mentality (10%) and culture (2%).

Demographics of our respondents show that the survey was mainly filled by persons aged 19-25 years (63.3%), female (70%), with higher education (73.3%), from urban areas (95.6%). The conclusions deriving from these findings are that most of the respondents practice volunteering, and the majority of people surveyed do not believe that there is discrimination linked to this practice. In addition, most people who completed the questionnaire considered that they did not discriminate and that they were not discriminated against in this context.

The second method used in this research was the group interview, using an interview guide that in our case was semi-structured. By doing this, it helped collect qualitative data, more personal and in-depth than what resulted from the survey. The group interview commenced by asking the participants to share their names, ages, and an embarrassing experience in their life, so as to create a more relaxed environment. Their ages varied between 19 and 23, and there were three males and five females. All of the participants had practiced volunteering and still do up to the date of the interview. The most common places where they practiced volunteering are the following: schools, theaters, NGOs, veterinary clinics, but also in cultural events or festivals.

When asked to define the term *discrimination*, the interviewees reached a common point, that discrimination means the violations of human rights and judging people based on unfounded reasons. They also expressed the idea that discrimination is based of prejudice and that it leads to the isolation of certain groups. The main types of discrimination that the participants identified are racism, xenophobia, homophobia amongst different social groups, discrimination of the disabled, political discrimination, and ethnic discrimination.

Asked about discrimination in volunteering, the participants reached the conclusion that there is in fact no actual discrimination, but a misunderstanding of what volunteering means, coming from the non-volunteer's side. One participant claimed that we cannot talk about discrimination in volunteering giving the fact there is no volunteering culture rooted in our country. All the interviewees expressed that they frequently encounter misconceptions such as "volunteering is just a waste of time," "you are only doing it because it looks good on your resume," or "you are just working for free."

We took the discussion on a more personal level and the participants revealed sincerely that they did not feel necessarily discriminated against, but rather misunderstood by their parents, friends, and professors. One participant shared an experience where she was excluded from school activities since she was volunteering at a certain institution. Another participant shared that her and some colleagues were sanctioned by a teacher because they were part of a student organization.

The main reason of discrimination in volunteering identified by the participants was the misunderstanding of the concept. Other motives were obsolete mentalities and the lack of a volunteering culture. However, the participants claimed that non-volunteers cannot be blamed for their passivity and misunderstanding. During the debate on this question there arose, for the first time, the idea that volunteers do not discriminate against non-volunteers.

Put in the situation of the misunderstood volunteer, the participants shared the idea of presenting the benefits that come with the act of volunteering, such as personal development, socializing, accumulating experience, the joy of helping others, the joy of getting involved, and of contributing to the development of the society. Another persuasion method presented was through the power of the self-example.

Taken out of their comfort zone and put in the shoes of the passive non-volunteers, the participants could not empathize and present relevant point of views, sharing only situations in which the non-volunteers are persuaded to join volunteering activities.

A way of fighting discrimination or misunderstanding identified by the participants was to promote volunteering among children, because their mentalities can be shaped, as they are a lot more open to new things than teenagers. Another solution would be a more efficient way of presenting the benefits of volunteering and promoting projects and organizations. The power of self-example was reinforced, in the idea of promoting volunteering (mainly in the rural environment).

The conclusions reached by the participants circled around the notions of discrimination and misunderstanding. The idea that Romania needs to grow a volunteering culture was reinforced and so, this misunderstanding will probably fade away over the next decades. The participants agreed that this social exclusion is unilateral, coming from the non-volunteers' side, because volunteering means doing something for non-volunteers, so volunteering is done for non-volunteers.

Discussion and conclusions

The results of the two research methods employed showed that there is no such thing as discrimination in volunteering, but rather a misunderstanding between volunteers and non-volunteers.

Most of the people who filled in our questionnaire are active volunteers, the answers being more complex and veridical from the volunteers' point of view. The study revealed that the most popular places to volunteer are NGOs, and the areas popular for volunteering among our study population are the educational one, the social one, and the cultural one. Most of the people that participated in our study consider that discrimination does not come from the volunteers' side but does not come from the non-volunteers' side either. When the authors confronted the conclusions from the survey and the ones from the interview, it was easily observed that indeed there is no such thing as discrimination, but rather a misunderstanding that can lead to one discrimination.

Even though the respondents of the survey declared that they do not feel discriminated, five out of eight people that were interviewed stated that they were involved or know people that were involved in a case of discrimination based on volunteering. The main motivations behind the discrimination in volunteering, as stated in the survey and in the group interview, gravitated around mentality differences and misinformation. During the interview, the respondents were open to discuss this matter, but in filling in the survey there was a high percentage of people refusing to answer.

The respondents stated that most of the time the discrimination is an indirect one, meaning that the ones that discriminate are not displaying intention. This fact was confirmed in the group interview as well, as the interviewed individuals confessed that they were discriminated against even by their parents in an indirect and unintentional manner. In the case of multiple discrimination, two of the participants of the interview declared that they were discriminated since they were part of a particular volunteering group. Also, the indirect discrimination resulted to be less frequent, both in the case of the survey and in the case of the group interview.

In the survey, as well as in the interview, the respondents asserted that this discrimination can be combated; however, in the survey, people were skeptical in terms of providing methods of combating. The interviewees emphasized a lot of ways to overcome this discrimination, ways that were presented in the description on the group interview.

The hypothesis from which we started turned out to be partially confirmed, because the respondents of the survey and of the interview drew the conclusion that discrimination in this area does not exist, and that the issue is more of a bilateral misunderstanding. However, it has been argued that the problem does not come from the volunteers' side, since they are working to fulfill the needs of non-volunteers, the latter being misinformed about all the aspects of practicing volunteering.

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Students' adaptation to campus life and food sharing as a social binder

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Abstract

Moving on from high school life to student life is a complex process in everything that concerns growing up. This process is powerfully resented by youngsters who choose to study in a different city. Students face changes on many levels: social, cultural, economic, and what is more important, leaving their home and family can be a burden in coping with the new life. For this reason, the present study investigates the FPACS (College of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences) students' views on the described situation. Through a survey, 107 first- year students living in Hașdeu Student Complex (77 females, 30 males) gave us information on their wish to socialize, and, on how they feel about campus facilities. By using the observation method, we analyzed around 50 subjects and discovered their openness to help. Results show that food might be considered a social binder. Moreover, most students feel that shopping for food with their roommates brought them closer.

Keywords: students, social life on campus, food, adaptation, prosocial behavior.

Introduction

This study was carried out to identify the easiness or difficulties in new students' life; how do freshmen who moved from another town to Cluj-Napoca adapt to campus life? Through this study, the authors want to show the way in which students get used to the Hașdeu Student Complex and to discover it, and whether sharing food is a social binder for them. This theme's relevance stands in the fact that a lot of youngsters who leave their hometown and move to such a diverse city undergo considerable shock. For this reason, this study is not only based on surveying students, but also on observing their behavior, to establish objective conclusions which might help making decisions on improving the students' situation by offering some guidance from experienced individuals. One of the most representative studies on this topic, that tackles advantages of living on campus, was realized by Chickering (1974). The author mentions that students who live on campus are more involved in academic activities compared to those who live off campus. Also, the National Alliance of Students Organizations in Romania has carried out a study about advantages and disadvantages of campus life, concluding that the lack of optimal living conditions directly affects students' life.

Literature review

The concept of "adaptation" engages every change and transformation suffered by organisms in relation with their environment (Academia Română, 2009). By "students' adaptation to campus life", the authors refer to every modification experienced from the first day of college: sharing the room with unknown people, connecting with unusual people, and even changing their schedule and alimentation.

The authors deem "difficulties" as all the problems met by students in the process of adapting to the new life: living conditions mostly, but not limited to this sole aspect; the research scope is also extended to social elements.

The "social binder" is defined in this research as the mediator in starting and strengthening relationships between two or more individuals. Through this concept, the authors aim to know whether eating somehow affects these relationships in such a way that can be considered a social binder. The "eating routine" will be tackled as the whole process and context of having a meal: the place, the individuals who take part in this activity, and the way in which food is chosen and shared.

By "social life," the authors understand every activity leading to creating connections between two or more people. This concept also involves the contact, the interaction, and the existing bonds between individuals living on campus.

Motivation and adaptation

The first year of college is an accommodation time, a gradual period of growing up for most students. Pleșca (2017) reveals interesting details about what this change means for students, starting from three essential elements: adaptation, motivation, and competences and skills.

Adaptation is the adjustment of an organism to its environment, to keep balance with it, but also to keep its own inner balance. Intelligence is built through a permanent adjustment between old and new experiences. Another element that helps youngsters' evolution is motivation, represented by dynamic factors that determine individual behavior. It seems that in classical psychology there is a distinction between motives and mobiles; the former represents intellectual causes of our actions, the latter are the emotional causes. Competences and skills are essential for students, and they refer to the natural and learned disposition to finish tasks; these are qualities which can be continuously developed using experience (Sillamy, 1998).

Without a certain motivation to act in harmony with the new academic environment, students can fail to discipline themselves. Yet choosing to continue their studies proves that there are many advantages that made them choose university: extending their social circle, learning more about what they like, and developing skills for a successful future career. Difficulties cannot be ignored: budget management, distance from home and family, the new teaching, learning, and organizing styles are only a few of students' burdens. That's why *"the adaption efforts to all these* *simultaneous changes generate a critical passing to a new stage, especially in the first weeks"* (Pleșca, 2017).

For a lot of students who choose to go to university in a different city, the change also means a new home, which can weigh on the adjustment level of youngsters to student life. *"Students who live on campus have high indexes of psychosocial and psycho-pedagogical adaption, fact generated by some personality traits as: overrating, intense but organized activity, wailing, emotional immaturity, the tendency to affirm their own superiority, and to deny emotional tensions and tense relationships"* (Pleșca, 2017). Once students live in a campus, they face actual non-problematic situations which might appear oppressive for them, and they have to make their own decisions. It is the reason why sometimes they have exaggerated reactions while they are just trying to hide anxiety and insecurity provoked by the new environment.

Campus life

Boyer's (1990) study on American campuses is meant to show what campus life means. Over 500 campus presidents and administrators, thousands of students and parents were surveyed to conclude that campuses are carefully managed, and students get used to the new life in a few weeks. Also, most students are satisfied with their social and intellectual benefits. Some problems such as alcoholism and racism are mentioned, and the fact that the responsibility taken by campus staff is sometimes too high. Although the data of this study might look obsolete, it is relevant that the interest in campus problems stands in the social and cultural environment and there are a few strong principles that still apply; the only difference is made by the habits and activities of our own subjects.

Life on campus has, according to the study, six basic principles that are *"essential to the community that has to be built here"* (Boyer, 1990). First, it's about a *purposeful* community whose priority is represented by intellectual life: the students cooperate in research in order to consolidate what they learned in class. Moreover, the campus community is described as a *just* place, *"where the dignity of every individual is affirmed"* (Boyer, 1990). It refers to discrimination (racial, economic, religious etc.) that is often avoided by students and rarely turns into major conflicts. The openness is another quality of campus life: it is about interaction and the instinct of supporting and helping each other by overcoming stereotypes. *Discipline* is also needed. Extending this to our subjects from Cluj-Napoca, it involves using facilities in the right way, respecting the quietness program, and identifying the persons who enter the campus by security. Students are now adults, and they need to be more responsible. Campus community is *caring*, an essential element which helps keeping everyone's well-being and creating friendships because *"we need each other"* (Boyer, 1990). The last trait identified by Boyer is a *celebrative community*, in which *"the heritage of the institution is remembered"* (Boyer, 1990), a value that is not obvious in our country.

All in all, these principles are essential in the young community of students, where everyone is growing up together and supporting each other, making the adaptation to the new lifestyle much easier.

Food sharing

Miller, Rozin, and Fiske (1998) study American students to show that sharing food has social aspects associated, although it is not considered a nonverbal means of communication. The conclusion was obtained through two methods: administering a survey where the subjects indicated the social connection between those who share food; the second method is based on the Asch experiment. This kind of experiment tests the mechanisms of perception: movies with opposite gender persons who were having a meal together were presented and the students had to appreciate the relationships between the actors.

Thus, students perceived eating as an element that suggests intimacy or friendship (depending on context) and it was also concluded that relationships can be strengthened by eating together. The food exchange between students originating from different areas is not just a formality, it has *"a powerful signification. The results of our research suggest that in this cultural context, sharing food involves more social activity than consubstantiation"* (Miller, Rozin, & Fiske, 1998). *Consubstantiation* is a term which usually applies to the Lutheran concept of community. The idea is that bread and wine coexist in their unity. *"Luther illustrated this through the steel passed through fire, where both elements are bonded in hot steel, but they still remain unchanged"* (Cross, 1958).

Thus, according to Miller, Rozin and Fiske (1998), food can become a social binder between students, and shared meals are seen generally as an opportunity to get closer to each other, even as a proof of intimacy.

Meanings of food

Nowadays, proper alimentation is essential to leading a healthy life. Generally, students do not take this into account because of the lack of money, time, or facilities. Through this study, the authors found that – as further presented in the findings section –students from Hașdeu Campus found some replacements or substitutes, such as food sent by parents, student restaurants, or they simply shared food with their roommates.

According to Coveney (2000), healthy alimentation and nutrition are very important for students from Western countries. There, children are educated to stay healthy from the first years of school. Because in Romania these values are not so promoted among children, when they become students, they tend to eat more accessible food (mostly fast-food). At the same time, a significant part of our subjects affirm that they prefer to consume this kind of food. Moreover, Logue (2004) showed that there are not only resemblances, but also differences in eating behavior.

Being used to a certain type of alimentation, each student is different depending on everyone's origins. Among our findings, we observed that this is obvious in campus rooms, where each person comes from different areas, having different alimentation habits. Conclusions that can be drawn from this research emphasize contrasts in eating behaviors throughout the campus studied.

According to Douglas (qtd. in Beardsworth & Keil, 1997), meals are a formal activity, a routine because of the way people have them (on a chair, at the table, usually not doing other activities at the same time), and because of their structure (one main kind of food and two secondary others). While having a meal, the communion of a family can be observed, as well as each other's roles, by analyzing the quantity and the type of food served.

In what concerns campus life, one cannot talk about this kind of a hierarchy. Nobody has a preset role in his or her own room, and the routine of the place and structure of a meal disappear. Students need to live with previously unknown people, but this is not a negative aspect, as the answers received from surveyed people show.

Following an analysis carried out on families with low incomes, who live only on social aid, Beardsworth and Keil (1997) concluded that there are continuous budget adjustments for food. Another important aspect is the fact that these families used to buy food for a very short period (one or two days) to avoid consuming more food than they could afford in a day.

To make a transition to the present research, one can assert that the life of students is similar to the life of families with low incomes. Following the survey results' analysis and after the applied observations, the authors inferred that student try to eat in student restaurants or to share food with roommates, thus lowering the amount of money spent on food.

Research design

The purpose of the present study is to show the way in which our subjects have been taking on the new context they were facing and their feelings once they arrived in their dorms, thus leaving their own homes' comfort. Numerous youngsters who choose to study at different universities in Cluj-Napoca are coming from other parts of the country, and so, not only the way they adapt seems to be a problem, but also their eating schedule and habits. Because of this, the authors decided to conduct research that will basically measure their level of adjustment once they have arrived in Cluj, and whether food becomes a social mediator for them.

The study started off by choosing a theme to which the majority of students can relate: students and their adjustment. The subjects were selected in a non-random way: they are first-year university students, accommodated in the Hașdeu Campus. After the questionnaires were answered and after observing fellow students' behavior, the authors were able to determine the main reasons for which they are unable to adapt easily.

The two main research questions employed here were *how well do first-year students from Hașdeu Campus adapt?* and *is food considered a social mediator?* The purpose of these questions is to discover the ways in which students view the new context they are facing. The data have been collected through a questionnaire that was administered to multiple students within a sociological inquiry, and an observation that was conducted in dorms number 1, 5, 6 and 16 in the Hașdeu

Campus. The observation was carried out on two separate occasions, being an uncontrolled type of observation, involving subjects randomly using the spaces in which the observations were held. During these instances, the researchers were having direct contact with the subjects, and wrote down several details on their behavior, using research grids.

The second method that was engaged consists in the sociological inquiry, through the questionnaires administered. These were filled in online, thus no direct contact with the subjects was needed. The advantages were the reduced costs of the method, and the fact that the range of the public was wider than it would have been otherwise. Of course, there were some disadvantages as well, such as the fact that it was possible for students that were not in our targeted group to fill the questionnaires.

The research was started on the 1st of December with the application of the questionnaires, and it ended on the 20th of the same month. One can assume that the collected data represents the accurate feelings of the questioned students, recording a total number of 107 responses from the students accommodated in Hașdeu Campus.

By conducting this research, the authors successfully identified how and why it is difficult for first-year students to adapt to their dorm life and how this "passing" from their city to another changes their life and their everyday habits. The perspective of repeating the research at the end of their first year is very interesting, as it may show a different view from the same students.

The members of the research team that took on the project are also students who study in their first year and are accommodated in Hașdeu Campus as well. At the beginning, freshmen were selected as subjects, and only from the above-mentioned campus. The questionnaires were answered by 107 people (72% female and 28% male), and, through the second research method, the observation, 72 subjects and their habits were investigated.

Findings

When deciding on whether to live in dorms, the subjects were influenced by the opinions of others, as 70% of them stated. Moreover, the opinions of the older students were mainly positive, further encouraging the subjects to choose these dorms. Furthermore, almost 75% of the respondents declared choosing to live in dorms because the cost is a lot lower than renting an apartment. First-year students stated that another reason for choosing dorms is to make new friends (16.8%). Of course, some of the students were somehow forced to stay here, as they could not find apartments for rent.

As Pleșca's study (2017) suggests, the first six weeks seem to be crucial in how well the process takes place. However, this study found that the first week was the biggest issue for the subjects, with some of them qualifying it as "different" or "weird." The opinions are, of course, mixed. On one hand, there were those who felt liberated from all the work they were supposed to do at home. On the other hand, there were a substantial number of subjects who stated they were missing the comfort of their home, as their first week was "confusing," "chaotic," or even "horror."

Less than half of those questioned chose to stay in their rooms with friends, or people they knew beforehand, and 63.6% said they made friends around the campus easily, in different places, as shown in *Fig. 1*:

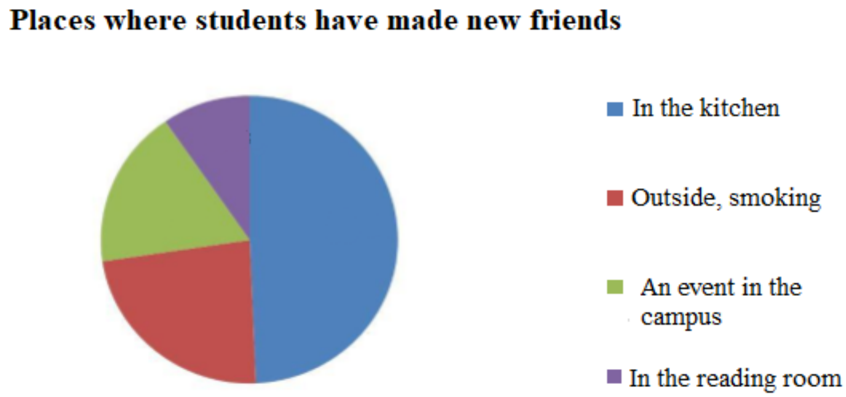

Fig. 1: Distribution of places where students declared making new friends

Although, in general, the dormitory experience was a satisfying one, our subjects confessed to having some incidents with their roommates. However, only 51% of them encountered such problems in the first weeks.

Most of the conflicts were caused by them failing to reach a level ground regarding the cleanliness of the rooms (*Fig. 2*). Some other conflicts were caused by the fact that their roommates were bringing strangers into the rooms way too often. Logue (2004) found that the differences between roommates were probably caused by dissimilarities in their lifestyles.

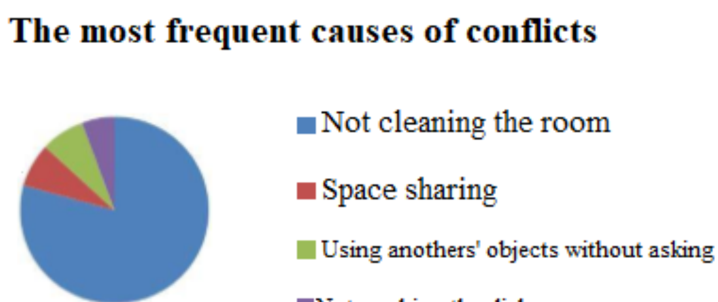

Fig. 2: Distribution of most frequent causes of conflicts among dormitory roommates

Asked about how often they used the kitchen that was available in their dorms, 37.4% of the subjects declared using it daily, while only 10% of them stated they never used it. However, 96% of them prefer the comfort of their own rooms when eating their meals, where they can also enjoy the company of other people. When hungry, most of the students eat their cooked meals, while the second option is the cafeteria, 25% of subjects being regular cafeteria visitors. Almost

90% of them are happy to share their food with their roommates, mentioning that the favor is returned as well. When it comes to shopping, 65% used to shop alongside their roommates for products that they all use. 75% of those are also sure that sharing food and shopping turned their roommates into friends. The same percent also ordered in food, but only a quarter of them used food as a social mediator. When they were asked what other items they received in return, the main answers were cigarettes and other foods (*Fig. 3*).

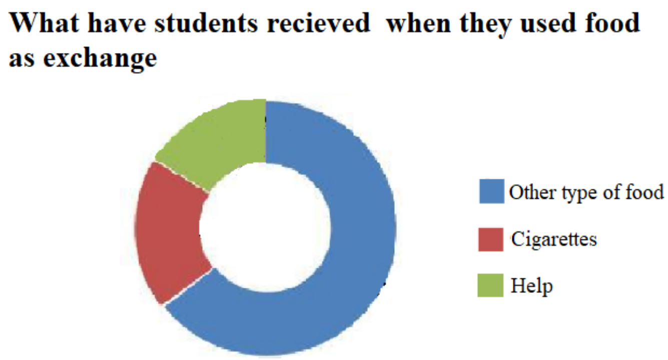

Fig. 3: Distribution of goods received by students in exchange for food

According to these results, we can compare the behavior of a student to that of a low-income family. According to Beardsworth and Keil (1997), families who live on social aid have a small budget for food, which they constantly adjust. But unlike them, who mainly buy their food from the store, students have found a less expensive way, namely, the exchange.

On the other hand, half of the subjects said that their academic performances are influenced by the fact that they live in the student dorms, and 75% of them mentioned that they are affected in a negative way, considering that the only environment where they manage to study is the reading room. Here one can see the differentiation from the American setting, where students are delighted to be able to deepen the disciplines together, creating an open community on the principle of helping each other (Boyer, 1990). Even so, students who participated in this study considered that the accommodation in the students' dorm is influenced by their academic performances to a very small extent (*Fig. 4*).

When asked to evaluate the student dorm facilities, most of them complained about the low standards of hygiene and the internet: 36.4% graded 3 for hygiene, and 31.8% graded 2 (low satisfaction level). The internet makes them unhappy as well, being graded with 1 (lowest level of satisfaction) by 44.9% of the students, and with grade 2 by 32.7% of them. However, when discussing roommates and the positioning of the university, most of the respondents gave the maximum rating. The only category in which students were almost entirely in agreement was the rating given to the monthly accommodation fee. Here, more than 80% of them said that they were very satisfied and gave this the maximum grade.

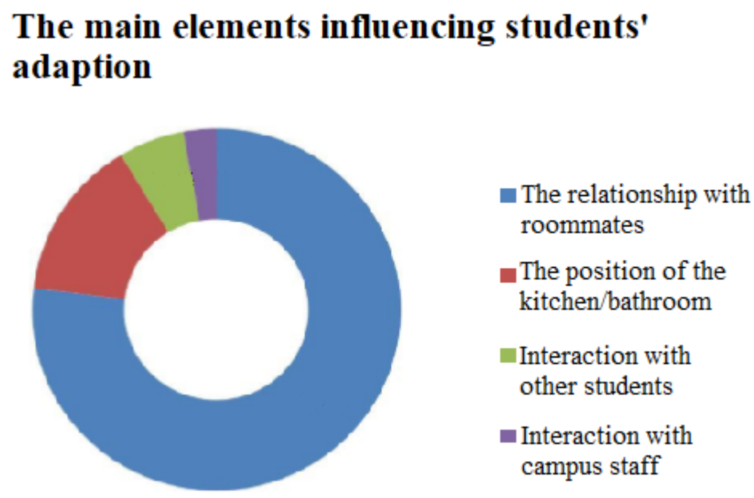

Fig. 4: Elements influencing students' adaptation to campus life

As a secondary research method, the observation was employed. It was carried out in four different student dorms on two separate dates. Through observation grids, it was pointed out that the main reason the students used the kitchen was dishwashing, and the secondary one was cooking. The length of the observations was about 60 minutes in each place, one week apart. The instruments used were the mobile phone, for time measuring, and the observation grids for recording data. The observations took place in the morning and at noon when the students are preparing for college and in the evening, when they usually have dinner. Their outfits were casual, most of them preferring pajamas and baggy T-shirts during the evenings, while during the day the look was neater and more elegant. As it can be seen through the questionnaire, the kitchen is a place frequented by many students on a daily basis. This can be inferred from the observations as well, where the number of subjects ranged from eight to fifteen individuals during the time frame studied.

One first aspect revealed from the observations was that in most cases, female subjects used the kitchen accompanied by somebody else, while male subjects preferred to use it alone. The females also tried to talk more often with the person who saw, and the boys were more concerned with their own tasks.

Another difference observed was that most of the time, male students cooked semi-processed meals (frozen vegetables, instant soup, or fried cheese), or just warmed up food brought from home, while the female subjects cooked. Also, the males' attempts to cook resulted in inedible preparations and odors that caused the reluctance of subjects to use the office. When assessing interaction between people, mornings are most dull, because everyone is concerned about their own tasks. In addition to that, the observation made in the evening demonstrated that, for the students, socialization was a way of liberation. Moreover, activities are more diversified in the evenings, while no one cooks in the morning, probably because of time pressure. Another distinction between the two observations is that in the evening there were also groups of friends in the kitchen, while in the morning each person tended to keep to themselves.

In all observations recorded, all respondents were embarrassed by the observer's presence, even if they did not know their function. Their reaction was different, as some of them just talked with that person, but others became clumsier when observed. Most people who used the kitchen left it immediately after they finished cooking, preferring to eat in their room, and just a small number of subjects chose to eat in the kitchen. Of course, their decision could be influenced by the presence of the observer, but also the strong and persistent smell of cooked food during the day was a very important factor.

Another similarity between the observations was the use of the mobile phone by all subjects during the time spent in the kitchen. Female subjects called their parents more often than male subjects. The use of the phone could also be an attempt to avoid dialogue or visual contact with the observer. At the same time, when there were more people in the kitchen who encountered difficulties in cooking or using the equipment there, the other people offered their help, often without being asked.

As a result, the kitchen is more than just a space where students cook or wash their dishes. They often manage to meet new people and interact successfully after a difficult day. Even if the behavior of some subjects was less than social one, preferring to use their mobile phone instead of interacting with those present in the kitchen, most of them were very polite, talking and helping each other. Likewise, as the culinary sphere encourages interaction between individuals, sharing food becomes a method of social consolidation (Miller, Rozin, & Fiske, 1998).

Conclusions

The main goal of this research was, from the outset, to identify the difficulties encountered by first-year students hosted in the Haşdeu campus in their adjustment to student life. At the same time, the study wanted to shed light on whether the division of food is seen as a social binder by them. This analysis is based on questioning and observing some people directly targeted by the research. Thus, by questioning 107 students living in the Hasdeu Campus (77 females and 30 males), the study investigated their opinion about the subject addressed in this research. At the same time, the observation method helped to map the behavior of about 50 subjects on the addressed issue. Once all the results were interpreted, it became clear that they helped accelerate students' adaptation to life on campus. At the same time, it helped to outline a clearer view of the life of a provincial student in the university environment.

Considering all the above, the difficulties faced by students living on campus are more present in the first months, but a large part of them could be avoided with just a little more attention from the administrators of the dorms. It is obvious that for first-year students, food is a social binder, and this is closely linked to slow adaptation in the dorms. Most of the first-year students have problems socializing, because they came overnight from a different social environment to a place where they practically did not know anyone. This made some of our subjects lose confidence and be afraid to leave their comfort zone. This was clearly visible during our observations, through the eyes cast on those entering in the kitchen, or the embarrassment when students had to interact with strangers. The questionnaires administered revealed, strictly about this problem of socialization, that most students preferred to eat in the room. They do not eat in the kitchen, where other people are unknown, because after a certain time the room and roommates start to become their new comfort zone. This issue of socialization is one of the most common factors that can slow down the student's adaptation to the new lifestyle. When the student learns to cope with this problem and with situations where he or she feels embarrassed, that will be the moment when he or she will feel part of the new environment.

In conclusion, after investigating the two research questions that aimed to measure the degree of students' adjustment to the Hașdeu Campus and whether food is a social binder, the research hypothesis was confirmed. The ideas were addressed both qualitatively and quantitatively, using the sociological survey and observation. Difficulties in adapting for first-year students who live in the Haşdeu Campus were experienced both by the female subjects, as well as the male subjects. Those are generated by the low degree of socialization, which could be countered by using food as a social binder.

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Gender roles in Cannes and Effie festival-winning advertising campaigns

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Abstract
Ads have become an integral part of our lives, even if we do not know we are always seeing ads everywhere, such as magazines, TV, radios, billboards, and other platforms. If we are talking about advertising and advertising campaigns, stereotypes are a very important factor. This research is focusing on gender roles, how men and women are represented in Cannes and Effie winners' advertising campaigns. Previous studies have proven that women are mostly portrayed as housewives, as sex objects, not as independent individuals, but as persons who are dependent on the man. This study reflects on whether in winner campaigns these stereotypes exist or not, and how gender norms are presented along different categories.

Keywords: advertising, effectiveness, influence, commercials, media channels.

Introduction

Advertising has become an essential part of our lives, even if we do not realize it, as it is omnipresent. When someone advertises something, it carries a message, it would like to sell us something in different ways, by various mechanisms. The advertisements' key goal is to manipulate us into doing something. They mostly use emotional effects, music, little stories, something that may affect us on a personal level. We are influenced by ads even if we are not aware of it.

Another important aspect is the ways in which gender roles work in advertisements, how they present a man or a woman. Do gender stereotypes exist or not? How do the creators try to sell us something using gender norms?

The objective of this research is to analyze gender roles in Cannes and Effie festival-winning advertising campaigns. It is important to investigate gender roles because, first, the author aims to ascertain whether winner ads are different from the ads that we see on TV, listen to on the radio, or see in magazines, and second, to assess whether traditional gender norms are present and represented or not.

Advertisements are everywhere and people are perpetually exposed to them, which could mean that they have an impact on individuals, by showing or trying to teach how one needs to behave as a man or as a woman. In the first part of this research, the author describes basic concepts like meanings of advertising, its types, and the channels conveying the ads to which one is exposed.

As a second concept, the author tackles the issue of gender, what it means, what the difference sex and gender is; then, a discussion about gender roles explains traditional gender roles, how people use them, the difference between traditional and modern gender roles, and how they reflect upon society. To comprehend how gender roles are constructed, stereotypes are a very decisive factor; thus, a discussion of how stereotypes work, what they mean, and how they connect to gender roles is needed.

This paper focuses on sexism and gender roles in advertising are the main ideas; previous studies document how gender norms and roles changed in time, and what coding schemes were engaged by researchers looking into gender differences in society. From a methodological standpoint, the paper analyzes festival commercials using a codebook compiled based on previous studies. The codebook is structured in one part concerning women's roles and representations, and another one including male and female representations and their relationship to each other.

Advertising definitions and types

Advertising is a Latin-derived word that means „to scream," but if we are looking for an exact contemporary definition, several perspectives are shown. For example, a scientific definition is that the advertisements are information packages that the seller gives to its consumers, in order to manipulate their attitude (Márkus, Szűcs, & Takács, 2014). There are two types of media one can distinguish, 1) the printed medium and advertising channel, and 2) the electronic forms of advertising. In a nutshell, one can distinguish between the old and the new media channels. Printed media can include books, newspapers, journals, or other periodical magazines, catalogues, advertisement newsletters, and others. Among the electronic media, one can identify terrestrial or satellite television and radio, the cinema, a video cassette, discs, data banks, cable, teletext, the electronic billboards, and finally, the Internet (Papp, 2009).

Nowadays, when discussing new media, one does not only refer to advertisements seen on TV or heard over the radio, but there are also multiple forms in which an advertisement can reach its audience. There are many media channels where individuals can find ads, and these channels are TV, radio, print ads, internet, direct mail, signage, product placement. These seven channels are the most used by advertisers, and the Internet provides various forms of such. Even if one thinks they elude the influence of the advertisements, they do not. We as consumers see them everywhere and cannot avoid them.

The question arises about how to measure the effectiveness of advertising. There are five basic elements in an ad that consumers or potential consumers can observe. The first basic element is *attention*, which means how many people will remember the ad after seeing it. The second is *identification*, whether consumers recognize the brand or the product in that advertisement. The third is *understandability*, referring to the level of message clarity. The fourth is *reliability* – how trustworthy the message was –, and lastly, the *interest* (Krylov, 1996).

Gender

Distinguishing between sex and gender represents an important task for a research tackling this subject. For further clarity, sex is a biological component, about physical characteristics that makes individuals male or female. Gender is a more complex concept, and represents a social construct. The question arising here is what does it mean to be socially constructed? It contains ideas about masculinity and femininity, and about how we are applying these on designated sex assignment (Trier-Bieniek & Leavy, 2014).

Each field of science describes gender roles and the way in which it is created varies. The ecological perspective says that gender roles are created during interaction between individuals, between communities, and in the way we communicate with our environment. These are the situations that create gender roles in each society. From a sociological point of view, masculinity and femininity are learned, and not connected to or determined by male and female biological traits (Blackstone, 2003).

Starting from the sociological standpoint, feminist ideology says that if gender roles are learned, they could be unlearned too, so there is a chance to change these roles, and to create new and different gender norms. Feminist ideology also states that gender roles are not just about the ideas of how one should behave if they are male or female, but also about the power men and women hold in society, on various levels. Feminist movements have consistently tried to discard those traditional gender roles perpetuated by means of stereotypes (i.e. women are overemotional, men are not), and to create new alternatives for gender roles that highlight the equality between men and women (Blackstone, 2003).

Stereotypes

Stereotypes refer to negative and positive characteristics of individuals, most of them inaccurate reflections of reality. In some cases, stereotypes emphasize the difference between different groups. The concept of *stereotype* was introduced in 1922 by Walter Lippmann. He presented it as a simplified mental picture that shows how people behave differently within different groups, what they look like, and what their traits are. Stereotypes mostly refer to a group whose members are similar in their personality traits and cause similar feelings from outside the group. For example, one can observe if someone has an interaction with someone from a group that creates stereotypes affecting the entire group (Smith & Mackie, 2004).

The most common and oldest stereotypes refer to racial, ethnic, and national characteristics. The existing stereotypes prevent an individual from recognizing the difference between an individual and an individual within a group. It is a proven fact that your ethnicity, sex, or sexual orientation within a group attracts more attention than personality features. In many cases, one learns these stereotypes through socialization. Occasionally, it is possible that stereotypes have little or nothing to do with reality or the said person. It only reflects upon the group or the individual holding those views. Stereotypes rarely, if ever, change (Forgács, 2007).

Sexism and gender roles in advertising

Sexism is a gender-based concept and reflects discrimination and/or prejudice. Sexist manifestations and attitudes derive from stereotypes of gender roles (Alksnis, 2000). The question being posed here is how sexism relates to stereotypes and their representation in advertising. Below, there are the types of sexism encountered in advertisements.

Royo-Vela *et alii* (2008) define five types of sexism found in advertisements:

1. Putting the individuals down, as characters are shown as sex objects – i.e., women are blonde and dumb, men are muscled and stupid.
2. Keeping them in their place, as characters are displayed in traditional roles.
3. Both sexes shown in traditional and non-traditional ways, but traditional representations are the stronger ones.
4. Recognizing that men and women are equal by showing them in traditional and non-traditional manners, none of which have prevalence.
5. Men and women are presented as individuals, not to be judged by sex criteria.

Research shows that the first two categories are called "high sexism," the third qualifies as "moderate sexism," and the last two can be called "low sexism" (Royo-Vela *et al.*, 2008).

Many people have already dealt with the issue of gender roles not just in advertising, but in movies or other fields or productions as well. Sociologist Erving Goffman created one of the most popular and widespread code systems. He analyzed gender roles in print advertisements; his coding scheme included relative size, feminine touch, functional touch, ritualization of subordination, and licensed withdrawal.

Other research was made based on the sex roles in advertisements, on the assumption that advertising influences the perception of society when it comes about gender roles, especially women's roles, and it shows that traditional women's roles are natural and adequate for all of us, for the society. These unnatural women's roles can harm society in a way that creates stereotypes. Courtney and Whippel (*apud* Gilly, 1988) says that advertisements are not creating the stereotypes and not giving distorted pictures of gender roles, but function as a mirror, showing us the reality, projecting the recent society. Previous studies also revealed that women are mostly presented in a traditional way in commercials, such as an individual who needs men's protection, or as a housewife, or in some cases as a sex object (Yorgos, 2014).

A study made in the USA, Mexico, and Australia found that there are differences in male and female roles in commercials. In the United States, women were mostly portrayed in the kitchen, stores, at home, or outdoors, but men were portrayed mostly in work situations and other similar places and contexts. In Mexico, the representations of gender are the same as in the U.S., but in Australia, unlike the other cases, the percentage of men who are represented in stores and outdoors is higher, which shows a significant difference.

Another factor that shows significant differences between men and women are the roles in which they are represented. In all three countries, women are portrayed in relation to others, unlike men, who are represented as independent individuals. All three contexts provide advertisements representing gender roles in a stereotyped way. To a certain extent, Australian commercials are better than US and Mexican commercials (Gilly, 1988).

Moreover, Milner's (2004) study found that in television ads there are no significant differences between men and women; reflecting on the advertised product, both male and female are used in mixed categories to promote a product. The study shows that women are portrayed in household or in retail settings, and men are mostly portrayed in outdoors settings.

Methodological framework

The author took a qualitative approach in assessing gender stereotypes in ads, and gender differences in commercial portrayals. The author analyzed the Cannes Lion International of Creativity and the Effie Awards' winning advertising campaigns. From the Cannes Festival, the author selected those ad commercials that received the creative effectiveness prize, and from Effie Award, the winning ads for the best demonstration of social media effectiveness, the best demonstration of integrated effectiveness, the best integration of social media effectiveness, the most effective use of social media marketing, and the long-term effectiveness. The corpus of analysis includes 75 commercials, ranging from 2011 to 2017.

The instrument for content analysis was created based on several existing schemes and coding systems. To investigate women's roles and portrayals in the commercials, the author drew from Zotos and Lysonski (1994), Mitchell and Taylor (1990), Lysonski (1985), and Plakoyiannaki and Zotos (2009); all these research endeavors previously developed and used a systematic method to analyze women's roles.

The coding system includes four categories: 1) *women in a traditional role*, with three accompanying variables 1 – dependency, 2 – housewives, and 3 – non-applicable; 2) *women in decorative roles*, associated to three more variables: 1 – women concerned with physical attractiveness, 2 – women as sex object, 3 – not identified; 3) *women in non-traditional roles*, respectively 1 – women in non-traditional activities, 2 – career-oriented women, 3 – voice of authority, 4 – non-determined; and 4) *women portrayed as equal to men*, 1 for yes, and 2 for no. For gender role representation, a part of the method of Paek *et al.* (2010) was used. Based on this research, each character from the commercials was analyzed based on the following code: prominent character, assisting character, voiceover's gender, and the characters' occupation.

First, the gender of characters is defined as 1 – male, 2 – female, 0 – non-human. After defining gender, each character is placed in one specific category. There are four categories involved (Paek *et al.*, 2010), in which the prominent character is coded with the dichotomy values 1 – yes (that character was a prominent one) and 2 – no (he/she was not a prominent character), the assisting character also included two variables, 1 for yes and 2 for no, the characters' occupation were identified as 1 – professional, 2 – office worker, 3 – homemaker, 4 – other, and the last category was the voiceover's gender, 1 – male, 2 – female.

Results and discussion

Chart 1 indicates the gender distribution of the characters in the commercials studied. As the results show, the difference between female and male characters is not a significant one, as there is only a 6% difference between the two. We can infer that the use of female and male characters in this case is relatively balanced.

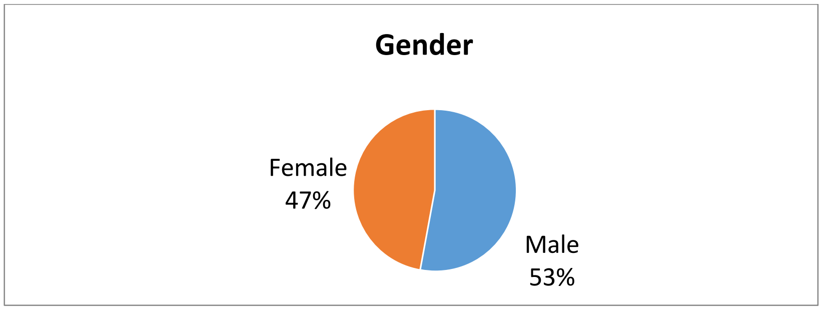

Chart 1: Gender distribution in the commercials

From the next chart (*Chart 2*) that measured narration roles, we can see that on the mentioned commercials, there was mostly male voice narrating the stories. Contrary to previous results, that show the gender distribution, the difference here is large and significant. Only 22% female voices were used, as opposed to men's, used in 78% of cases studies. This finding is consistent with Furnham and Paltzer's (2010) research that shows men are more likable as a voiceover gender then women.

That could mean that, even if gender distribution in narration were balanced, the voice deemed to be "telling the truth,"The voice of authority would still be men's voice. That shows that traditional roles are still in place when it comes to the voiceover's gender.

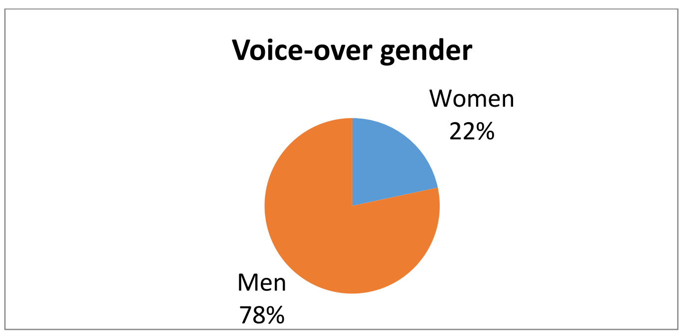

Chart 2: Distribution of voiceover gender in commercials

An intriguing aspect is that among male characters, the situations in which they are represented show either a prominent or an assisting character. In *Chart 3* we can observe that in 57% of commercials, men are presented as an assisting character, and their representation as a prominent character is only 43%, significantly lower than the previous portrayal. That could mean that, even if there are more male characters in ads, it does not automatically mean that they are represented in a prominent role, but they can also be displayed in assisting roles.

Chart 3 shows the female characters' distribution in terms of representation as prominent or assisting characters. The chart shows that 56% of female characters are presented as prominent, whereas 44% of them presented women as assisting characters. Drawing a comparison to the previous chart presenting men's characters, we can observe that women's proportion as prominent characters is much higher than men. Even if in the festival-winning commercials there are more men than women, women seem to be portrayed in a stronger fashion than men.

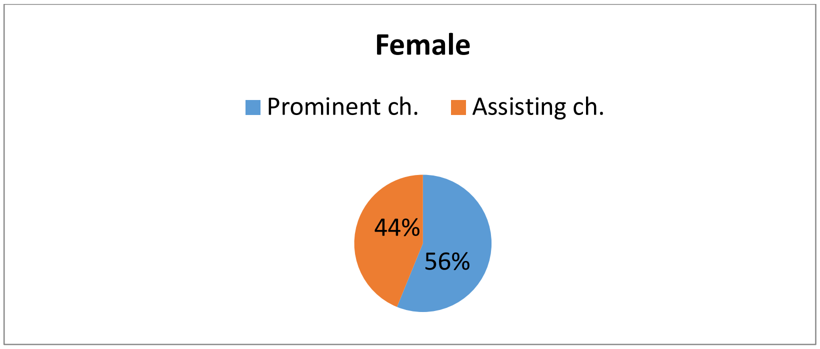

Chart 3: Distribution of roles for female characters in commercials

In the "Slow Down, take it Easy" campaign, on the commercial featuring road names, a woman is portrayed as the prominent character. She is the one driving the car, dressed in a suit, and the whole story is created around her. She is thus not portrayed in a traditional role, she is driving, wearing conventionally masculine attire, and she displays an angry attitude. The male characters are presented in a support role, trying to help the woman to keep calm. They are dressed loosely, in white, whereas the woman's suit is black, which is an elegant color and shows her dominance in the commercial. Another ad production displaying women's power and female professionals is the "I Will What I Want" campaign. In this commercial, the woman is portrayed as an independent individual, who does not show any fear, who knows what she wants, and she goes and gets it. Her body is shown, but not as physical attractiveness or as a sex object, but as a sign of power. We can see her prominence from her body language, from her firm posture.

Concerning the proportions of prominent characters, distributed across genders, the results show that 46% of male characters and 54% of female characters are presented as prominent characters. Contrary to Paek's (2010) research, which found that males are chiefly presented as prominent characters, in this case the results show the opposite, as women's portrayals in dominant features are higher than men's percentages. When analyzing the proportion of portrayals as assisting characters across genders, results show that 59% of male characters and 41% of female ones are portrayed as an assisting character. Overall, however, there are more male characters in these commercials than female ones, so regardless of their roles, they are significantly better represented.

The next chart (*Chart 4*) shows aggregates for the distribution of characters, both male and female. As can be observed here, there are no gaps between these roles. Based on these results, one can say that there is a relative balance between genders and their representation in Cannes and Effie festival-winning advertising commercials. Differences lay in just a few percentage points, but the interesting aspect is that unlike the research that shows mostly men represented as prominent characters, in these festival commercials women act in the prominent role, leaning the balance of power in a more egalitarian manner.

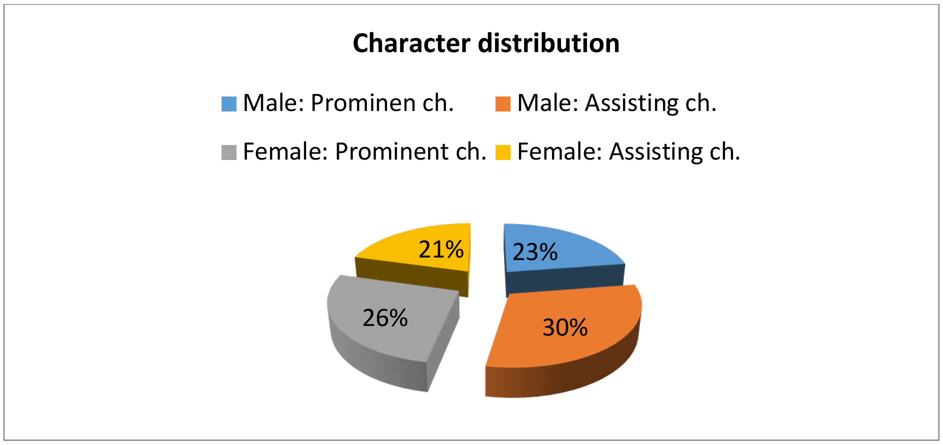

Chart 4: Aggregate distribution of prominent and assisting characters across genders

In the award-winning Adidas commercial "Your Future is Not Mine," there are both male and female characters. They are presented both as prominent and assisting characters, none of them are displayed more frequently than the other, and there are no visible signs of any differences between them. Their body language highlights strength, both of them are presented in the same environments, clubs, parks, subways, and playing the same roles. The traditional women and men roles do not exist here. Women are presented not in a dependent role, but as independently as men are.

Moreover, the analysis included an investigation of characters based on their occupation. Research carried out by Gilly (1988) found that men are mostly presented as office workers or as professionals, as opposed to women, whose percentage in such roles is much lower. Paek *et alli*'s study (2010) also supports Gilly's research, as they also found that in advertisements, men are presented as office workers, or as businessmen and professionals.

Chart 5 shows that in the ads included and examined in this study, only 29% of men were presented as professionals and 1% as office workers. In most cases included in the analysis, their occupation was undetermined, because of the setting in which they were presented. They were shown in outdoor activities, in nature or with friends or family, but their occupation was not clear.

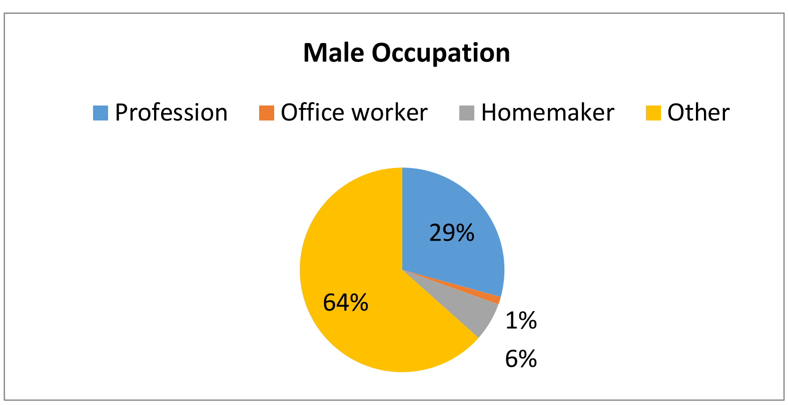

Chart 5: Distribution of male characters' occupations

As we can see, there are 6% of them who were presented as homemakers, a conventionally feminine role portrayal. We can argue that, in the award-winning commercials, the characters' occupation is not that pronounced.

In a dish soap commercial studied, men are the ones portrayed in the kitchen, doing the dishes. Thus, that stereotype that men are just portrayed in high-authority positions is not always present in the media. The man in the kitchen acts in a natural manner, even when not being portrayed conventionally, which conveys the fact that women are not solely responsible for household chores, but men as well.

Chart 6 presents the distribution of occupations among female characters portrayed in the commercials. As was the case for male characters, the highest proportion of roles could not be clearly determined. Yet, unlike Zotos and Firini (1994) found in their research that women are least frequently portrayed as career-oriented or people of authority –, this research shows that women tend to be represented as professionals in a proportion of 25% of selected commercials. There are no portrayals as office workers among the festival-winning ads. Milner's (2004) analysis shows that, in most commercials, women are shown in a household role, yet in this analysis only 9% of them are displayed in such a traditional role.

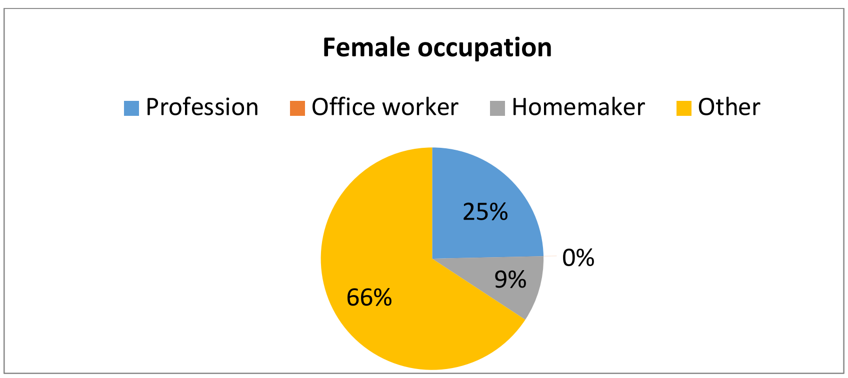

Chart 6: Distribution of female characters' occupations

The following figure (*Chart 7*) renders a comparison of women's occupations to men. We can see that males are more likely represented as professionals than women, but the difference is not as significant as in previous studies, such as Gilly's (1988), Zotos and Firini's (1994), or Furnham and Paltzer's (2010). Both male and female are shown in homemaker roles, and this is a pivotal finding, even if the proportion of representation still displays more women in such roles than men.

In both male and female cases, the option coded as "other" was the highest-ranking among variables, which could be a good sign. It could mean that a person's occupation is not as important as it was before and does not determine an individual's position or value within society, but rather their personality traits. This could help alleviate stereotypes or could be a key step in combating stereotypes. If we stopped being exposed to commercials in which women are portrayed as homemakers or housewives, and men as professionals or office workers, society would be pushed towards rethinking gendered roles, and consequently the traditional roles could change, or at least be less noticeable.

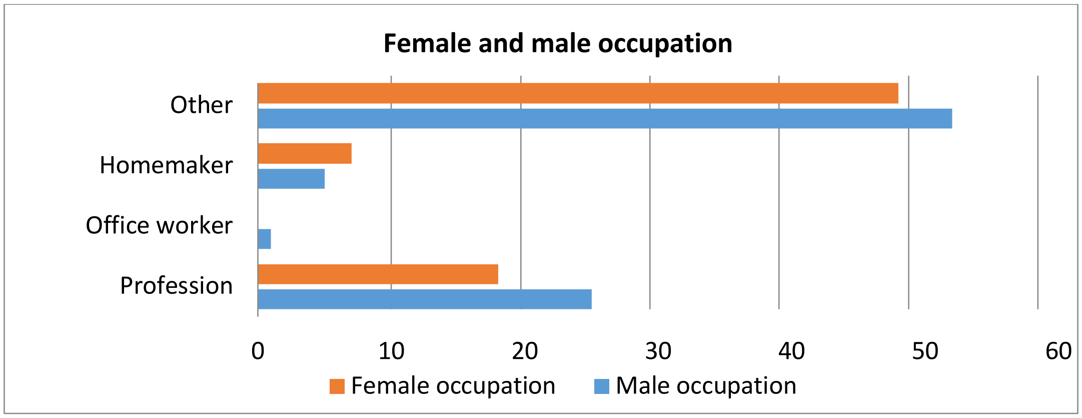

Chart 7: Distribution of female and male occupations in commercials

Study results show that the gender distribution of the characters in commercials is roughly balanced, and there are only a few percentage points between them. The voiceover gender distribution shows a significant difference between men and women. Even if the gender representation in terms of characters present in commercials is similar, male voice significantly overshadows women.

In terms of prominent and assisting character roles, equality or balance might be within reach, as both genders are portrayed as prominent characters. Moreover, men are more likely to be presented in assistant roles than their female counterparts, yet most characters presented in commercials might skew the findings and justify this distribution of roles.

From an occupational standpoint, results clearly show that both men and women are displayed in professional occupations; however, the "other" category dominates, which means that the author was unable to determine the occupation based on the setting of the commercial. Moreover, both men and women were portrayed in household roles, thus breaking conventional wisdom that home is exclusively women's territory and responsibility.

During the research, the author analyzed women's roles, whether they are represented in a stereotypical manner. The variables were women portrayed in traditional roles, which meant dependent roles, in need of man's protection, and not making any big decisions autonomously, but rather unimportant ones. Then, housewife roles were documented, meaning that they were positioned at home, carrying out tasks related to housekeeping.

Findings of commercial analysis reveal that women are not overrepresented as housewives or in dependency roles. That could derive from the first part of the research that found women mostly presented as prominent characters or in assisting roles, which could alleviate stereotypes heavily documented by previous research. As mentioned before, women were presented as independent individuals, not as characters in need of men's protection.

The second variable of women in decorative roles, included the factor of physical attractiveness and that of sex object portrayals. The analysis showed that, in some commercials, women displayed were attractive, but the focus of the commercial was different. An overwhelming majority of commercial did not portray women as sex objects or as centers of physical attraction. These results differ from Gilly's (1988) research which found that women were presented as dependent individuals and as sex objects, yet in festival-winning commercials women were not presented in traditional roles or as passive individuals in need of their husbands' protection, or who are in a relative relationship with others.

Another variable includes women in non-traditional roles. The variable includes three further aspects: 1) women engaging in activities outside their homes – the most frequent occurrence, when their occupation was unable to be determined, as they were on the road, in nature, in bars, in non-traditional activities; 2) career-oriented women, which mean that they are presented or not in a professional occupation – women in these commercials were indeed presented in professional occupation. Men are more likely to be represented as a professional than women, but the difference is not that large, which can show traditional gender roles blurring; 3) women as the voice of authority. This aspect was not very easily measurable. Those characters displayed in professional roles that were the prominent character in the commercial, could be deemed as the voice of authority.

Last but not least, the analysis focuses on whether women are portrayed as equal to men. Findings show that in nearly all commercials, women and men are equally represented. Even in a few cases where women started on a lower step than men, during the ad dynamics changed and reached equality.

In an Ariel detergent commercial named "Why is laundry only a mother's job," in its debut we can see a mother coming home, her father playing with the child, and her husband watching television. The woman starts dinner and brings a cup of tea to her husband. She acts like a woman enforcing her traditional role, we can see that she is a dependent female, who comes home from work, and takes care of household chores. At that moment, her father starts to narrate the commercial. He takes the blame for the situation, for the behavior of the child's father and his daughter's chores. He points out that society is to blame as well, because of the roles they portray and deem as natural, yet signals that it is not too late to change it. We are then shown the father going home to his wife, who wants to do the laundry, but the man will not allow her. He takes charge of this conventionally feminine task and suggests this being the right way men have to behave.

This commercial presented was a strong one in terms of dismissing conventional wisdom, by trying to fight against stereotypes linking women to exclusivity in household chores. It starts as a traditional commercial where all the stereotypes are present, but it becomes an unusual one, in which a man points to unfair expectations and roles assigned to women. That moment changes the dynamic of the whole commercial, because the woman became a strong and prominent character.

The question arises about how commercials display equality. For example, in a mobile phone network commercial, equality is within reach. The commercial is named "Lowe Lintas India - Hindustan Unilever Ltd.: Kan Khajura." In this commercial, men and women are presented simultaneously. Men are not represented in a superiority position, but it presents male and female in the same places, holding the same occupation, using their phones. Women are not presented in traditional roles, as housewives, neither are men presented as stronger and as professionals. Traditional roles and norms are not enforced. Their body language is the same, they both live in poor settings, they act in the same manner, there are no differences between their behaviors or attitudes. Both men and women are speaking in that commercial, expressing their opinions. Both genders are presented as simple human beings, none of them are superior to the other.

In some ads women were presented in a better light than men, even as superheroes, or in some cases there were exclusively women – only a few times. As an example, the “Help a child to reach 5” commercial is about helping women in poor settings with raising their babies in safe and secure settings. In the commercial, women are mostly presented in prominent and assisting roles. The relationship between them was equal and balanced. Men are presented just in the background of the commercial. Thus, the commercial portrays men as weaker, in terms of power of exposure.

As a conclusion, from the analysis of women’s portrayals one can easily see that in festival-winning campaigns, women are eluding traditionally feminine roles. There were a few cases in which women were portrayed conventionally, but looking at the big picture, women are equal to men. As the results suggest, women are not represented as housewives or dependent individuals, but as independent ones, or as equals to men. They were also presented in professional roles or as prominent characters. Inconsistent with findings from previous research, in which women were presented as sex objects or objects of physical attractiveness, the commercials studied did not render these portrayals. Most representations of women included women as career-oriented individuals, and as equal to men.

Conclusion

The results of this research show that, in Cannes- and Effie-winning advertising campaigns, stereotypes of men and women are reduced, nearly nonexistent. Unlike found in previous research, women are not used as sex objects, nor are they presented exclusively in a traditional role, like housewife or the weakest character in the commercial. Men also were presented not just as prominent characters, but as assisting characters too, and in most cases they were presented in the latter context, unlike women whose percentages were higher as prominent characters.

Results also revealed that a character’s occupation is not as important as it used to be, as it is not a determinant in the commercial, but rather the personality traits. This could help alleviate gender-related stereotypes. Findings support the idea that festival-winning commercials are different from those we are exposed to daily. Traditional role portrayals are rare, and challenges to what is considered conventional are present and acute.

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Creative identity in advertising:
The strategy behind IKEA advertisements

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the importance of a brand's creative identity when it comes to both business development and connecting with its customers. In advertising, a brand can immediately differentiate itself from the competition by engaging with their audience on multiple levels, and by personalizing their experiences and interactions. Through content analysis and creativity measuring scales, this study examines some of the most popular and widely known IKEA advertisements to see whether their world-wide success and appreciation is based on their one-of-a-kind creative character. After analyzing the advertisements, it appears that IKEA is not only succeeding in the fields of marketing, advertising, and branding, but it has become a genuine lovemark among its consumers by keeping up with trends and creating context advertising. The current study ends with mentions of limitations and invitations to further research.

Keywords: IKEA, identity, creativity, advertisements.

Introduction

Being number one in the minds of audiences and differentiating oneself from the competition is one of the most powerful desires a company can have. There is nothing more rewarding than being recognized worldwide for your products, attitude, or values. Achieving this dream, however, is a different story. Not everyone has the necessary ingredients to make it.

Many have tried to imitate big brands like Coca-Cola, Nike, or Samsung, but have failed. The key is not copy-pasting the competition or adapting solutions from unrelated fields but creating one's own recipe. Something that really attracts and interests the consumers, that allows them to take part in great experiences and constantly offers them innovative ways to engage with the company. It should go beyond just selling things; it should deliver memorable and emotional content. These are the aspects that create thriving brands and lead to the forming of well-composed identities.

The current paper researches the topic of creative identity that allows companies to stand out from the competition, to create strong connections with their audience, to communicate a message in a more interesting manner, and to combine all the aspects of the company so that there is a balanced and constant structure in time and a shared vision and mission. The reason for choosing this topic is that creative identity has rarely been discussed in this light. Most of its uses were in correlation to art (artists, art projects, art visions etc.)

(Taylor & Littleton, 2008) or to the identity struggles of advertising creatives (Hackley & Kover, 2007). Therefore, this research is relevant and original due to its new approach on 'creative identity.'

For this analysis, the author selected IKEA, the Swedish retail company, due to its growing popularity and unique style of communicating. Mastering creativity is difficult and it has become an art that only few seem to truly understand. However, IKEA found a way that led them to the worldwide success that they enjoy today. The current study aims to find out whether the secret behind IKEA is in its creative identity, and whether this has led the Swedish company to become a lovemark.

Literature review

In today's advertising field, there are multiple factors that lead to a good advertisement – compelling images, well-written copy, an effective call-to-action, focus on the audience's desires and needs and so on. But before deciding on how to sell products, brands should first think of their image and how they will be perceived. What is their identity and what does it represent? How does this create a bond with their audiences?

As Professor Paulseen from University of Geneva said, "brands are some of the most valuable assets companies own." Brand identity is more than just a name, a logo, and a slogan; it communicates the company's vision, beliefs, and values to their customers so that they can form a positive impression. Brand identity needs to define the company, to connect with its customers and to easily distinguish itself from the competition to be effective (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Moreover, it is important to understand that "core identity is the central, timeless essence of the brand that remains constant as the brand moves to new markets and new products" (Ghodeswar, 2008). Without this consistency and cohesiveness, customers cannot develop a bond and a sense of trust; they cannot create brand associations or develop brand loyalty.

Therefore, one of the steps behind successful brands is striving to integrate identity with strategy and marketing, and at the same time building on company-customer relationships. There is a need for a blend between understanding your audience, knowing your competitors and having a clear idea of the business environment (Ghodeswar, 2008). But how does one correlate this with advertising?

This is when creativity comes into action. This controversial and appealing factor is similar to a double-edge sword that can make or break a company's popularity and success. Not only can "truly great creative ideas harness the power to engage consumers and prompt experiential involvement" (Sasser, 2008), but they can also lead a company to failure. However, when properly handled, creativity is like a breath of fresh air among all the numerous ads that bombard the audience every day. Dull, exhausting ad messages are just something that people managed to ignore or skip as the recent advertisements seem to be the same. Additionally, creativity comes into discussion when talking about business and strategy, especially in business plans and objectives. It is important to know when and how to take risks and whether there are changes that need to be made to mold with your audience's preferences (Ray & Myers, 1989).

Nevertheless, how does one assess creativity when society is constantly changing, and advertisements always need to pleasantly surprise customers? One of the methods is the Creative Product Semantic Scale that judges creative products that can be intangible (Smith, Shen, & White, 2002). Although different items can be added there according to the analyzed product, some of the most common revolve around originality, novelty, appropriateness, effectiveness and so on. In this manner, one can determine the level of creativity when it comes to advertising. By exploring and researching creative advertising, marketers understand how to use it to build powerful connections with their audiences and create impactful and influential brands.

Methodology

Scope and objectives

As more and more people are searching for the secret behind brands like Google, Coca-Cola, or Apple, it is important to understand that different companies have different strategies of winning their places amongst the favorites of audiences. Building a strong global brand is more than just imitating others; it is about creating your own success formula, a formula based on the company's values, beliefs, and attitudes. Therefore, this study aims to find out and have a better understanding of the strategy behind IKEA's success, and whether this popularity is related to their distinct identity and creative advertising.

Research questions

For a better focus, the following questions will serve as guidance when analyzing the advertisements and collecting the data:

- Are IKEA advertisements using the company's colors (blue, yellow, and different variations of them) in order to create a stronger link with the company?
- Is IKEA incorporating trends, hot topics, new concepts etc. in order to create more up-to-date, emotional, and personalized advertisements?
- Is the name of the company mentioned or written in any of the videos before the appearance of the logo at the end of the commercial?

Hypotheses

1. IKEA's creative identity is portrayed in each of the ten advertisements in a subtle way by presenting different stories of everyday situations instead of concentrating solely on the benefits of the advertised product.
2. IKEA ads are attention-grabbing, memorable, and unique stories that create a more personalized and intimate connection with their target audience.

Method

The method deemed appropriate for this research is content analysis, as it allows not only to carry out an in-depth analysis of IKEA advertisements, but it also helps to observe if there is a pattern or a specific style in which IKEA portrays their brand and messages.

Moreover, content analysis will help determine if there is a constant attitude and/or theme in their ads, or if they differ according to the advertised products, the context or the country and/or the culture of their audience. Therefore, ten IKEA advertisements will be studied to have a better understanding of the strategy behind this popular world-known brand.

Selection of data

To have a non-biased judgment, the author randomly selected ten ads from www.bestadsontv.com. This website was chosen because it offers the possibility to view ads from different media (TV, web, print, outdoor, ambient, interactive, and radio), and it has a great archived collection of IKEA ads. YouTube was not chosen because there is no IKEA account that has all their advertisements.

On www.bestadsontv.com, the author typed the keyword "*IKEA*" in the search box and selected every fourth commercial that appeared on the website. After debating between the formats, the final decision was to analyze the video advertisements due to their attention-grabbing and high impact structure. Not to mention that it is easier to convey the message and desired attitude in this manner.

Creativity measuring scale

To assess the creativity of IKEA's advertisements, a measuring scale was created. These items have been chosen as they seemed relevant and applicable when talking about IKEA; they also offer a better understanding of the elements that construct their creative identity and the message that it is conveying. The creativity measuring scale includes:

1. Originality						
conventional	1	2	3	4	5	original
2. Novelty						
overused	1	2	3	4	5	novel
3. Unusual						
usual	1	2	3	4	5	unusual
4. Uniqueness						
common	1	2	3	4	5	unique
5. Emotional						
rational	1	2	3	4	5	emotional
6. Effective in sending the message						
ineffective	1	2	3	4	5	effective
7. Relevance towards customers						
irrelevant	1	2	3	4	5	relevant
8. Focus on the product						
none	1	2	3	4	5	a lot
9. Memorable						
forgettable	1	2	3	4	5	memorable
10. Funny						
not funny	1	2	3	4	5	funny
11. Provocative/challenging						
unprovocative	1	2	3	4	5	provocative
12. Appropriateness						
inappropriate	1	2	3	4	5	appropriate
13. Entertaining						
dull	1	2	3	4	5	entertaining

Table 1: Creativity measuring scale

Therefore, the creativity measuring scale includes 13 items. The advertisements were rated according to a 5-point scale, where 1 represented the lowest/negative value and 5 represented highest/positive value. In this case, 3 indicated a neutral response/result.

Analysis

IKEA is a Swedish retail company founded by Ingvar Kamprad when he was just 17 years old. With 75 years of developing their famous unique concept – democratic design – IKEA is now a $13.5 billion business (Forbes, 2018). Having furniture that is affordable and sustainable, but also qualitative and of good design, the Swedish company never ran after money. According to their website, their main goal is to make each home "the most comfortable space in the universe" and to "pair customers' needs with the abilities of the suppliers to create new solutions that, hopefully, will make everyday life a little better." Thus, one can immediately see the passion and hard work that are put into both the product and their promotion.

The IKEA commercials were selected from the latest to the oldest so that the study can concentrate on the recent activity and vision of the company. This way, a more accurate opinion can be formed of what IKEA is today and about their message to the audiences. In addition, it helps to observe if the recent ads have similarities or if they completely differ in style and attitude.

The ten ads selected are the following:

1. **Pee Ad** (A) – demonstrates how the new catalog will display a better price on baby cribs for women who find out they are pregnant by putting pee on the special surface on the bottom of ad.
2. **Her Cravings** (B) – is about making it easy for a husband whose pregnant wife has cravings in the middle of the night.
3. **Close Call** (C) – illustrates a teenager's party that got out of hand. In order for the guests to not destroy the house even more, the teenager called his parents to return home.
4. **Aprons** (D) – shows how an apron enjoys cooking in a kitchen equipped with IKEA products.
5. **Win at Sleeping** (E) – portrays in a dramatic manner the battles one has to have in order to get ready for a good night sleep, the battles and struggles resembling the ones from boxing matches.
6. **My Way** (F) – is a collection of everyday situations in various homes that illustrate how different and weird each and one of us is in the comfort of our house.
7. **Let's Relax** (G) – portrays the importance of family meals in detriment of posting food photos on social media through an example from the Renaissance period.
8. **Good Solutions for Bad Habits – 3 Seconds Rule Lady** (H) – is about a clumsy lady that does not really care if her food falls in a dirty sink before serving it to her guests.

9. **Good Solutions for Bad Habits – The Finger Taster** (I) – shows an older man who does not wait for the birthday cake to be served. Instead, he finger-tastes the frosting and wipes the name of the birthday boy.
10. **Cooking is Caring** (J) – illustrates the situation of a divorced couple whose child spends every other week at one of the parents. Every time he changes locations, he lies to the respective parent that he only had macaroni the previous week so that they would cook them the most delicious meal.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total score creativity items
1)	5	5	3	3	5	3	5	4	5	5	**43**
2)	5	4	3	3	5	2	5	4	5	5	**41**
3)	5	3	3	3	4	3	5	2	3	5	**36**
4)	5	4	2	2	5	2	5	3	4	5	**37**
5)	1	3	1	2	4	4	4	4	4	5	**32**
6)	5	4	1	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	**43**
7)	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	**47**
8)	5	5	2	5	5	1	1	5	5	1	**35**
9)	5	4	2	3	5	3	5	4	4	5	**40**
10)	1	3	1	2	5	3	5	4	4	4	**32**
11)	3	2	2	1	3	4	4	3	3	4	**29**
12)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	**50**
13)	5	4	1	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	**41**
Total score ads	**55**	**51**	**28**	**43**	**56**	**47**	**59**	**51**	**56**	**59**	

Table 2: *The scores of the 10 IKEA ads analyzed according to the 13-item creativity measuring scale*

Results

First, one can immediately identify some creativity items that IKEA prefers to concentrate upon. The items with the highest scores are appropriateness (50 points), relevance towards customer (47 points), originality and effectiveness (43 points), entertainment and novelty (41 points), and being memorable (40 points). At the other end, the provocative item only scored 29 points. These results demonstrate that IKEA's focus is not on provoking beliefs and challenging norms as it may seem, but on creating original and unforgettable commercials that are enjoyable and relevant for their audiences.

When it comes to the other items, it appears that IKEA likes to have ads that are balanced in unusualness and uniqueness; not too much to shock in a negative way, but also not too little so that it turns ordinary. In addition to this, the focus on the product is subtle, usually emerging in the second half of the commercial or towards the end. Thus, it allows the ad's story to unfold and to grab the audience's attention so that they remain curious until the end, when the product is presented. An interesting aspect here is that sometimes there is no focus on any product, as the highlight of the ad is on relationships and the cozy feeling of home. Whether it is about moments with family or friends at home, or just single people enjoying their home, ads C, F, G, and J leave the product aside and concentrate solely on the social factor, on how important it is to spend time with dear ones and how nice it is to have a home according to your personality. Moreover, IKEA is pointing out that in this era of speed and technology, nothing can compare to the warmth of one's home and loved ones.

Secondly, the scores of the ads show G and J (59 points), E and I (56 points), and A (55 points) recording the highest values. These are the ads that use almost every creativity item to the maximum, thus making them some of the most creative commercials of IKEA. Not only are they the most interesting ones, but they also reflect IKEA's identity and values the most. The only ad that stood out when it came to a low score is C, which did not have an original or new story, it did not evoke any emotions, and it was not memorable or funny. Also, the presented product and the story did not seem to match, and it created a slight confusion when watching it.

The ads were not only analyzed using the creativity measuring scale, but the study also concentrates on whether specific colors are used, on the length of the ads, on the situation from the ads and on the persons present in the ads. In this manner, one can observe if there is a certain pattern used or if certain elements are repeated in order to convey a specific idea.

Even though there are different brands that use their colors in their advertising, IKEA does not apply this concept. Also, it did not seem to be a focus on a color, or a set of colors, in order to convey the messages. In addition, there is nothing that leads to a pattern or that suggests something important when talking about the duration of the videos as it varies from 20 seconds to 1:36 minutes. The colors and length of the videos are chosen in accordance with the context and not to resemble the brand in any way.

When talking about the characters, five out of ten ads present young adults with children. A and D do not feature any people, H and I feature only elderly, and F includes people of all ages. This reflects their primary and secondary audience. The focus is clearly on young adults with children, and young adults who are starting a family. They are the ones that need a helping hand when moving into a new home, when encountering new experiences, and when dealing with unpredictable situations. The secondary audience – the elderly – is also an important audience as they need practical and easy-to-use products to make their home a more suitable place as they get old and do not have the same energy and strength. But no matter the case, IKEA is ready with the right products.

Finally, there are the situations portrayed in the videos. No matter if there is an aggressive-looking man sleeping with kittens or if an old couple is having breakfast naked, IKEA has solutions and products for every type of situation and every person. In each ad unusual situations are illustrated to emphasize how different our habits and behaviors are when no one is watching, when we are surrounded by the walls of our homes. No matter how peculiar people like their house to look, at IKEA they can find the right furniture to match their personality.

All things considered; one can observe that IKEA does not have a strict structure for their advertisements. Their style is to make each ad as diverse as possible to create the most accurate and intimate experiences for their audiences. Although there are certain similarities between the ads, such as simplicity, originality, uniqueness, and diversity, the Swedish company really cares about their customers' needs and desires to a great extent.

Conclusion

Considering the research questions, the current study reveals that IKEA does not use the company's colors (blue, yellow, and different variations of them) in order to convey subliminal messages to the public. In all of the ads, different colors were used in accordance to the context and to the advertised product. If their representative colors appeared somewhere in the ads, it was just a coincidence, or they were used because they matched with the background. IKEA does not focus on colors to reinforce the brand in the minds of the consumers. Thus, it creates diversity in commercials, and does not pester the audience with the same tactic.

To the question "Is IKEA incorporating trends, hot topics, new concepts etc. in order to create more up-to-date, emotional, and personalized advertisements?" it appears that only in half of the ads they are assessing the above-mentioned factors. For example, in commercial G (Let's Relax) they are confronting the problem and tendency of posting perfect food pictures on social media instead of enjoying a meal with the family. The ad is ingeniously created, and it helps audiences realize their behavior and how it affects their family. While one is busy trying to capture the perfect shot of the dinner table, the family impatiently waits to start eating. Another example of incorporating hot topics and new concepts is commercial F (My Way), where nudity at elderly is presented as something casual instead of unappealing, or where trans-sexuality is nothing more than just choosing your outfit for the day. However, there are also ads that do not challenge or provoke, such as a pregnant woman asking for her husband to bring chocolate because she craves it in the middle of the night (ad B).

Lastly, the name of the company has not been mentioned or written in any of the ads before the appearance of the logo at the end. Henceforth, IKEA prefers to emphasize the story and the message that it conveys instead of presenting themselves and their products. For this reason, mystery and curiosity is created for the audience, thus making them be more attentive to the ad.

Taking everything into consideration, both hypotheses have been confirmed: "IKEA's creative identity is portrayed in each of the ten advertisements in a subtle way by presenting different stories of everyday situations instead of concentrating solely on the benefits of the advertised product" and "IKEA ads are attention-grabbing, memorable, and unique stories that create a more personalized and intimate connection with their target audience."

In conclusion, one can observe that IKEA's success is owed to their boldness of stepping out of their comfort zone and aiming for the unconventional, unordinary, and unique. They managed to build a strong creative identity that differentiates the brand from competitors through their concepts of democratic design and by doing things differently. As IKEA CEO Anders Dahlvig stated, IKEA has never been conventional: "Whatever the traditional business did, IKEA did it the other way around. In that way we became a distinct brand" (Goteman & Kling, 2003). Moreover, knowing how to combine identity with strategy and marketing, but also with customer care and customer bonding, is what makes IKEA a lovemark. Kevin Roberts, CEO worldwide of Saatchi & Saatchi, has stated in his book that traditional branding is no longer in power as consumers desire emotional and intimate connections (Roberts, 2005). And this is exactly what IKEA has achieved through their passionate work and one-of-a-kind creative character.

Limitations and future research

As many other research papers, this study has encountered various limitations. On one hand, ten advertisements are not enough for an accurate idea of IKEA's creative identity. More ads need to be studied in order to have an in-depth understanding. On the other hand, the commercials used are recent, from 2016 to 2018. If one could have access to all the IKEA advertisements, it would offer the possibility to see whether it developed this identity over time or if it has been maintained since the 1950s.

Equally important is to develop new and more in-depth research from the current one. A study that can be driven from this one might analyze ads from different countries/continents to see how the message, style, and attitudes differ, and whether they are slightly or greatly adapted to the respective culture/country. Moreover, a study on the evolution and development of ads over the years can be created in order to see the way in which ads were made and what the degree of interaction and engagement with the public was. If they had a focus on values, CSR, and good employee-company relationship, and whether there is a strong organizational culture worldwide.

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Japanese students' perception of the use of Dr Pepper in the anime Steins;Gate

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Abstract
This study will observe and assess Japanese students' perception of Dr Pepper in the anime Steins;Gate. An opinion survey consisting of 27 questions was answered by 71 participants and data regarding the perception of product placement in Japan, in anime and ultimately in Steins;Gate was collected and interpreted. Results show that Japanese people do not perceive product placement as a harmful advertising technique, but rather as a creative means of promotion. Consequently, the answer for the research question: Does the Japanese audience perceive the promotion of Dr Pepper in Steins;Gate as being a negative factor? is no and the hypothesis that Japanese students do not regard the presence of Dr Pepper as a distraction from the main plot, but rather as an indicator of realism within the universe of the anime is correct.

Introduction

In the context of the rapid growth of interest in Japanese animated series, not only for the Japanese viewership**,** but also for the Western audiences, one can't help but ask themselves what are the mechanisms which keep this business alive. Furthermore, it seems that nowadays that *anime*'s favorite brand is Dr. Pepper, the brand starring in several shows as the favorite drink of the main characters.

However, despite the increasing popularity of techniques such as product placement and product displacement in *anime,* there has not been much research conducted on how these means of advertising are perceived by the Japanese audience. The aim of this paper is to take a deeper look at how product placement in the world of Japanese animation is perceived by the consumers, particularly what influence has the promotion of Dr Pepper in the *anime Steins;Gate* (2011) on Japanese students. In order to achieve relevant results, a survey was handed in to Japanese university students and its results were thoroughly assessed.

A content analysis of the product placement of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate* shows that the brand is successfully integrated within the plot and the viewer feels that the product itself has become a character. As previous research has shown, the audience is significantly less bothered by this form of indirect advertising in the case in which the product blends in with the atmosphere and the theme of the show. Therefore, the survey's aim is to determine whether this statement is also true in the case of Japanese students

Given the fact that the study addresses the issue of the Japanese viewers' perception of product placement in *anime*, particularly how the use of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate* is looked upon by the viewers, the research question is: Does the Japanese audience perceive the promotion of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate* as being a negative factor? The hypothesis is that Japanese people do not regard the presence of Dr Pepper as a distraction from the main plot, but rather as an indicator of realism within the universe of the *anime*.

Literature review

In a constantly changing world advertising has become more and more creative, attracting customers through new communication channels such as social media or mobile marketing (Babacan, Akcal, Baytekin, 2012). Product placement specifically seems to be extremely effective, since it is regarded as a crossbreed technique which combines different communication means into one (Lehu and Bressoud, 2007). The result of this mixture is reflected by the fact that it usually receives positive reactions, as it does not cause brand pollution or overemphasize the product or service (Babacan, Akcal, Baytekin, 2012). Moreover, as opposed to traditional advertising techniques, by integrating itself within the program, the sponsoring brand noticeably reduces the likelihood of zapping by viewers (Meenaghan, 1991 in d'Astous and Séguin, 1998). It is, therefore, not surprising that product placement is preferred to traditional commercials (Nebenzahl and Secunda, 1993 in d'Astous and Séguin, 1998).

In a study from 2008, Simon Hudson, David Hudson and John Peloza proved that consumers do not generally mind product placement, reason being the fact that it adds up to the realism of films, making the viewer feel closer to the action and the storyline. Furthermore, 61% of their respondents admitted that product placement is tolerable if it is not overused. These studies have shown that product placement is a refreshing advertising technique, with noticeable advantages for the viewers, advertisers, and the brand altogether.

Product placement's effectiveness is considerably increased when there is a tight connection between the sponsoring brand and the sponsored event or entity (d'Astous and Séguin, 1998). The sponsor's products or activities have to be clearly related to the contents of the program in which they are featured, because the stronger the link between sponsor and sponsored entity, the greater the impact on the sponsor's image and the attitudes toward the sponsoring itself (d'Astous and Séguin, 1998). For this reason, in the case of quiz/ variety shows and information/services magazines implicit product placement had the most negative consumer evaluations and consumers perceived the sponsoring of television mini-series or dramas less commercial than the sponsoring of variety shows and information magazines (d'Astous and Séguin, 1998).

Various studies have focused on the effects and effectiveness of product placement and how it is used in the entertainment industry. The presence of product placement promoting alcohol, tobacco or cigarettes is regarded as harmful not only by parents when thinking about their children, but by people of all age categories. Gupta and Gould have proven in a study from 1997 that the product placement of certain products is generally regarded as being unethical and product placement is more unethical when it is present in children's films, as compared to traditional TV ads (Gupta and Gould, 1997, Hudson, Hudson and Peloza, 2008). Moreover, consumers who watched more movies found product placement more acceptable, as opposed to people who rarely watched movies (Gupta and Gould, 1997).

Despite the controversy started by the use of product placement in animation, as far as sponsorship is concerned, product placement is one of the most popular means of promotion employed in this genre. In the field of animation, the term *anime* stands out, as it is generally used for Japanese animated cartoons, particularly serialized cartoons aired on television (Pellitteri, 2014).

The reason why product placement is a successful tool in *anime* sponsorship is strongly related to the duality of this animated genre. Double nature and parallel worlds are wonderfully woven into the fabric of *anime,* which treats them as the common-sense substance of reality (Kaida, 2010). Therefore, *anime* shapes at first the world as we know it and then brings forth a twist, phenomena unknown at first even to the main characters, filled with wonder, adventure and, at times, dreadful events. This double-layered imagination in terms of aesthetic taste, sensitivity and values is the reason why the Japanese animation has been well-received by the European public, particularly the Italian public, the first country to assimilate and manifest interest towards the Japanese pop culture (Pellitteri et al, 2010).

In *anime,* duality creates the perfect context for bringing together a highly creative element- the fantasy aspect- and an element which helps the viewer keep track of the quickly evolving plot, which is generally inspired from everyday life. This means that the audience can recognize products and goods that they use on a regular basis, without perceiving them as advertising, but rather as a technique which makes the story and its context genuine. What is more, seeing ghastly characters such as Lucifer himself become addicted to using the internet and buy various products online (as seen in *The Devil is a part-timer*) creates cognitive dissonance, which gains the interest of the consumers and might prove itself to be great means of promoting a concept, idea and ultimately a brand. Product placement makes the goods become part of the scenario (Babacan, Akcal, Baytekin, 2012), and helps the viewer integrate the show's storyline within the framework of their daily lives.

Methodological framework

This part of the study deals with the in-depth analysis of the perception of Japanese viewers on the product placement of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate.* The motivation for choosing this show lies within the fact that although most *anime* occasionally promote products in a few instances, *Steins;Gate* shapes some of its characters or even the plot itself around Dr Pepper. Although nowadays several *anime* feature Dr Pepper, *Steins;Gate* is particularly relevant for this study because it is one of the first animations to promote the brand to the Japanese audience. Moreover, *Steins;Gate* has been in the top 10 *anime* of all times since its release, becoming one of the best time travel Japanese animated series. A survey in which the opinions of native Japanese students are expressed will provide an in-depth analysis of the way in which the placement of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate* is perceived by the Japanese audience.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how the placement of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate* is perceived by the Japanese students, Japanese written questionnaire consisting of 27 questions was answered by 71 Japanese students. The participants were born and raised in Japan, first year university students at the Faculty of Humanities in Kobe University.

The survey was structured on 2 aspects: gathering information on the participants' knowledge regarding product placement in general, and highlighting their opinion on the placement of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate* specifically. The whole survey was divided into 5 parts, part I and II corresponding to the first aspect, parts III and IV to the second aspect and part V collecting personal information about the participant which might influence the results of the survey.

Whereas the goal of part I was to determine the popularity of *anime* in general among the students and determine how often they watch this genre, part II consisted of an agreement scale, focusing on the participants' opinion regarding the use of product placement in *anime* as a genre. Part III was aimed to determine whether the participants have heard of or watched *Steins;Gate* and heard of or drank Dr Pepper. In the event the students have not heard of the anime, an explanation of the plot as well as when and how often the brand was promoted during the screening time was provided so that the participants can proceed to answer the questions from part IV. The survey made use of screenshots from the anime in which the brand is both visually present and vocalized by a character so that the students can freely express their opinion even if they have not watched the show or if they have forgotten most of the plot and action if they watched it in 2011, when it was released. Part IV was an agreement scale, assessing the opinions and the overall point of view of the participants regarding the use of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate.*

The procedure consisted of an explanation about the content of the survey at the beginning of the procedure, as well as about what product placement is. In addition, a summary of the plot and the instances where Dr Pepper is featured was provided to the students.

Results

The survey's results consist of answers collected from 39.4% male and 60.6% female participants, 77% of which live in an urban area. Moreover, 50.7% of the participants are 20 years old or younger and 47.9 have ages between 21 and 31. An extensive overview of the results from the agreement scale on parts II and IV of the survey can be found in the Appendix. The results of the survey indicate that only 8.5% of the participants have heard of product placement prior to this study. However, after receiving the explanation on the product placement phenomenon and how it is used in the world of animation, 83.1% admitted they have noticed product placement in *anime*, even though they were not aware of the scientific name of this advertising technique. 18.3% of the participants reported having bought a product because they saw it featured in an *anime*, out of which 53.3% were male participants.

As far as the habits of watching *anime* are concerned, 47.9% of the respondents have noted that they don't watch anime at all and 46.5% admitted they watch between 1 and 7 episodes per week. No noticeable difference has been observed between participants living in the countryside and the ones living in urban areas. Out of all the respondents, it appears that female participants tend to watch less *anime* weekly, as reflected by the fact that out of the participants who do not watch anime at all, 64.4% are female.

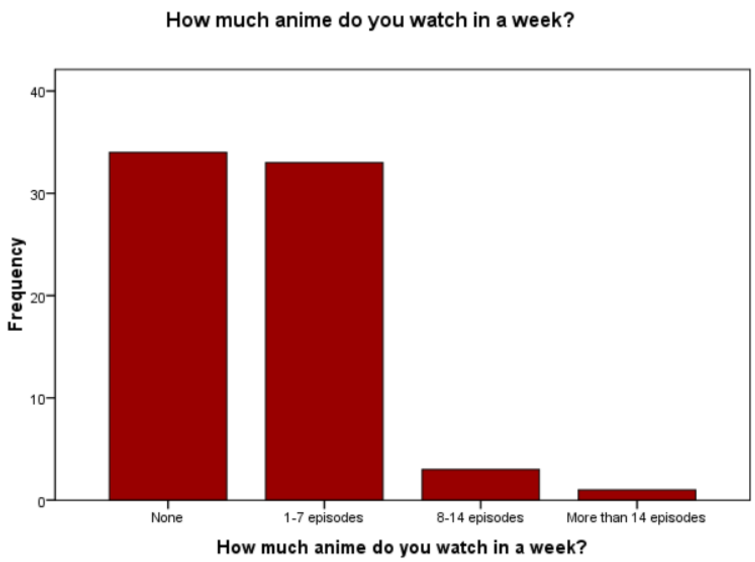

Fig. 1. Graph illustrating the results for question Q4.

Similarly, to the previously mentioned studies, 81.6% of the Japanese students believe product placement is harmful for children, as they can be easily influenced by what they see on screen. Adults can also be sensitive to such a subtle advertising technique, as 56.3% of the participants have pointed out.

The survey reveals that 54.3% of the participants actively pay attention to product placement when watching an animated show and 52.1% are more likely to remember the name of a brand when it is integrated within the plot of an anime, as opposed to traditional advertising means of promotion.

In addition, 63.3% of the participants consider that product placement is a creative technique, a fresh approach to advertising in a world where people are constantly being pressured into acquiring specific consumption behaviors. It is not, therefore, surprising that 77.4% of the participants enjoy product displacement more than product placement, as shown in Fig. 3. Altering the name of a brand is a sign of creativity, as well as a way in which sarcasm can be expressed, as Japanese language has relatively few instruments through which sarcasm can be used in everyday conversation. This preference towards product displacement can be noticed in other *anime* which promote Dr Pepper. In *Kamisama no memochou* the protagonist's favorite drink is DoKupe, an agglutination of the words *dokutaa* (doctor) and *peppaa* (the way in which 'pepper' is pronounced in Japanese). In *Danganronpa 3: The End of Kibougamine Gakuen - Kibou-hen* one of the characters is seen drinking Dr Hopper. Sarcasm is once more expressed through product displacement, as the character is known to often obsess over the idea of 'hope' and its implications.

When questioned on the issue of this advertising technique being used too often, 90.1% of the participants disapproved of the statement that the *anime* broadcasted nowadays uses too much product placement during screening time. Moreover, supporting the positive attitude towards this form of advertising, 95.7% of the respondents support the idea that product placement should not be banned from being used in anime, out of which 57.7% of the respondents were female. Moreover, 100% of the participants living in the countryside agreed that product placement in anime should not be a forbidden technique. Similarly, 85.7% of the respondents who strongly agreed that product placement is a creative advertising technique also strongly agreed that it should not be banned from *anime.*

Fig. 2. Graph illustrating the results for question Q12.

This result could indicate that the interviewed Japanese students understand and appreciate the novelty and freshness brought by product placement to the advertising industry and support its use in the entertainment industry. However, they do seriously take into consideration its problems, such as children's vulnerability to such subtle advertising techniques.

Analyzing the issue of product placement from the point of view of how Japanese students perceive the use of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate*, 45.1% of the participants have heard of the brand, out of which 21.1% have also drunk the beverage. Moreover, 52.1% have heard of *Steins;Gate* and 21.1% have watched the *anime*, the majority of respondents who have interacted with both the beverage and the animation living in urban areas. 66.7% of the participants who have watched *Steins;Gate* have also drunk Dr Pepper previously to this study.

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No.	Question	% of participants answering yes
Q13	Have you ever heard of *Steins;Gate*?	52.1%
Q14	Have you ever watched of *Steins*;*Gate*?	21.1%
Q15	Have you ever heard of Dr. Pepper?	45.1%
Q16	Have you ever drunk Dr. Pepper?	21.1%

Fig. 3. Table illustrating the results for questions Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16.

In conformity with the majority of the participants agreeing on the creative aspect of product placement, 80.2% of the participants considered the use of Dr Pepper makes *Steins;Gate* more realistic for the viewer and 63.3% considered the way in which the brand is integrated within the plot makes the *anime* funnier, the scenes where it is featured often being used as a comic relief technique.

Moreover, 38% of the respondents consider Dr Pepper to be important for the anime overall, although it is not a vital aspect for the storyline. Consequently, 61.9% admitted they could imagine the animation being the same even if the characters would not be seen drinking Dr Pepper.

What is more, 87.3% of the participants supported the idea that *Steins;Gate* would not be more enjoyable without Dr Pepper being featured and made such a big part of the plot, majority consisting of students who have watched the *anime*. Consequently, seeing the characters regularly sipping and talking about the beverage does not make the *anime* less interesting or enjoyable, an idea which was supported by 88.7% of the respondents.

In the case of *Steins;Gate* and Dr Pepper, the main issue which determined some the participants to see the animation from a less favorable perspective is related to the length of the scenes which feature the drink. 33.8% of the participants admitted the length of the scenes is too long, the majority being respondents who have previously watched the *anime.* Furthermore, 42.2% of the students consider the length of these scenes a factor which distracts the viewer from the main storyline, as the focus seems to shift from the action to the beverage.

Out of the participants who have watched *Steins;Gate,* 100% admitted that product placement makes the show more realistic. Similarly, 80% of them supported the idea that the way in which Dr Pepper is featured in the *anime* also makes it funnier. Moreover, 100% of the respondents who have watched the anime agreed that the show wouldn't have been as enjoyable if it wasn't for the comic relief provided by the product placement.

It becomes, therefore, noticeable that the placement of Dr Pepper is successful from the point of view of its integration within the storyline and the viewers have an overall positive attitude towards the way in which this integration has been made. Even if the scenes are fairly long, the relatively frequent feature of the product does not seem to raise any problem for the majority of people.

However, the participants are particularly concerned about the effects that this advertising technique might have on children, even though they do not support the idea of banning product placement from animation. These results could be linked to the fact that numerous *anime* series, in spite of adhering to the animated cartoon genre, are not aimed at children, but at teenagers and adults, exploring various grotesque or psychological issues that society is facing at that given moment in time.

In the case of *Steins;Gate*, the negative attitude of some of the respondents is linked to the length of the scenes where the placement was used. For this reason, although Dr Pepper provides a hint of realism to the *anime*, it could become a distraction from the storyline, damaging the image of the show overall. The present study emphasizes once more the fact that product placement can have a great positive influence on the consumers, if used moderately and if integrated properly within the theme of the sponsored show.

The participants acknowledged the fact that this technique is a fresh approach to traditional means of advertising, which, if used properly and in moderate doses, might have better results for both brands and consumers. Half of the participants admitted that they are more likely to remember the name of the brand if they interacted with it through a placement, as compared to traditional means of advertising. As recently the most used form of product placement in *anime* seems to be product displacement, the participants were asked to express whether seeing the name of the featured brand altered makes them have a better experience as a viewer overall. Results showed that a little over 50% of the participants were positive about this technique, which might potentially be the solution to the current issues identified in product placement. Children, who do not have an extensive knowledge of most of the existing brands, could not be as influenced as they are in the present and adults could enjoy the link between the new name or visuals for the brand with the plot better, deciding for themselves if the product from the real life is worth purchasing or not.

Lastly, the overall positive reaction of the participants can be attributed to the proper integration of Dr Pepper within the storyline of *Steins;Gate*, more than half of the respondents supporting the idea that the way in which the beverage is promoted within the show actually makes the animation funnier and realistic, which helps release some of the tension which builds up as the plot becomes more complex.

To sum the previously assessed data up, the answer to the second research question: Does the Japanese audience perceive the promotion of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate* as being a negative factor? is *no* and the hypothesis that Japanese students do not regard the presence of Dr Pepper as a distraction from the main plot, but rather as an indicator of realism within the universe of the *anime* has been proven correct.

Conclusion, Limitations and Further Research

Product placement has become more and more frequent in *anime* and the way it is blended with context of the plot, as well as the way in which characters interact with the brand is undoubtedly different from what we are used to in the West. However, the attitude of the Japanese audience was incredibly similar to the way in which this technique is perceived in the West.

As a result of the analysis of the data provided by the survey, the answer to the research question: Do Japanese students perceive the promotion of Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate* as being a negative factor? is *no.* The hypothesis that Japanese students do not regard the presence of Dr Pepper as a distraction from the main plot, but rather as an indicator of realism within the universe of the anime is correct. Although the length of the scenes was, indeed, perceived as too long and a distracting factor by some of the participants, overall, the study proves that because the brand is completely integrated within the storyline, it becomes crucial to the *anime*, idea supported by 87.3% of the participants, who admitted that the show would be less enjoyable if Dr Pepper was taken out of the picture. However, in spite of the general positive attitude and high level of acceptance of product placement in *anime* and in Dr Pepper in particular, more than half of the respondents pointed out that Dr Pepper is not an important part of the show, and they could imagine it without the characters drinking the beverage.

These results prove that on the one hand, the placement was done in a subtle manner, which did not make the viewer forget about the plot and, on the other hand, that there is the possibility that the placement of the product was not done flawlessly. Because numerous participants felt that the *anime* would have been just as enjoyable without Dr Pepper, or with any other beverage being featured, one cannot help but wonder if the sponsorship had a few vulnerable aspects which stopped Dr Pepper from becoming indispensable to the audience.

One of the technique's possible breaches identified by this study is the length of the scenes. The product was not only visually present, but also verbalized and had the conversation focused on the product, rather than the action, which received negative reactions from the Japanese students. This result supports Simon Hudson, David Hudson and John Peloza's findings that product placement is tolerable only as long as it does not feel overused, regardless of the quality of the technique.

Nonetheless, the respondents agreed that using product placement has an admirable comic relief effect in the case of *Steins;Gate*, where the story gradually shifts towards a fairly dark and complex narrative. Moreover, they considered product placement overall as a creative means of advertising and pinpointed the fact that altering the name, or the logo of a featured brand makes this technique more tolerable. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is the link between product displacement and the use of sarcasm and irony in Japanese language.

This study shows that product placement remains to this day a refreshing technique, welcomed by the consumers and the advertising and entertainment industries altogether. The Japanese students had a positive reaction to the technique used to promote Dr Pepper in *Steins;Gate,* admitting that the show would not be as enjoyable without the characters loving the beverage. However, more than half of the respondents supported the idea that Dr Pepper is not crucial for the plot and could picture the *anime* without the beverage, a potential reason being the unusual length of the scenes in which the placement took place.

Taking all the previously assessed data into consideration, the study proves that although the brand is properly integrated within the storyline and receives overall positive reactions, the consumers will still be bothered by the length of the scenes featuring the sponsorship, finding them to be distracting and not a necessary tool in achieving the comic relief effect.

Lastly, to improve further research on this subject and in this field, it is of utmost importance to mention the limitations of the present study. The number of participants was relatively low, which might have a negative impact on the validity of the results. Moreover, the chosen research method, although relevant, is not enough to properly assess the opinions of the Japanese students.

Therefore, as far as the future research is concerned, to gain access to a deeper outlook on the way the Japanese students perceive product placement, focus groups should be conducted, as they provide the researcher with better tools of indicating the opinions of the participants, as well as the reasoning behind these opinions. Moreover, people of different age groups should be interviewed to facilitate the observation of the differences or similarities in perception between age groups.

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No	Question		Agreement Rate
Q5	I don't really pay attention to product placement in anime.	54.3%	45.7%
Q6	I am more likely to remember a brand or product due to it being displayed in *anime* (as compared to seeing a commercial about it).	47.8%	52.1%
Q7	I enjoy an *anime* more when the name of a brand is altered (ex: Google -> Doogle/ McDonald's -> MgRonald's).	22.5%	77.4%
Q8	Adults can be influenced by product placements they see in anime (after seeing the anime they will want to buy the products featured there).	43.6%	56.3%
Q9	Children can be influenced by product placement they see in anime (after seeing the anime they will want to buy the products featured there).	18.3%	81.6%
Q10	I think anime nowadays has too much product placement.	90.1%	9.8%
Q11	Product placement in *anime* is creative.	36.6%	63.3%
Q12	Product placement in *anime* should be banned.	95.7%	4.2%
Q17	The fact that the characters drink Dr. Pepper makes the show more realistic.	18.3%	80.2%
Q18	The length of the scenes where characters talk about Dr. Pepper is too long.	66.2%	33.8%
Q19	The length of the scenes where characters talk about Dr. Pepper would distract me from the main plot.	57.7%	42.2%
Q20	The fact that the characters talk so much about Dr. Pepper is making the show less enjoyable.	11.2%	88.7%
Q21	The use of Dr. Pepper makes the anime funnier.	36.6%	63.3%
Q22	The show would have been more enjoyable if Dr. Pepper was not featured in it.	12.6%	87.3%
Q23	I think Dr Pepper is an important part of the anime.	61.9%	38%
Q24	I can't imagine watching Steins;Gate without seeing the characters drinking Dr Pepper (Because Dr Pepper is an important part of the anime's plot).	61.9%	38%

Portrayal of pets in Romanian commercials

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Abstract
This paper aims to analyze the way in which animals (specifically dogs and cats) are portrayed in commercials by Romanian brands. In order to understand this aspect, three research questions are raised: "How are animals featured in commercials of the selected brands?," "What are the differences between cats and dogs in the analyzed commercials?," and "What roles and positionality do they have in these commercials?."

Literature advances three perspectives on which man can be influenced by animals: genetics and neurologic factors, human-animal relationship, symbolism and popular culture. Considering these perspectives, while also acknowledging the theoretical perspectives that discuss the use of animals in commercials, a profile of animals in Romanian commercials could be created.

Thus, it can be argued that animals are mostly portrayed as being a loved one, part of the family, used in commercials for the fact that they are cute and can create a funny scenario, but also for other positive emotional states. The role and positionality of the animals is not outside their daily activities, but even so, there is an important difference between how dogs and cats are portrayed.

Keywords: pets, advertising, portrayal, Romania, commercials

Introduction

Daily, hundreds of videos of cats or dogs are uploaded to platforms such as Youtube, Google, and Facebook, the most opened three websites worldwide (Domocos, 2018, July 19). Also, these are not the only platforms that have been overcrowded with such videos, but they are the ones worth mentioning, according to statistics.

Although videos of pets are all over online media, one can observe that people like them more and more (Messenger, 2014, May 20). Any pet that can do a trick is impressive, is special through its beauty or uniqueness, or can make a funny scene, which becomes an internet sensation, if not a proper superstar.

Lately, there have been increasingly more Facebook pages and Instagram accounts created for animals, recording impressive numbers of followers. For example, the Facebook page "The Official Grumpy Cat" has 8,527,674 followers (The Official Grumpy Cat – Facebook, 2018), displaying posts that mostly represent advertisements. Besides that, there are pictures with the famous grumpy cat, very well-known for its unique expression.

Another example, this time from Instagram, is "Marnie the Shih Tzu" (marniethedog – Instagram, 2018), that can be easily recognized because its tongue is hanging on a side most of the time, making it look cute and naïve as well. This account gathered more than two million followers on Instagram, and it is perpetually active. Also, as on the official Grumpy Cat Facebook page, it also offers a platform where one can buy products with the trademark.

One can also note the presence and influence of animals within the "meme" phenomenon, being present in a large palette of such pictures. Even though the term "meme" originally had a different definition from the one that everybody knows today, one can say that memes represent unusual pictures, with text on them, aiming to entertain the public. Every meme has an official name and it can be used only in specific contexts (Watercutter & Ellis, 2018, January 4). Also, within the memes culture, cats and dogs are widely popular. A relevant example is the "Doge." These memes represent a picture of a Shiba Inu, together with a sarcastic text, written in the Comic Sans MS font. Another rule of this meme is that "wow" must be used in every picture. Also, it is recommended that the text should start with any of the words: so, much, or such. Besides this, animals are more and more present in man's life, being considered even part of the family. What is more, lately the couples preferring to first adopt a pet to get the parenting experience prior to the moment they become parents of a child. Some newlyweds even prefer a pet instead of a child, considering their dog or cat as being their child (Ledbetter, 2017).

Loving one's pet is a natural feeling, as it is a social expectation to get such feelings while getting attached to them through raising and nurturing them. Considering this attachment towards animals, it is not surprising to see that this love can be better and better observed within and across the whole society. Therefore, there are more and more associations, NGOs (ex. PETA), or political parties that fight for animal rights and for their protection. Moreover, a large part of the population adopts a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle for respect towards animals, and campaigns towards promoting these behaviors are increasingly intense and popular.

Thus, the subject approached in this study – the portrayal of pets in Romanian commercials – is topical and interesting, considering that nowadays pets receive increasingly more attention from animal lovers. The scientific relevance of this study comes within a scenario where animal lovers have an important word to say in economy (Bradley & King, 2012, November 13), and even more than that, their number is on the rise ("A guide to worldwide pet ownership," 2015), making this group of consumers an interesting one to investigate.

In the light of all the above, the research questions came naturally for this study. Beside the main research question giving the name of this paper, namely "How are pets portrayed in Romanian commercials?," three other research questions accompany this paper, aiming to capture major aspects that can be framed within the main research question "How are animals featured in commercials of the selected brands?," "What are the differences between cats and dogs in the analyzed commercials?," and "What roles and positionality do they have in these commercials?."

Theoretical perspectives

In a society that is increasingly more dynamic, everything seems to change from day to day. As the human population rises, so does the number of pets in the world. A study made by GfK in 2016 shows that more than half of the population in the 22 studied countries has a pet.

The most common are dogs (33%) and cats (23%), followed by fish (12%) and birds (6%) (Global GfK survey, 2016).

In advertising there is more attention paid to the commercials for pet products. Simultaneously, the roles pets have in commercials are different, as their presence has an impact even on the decision-making process when buying a product (Mayo, Mayo, & Helms, 2009).

By observing and analyzing the literature on this topic, one can note that there are three large areas of interest when it comes to why pets could have an influence over the consumers, and these are going to be approached in the next sections of this study.

Genetics and neurological factors

The human – animal relationship is a special one since prehistoric times, so there is no surprise that they influenced each other over time. The so-called biophilia hypothesis of Wilson (1984) argues that humans are genetically predisposed to be attracted by nature and living creatures, especially animals (Stone, 2014). And if one thinks of the well-known Evolution Theory of Darwin, one can easily understand the closeness between humans and animals, and the influence they have upon each other. This theory argues that humans have reached today's form through a series of genetic transformations from the simplest life forms to the most complex ones (Darwin, 1859).

Two methods are discussed in information processing: there is the cognitive analysis that divides information in pieces and analyses it in segments, and syncretic knowledge that sees information as holistic. Tucker (1981) associated these two methods to the central hemispheres of the brain – the left and the right hemispheres (Chaudhuri, Buck, 1995). Also, it is known and widely accepted that the visual stimuli are associated with the right part of the brain, while the verbal stimuli are associated with its left side (Rossiter *et al.,* 2001, p. 14).

The attribution of certain stimuli and effects to each part of the brain was also studied by Tulving et al. (1994). They proposed the HERA model (the hemispheric encoding/retrieval asymmetry model). The model suggests that the left hemisphere of the brain has a key role in coding the episodic memory (more precisely of certain events) from the short-term memory to the long-term memory, while the right hemisphere has a key role in recovering traces from the long-term memory to acts of recognition of remembrance (cited in Rossiter *et al.,* 2001, p. 14).

Together with the development of neuromarketing, there were several studies that discovered how the human brain works and how this can be applied in marketing and advertising to facilitate or boost sales. Therefore, some neurologic tests confirmed that some parts of the brain are activated when we see commercials that contain pets, and especially baby pets, prompting humans to remember the commercial easier (Stone, 2014, p. 9). In a first such study (Rossiter *et al.*, 2001), it was found that the transfer of information from the short-term memory to the long-term memory is done in the left part of the brain, and not on the right side, as it was thought before. The video scenes generate faster electrical impulses on the left side of the brain, making it act faster to the stimuli than the right side (p. 13).

Thus, it can be explained why in the '90s, Taco Bell had a resounding success after they introduced the Chihuahua dog in their communication campaigns (Kane, 1998, August 7).

The human-pet relationship

The centrality of pets in people's lives has changed quite a lot over the years. If past generations of pets only had the bare necessities (a bed, food, and regular veterinary checks), nowadays they receive famous designer clothes, refined food, life insurance, and they even have special places where you can leave your pet over the day, so it is not alone (kindergarten) (Ellson cited in Mayo, Mayo, & Helms 2009, p. 45). All these elements show how much the human-pet relationship has changed, how the pet evolved from being the guardian of the house (against thieves or mice) to be a family member that has as many facilities as any other family member. A study made by Harris Interactive (2007) shows that nearly all pet owners consider them part of the family.

Pets have become such an important part of people's life that they have even become part of people's personality. They seek to affirm themselves through material possessions that they own, to seek happiness, to relieve experiences, or even to create a sense of immortality after death through them.

The extension of self is done through owning an object or through creating it. And beside consumer items that they buy, pets too can be considered an extension of the self. Pets are given names, are fed and taken care of, people sleep next to them, play with them, and cry when they die. In some cases, pets can even be substitutes for kids or family (Russell, 1988, pp. 155-156). All these can explain the attachment man feels towards their pets and the evolution of human-animal relationship over time. Man identifies himself with his pets. Thus, it would seem just natural for a man to offer his pets all the necessary comfort and to be influenced by their presence when it comes to decide what to buy. And beside all these, there are also well-known medical benefits when it comes to owning pets (Blazina, Buller, & Shen-Miller, 2011, pp. 173-174).

The change in the human-animal relationship is also underlined in animal-companion depictions study in women's magazine (Kennedy & McGarvey, 2008). Analyzing commercials for over ten years, the authors concluded that the pet's position within the family has changed. Pets are presented more inside the house, portrayed more around humans and in physical contact with them. Also, pets are now more often than ever featured without a leash.

Symbolism and popular culture

The animal symbolism could represent another element for which they are successful in commercials. Many animal portrayals in commercials are simple. They are offering the first symbolic connections (Harbrecht, 1993). The animals are efficient communication instruments, because they can transfer a desirable cultural sense connected with the product with which they are associated. Besides that, animals can transfer cultural symbols or standard human qualities (Phillips cited in Mayo, Mayo, & Helms, 2009, p. 48). Thus, one can create metaphors and transfer values to the brand (Morgan & Reichert cited in Mayo, Mayo, & Helms, 2009, p. 48).

Animals are easy to recognize, they attract attention, and create a well-being state for those who are watching. They can increase emotional acceptance and raise sales, having been proven that the presence of animals on posters has a positive impact on the consumers; this happens especially when they present a positive attitude of the animals (Lancendorfer, Atkin, Reece, 2008, p. 390) and there is indeed a change of values at the symbolic level (Spears, Mowen, Chakraborty, 1996).

It is more efficient to use animals in commercials because man already knows and understands the cultural value of the animal and the human can automatically connect the pets to the product. It is internationally known that bees are representatives of industrialization, that swans symbolize peace, and that foxes embody cunning (Robin, 1932, p. 6). Also, Duracell uses a rabbit to symbolize energy or Ferrari has a horse as a symbol to represent speed. The dimensions through which man makes cultural connections with the animals are based on certain characteristics, among which stand appearance, habitat, personality, animal-human interaction, popular culture, and behavior (Phillips, 1996).

The use of animals in advertising

It is widely known that advertising is engaging various methods to attract the customers' attention, firstly through visual representation. The most common themes exploited to render an impact on the decisional level are violence, sex, or emotion. Among these, one can also count the use of animals. Brown (cited in Stone, 2014) argues that the use of animals is not a new tool in advertising, Leo Burnett being considered the master of using animals in commercials.

When it comes to animals in advertising, it can be observed that there is a focus on the strong relationship between man and animal, and on its symbolic dimension. There are statistics confirming that oftentimes the connection of the brand with the animal has a more important value than the connection between the brand and a celebrity (Hoggan cited in Lancendorfer, Atkin, & Reece, 2008, p. 385).

Mayo et al. (2009) carried out a study capturing the changes over a 10-year period (1994-2004) in the way dogs and cats are represented on posters. It can be noticed a slight decline in the use of animals on posters in this period, but dogs appear more often in commercials than cats do. However, even if the number of appearances declined, it can be observed that their role changed. There is a 15% increase of the animals' presence in commercials for products that are not designed for animals. In these commercials, they are displayed as a central character on the poster, they hold certain animal values, and characteristics, and are more integrated in people's lives (pp. 51-58). The products for which there is the highest rate of animal presence are insurance, toilet paper, cars, beer, and food (Stone, 2014, p. 16).

Lerner and Kalof (1999) identified six hypostases in which animals can be displayed within commercials. They can appear as a loved one (a member of the family), as a symbol (representing a logo or an idea), as an instrument (consumer food), as allegory, as someone that creates problems, or simply as an animal in nature (Lerner & Kalof, 1999). Besides, the animals seem to play specific roles: they can be main characters in the key message, the elements that are highlighting the key message, or they can simply be in the background, setting a certain tone or attitude for the commercial (Mayo, Mayo, & Helms, 2009, p. 45).

Most of the time, pets are represented by real animals, while the wild animals are virtually created through sketches. Out of these two categories, real animals seem to be used more often, being more efficient from an emotional point of view. The most commonly used animals in commercials are dogs, closely followed by cats (Stone, 2014, p. 15).

Considering that dogs and cats have the highest number of appearances in commercials, but also the fact that these are the most common pets, this study focuses on these two type of pets, and on how they can influence the remembrance and the recognition of the brand and, in the end, the decision-making process of the buyer.

Methodological framework

This research was mainly based on findings coming from research papers and journal and magazine articles on pets and pets in commercials. Thus, data from different perspectives were gathered to build a content analysis grid to be applied on Romanian commercials, a cultural context in which studies on this subject are not very common.

To be able to study this subject in Romania and to answer the related research questions, content analysis was used. This method was selected to answer the main research question - "How are pets portrayed in Romanian commercials?" and to the secondary research questions: "How are the animals featured in the commercials of the selected brands?","What are the differences between dogs and cats in the analyzed commercials?," and "What are the roles and positionality that they have in these commercials?."

To shed some investigative light onto these research questions, content analysis was used together with its specific instrument – the analysis grid. In this way, after researching tens of commercials made by Romanian brands, it could be observed what kind of animals and breeds are used in the Romanian commercials, how they interact with the human characters, the product or the brand in the commercials, what attitude the presented animals had, and what roles they played. Also, a pattern could be observed that guides animal portrayals in Romanian commercials.

The content analysis encompassed 70 commercials. All the analyzed commercials were made by Romanian brands belonging to the top 100 most powerful Romanian brands in 2017, a ranking made by Biz magazine ("Top 100 cele mai puternice…," 2017).

Thus, each brand was selected from the ranking list and their commercials were analyzed, regardless of the year in which they were made. The commercials that had cats and dogs, regardless of their duration, execution technique, role, number, or the positionality were selected to be later analyzed.

The following brands created commercials eligible to be included in the analysis: Altex, Arctic, BCR, Benvenuti, BRD, Caroli, CEC Bank, Dacia, Dedeman, Delaco, eMAG, Flanco, Joe, Măgura, Media Galaxy, Napolact, Pegas, Poiana, Policolor, Primola, Rompetrol, Sensiblu, Ursus, and Zuzu. Thus, one could maybe already observe that the areas of activity of these brands are mostly the food sector, with nine brands, the electronics sector, with five brands, the banking sector, with three brands, the transport sector, with three brands (including Rompetrol), the constructions sector with two brands, the clothing sector with one brand, and the pharmaceutical sector with one brand.

The criteria of the analysis grid are the following: the type of the animal presented in the commercial (cat or dog), the number (how many animals of this type), the number of seconds they appear in the commercial, if they interact or not with the product, if they appear in the same frame as or with the brand, whether or not they interact with the humans in the commercial, the context in which they appear and their role in the story, the attitude they have, their positionality in the commercial (criteria based on Mayo, Mayo, & Helms, 2009), their role in the commercial (criteria based on Lerner & Kalof, 1999) and lastly, any other particular observations for the commercial.

Results and discussion

Every criterion was selected to highlight as precisely as possible the situation of pets in the Romanian commercials. Thus, by following these criteria, the aim is to observe the positionality of the pets within the commercial, how they are displayed and perceived, what roles or functions they have, and what attitude they express. It is also desired to capture the relationship between pets and human characters, and their relationship with the brand.

Out of the seventy analyzed commercials, twenty-two show cats, forty-six of them show dogs, and only two of them show both dogs and cats in the same frame. It can thus be observed that the number of dogs in Romanian commercials is almost double compared to the number of cats in similar commercials.

The presentation of cats and dogs in commercials follows a representative and known pattern in the popular culture connected with the two animals. While cats are cold, calm, and independent, and do not interact a lot with the people around them, the dogs are presented as being friendly, lively, playful, and always around their owners, directly interacting with them.

The animals are walking outside, in the house, sitting in their bed or cage, eating, playing, running, inspecting their houses and so on, presenting a specific animal behavior. Three BRD commercials even present the classic relationship between cat and the golden fish in the fish bowl, spying on him, but also the relationship between the cat and the pigeons, aiming to catch them.

The context in which the animals appear is always a regular one, them being presented around the house or their owners, being mostly just a pet, embodying a loved one. In two of the commercials, they also take upon a symbolic role. The commercial from Altex presents the cat as a symbol for adventure and exploration, the commercial being constructed around these themes. Also, one commercial from BCR presents the dog as the bad wolf from the "Little red riding hood" story. Only in four commercials do animals have destructive roles. Three of BRD's commercials present the cat and the dog as destroying pieces of paper or various objects in the house, while a commercial from Primola presents the dog destroying an apartment room almost completely (concept based on Mayo, Mayo, & Helms, 2009).

From the analysis it can be easily observed that the relationship between humans and pets has changed, as the theoretical foundation suggests. Out of the seventy commercials, only nine of them feature dogs in leashes. Besides the Policolor commercial, in which the dog is inside a home in one of the shots, in all the other shots the dogs are outside the house. Thus it can be argued that the leash is only used to protect the dog from the possible dangers around it.

In one of the BRD commercials, in which the main character is a cat, the beds in which it is sleeping are presented, highlighting the comfort it lives in. The commercial from Joe presents the dog even occupying the whole couch, the owner being forced to sit somewhere else. Other examples that show the evolution between the human-animal relationship are the BRD commercials, presenting a dog called Gore, and the commercial from Joe, presenting a dog called Kiki. Out of all the analyzed commercials, only in these two the pets have a name. Besides these, in the Rompetrol commercials, in the Joe one, and in the Dacia one, dressed pets show up, wearing a bow on their heads, or at the neck level. Even more than that, two out of three analyzed commercials from Poiana have the tagline "More happiness in the family" and "My family's inspiration." Both commercials present as part of the family a Labrador dog and a Polish Lowland Sheepdog. One of the CEC Bank commercials has the tagline "The second-best friend of man" and has a Jack Russell Terrier as one of the main characters.

All these definitions show that the pet-human relationship is getting closer and closer, with pets being integrated and considered part of the family, making it a whole. The concept of a family being formed by the two parents, two kids, and a dog emerges countless times in the Romanian commercials, being observed that in most of the situations the dogs are presented as being part of the family or as being a very close friend for the man.

What is interesting is that in every family presented in the commercials, the family's personality matches the personality of the dog. The families that own dogs are presented younger, lively, while the families that have cats are calmer or with older members. So, it can be argued that the pets one owns match one's personality, and it would be strange to own a different type of pet.

Out of the seventy commercials, only in two, both from BCR, the dogs are puppies. In one of the commercials the story is based on the dog being a puppy, while in the second one the dog is a symbol for the wolf from the Romanian folk story "The goat and her three kids," this dog being a German Shepherd, popularly known as "wolf-dog." The other animals are portrayed as being adults, but even so, their cute side is highlighted in order to soften the consumer.

Another interesting observation is that while almost every cat in commercials is a different type of breed, the presented dogs (regardless if it is a commercial from the same brand or from different one) are most of the time the same breed (Jack Russell Terrier – fifteen counts, Labrador/Golden Retriever – six counts, Bulldog – three counts, Beagle – three counts, German Shepherd – two counts, Pug – two counts, Chihuahua, Pekingese, West Highland White Terrier, Lhasa Apso, Yorkshire Terrier, Polish Lowland Sheepdog, Collie Border – one count, big dogs – three counts, half breed – three counts). As cat breeds, one can identify American Wirehair – fifteen counts (main character in many BRD commercials), Chausie – one count, Orange Tabby – four counts, Turkish Angora – one count, striped or other breeds (in the BRD commercials together with the main character) – ten counts.

Out of the seventy analyzed commercials, in only seven commercials does the pet interact directly with the product advertised. The interactions are almost always the same in every commercial – sits on the product or walks on it (when it comes to laptops or clothes) or they sniff it (Primola chocolate and Dedeman plaster). In only one commercial from CEC Bank the dog takes the owner's card in its mouth and gives it to her and in one BRD commercial the cat is shown chewing some papers needed for a credit application.

The interactions with the human characters in commercials are more often. 32 out of the 70 commercials are showing such frames. They emerge almost in the same context. In most of the cases, the animals and the human characters appear in the frame playing, running after each other, doing tricks, jumping, being a positive interaction, sending a joyful and pleasant tone and attitude. There are shots in which the two characters are sitting quietly. In these shots the interaction is focused on them being close, expressed through petting or direct physical contact in which the animals are sitting in the lap of their owners. Another quite common interaction in the analyzed commercials is represented by walking the dog.

It is also worth mentioning that in the communication campaign from BRD, out of the 15 commercials they made, only three of them feature human characters, in the other ones there are only cats displayed. Out of these three commercials including human characters, only in one of them the pet interacts with the human.

The animals appear in the same shot with the brand in 31 out of the 70 analyzed commercials. There are some patterns after which frames are designed. In the first one, the brand is somewhere in the background, the focus falling on the characters in the commercial (seven commercials use this tactic). In the second pattern, the commercial is made in such a way that the brand logo always appears in a corner of the commercial (thirteen of them are made like this). In the third pattern, the animal is in the same shot with the brand, but it does not interact with the product, the human character being the one that interacts with it in that moment (ten commercials done like this). Only in three commercials there are shots in which the pet appears simultaneously with the brand and interacts with it.

The attitude that the presented animals have in the commercials is a bit different depending on their species. While the cats are mostly quiet and curious, and sometimes authoritarian (the BRD commercials are built on this trait) or playful, the dogs are portrayed in every commercial as being friendly, joyful, calm, and playful. In some commercials, in which their context asks for this, the dogs are agitated.

The most common positionality the pets have in the commercials is that of catalyzers, highlighting the key message (27 commercials). Depending on how they look or on the activities they are engaging during the commercial, the pets are in specifically chosen scenarios that highlight the message and the idea of the brand. For example, how fluffy is the top of Măgura's brand cake compared with the fur of a Lhasa apso dog, how important it is to make memories with the loved ones (Poiana), taking care of them so they do not get sick (Sensiblu), or how good is the Primola chocolate, that you do not want to share it with anyone. Here the family dog is used to distract the significant other.

The least common position is that of a main character transmitting the key message (seventeen commercials). The difference in these two types of positions is represented by the fact that the commercial's storyline is concentrated on the pet to highlight the message. This position is used by BRD in their communication campaign when the American Wirehair cat talks during the whole commercial about the advantages of having a BRD account from its point of view, but with implications to human life. Another commercial that presents this position is represented by the commercial from CEC Bank with the Jack Russell Terrier dog, together with the tagline "The second-best friend of man," creating a connection between the relationship the man and the dog entertain, and the relationship the man and the card have.

In the commercials in which the position is that of setting a certain tone or attitude (26 commercials), the role played by the pet in the commercial is not that important, and they emerge in a natural context, already created, as their place would simply always be there (in the respective family).

However, a direct correlation could not be observed between the positionality of the animal in the commercial and the number of seconds it appeared in it. An arithmetic average between the number of seconds in which the animals appear in all the commercials and the duration of all analyzed commercials shows that they have an average of 8.12 seconds on screen out of the 31.4 seconds, so less than half of the commercial's screen time.

The most occurrences featuring animals last for two seconds and six seconds (eleven commercials each), closely followed (ten commercials) by three seconds appearances. In nine commercials the animals are being presented between eleven and twenty seconds. In six commercials out of the seventy, the animals show up for four seconds. In five commercials they appear for over twenty seconds. The animals appear five, seven, and nine seconds in four commercials each. In two commercials, they show up for eight seconds, and in the other two for ten seconds.

There are four commercials that last one minute or longer and only one commercial that lasts fifty seconds. Most of the commercials, 27 to be more precise, last between 30 and 36 seconds, 15 commercials last between 40 and 46 seconds, and 10 between 20 and 29 seconds. Between 10 and 19 seconds last seven commercials and only four commercials last as short as four to nine seconds.

The duration of animal presence in commercials is not related to how long the commercials last. There are commercials that last one minute or five seconds and in which the animal appears only for five seconds, while there are also commercials of one minute in which the animal appears 17 seconds, 45 seconds commercials in which the animal is shown 33 seconds or two seconds, but also four seconds commercials in which the animal is present for the whole length. The duration of appearance of the animal in the commercial is influenced rather by the role and positionality it has in the storyline. Lastly, it needs to be mentioned that in four commercials other animals are also featured, such as wild horses, sheep, or turtles.

Conclusions

The commercials investigated use many of the presented animals in order to highlight the idea of a complete family, the animal being featured as a loved one, part of the family. Thus, it can be observed that the brands rely on the fact that people recognize the animals, they include them more and more into their lives, and they nurture strong feelings for them.

What is more, in the portrayal of the animals their attributes are counted on, such as the loveliness they express, the humorous elements in their behavior, and their innocence being highlighted in every commercial they appear in.

The contexts in which the animals emerge are mostly natural, capturing species-specific attitudes and behaviors. The attitude that human characters have with the animal characters suggest that their relationship is a close one, the animal being presented mostly inside the house, having a focus on any given day products they own, such as bed, toys, and they are presented seldom on a leash or have a bed outside the house.

A direct correlation between the role animals is invested with and the number of seconds they appear in the commercial cannot be observed. Most of the analyzed commercials choose to put the animal in a secondary role and they mix naturally with the decoration and the storyline of the commercial. However, there are some brands that chose to focus their story on the animal. Besides the communication campaign of BRD, in which the animal is presented in an uncommon position but fit for the stereotypical image people have regarding cats, the other commercials keep a classic attitude when it comes to the actions the animals undertake. The animals presented do not interact that often with the product or with the brand for which the commercial is made, but they are more focused on the relationship with the human characters or on their own actions, actions that regard their own comfort.

It can be observed, however, that the presence of dogs and cats is very different, almost opposing. Besides the fact that it is not equal to the number of representations (the dogs appear more than twice than the cats), the portrayal of the animals is usually stereotypical – the cats are colder and independent, while the dogs are affectionate and playful.

Finally, the portrayal that the animals have in commercials can affect their role in these commercials, as well as their relationship and interaction with humans and products featured in the commercial. Besides, it can be observed that there is a preference in the use of specific breeds of animals – Jack Russell Terrier for dogs and American Wirehair for cats. For dogs, the most displayed breeds are known for being ideal for families and being calmer, more affectionate and playful in their interaction with the kids.

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How to build a strong employer brand:
Overview of loyalty building techniques

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Abstract

This study focuses on the IT sector in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, based on an observation of multinational companies and local businesses. During this research, the author mainly focuses on the human resources part of the companies' employer branding. The research analyzes and compares the human resource management strategies and techniques, the organizational culture, the operating systems, the motivation, performance and incentive systems, and the external and internal communication of the employer branding (communication direction, content, message, channels used).

Companies and the labor market have to face new challenges with the development of industry and the economy and the growth of segments. For a well-functioning and productive company, they have to pay increasingly more attention to recruiting people, because they have to hire the most suitable candidate among a large number of candidates. Sometimes, there is a real struggle for the companies to acquire the best professional for the job. It is increasingly important for companies to become more attractive to their prospective and current employees, so they have to work with their own brand's judgment and image very conscientiously, thus they need to devote more resources to their employer branding strategies.

Much research has shown that jobseekers' attention is not primarily raised by high salaries, but rather by the prosperity of the workplaces. So if the employer's brand image is strong and well-constructed, the number of candidates can increase even without direct recruitment; they can gain the best talents, win the most qualified workforce, because the employer branding can make the company more attractive.

This paper studies the loyalty-generating tools underpinning the employer branding, as its purpose is to explore the motivational factors of those working in the IT sector. A key motif of a well-functioning company is motivated, skilled, and satisfied workers, therefore it is very important for IT companies to enhance the employer's brand and to increase employees' loyalty and satisfaction. This study presents a case study on applied techniques and strategies in loyalty building.

The research questions are the following: In what ways are loyalty-building programs part of employer branding? What motivational factors help to build engagement? Which methods and techniques are proposed by loyalty programs?

Keywords: employer branding, loyalty building techniques, human resources strategies, IT sector, organizational culture.

Why is employer branding important, or is it called employer branding?

Branding emerged as a concept in the late 19th century. Branding is a continuous struggle between the manufacturer and the consumer to determine the brand's promise. In this interpretation, one might mostly think about the product and the consumer, but when it comes to branding or brand building, anything can be the focus of products, services, organizations, places, and even people. Thus, employer branding is about the construction of the organization's brand, the company as an employer. In this case, the concept of employer branding is placed at the intersection of human resource management and marketing. The purpose of employer branding is to build a unique, positive, and recognizable position that is both attractive to current and future employees in the public domain (Maschioschek & Katoen, 2007).

Employer branding is not a short-term process, it is not a one-time advertising campaign, and for each company, one can talk about an employer's brand, even without any conscious strategy, as people spontaneously create a thought, a feeling of association with a given company. With this spontaneous association, the employer can act much more cleverly if he or she builds and communicates a long-term conscious strategy in which one defines for themselves the employer's brand. It is also noteworthy that, during the employer's brand building, one does not only focus on the future workforce, but also on the need to maintain and motivate the existing workforce.

A well-established employer's brand can, in the long run, help strengthen the commitment of employees to the company, which can reduce fluctuation and result in cost savings. Furthermore, consciously built work can increase employees' motivation, performance, and interest in the recruiting processes, mainly because younger generations (Y, Z) are more interested in a company whose perception is good, has a strong employer's brand, and are well-experienced with the concept of work, because it is important for them to be a member of a well-positioned company as it can make them proud. In fact, the employer's brand is also important because it can be closely linked to the judgment of the product or service.

Barrow and Mosley (2007) state that a company should consider twelve meaningful factors to manage its employer branding:

1. External reputation – which means that companies with positive reputation are more attractive.
2. Internal communication – this is the main tool, which helps the employees to understand the brand values.
3. Senior leadership – management involvement is an important part of the employer brand because managers and leaders are the key figures, and they play an important role in employee engagement.
4. Values and Corporate Social Responsibility – employees can find it more attractive when a company promotes aspects of CSR.
5. Internal measurement systems – help in monitoring employees' performance.

6. Service Support – it is crucial to support the employees in their tasks, for building a strong brand both internally and externally.
7. Recruitment and induction – the recruitment process is essential for brand management, the information presented about the jobs is very important to have positive effect on the visitors.
8. Team management – leaders have to mentor and coach employees, so they have an important role in the way in which employees live the brand experience.
9. Performance appraisal – this dimension is based on the feedback and evaluation of performance.
10. Learning and development – trainings and career development opportunities are very important factors influencing employees' decision to stay in a company or leave.
11. Reward and recognition – recognition is a significant source or reward, but the compensation and the economic benefits are not to be overlooked either.
12. Working environment – working conditions affect motivation and performance in a significant way.

The goal of corporate brand building is, therefore, the creation of unique, distinctive organizational features through physical elements (income, benefits etc.) and non-physical elements (corporate culture and values). Employer branding takes place simultaneously both on the internal market and on the external market, and it clearly defines in both directions why that company would be the desirable employer. According to results of many surveys, the most important factors for employees are the workplace atmosphere, security, and income; however, factors such as appreciation, honor, and fair treatment are also very important. If we consider that the basis of employer branding is the human resource for the research into building commitment (loyalty) and how to improve performance, it is worth studying the psychology of human behavior and the theories of motivation.

Motivation theories - historical development

Human motivation has been explored for centuries, several theories and definitions have been created already, but its historical development is characterized by two more distinctive ideas. One of these ideas of motivation compares the attitude of animal instinct (instinctive theories) with the human rational conscious behavior. The disclaimer of this conception came with Darwin's theory in 1859, according to which animal and human motivations are the same, which is the struggle for survival. "According to the reigning philosophical conception, people, who are led by arguments and knowledge, are not the same as animals. Conversely, the Darwinian thought pattern depicted humans as being influenced by the same biological pressures as inferior class animals. From this point of view, the forces that determine our behavior are above our control. The conflict between these two perceptions of human nature – the mentalism of early philosophers against Darwin's mechanistic conception – caught the attention of a number of psychologists at the end of the XIX century" (Klein, 1982).

These theories were in sharp contrast with each other, but the current motivational theories also feel this tension; yet within the Y generation, they are trying to answer differently about human motivational factors.

In the 20th century, the behaviorist trend of psychology, which criticized instinctive theories in many ways, was also published. Behaviorists, although acknowledging that the role of instincts is great, still argued that the most important factors that determine human behavior are the learned ones. Such theories included Pavlov's theories, which demonstrated that learning and experience can influence behavior.

During this period, Woodworth, in 1918, defined the drive approach that largely defines modern motivational theories these days. In the determination of the drive theory, the driving force is an internal force that motivates behavior; it is generally accepted in these theories that both instinctive and learned factors influence human behavior (Klein, 1982).

One can also talk about the content theory of motivation in which Maslow's classical analysis must be emphasized. Maslow has set up five basic needs groups that have a hierarchical relationship but can also be independent of each other: physiological needs, needs for security, love, recognition, and self-fulfillment. The fact that they are in hierarchical relationships means that if a lower order is not satisfied, it dominates human consciousness, and the rest are sent to the background.

While the content theory of motivation seeks to find which motivational factors determine individual behavior, process theories focus on how leaders can use their knowledge of needs and individual aspirations to create motivation: for example, the behavioral Skinner reinforcement theory, objective theory, expectation theory, and equity theory (Bakacsi, 1998). In the case of reinforcement theory, one assumes that human behavior is determined by environmental factors, causing positive or negative impacts. Positive and negative reinforcements play an important role in encouraging employees in companies and in the efficiency of corporate operations. In objective theory, one assumes that goal determines human behavior and motivation and the extent of the effort invested, and it is also important to emphasize feedback and its frequency, the publicity of objectives and the measurement of results. According to the theory of expectations, the individual considers the attractiveness of the reward with the result, as the name of the theory suggests, so the expectations are at the center. The perception of equity theory, lastly, emphasizes the relationship between the effort of the individual and the probable outcome against his action.

Modern motivational perceptions reflecting on work

Ariely (2017) explains what motivates the modern man. Human motivation depends on many external factors, since motivation is always present, but it is only necessary to look at the effects that influence it the most. What is clear from Ariely’s view is that money is still an important motivational factor, but it is not the only one, which is why it is important to understand the logic of motivation and human behavior; only by comprehending this can loyalty programs be categorized and evaluated. According to Ariely, what largely determines human behavior and work efficiency is how relevant we find our task.

If we feel the weight of the task, we feel the recognition is much more about ourselves than the task itself, the goal-oriented motivation also appears, so we are much more inclined to go into the task and not agree with the easier and simpler way. This is also true for workplace assignments: as long as we do not feel full responsibility for the task we do, we do it with much less efficiency, engaging less motivation, and we will recognize it as an eternally meaningless repetitive task. The feeling of significance can be reinforced by positive feedback. Research has shown that if a person receives positive feedback, which is acknowledgement to his or her work, that person can work with greater dedication or for less money than the individual whose work is disrespected and does not receive any recognition or feedback.

Recognition is an important link between the individual and the employer, which can help an individual engage in commitment and loyalty. Gallup has been tracking, since 2000, the commitment of American workers; polls show that 50% of Americans are not committed and 17% are not actively committed – they are those who show their dissatisfaction, thus undermining the morale of the environment (Ariely, 2016).

The work environment also plays a major role in the engagement and motivation of individuals in the workforce. Demotivating factors may be the very tight hierarchical organization, as research has shown that the more isolated and confined the individual feels, the more difficult it is to develop engagement and efficiency-enhancing motivation. It can also undermine the individual's motivation for a uniformised work environment because it also prevents them from embracing the job and the environment. Narrow working cubicles or uniformed spaces reduce motivation and prevent the formation of a sense of attachment that, for example, plays an important role in the behavior of an individual, as it is one of the direct links between identity and community affiliation. For companies and the employer brand, it is very important to have a sense of relevance and attachment that can halt the motivational destroying processes of the routine and may even have a positive effect on building loyalty programs.

For the internal communication of human resources management and the employer's brand, a very important question is how to increase motivation. A very simple and research-proven technique can be the pleasure created by self-made things, which Ariely (2016) defines as the IKEA effect. The IKEA effect means a binding attachment to the process of creation that the Swedish furniture industry has formulated early on and knows even if its composition is more complicated, we are even more attached to the objects we created than to the ones received ready-made.

This creation-binding theory and the research done in this direction shows that the harder the individual works and the more time and effort he invests, the stronger the bond becomes, the more it feels like his own, which is also important because he becomes more committed to the employer. For employer branding, it is also very important to create organizational identity among employees, so it is also important to consider that recognition, performance and creativity greatly influence our self-image, which is closely related to identifying with organizational identity.

The mistake commonly made by employers is to see work as a simple exchange between performance and pay, a theory that cannot be sustained in the long run, since this formula excludes the individual's expectations, goals, and self-realization efforts.

One research hypothesis in motivation studies states that money is not a sufficient incentive and not enough of a motivation factor. Ariely (2017) conducted a survey at Intel's software development company, which also pointed to this assumption that money, which is the actual financial benefit, does not increase commitment and motivation. Four groups participated in the research, which received different feedback after the given task was completed. A group was praised, a group received cash bonuses, another group was offered pizza coupons, and the fourth group (as a control group) did not get any extras after the job was done. The question was whether tangible things or verbal praise improved performance. The results of the research showed that each bonus had an impact on performance, but only in the first work cycle, since the money could be very poorly reckoned on the day after the reward, employee performance dropped below control group performance. It is therefore a mistaken assumption that people work for money, and that greater financial benefits result in higher output. Non-monetary recognition has also delayed and persistent consequences on the basis of research, so it is important to pay attention to the individual's internal motivation and language of recognition.

Creating a good relationship between the employee and the organization or the brand is very important, as this is a long-term investment; humans have a need for commitment, thus a good relationship can be built in the long run. This phenomenon can be identified both in work and in private life, as an individual does not put as much time and effort as possible in a short-term relationship. The employer and the employer branding need to pay attention to the fact that the commitment is the consequence of long-term planning and, if this relationship can be established in the employee, we can spare our organization from the additional costs of fluctuation. Institutions and enterprises with non-tenders can use a variety of tools, such as investing in development, training for individuals, or providing health benefits that carry the message of a common long-term planning and provide opportunities for workplace and private life well-being.

Loyalty building programs

After examining the motivational factors that can affect employees, the next step is to look at which loyalty builder programs work best, and which motivational factors most affect employees.

Based on different case studies presented in literature, the author collected the best techniques used in loyalty programs. Most loyalty programs emphasize that employers need to be creative and offer useful things to their employees.

The first most used techniques are customized souvenirs like T-shirts, sweatshirts, necklaces, notebooks, mugs, water carriers, bags, key rings, stationery etc. In creating these personalized objects, the employer should strive to use a more distinctive and unique design, that the employee would use and wear, and they must choose useful objects.

However, the employer can solve the problem much more creatively. The most commonly used techniques include, for example, a lunch with the CEO/leader. This provides a pleasant personal contact that is a very important factor in establishing a sense of belonging, and the employee may feel honored through this kind of event. If office circumstances allow pets at work can be a great way to improve morale across the entire team. It is also a good opportunity if the company offers the opportunity for senior employees to hold mini workshops to share some of their highly valuable skills or insights. These mini workshops could also be good circumstances to find easier solutions to different tasks or problems.

If it is possible and the employer can provide parking, the VIP parking access can be a great reward for those who are traveling by car. Reserving the very best spot to celebrate a teammate can be a great reward. If a worker does not use a car, the employer can help him with transit vouchers, because depending on the company's location, getting to and from work can be a challenge, and in some cases, can be expensive. Employers can also reward the employee with offering him city bicycle rentals or cost support, or even offering service vouchers for the maintenance of their car and bicycle. If there is the possibility of music playing in the office and there is not already a mandatory soundtrack, employers can consider offering the possibility to select the music for the day, as a reward for employees. These are important for employees, because they provide a common experience and build a good relationship between individuals. The HR portals also recommend the formation of various clubs, such as the Socks Club. By joining such clubs, one can also strengthen the feeling of belonging. Socks Club members, for example, weekly reward a well-performing colleague with a funny sock, which can be carried out based on other ideas, so there is no high cost for the employer.

As mentioned earlier, the work environment is very important for employees. Forbes Magazine, for instance, reports on research that has shown that employees who can control the look of their work environment are much happier, more motivated, and better performing. Also, surveys of the impact of work environments have highlighted that art has an impact on employees' creativity and reduces stress at the workplace (Cass Business School Study). It is therefore advisable to ask workers how to decorate their office and work environment within a certain budget.

If they are involved in these kinds of tasks, they are likely to feel more comfortable in their workplace, since they can also identify with decorative elements. Also, making a home environment for the workplace can be part of the strategy: common library equipment that includes books can help relax, as well as promote personal or professional development. However, books can be used as souvenirs, if the employer knows the employees' interest, and a good book can be an appropriate reward for well done work. Such loyalty-generating gifts are also flowers that can be bouquets or even plants to care for at the office. Employers can give them DIY (do it yourself) trophies or entertainment vouchers, such as tickets to cultural or sport events.

The opportunity to attend workshops, courses, seminars, and conferences provides positive behavior change because professional development implements the concept of long-term planning in the employee and promotes good relationships, which is also important in building engagement, as seen before. Another reward could be to provide various leisure activities, either through membership fees or by discounted or free lease in sports clubs, personal trainer workout, massage centers etc.

If the greatest recognition and reward for employees is the gift of time, employers can offer them shortened working days, work-from-home options, or give them vouchers for a cleaning company or, if possible, make laundry options at their headquarters, to help employees with their everyday life tasks. Employers can also give them time when allowing them to make their own schedule during the work (starting hours, extra lunch time etc.). If a manager knows that there are some of our employees who are lovers of travel, they can offer them an opportunity such as a remote year, which is the opportunity for employees to work anywhere outside of the office for a period or even in any other departments of the company in other cities. A very popular method is organizing team-building events outside working hours, such as group trips, team-building weekends, team lunch breaks, movie theaters, team dinners etc. The employer must pay attention to the fact that if it is institutionally organized the employer may take over as much of the cost as they can.

Not only travel, entertainment, sports, further training, vouchers, and gifts are important tools for rewarding. It is also a great help to provide better medical and dental care, to indicate the focus on employees' well-being and health.

Conclusions

The questions posed in this research referred to the extent to which loyalty programs are part of employer branding strategies, and which methods and techniques are advanced for these programs.

By studying motivational theories, one might conclude that the most motivated employee is loyal and committed. A committed employee is the most important factor in a well-functioning organization, with good results and good performance metrics. The individual's expectations and psychological needs must be met by employers if they want to keep a skilled workforce in the long run. Fluctuation entails high costs for the company, HR management, and employer branding, dealing with many different methods and techniques to reduce fluctuation.

Literature also shows that employer branding can be divided into many components, but the most important factor is the human resource, both the future and the existing ones. After reviewing loyalty programs and statistics, it is safe to argue that all forms of recognition are considered and offer reward methods. It is the employer's main task for middle management to pay attention and personal contact with the employees so that they can use the appropriate form of recognition to motivate and build commitment among employees. The loyalty-building programs are mostly used by large or multinational companies, but they can be adapted to smaller ones, as well.

This paper is the backbone of a Ph.D. thesis focusing on the IT sector in Cluj-Napoca, so the author assumes that most motivational strategies and loyalty programs are also used in Cluj-Napoca, but further empirical research by qualitative and quantitative methods needs to be employed.

The Facebook team performs surveys several times a year, in which they assess what interests employees, and what motivates them. A summary of the results of these surveys revealed the position of the individual in the company, regardless of nationality and belonging to any generation, the most interesting factors are community, career, and social affairs. This research suggests that early motivational theories, which build hierarchically the mechanism of internal motivation, are no longer completely in place because they are influenced by their psychological needs.

Thus, the challenge for employers consists in being able to provide all main needs for their employees. They can respond to career needs by providing a workplace where a worker can do his job creatively, freely, and independently, having the opportunity to learn and develop. As it was found earlier, many software developers are seeking to build loyalty programs to meet this need. The community is therefore another important factor, regardless of age group, because the individual needs the community to feel recognized and appreciated, which is strengthening the commitment. The third important element is the representation of social affairs and values, which helps the worker feel his work meaningful, to identify with the employer's mission and value system, and if he succeeds, he feels proud of his work, which also drives him to think on the long term.

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Political branding, symbolic interactionism, and leadership in postmodern democracy

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Abstract
The political brand has become an important instrument in the political communication and political public relations field. Social fragmentation and the decline of group loyalties prepared the fertile ground for the emergence of personalized politics. This paper wishes to examine the extent to which politicians manage to shape voter's cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions in a fluid electoral environment. To understand the dynamic relation established between politicians and voters, the paper will be drawing on a combination of literature on relational and authentic leadership. In essence, the political branding process focuses on three dimensions in the politician-voter interaction: whether politicians are in group members ('one of us'), whether they act in the interest of the electorate ('act for us'), and whether they are effective in developing efficient political platforms ('deliver for us'). What matters in the construction of brand relationships is not only the image projected by politicians towards the electorate, but also a conscious effort to gain a shared sense of purpose. Empowering politicians is a sine qua non condition for the functioning of a democratic society, hence the need to establish a set of mechanisms for the compatibility of political life with the realities and issues of civil society.

Keywords: political branding, relational leadership, personal branding, authentic leadership, political communication.

Introduction

Nowadays, the use of branding concepts and frameworks in the political environment is of growing interest. Branding may be a useful concept to understand candidates as political brands, and there have been calls to investigate (the need for evolution and decontamination of brands, the importance of consistency and authenticity in the political sector, and the rise of branded political leaders). On the other hand, personal branding is becoming an important factor, agencies and image consultants are increasingly accompanying politicians as they become public figures/personal brands. The role of personal image and self-presentation has always been essential to the exercise of political power. Undoubtedly, managing a politician's image seems to have acquired an even greater role in the last few decades as part of the alleged "mediatization" of politics.

Symbolic interactionism and political branding

The theory of symbolic interactionism calls to investigate the process of image-building which has been neglected or marginalized in the past. In order to offer a new focus to the objectivity of the world within the social realm, Mead's perspective is confined in a relational and constructivist approach to the self. The enriched formula proposed by Mead states that "the self is something that has a development, it is not initially there, at birth, but it arises in the process of social experience and activity" (Mead, 1967, p. 135). Therefore, the author claims the roots of self in language, stating that, "the self gets to express itself through the communication process. Self is part of the communicative activity" (Mead, 1967, p. 29).

Meads' scheme places the self within a two-phase structure. In a broader context we discern "I" - the incognizable and knowing self. In the second part, we distinguish "me," embedded as the socially determined self (Scârneci, 2009, p. 42), including here the internalization of social roles, in other words the identity attributed by others. The complete self provides a cohesive and centralizing approach reuniting not only the attitude of others towards the subject, but also the internalization of the attitude regarding different aspects of the common social activity. As a result of this subsequent development, collectivity fits into the flow of social thinking as a determinant factor. Collectivity is expressed in concrete sub-groups – a prominent political example being here the founding of parties – their activity and existence being particularly defined in relation to other institutions. Collectivity brings together a multiplicity of values and behavioral norms placed in the community as a guide to the action of the self.

To understand the tools underlying the construction of electoral campaigns, a special role is given to the concept of image developed within the School of Symbolic Interactionism. The image derives from the theory of biological perception. To ensure their survival, individuals are constantly adapting to the environment. At a political level, the candidates ensure their survival by adjusting their behaviors in order to meet the needs of voters. Consequently, through perception, individuals choose objects or stimuli that dictate the need for adaptation. After identifying them, "individuals will adapt to the stimuli and act in a specific manner" (Nimmo, 1995, p. 52). The process of perception adjustment is facilitated by imagery and imagination. According to Nimmo's observations, "the image allows the individual to choose the stimulus according to the impulse that seeks their expression" (*ibid.*).

With the help of the image, the individual projects an earlier experience upon the present objects. In the electoral field, present assessments of political candidates are based on previous electorate's experience of the candidates' images. At the same time, the candidate can rebuild his or her own image to match the stimulus of the electorate, but also to reshape the voters' experience (Nimmo, 1995, p. 52). Under these conditions, the assembling of the political image is accomplished through a continuum of inter-influences-message-image (Boulding, 1956, pp. 6-7). *In nuce*, between the transmitter of the image (political candidate) and receiver (the electorate), the common denominator is represented by the media, an entity that functions as the "main connecting point between the citizens and the universe of representative politics" (Stanyer, 2010,

p. 171). Therefore, the political image is "the product of the perceptions generated by the large amount of information sources that sell and continually inform" (*ibid.*).

The interdependence between political culture, the perception of voters, and the electoral process gives birth to another phenomenon of positioning the political actor – the political brand. Apparently easy to understand the meaning of the above-mentioned concept, its definition implies a broader explanatory effort. An ongoing debate, however, is especially necessary, as we observe that the political brand concept is poorly understood and used in inappropriate ways. In most cases, the branding process in the political sphere is mistaken by advertising manipulation and aggressive "self-praise," or associated with the superficial image of politicians, and sometimes, rightfully so when used without purposefulness.

In the literature there is no definitive agreement upon a single definition, but rather a multitude of perspectives that emphasize different aspects of political branding. In short, branding could be defined as "a consciously chosen strategy" (Barberio & Lowe, 2006, pp. 7-11), encompassing what Dann and Hughes (2008) name "a complex bundle of benefits for the voter," consisting of "a variable combination of politician, political party reputation, policy, ideology and active promises made to the electorate during the campaign" (p. 8). In other words, these assumptions favor a relational approach to political branding which stands in opposition to the transactional view of the economic perspective. As we can see, in such a context (Needham, 2005), the frame of reference is the relationship between the individual voter and the political brand (p. 349).

At this point, we must not ignore the fact that voters use political brands in a similar way they do with commercial brands. Individuals "buy products to express the sort of person they are (or would like to be), so they might vote in order to express themselves" (Bartle & Griffiths, 2002, pp. 28-29). The term *brand* possesses a symbolic value, understood as a psychological representation of a politician, creating in Scammell's (2007) terms "an emotional connection layer" (p. 177). All this confirms that the brand is therefore a multidimensional construct, bonding functional and motivational aspects. As a result, brands provide "a basis for long-term loyalty in an environment where products (policies) are fairly fluid" (Needham, 2006, p. 180). Following the assumption of Scamell (2007), Needham argues that political brands "provide reassurance," are "aspirational" and, if successful, are seen as "authentic and value based" (2006, p. 179). As a consequence, political branding is "the primary mechanism" (O'Cass & Voola, 2011, p. 635) to differentiate from competitors and build voter awareness. With a more engaging and interactive communication style, the brand has the potential to build connections with apathetic and opposing audiences.

The personalization of politics: Changing patterns in the politician-voter relationship

Beyond the restricted framework of political communication, political branding should be examined in a broader perspective. In the brand building process, Aaker (1997) advocates that brand personality reflects "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (p. 347).

Therefore, the interactive relationship established between the brand and voters is built around a "symbolic exchange of benefits" (p. 353). Undoubtedly, voters 'see' themselves in the personality of the brand and can hence use the brand in order to build their own identity and self (Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2008, p. 118). Creating the brand's personality is a cyclical process, which "starts within the political organization and then turns into an interactive process between the electorate and brand, creating and reinforcing a certain brand personality" (p. 120).

According to this paradigm, a political image is "a mosaic of impressions formed by a variety of formal and informal signals" (Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2008, p. 53) projected by the political party of the politician. Continuously measuring the politician's image is an important source of keeping track of how voters perceive and value brand identity. As opposed to the image concept, it takes a long time to establish a reputation, because it is based on what the political organization has done over time and it is not the result of short-term communication and advertising, as is the case of image-building. The notion of reputation can also explain the benchmarks that govern inside political parties, ultimately shaping the political behavior of candidates.

Political leaders gain more and more importance, both in political communication and in electoral competitions. This trend is visible through the replacement of party symbols with the candidate's image during the electoral campaign, and the growing preference of the media in mentioning candidates rather than political entities. An increasing number of studies focus on the intimate relationship established between the personality of politicians and representative democracy, emphasizing that personalization of politics must be understood as "a process in which the political weight of the individual actor increases, while the political party's central power decreases" (Rahat & Shaefer, 2007, p. 65). Basically, the electorate develops a mental image of political leaders based on a limited number of traits, "robustly summarizing the bases for political judgment" (Pancer, Brown, & Barr, 1999, p. 362). Therefore, "these simplified perceptions of the political leaders' personalities can stem from an effective cognitive strategy that voters adopt to deal with the massive amount of information they are exposed to every day" (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004, p. 585).

The emphasis from the political side towards the omnipresence of the personal side was achieved through the media. The power of the media in restructuring the social space is a recurrent theme in the sociology of communication field. In numerous studies, Meyrowitz focuses upon the relationship established between political leaders and television, and in particular, what he calls the reduction effect of the former on the latter. Through television, we get to know the personal side of politicians because "the camera minimizes the distance between the audience and the interpreter, it decreases the politicians at the level of their audiences" (Meyrowitz, 1985, p. 271). Candidates are chosen on the basis of communicative, expressive, and relational capabilities – traits that indicate the existence of public communication competencies. People come to evaluate the personality of a candidate within the context of their perceptions of everyday people (Sullivan *et al.*, 1990, p. 463), as opposed to ideology, and by virtue of his visibility. In this respect, Lilleker and Lees-Marshment (2005) argue that the situation has led to the substitution of ideological identity with “peripheral indices to help the voter make the decision” (p. 237). The phenomenon precipitated the weakening of the organizational structure of the parties and diminished the percentage of political involvement, and in general, the power of political engagement. In the absence of precise ideologies and electoral offerings, we witness the increase of competition between parties and, at the same time, little similarities between them, as well as electoral volatility, understood as “the decrease of behavioral and cognitive involvement in party politics” (Tingsten, 1937, pp. 230-231).

Assuming a negative perspective, the professionalization of political communication led to what Martin (1990) calls “democracy without citizens” (p. 13). In the contemporary period, “political ideas and values are outshined by image-building processes” (Corner & Pels, 2013, p. 47), as the media itself provides information that highlights the personal traits of candidates during the electoral campaign, rather than pointing to existing problems. Competition launched in the media sector “exerts pressure on policymakers to shorten their messages or make them more appealing to audiences” (Archetti, 2014, p. 2). Thus, electoral political programs find themselves in a fierce competition, being presented to the electorate in exhaustive terms, in an easily digestible manner, blurring the complexity of political ideas.

The politician-voter relationship through leadership lenses

From the vast specialized literature dedicated to the leadership field, Wright and Taylor (1984) portray the concept as “an activity that influences the behavior, beliefs and feelings of group members in an intentional direction” (p. 2), hence the basic idea that “the term refers to a group phenomenon, implying the involvement of two or more people” (Butnaru, Cojocaru, & Tofan, 2013, p. 56). Undoubtedly, the notion of leadership has new meanings because of changes in modern political science. Particularly, the literature highlights two increasingly prominent trends. Firstly, there is the necessity to understand the notion of political leadership as a dynamic concept, not as a static one. Secondly, we underline the need to move from a one-way analysis to a multi-directional analysis, to define the political leadership-follower relationship. In other words, we do not have fixed patterns in building relationships between leaders and followers, or schemes that attract the support of members or voters. Thus, the relationship is created in different social-political environments where leadership can take various characteristics in full connection with cultural and socio-political factors.

Uhl-Bien's (2006) analysis concludes that relational leadership “must be seen as a process of social influence through which emerging coordination and new values (attitudes, approaches, behaviors and ideologies) are built and produced” (p. 654). In this respect, leadership is not personal dominance (traditional leader-centric models), but rather a process of relational dialogue, a shared responsibility between members of political parties, engaging and interacting to construct knowledge systems, and design political campaigns together. In these processes “interdependencies are organized in ways which, to a greater or lesser degree, promote the values and interest of the social order. Definitions of social order are negotiated, found acceptable, implemented and renegotiated" (p. 662). Uhl-Bien briefly explains that "this perspective allows us to consider processes that not only address the quality of the relationship but rather the social dynamics through which the leadership relationship is formed and evolves" (p. 672), in the electoral context between the political actor and members organization, and between political and electoral candidates.

Considering the perspective of Fletcher (2004), relational leadership "requires relational skills and emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, empathy, vulnerability, and openness to learning from others regardless of their positional authority, and the ability to work within more fluid power dynamics, reenvisioning the very notion of power from 'power over' to 'power with'" (p. 650). This type of adhesion represents a discursive accomplishment – politician seeking to – disseminate, redefine various political discourses to prioritise certain things, elevate, and foreground threats and opportunities during electoral campaigns, and ultimately, advocate for different courses of action. In a similar way, the approach of Murell (1997) highlights the ability of politicians to understand the collective act of leadership, putting emphasis squarely on processes of how politicians decide, act, and present themselves to the electorate. In his theoretical studies, he states that "it is possible to see relationships other than those built from hierarchy and those in which nurturing and supporting roles could be legitimized as means of influence. It is also possible…to envision a transformational phenomenon where the social change process occurs well outside the normal assumptions of command and control" (p. 39). He argues that applying relational leadership could lead to developing a critical reflexive practice – determining continually and routinely revisions of political behaviors in respect to the priorities of voters and political members.

Following the assumptions of transformational leadership, this theory is disengaged from the transactional perspective and is based on the leader's attribution as an agent of change within the political organization. The concept has become widespread among the general public, along with Burns' studies on political leadership. Moreover, this perspective foresees leadership as an evolution in a particular space, where "individual agents act in a dynamic environment formed by a network of interactions. It also creates a specific context - a morphological field, where agents co-evolve through themselves and in relation to a changing environment" (Burns, 1978, p. 20).

The recent approach concludes that followers are not just pursuing political leaders (they do not play a passive role), but have an active role (Baker, 2007, p. 58). By paying attention to the advocates of a political organization, Baker argues that sympathizers can be analyzed using the attribution theory grid, more precisely emphasizing the supporter's attribution to the leader's behavior. This theory is based on perception. Baker (2007) "assumes the importance of recognizing leaders' and supporters' perceptions of leadership rather than focusing exclusively on the features of a leader or the way in which he/she acted" (p. 54). In extenso, a political leader, through self-consciousness (including values, identity, goals) and self-regulation (relational transparency and authentic behavior) have the ability to influence supporters' characteristics. In turn, this process generates confidence and commitment among the followers.

Within relational leadership, power is understood as an influence of resources. In other words, power is held by the one who holds the influence and does not assume that it is based on a hierarchical structure. The political environment demonstrates that the influence of a political actor is exercised through the characteristics, traits, and behaviors of a leader. In the context of the political organization, we have a dynamic context established between the leader and the supporters. The analysis of traits and characteristics helps to understand the ways in which an individual can influence one towards a common goal. These traits or behaviors can be changed in view of the various electoral contexts, or according to the attributes of the political actor enrolled in the electoral race. The perspective of authentic leadership is an extension of the transformational trend, but also as a differentiation from the charismatic leadership proposed by Max Weber. The underlying principles of this notion are similar to ethical leadership.

The authors Parry and Bryman (2006) exclude the unanimously positive presentation of charisma, pointing out "the obscure parts of charisma, narcissism and pseudo-transformational leadership that have inevitably led to theoretical discussion of the positive or negative parts of charisma, not only the utilitarian leadership efficacy organizational" (p. 456). Theorists therefore propose a positive approach to the notion of leadership. In addition, Luthans and Avolio (2003) conceive of political leadership by bringing together several aspects of the various leadership categories such as positive organizational behavior, transformational leadership, and last but not least an ethical leadership perspective in the notion of "coping with the new environment turbulence" (p. 243).

Cooper, Scandura and Schriesheim (2005) separate from Avolio's perspective by noting that this process "[w]ill allow the empirical differentiation of authentic leadership from other types of leadership, such as transformational and charismatic, and also demonstrate that it is indeed a root construct (rather than a construct that is equivalent to one or more many of these types)" (p. 480).

According to theorists, authentic leadership consists of four dimensions: self-awareness, openness, transparency, and consistency. Avolio et al. argue that from this angle, political leaders are "individuals deeply aware of the way they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own moral, knowledge and strengths, aware of their context activity" (Avolio, Luthans, & Walumbwa, 2004, p. 4). On the same line, Cooper, Scandura, and Schriesheim (2005) claim that authentic political leadership has elements that can be found in various areas – traits, behaviors, contexts and attributes, including consistency, transparency, alignment of decisions with their own moral values (p. 478).

Just like transformative leadership, the authentic perspective counts on the dimensions that have an essential role in terms of the relationship established between the political actor and party members. Transparency and openness contribute to establishing the relationship with the electorate. As well as other dimensions, theorists of authentic leadership focus on the features and behaviors of leaders.

Conclusions

The study focused on exploring the personal brand phenomenon and the implications of political leadership in enhancing political image. The fusion between personal and political branding leads to the “secularization” of political communication. Currently, political entities and political candidates seek to reactivate emotional elements in their communication activities to achieve closer links between political and electoral programs.

In this way, the qualitative analysis of the literature highlights that personal branding and political leadership become effective tools for disseminating the image of political candidates in multi-channel environments and generating trustful relationships between electoral candidates and party members. According to postmodern implications, contemporary voters seem to be attracted to more and more aspects of the personal style of the political candidate. The diversification of personal style and electoral preferences has accentuated the media fragmentation, creating the emergence of specialized media, dedicated to segments and subgroups of society. In fact, these situations represented the fertile ground for the emergence of tendencies towards political apathy and electoral cynicism, voters reluctantly receiving electoral messages.

Leadership models in the organizational sphere have led to the creation of alternatives for the development of political leadership theory. The new paradigms emphasize the leader's personal features, which until recently have been narrowly dealt with in literature. The theory of political leadership emphasizes the leaders' behavior in relation to various groups. First, the leader can exercise direct influence to determine the political behavior of voters in the desired direction. Second, the leader supervises the fulfillment of the political objectives within the organization of origin. Thus, the process is based on enhancing a sustainable voter-politician relationship.

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