Andreea Nicoleta VOINA

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Presa Universitară Clujeană

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ISCC 2018: PANDEMIC EDITION

International Students' Conference on Communication
(ISCC)
-Eighth Edition-
28-29th of May, 2020
Cluj-Napoca, Romania

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Foreword

2020 brought about unprecedented challenges for the academic world on a global scale. However, the COVID-19 pandemic did not manage to freeze scientific activity, and academic communities mobilized to switch from offline to online swiftly and consistently. The present volume, called *Effective communication in sustainable societies*, is the mere expression of a department's collective efforts to maintain academic life as performant and vibrant as technology could allow it, under such circumstances. During May 28-29, 2020, the 8th online edition of the International Students' Conference on Communication took place in the Department of Communication, Public Relations, and Advertising from Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, organized by the Communication and Social Innovation Research Center. The eighth edition of the conference brought together Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. students who contributed to a wide and diverse discussion on communication, and the present volume gathers selected works that reflect their research work in times of a pandemic.

This volume follows the structure of the conference, and encompasses seven topical sections, gathering 28 research papers on diverse topics, employing various methodologies, each one contributing with significant results on communication scholarship. The **Advertising and strategy** section introduces four papers meant to build on advertising research. Cezar-George Moșneagă conducted an experiment and a series of expert interviews to explore the relationship between unconventional advertising and consumer behaviors. He found unconventional advertising to be effective among consumers and deemed it a key ingredient for achieving a successful advertising strategy. Antonia-Maria Popa carried out an experiment on subliminal messages and their influence, yet her endeavor showed audiences might be no longer influenced that easily. The research employed by Andreea Cristiana Coroian, Teodora Maria Andreea Deseagă, Romana Paula Farcaș, and Fulga Lazar tested whether and how the presence of dogs in advertising impacts upon human emotions; they found dogs in advertising to be effective in lifting audiences' spirits by generating positive emotions. A similar aim was found in a paper authored by Miruna Merlușcă, Eduard Pătrunjel, and Georgiana Tamba, who tested the role of advertisement music in inducing emotions and influencing recall. Their findings showed that happy music induces positive emotions, which can further influence the levels of ad recall regarding story elements in an advertisement.

Some participants turned to crisis communication in their analyses, featured in the **Brands and strategy** section: Roxana Halați and Carmen Țifrac capitalized on the COVID-19 pandemic to explore how brands used social distancing as a branding strategy but saw that a specialized public did not necessarily perceive these logos as attractive. It is useful for companies to know that adopting such a strategy in a crisis does not make brands seem misleading, fake, or exploitive, but rather responsible, and that this can give the public a general feeling of caring beyond profit, and empathy towards the public. Mihnea Țintea explored innovation, fundraising, and crisis management within Rotaract District 2241 – Romania and Republic of Moldova. Based on survey and interview research, the author identified innovative strategies that can be implemented both in crisis and post-crisis situations by NGOs.

Next, the **Social media and society** section introduces interesting approaches. Ana Olaru analyzed an online protest community in the Republic of Moldova, and how social media managed to galvanize Moldovan civil society. Alexandra Călușeri, Agnes-Elena Crăciun, Beatrice Drăgușanu, and Andra-Maria Goarnă interviewed senior citizens in Romania to see how they perceive artificial intelligence; the ten people interviewed showed interest in Google Assistant, deeming it practical, despite language barriers. A special interest in adults and the elderly was shown by Ecaterina Dăscălescu, Andreea Handrea, Mădălina Măstăcăneanu, and Alexandra Leona Georgia Mihăiescu, who materialized their interest in showing how their subjects related to social media and technology in times of restrictions. They found that most people managed to integrate technology in their daily activities and presented a very interesting and informative expert account regarding communist-related nostalgia among Romanians who have experienced it. In an exploratory study on the third-person effect among Instagram users aged 18 to 24 years old, Rebeca-Lia Arseni found that this theory is applicable to this specific population, as they tend to think that social media does not influence them, but only others.

Youth, society, and communication includes studies that are especially interesting for understanding dynamics of young people in various contexts. Ana Maria Mungiu, Alexandra Tudor, Aida Maria Piticar, and Cristian Vodă Oanea developed a survey with over 900 respondents to see how and why young people edit their photos before uploading them on social media, and how that influences their self-esteem, findings that were further explained in an expert interview. Florina Jude and Raluca Mihuțoiu brought about the issue of bullying in schools, and how it is perceived by teenagers and young adults. Their findings show a positive attitude towards interventions against this phenomenon. Moreover, Adelina-Cosmina Dinu, Georgiana-Viorica Gheață, Deana Cenean, and Cristian-Ionuț Cușniriuc defined the comfort zone and how it affects young people in relationships. In their study, they showed that young people fear emotional discomfort when contemplating break-ups.

Further, the **Communication and psychology** section, the richest one in this volume, looks at various issues facing diverse groups of people. Mihaela Beșleaga explained procrastination and deemed it inherent to human nature; complementarily, Ana Andreea Popovici and Adelina-Florentina Popa studied time management among first-year students at FPACS and found that they have yet to discover mastery in managing their time. Cristina-Gabriela Bejan analyzed the relationship between teen depression and satisfaction with their physical appearance through survey research and content analysis on songs preferred by her subjects; she found that body dissatisfaction goes hand in hand with depression, and a faulty love life might also enable depressive episodes. Mădălina-Augustina Cotfaș, Alexandra Sebeni, and Adelin Viski explored stress among 12-grade students facing a Baccalaureate exam, and found that although most take private classes, they are still prone to experiencing negative emotions due to the importance placed on this evaluation. Mărioara Negură, Gabriela Panainte, Mihaela Panainte, and Alexandra Zeliscu also tapped into students' behavior and tried to map emotional eating behaviors. They found that students in Cluj-Napoca engage in emotional eating both when experiencing positive and negative emotions. Denisa Dumitru studied the implications of empathy in the public relations profession, and found a great importance placed on this expression of emotional intelligence by nearly-graduates, professionals, and faculty in the field of PR. Two other papers investigate academic behaviors: Maria Lazăr, Bianca-Analisa Mihăieș, Irina-Elena Mircea, and Delia-Maria Moșoiu explored plagiarism among students, and pointed out that anti-plagiarism training needs to be done, and stricter sanctions need to be enforced; Miruna-Ioana Cîrșmari analyzed burnout among Romanian faculty and showed that risks for burnout are high, and generated by various factors, such as bureaucracy and pressure to multitask.

Another section approaches **Gender and communication**; Leea-Miriam Pop showed a significant relationship between the internalization of beauty standards promoted online and underlying psychological problems, such as low self-esteem, low body satisfaction, social comparison. Cristina-Elena Giurcanu and Teodora-Raluca Moldovan discussed the influence of the make-up industry and its development upon gender perceptions, showing slow, but steady changes leading up to a reframing of how we perceive gender. Moreover, Bianca Maria Alionescu analyzed gender differences in leadership through exploring the role of leaders' empathy in team performance in an NGO, showing that empathy is indeed important and has a conducive role in terms of perceived performance and motivation, and the lack of empathy can do quite the opposite.

A final section is dedicated to a series of works about **Information and technology**. Ovidiu Blag drew a comparison between two Romanian and Italian sports dailies in terms of content and discourse, starting from their first issue. Anita Todea analyzed the relationship between cash saving and price informativeness across 125 companies on renewable energy stock markets and showed that firms do save more when they experience positive shocks to their stock price, so prices with large content of private information provide manages with new information that weighs upon their savings behavior. Further, Nicoleta-Eugenia Meseșan thoroughly explored information literacy and its elements, specific to education levels, and showed that mastering this constitutes an important competence in today's society. Finally, Teodora Onutz provided an interesting account of morphemes and immerses the audience into the rich and diverse universe of language formation.

Although the contributions are varied in terms of topics, dimensions, and complexity, they all reflect students' interests and efforts to bring original findings to the audience. We further encourage them and their peers to capitalize on such scientific events and exercise critical thinking and research skills.

Cluj-Napoca, 2022
The Editor

The impact of unconventional advertising on consumer behavior

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ABSTRACT
Consumer behavior and the advertising process represent two concepts often encountered in the literature. This paper is based on two directions of research: on the one hand the analysis of consumer perception in relation to unconventional advertising (guerrilla marketing), and on the other hand, the analysis of the opinions of the specialists regarding the efficiency of the unconventional advertising. An experiment and a survey are employed to collect data. The hypotheses of the experiment are constructed in such a way that the impact of unconventional advertising on the dependent variables of the study could be observed. These variables are attitude toward the brand, attention, recall, and purchase intention. A hypothesis is also tested to verify whether the attitude toward the brand among the respondents differs depending on gender. N=60 participants were included in this study. Of the five hypotheses in the experiment, only two are valid, proving that unconventional methods, compared to conventional ones tend to develop a more positive consumer attitude toward the brand and are more effective in attracting consumer attention. All participants' responses are subsequently analyzed in the SPSS statistical program to carry out analyses. The answers obtained further in the interviews with advertisers strengthen the results of the experiment. The presence of the unconventional captures attention more easily among consumers compared to traditional methods. According to experts, it is not possible to talk about a specific recipe for achieving success in advertising, but to obtain an effective communication strategy the traditional and the unconventional must be combined.

Keywords: traditional advertising, unconventional advertising, guerrilla marketing, consumer, creativity.

Introduction

The modern society in which individuals carry out their daily activities revolves around products. Advertising is not a new field for modern society, but the evolution of this phenomenon is an aspect worth studying. At the same time, the complexity of the process urges its segmentation for a better understanding. Therefore, the analysis of advertising becomes the purpose of this paper, the emphasis falling on the ways of promoting products and the relationship between the usefulness of unconventional methods, guerrilla marketing to be exact, and consumer.

Advertising performance is influenced by various executive and media factors. Large amount of money is allocated to determine the most effective creative executions. Moreover, variables such as personality and attitudinal orientations as factors that can change the effectiveness of advertising have not received enough attention in previous research. It is true that the attitude of consumers towards advertising in general has been analyzed, but it has not been evaluated how attitudes can change the answer for a certain type of advertising (Mehta, 2000). Unconventional and guerrilla strategies have found significance in modern advertising. Specifically, these strategies are used by small brands to create a strong impact among consumers (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Less common promotion strategies create a link between the brand and the consumer, a link that focuses on progress rather than aggression, as is the case with many TV commercials (Scharrer et al., 2010). Both the consumer and a potential consumer should not feel assaulted by the product, but a friendly relationship should be created between the two. The interaction between the two is necessary for the most favorable continuity. It is proven that in today's social context, despite its modest beginnings in the '60s, guerrilla marketing is used not only by small and medium-sized enterprises, but also by large corporations (Behal & Saree, 2014). In this context, it has also been shown that the daily life of consumers is assailed by advertising, and they become increasingly sensitive, some even being irritated by traditional methods of promotion. Thus, unconventional ways of advertising appear that attract the consumer's attention and even their trust (Romanți-Maniu & Zaharie, 2014).

This paper focuses on the impact of unconventional advertising methods on consumer behavior. This paper follows two directions of research: on the one hand, the analysis of consumers' perception in relation to unconventional advertising (guerrilla marketing), and on the other hand, the analysis of specialists' opinions regarding the effectiveness of unconventional advertising. The following research questions highlight the first mentioned direction: Does the type of advertising influence consumer behaviors in terms of brand attitude, attention, and memory?, Is it possible for the consumers' purchase intention to increase depending on the type of advertising chosen?, Can the type of advertising develop different attitudes among consumers depending on the gender of the respondents? Regarding the second direction, the following research question are constructed: **R1: What is the opinion of specialists regarding the use of the unconventional in the advertising process?** Thus, to be able to analyze the two research directions, the experiment and the interview are used, in the order mentioned above.

The promotion industry should be the one to change the way advertising products are used and viewed. Perhaps the opinion of Toscani, the genius behind the Benetton campaign, fits best in this circumstance: "*...to capture attention, advertising must become an artistic product in itself, like a play or film. But this has never happened, because the advertising industry is conditioned by the money supply*" (cited in Ganesan, 2002, p. 59).

The first part of this study represents the theoretical framework, being discussed various research and opinions found in the literature. Emphasis is placed on both creativity and advertising, as well as on variables related to consumer behavior. The second part consists of the methodological framework and results. Initially, the design of the paper is presented, and later the results of the research are given and interpreted.

Theoretical framework: Creativity, Traditional, Unconventional

Traditional vs. nontraditional

Different forms of advertising are encountered daily. It is impossible to avoid, whether we look at an advertisement or a billboard placed in the bus station, the advertising is present (Dyer, 1982). These forms of advertising have various names. Traditional advertising is one of them. In Luxton's (2000) opinion, we can talk about the traditional when the print, the radio, and the billboards are used. Television is introduced in this universe of the traditional, it being the one that has the greatest significance (Jaffe, 2005). People get used to the same type of advertising message, and for this reason innovation is needed. *Boredom* can occur among customers when it comes to TV or print ads (Sandberg, 2006). In this context, unconventional advertising methods appear that try to surprise (Scheibe, 2013). This type of advertising includes those inventive, innovative, nontraditional methods, but also strategies of this kind when it comes to promoting a good, service, or brand (Jurca, 2010). Other authors state that such practices involve more subtle persuasion because they are interactive, captivating, and provoke emotions (Owen et al., 2013). This type of advertising can also be called viral advertising (Yan, Rashid, & Mohamed, 2017) or new media (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, & Cobbuci, 1998). A definition of the latter term is also provided in this approach, deemed as an unconventional way to promote advertising activities with a very small budget (Blythe & Martin, 2019).

Creativity and guerrilla marketing

The term *creativity* and the connection between creativity and guerrilla marketing is further analyzed, through previous research in the field of creativity in advertising. Advertising, as we know it, cannot work without creativity (Zinkhan, 1993) and creativity in advertising seems to attract more attention (Koslow, 2015). The following pages focus on different elements of creativity. Divergence and relevance, originality, the element of surprise are highlighted to see how creativity can be perceived.

Advertising creativity can be measured by consumer perceptions, first measuring the creativity of the product as a whole, and then taking separately the divergence and relevance (Smith et al., 2007). Starting from these premises of Smith, according to which consumers' perceptions about creativity are influenced by the connection between divergence and relevance, further studies emphasize the two-dimensional character of creativity in advertising. Creative advertisements should be both divergent and relevant (Chen, Yang, & Smith, 2014).

The originality of the idea, the good, the service, or the product is the basis of the type of viral communication. The authentic idea is to spread the message purely spontaneously (Chionne & Scozzese, 2014), and deviating from what is natural and trivial or incorporating amazing and unusual elements lead to the creation of an original ad (Reinartz & Saffert, 2013). An innovative idea is based on a lot of research, effort, planning, and time in order to surprise (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2011).

One thing that has remained unchanged over time for guerrilla marketing is the element of surprise. In 1993, the book entitled *Guerrilla Marketing* itself stated that there should be not only cleverness in the message conveyed, but also surprise when it comes to guerrilla marketing (Levinson, 1993). The advertising message that reaches the consumer by surprise is the main element of guerrilla marketing (Hutter, 2011). In order to achieve maximum public interest, but at the same time with minimal promotion costs, advertising needs to be *different, surprising, original, and entertaining* (Yuksekbilgili, 2014). Small and medium-sized companies are the ones for which guerrilla marketing was born because it is an advantage compared to competing companies that are based on regular, small, surprising actions using imagination and creativity (Tam & Khuong, 2015).

The usefulness of unconventional methods

Both the role and the behavior of the consumer have suffered with modern society. The multitude of technological, economic, and social changes have replaced the subordinate role of the consumer. Today, the brand acquires new values for the consumer, but it is also an important actor at a social level (Chionne & Scozzese, 2014). Next, we analyze this modern consumer and how the concepts of purchase intention and the phenomenon of word-of-mouth change when they are related to unconventional ways of advertising.

Purchase intention

To be able to introduce the purchase intention, it is necessary to mention in this context the theory of reasoned action. Fishben and Azjen (cited in Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992) developed this theory in 1975, and according to Madden, Ellen, and Ajzen (1992), the theory focuses on behavioral intentions, as an immediate antecedent of behavior, which is a function by which the execution of a particular behavior can lead to a specific result. The model not only predicts intentions, but also provides a basis for identifying where and how to target consumer behavioral changes (Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988). The theory of motivated actions is improved over time, and later a new theory is born: the theory of planned behavior. Specifically, the theory assumes that the intention to perform a certain behavior has three elements: attitude, norm, and behavioral control (Flowers, Freeman, & Gladwell, 2017). By incorporating the effects of guerrilla marketing into advertising, it is shown that this method has an impact on the desire to purchase. The creativity of the advertisement, the transparency of the message and the capitalization of the emotion have a direct positive impact in relation to the consumer's purchase intention (Tam & Khuong, 2015). At the same time, companies need to create an emotional connection with customers, to make them resonate emotionally with them through that product (Yildiz, 2017).

Word-of-mouth

Next, we analyze the word-of-mouth phenomenon in advertising and its connection with guerrilla marketing. This phenomenon is defined as "c*ommunication between a non-commercial communicator and a receiver about a brand, product or service and may occur through online or offline channels*" (Lang & Hyde, 2013, p. 1). The word-of-mouth phenomenon is the most important of guerrilla marketing, it creates an interaction that the customer experiences, and the experience is communicated to family and friends (Belić & Jönsson, 2012). There is constant talk of a guerrilla-based campaign (Farouk, 2012) and the multiplication effect is present in guerrilla marketing due to the word-of-mouth phenomenon (Nawaz et al., 2014).

Attention, recall, attitude

Increasing the intention to buy, building and recalling memories are possible only by attracting attention (Simmonds et al., 2019). Capturing consumer attention in advertising is a mandatory process (Nilsson, 2006). Consumer attention is drawn to advertising that is based on a marketing technique such as guerrilla (Ay, Aytekin, & Nardali, 2010) and consumers looking at creative content ads easily remember the advertising message compared to traditional commercials (Arrazola, Hevia, & Reinares, 2013). The affective part of the consumer is affected by a guerrilla strategy, so guerrilla advertising targets the audience on a more personal and memorable level (Farouk, 2012). Heath believes that the marketing system must be as adjustable as possible for new forms of modern advertising (Heath & Nairn, 2005).

The consumer's ability to use the memories of certain brands following advertising suggests brand recall. This is defined as *a traditional measure of attention and advertising processing* (Bellman et al., 2019). The memory phenomenon and creative advertising was studied in 2005 by Till and Baack. It is concluded that the unaided brand recall is facilitated by creative advertisements (Till & Baack, 2005). An idea worth mentioning in this context is related to non-users of a certain brand or product. If they pay close attention, the chance for them to remember is higher than for loyal users of the brand (Simmonds et al., 2019). At the same time, it is shown that the image can be remembered more easily than the text in advertising (Lochbuehler et al., 2017). Wilson says in 2015 that the phenomenon of recall can only increase if first the attention is captured, and then a certain threshold of attention is exceeded (Wilson, Baack, & Till, 2015).

Brand attitude is a way of predicting a behavior (Mirabi & Mojtahedi, 2018). More favorable attitudes from consumers appear if the message is perceived in a different way than the usual one (Diaa, 2017). At the same time, it is shown that humor makes attitudes among the target audience more positive, both towards the brand and towards the single advertisement (Einsend, 2011). A concept that is approached by researchers and which is closely related to the attitude towards the brand, is the technique of storytelling in advertising. Basically, the concept of storytelling is the act of telling a story (Väre, 2014), storytelling marketing attracting positive attitudes from consumers (Rhie, 2014).

Next, the research focuses on the usefulness of unconventional methods, namely guerrilla marketing. The concepts related to attention, memory, purchase intention and brand attitude are taken from the literature to be able to analyze whether the guerrilla strategy influences the level of the four mentioned concepts, compared to traditional advertising methods.

Methodology

Experimental design

Starting from the consulted literature, five hypotheses are formulated to be verified:

H1: Unconventional methods, compared to conventional ones, tend to develop a more positive attitude of the consumer towards the brand.

H2: Unconventional methods of promotion are more effective in attracting attention than traditional ones.

H3: Consumers will more easily remember creative executions based on unconventional advertising, compared to traditional one.

H4: Unconventional advertising methods increases the intention to purchase the promoted product or service.

H5: Females, compared to males, tend to develop a more positive attitude towards the brand in terms of unconventional promotion methods.

Procedure

First, the independent research variables are selected, reflecting types of advertising (traditional and unconventional). Next, validated scales are adopted from previous research to measure the concepts related to consumer behavior. Subsequently, the online questionnaire is built using the Google Forms platform. Thus, questions that follow the dependent variable of the study are integrated in the questionnaire. All questions are composed using the seven-step Likert scale, except recall, for this one an open question is used.

Two questionnaires are created, and the print ad is used as stimulus material for both. Regarding the methodological part, the idea based on the comparison between the two types of advertising is adopted from a previous research (Jankovska, 2015). The illustrative prints are chosen in such a way that the object of the advertisement remained the same. Brands that are not so well known in the Romanian space are selected, which present products and services in the field of food (fast food and ice cream), sports (fitness), and health (condoms as a method of contraception).

Participants

Regarding the first research method, the experiment, the questionnaire is distributed online, and the participants chose to contribute to this study voluntarily. The questionnaires are sent to the online groups of students, and they are asked to forward the questionnaires to the group of friends or colleagues. The total number of respondents is sixty, of which 66.7% are female and 33.3% are male for the control group and 76.7% female and 23.3% male for the experimental group. Thirty responses are accumulated in the control group and thirty in the experimental group, respectively. These data can be more easily seen in *Table 1* below. Also, *Table 2* shows the stimuli used for the experiment.

Table 1: Respondents' data by gender.

	Control group (traditional advertising)	Experimental group (unconventional advertising)
Number of respondents (N)	N = 30	N = 30
Female respondents (N/%)	20 (66,7%)	23 (76,7%)
Male respondents (N/%)	10 (33,3%)	7 (23,3%)

Table 2: Stimuli material used for the experiment

Control group stimuli	Experimental group stimuli
	
	

The only differences between the groups that can be mentioned are represented by age and monthly income. The age ranges of the respondents are –18 – 25, 26 – 30, 31 – 35 (M = 1.15, SD =.404) and the income starts with *less than 1500 RON* up to *over 3000 RON*. *Table 3* and *table 4* show these two variables.

Table 3. Respondents' data by income

	Traditional	Unconventional
Number of respondents (N)	N = 30	N = 30
Less than 1500 RON (N/%)	15 (50,0%)	7 (23,3%)
1501 - 2000 RON (N/%)	11 (37,6%)	10 (33,3%)
2001 - 2500 RON (N/%)	2 (6,7%)	5 (6,7%)

Table 4: Respondents' data by age

	Traditional	Unconventional
Number of respondents (N)	N = 30	N = 30
18 - 25 (N/%)	30 (0,0%)	22 (73,3%)
26 - 30 (N/%)	0 (0,0%)	7 (23,3%)
31 – 35 (N/%)	0 (0,0%)	1 (3,3%)

2501 – 3000 RON (N/%)	0 (0,0%)	0 (0,0%)
over 3000 RON (N/%)	2 (6,7%)	6 (20,0%)

Measures

Attitude toward the ad. This type of attitude is measured using Madden, Allen, and Twible's (1988) inventory of known psychometric properties. The scale is taken from Spears and Singh's (2004) study. The authors used the following pairs of adjectives: *pleasant/ unpleasant, likable/ unlikable, interesting/ boring, tasteful/ tasteless, artful/ artless* (Spears & Singh, 2004). These are subsequently integrated into the questionnaire. As mentioned in the previous pages, the seven-point Likert scale is chosen to obtain more complex analyzes. Items on this scale show a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach a = .96).

Attitude toward ad effectiveness. The scale used for this attitude model is found in Falk, Berkman, and Lieberman's (2012) study. The theoretical constructions and questions used to evaluate ads led to the composition of the scale. Ten statements are introduced such as *this ad is persuasive*. The answers to the questions used by the researchers are the following: *strongly disagree, disagree somewhat, agree somewhat, strongly agree*. The answers are adapted, and the seven-point question is used again. The internal consistency recorded for these items is .75 (Cronbach a = .75).

Brand attitude. The study conducted by Wise et al. (2008) used the same scale that Muehling and Laczniak used in 1988, a scale that was taken over and used in this paper as well. The following items are chosen and integrated in the questionnaire used by the authors: *positive/ negative, good/ bad,* and *favorable/ unfavorable* (Wise et al., 2008). In the case of this variable, the level of internal consistency is high (Cronbach a = .96).

Attention. To be able to measure the attention in the advertising process, a three-item question is used, composed in the same way using the Likert scale. This method of measurement consists of three statements: *"I was interested in what the ad had to say"*, *"I paid close attention to the ad's arguments"*, *"I didn't let myself get distracted from focusing on the message content"* (Yoon, 2015). Items on this scale show an internal consistency of .83 (Cronbach a = .83).

Recall. This variable is measured by a simple question: *What products or brands do you remember after viewing the ads?* This item is found in Mackay et al.'s (2009) study. The original question reads as follows: What products or brands do you remember seeing in the game? (Mackay et al., 2009).

Purchase intention. To be able to measure the purchase intention, an item for intention found in Azjen's instrument is used: *I intend to exercise for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months*. The possible answers to this question are *likely/unlikely* located on the Likert scale (Azjen, 2013). The item is adapted for the present research: *To what extent does the ad you see make you want to buy the product?* The question keeps the Likert seven-point scale.

Interview design

The second direction of research that the paper seeks through the interview method is to analyze the opinions of specialists regarding the effectiveness of unconventional advertising. The research question that highlights this direction is: **RQ1: What is the opinion of specialists regarding the use of the unconventional in the advertising process?**

Procedure

Three people working in the field of advertising who have experience in this field of activity are interviewed, two males and one female. Regarding the interview guide, directions are followed that emphasize the type of advertising, the impact of unconventional methods and the consumer in relation to the dependent variables of the study. Obviously, advertising specialists are asked about the impact of the unconventional on the mentioned variables. On the one hand, the perception of consumers is tested, and on the other hand, the opinion of specialists is analyzed. The questions are sent to the participants by e-mail. Two written and one audio responses are received, the audio one is transcribed. The two methods used, the experiment and the interview, led to the creation of a strong connection that made it possible to analyze the two directions of research.

Results

Experiment

The following pages of the paper focus on the interpretation of the data collected from the experiment and the online questionnaire. To analyze the data as efficiently as possible, this subchapter focuses on a descriptive perspective on the experimental data, t-test and the correlations.

A descriptive perspective on the experimental data

To show the impact of the independent study variable (type of advertising) on the other variables, the present study used crosstabs within the SPSS analysis program. For a more complex interpretation of the data, the analysis is performed by comparing, according to similarities and differences, the two groups (control and experimental). Thus, the most representative results from the four prints are presented. The first print for the type of advertising is introduced in the questionnaire, and the first scale analyzed represents the attitude towards the brand. For the *positive* scale item, different results are obtained between groups. In the traditional group is shown a continuous increase from *not at all* to *very much* while in the composition of the unconventional group there is a decrease, and later a slight ascent. These data can be seen in *Figure 1*.

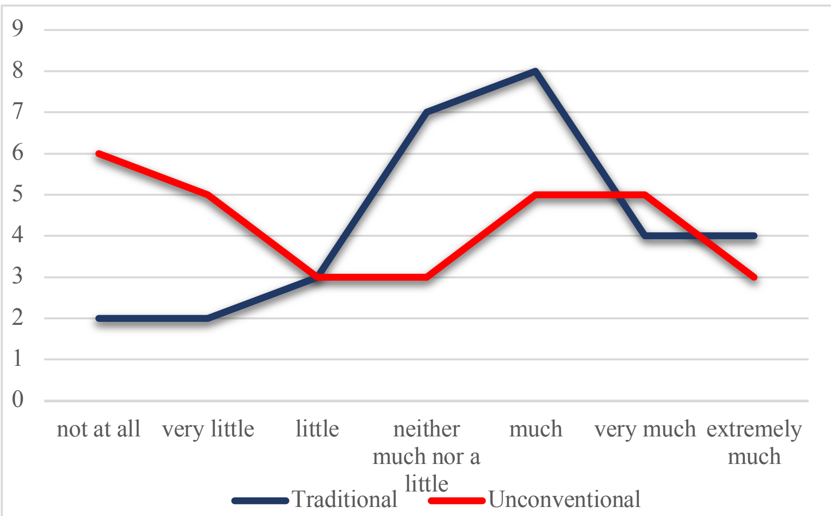

Figure 1. Consumers' attitude towards the print as being "positive"

The second print shows big differences in the case of the two groups in terms of the attention. Specifically, in the case of the item *I paid close attention to the ad's arguments*. The participants of the experimental group pay more attention to the advertisement compared to the control group for the following answer options: *very much* and *extremely much*. For the third print, the purchase intention for this print sees an increase in both groups, and then other slight decreases and increases again. *Figure 2* shows this better.

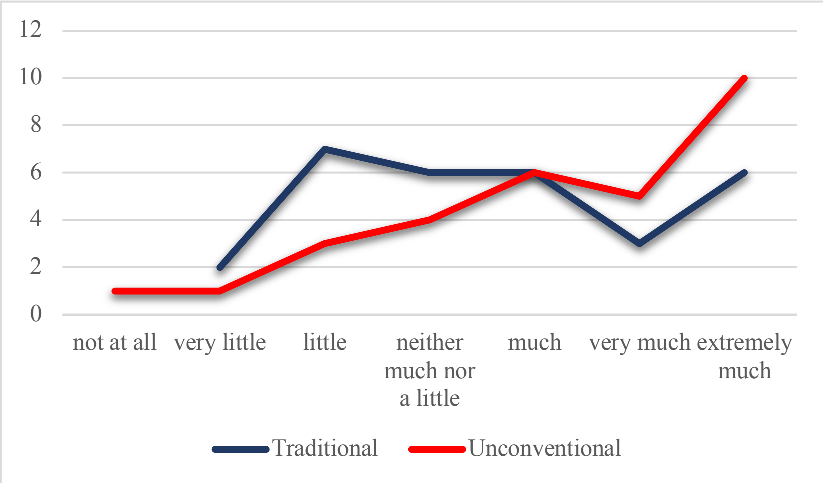

Figure 2. The evolution of the intention to purchase variable within the groups

In the case of the fourth and last print, concerning the attitude towards the effectiveness of the ad, the item *the ad is helpful* shows twice the values of the number of respondents in the experimental group who answered *much*, *very much* and *extremely much*. Therefore, the number of respondents in the group where the guerrilla print is displayed considers the advertisement to be much more helpful, compared to the number of participants in the control group. *Table 5* shows this.

Table 5: Effectiveness of the ad

	Traditional	Unconventional
much (N/%)	1 (3,3%)	5 (16,7%)
very much (N/%)	3 (10,0%)	7 (23,3%)
extremely much (N/%)	3 (10,0%)	6 (20,0%)

T-test

To determine whether or not there are differences between the two groups of the experiment, the t test is used. The test grouping variable is the stimulus variable created in SPSS. For the test variables, six averages are created, one average for each scale used in the questionnaire, and in the case of memory, two are created to observe whether the participants remembered the brand or product from the prints used. To these six averages are added the first two questions in the questionnaire to analyze the groups' preference for advertising. There are differences in the scale of measuring attention. Regarding this variable, there are major differences between the first and second group (t = -3.623, df =

50.535, sig. = .001). The effectiveness of the ad is the following analyzed. There are also differences between the traditional group and the guerrilla group (t = -2.757, df = 52.171, sig. = .008). Next, the attitude towards the ad is analyzed and it is shown that major differences between groups are present. (t = -3.946, df = 58, sig. = .000). Concerning brand attitude, the answers show that there are differences between groups (t = -2.664, df = 58, sig. = .010). Next, the analyzed correlations are presented to observe the connection between the variables. In the case of the other variables there are no major differences between the groups. *Table* 6 shows these data in a clearer graphical form.

Table 6: Significance levels of dependent variables in the context of the two groups

	t	df	sig
preference for advertising	-1.884	58	.065
advertising consumption	-1.358	45.919	.181
attention	-3.623	50.535	.001
attitude towards the ad	-3.946	58	.000
brand attitude	-2.664	58	.010
brand recall	-1.027	47	.310
product recall	-.933	58	.355
purchase intention	-1.746	58	.086
attitude towards the effectiveness of the ad	-2.757	52.171	.008

Correlations

The existence of a link between variables in the research is possible with the help of correlations. These are created to be able to observe the level of significance and the strength of the relationship between the variables, so that later the hypotheses of the experiment can be validated or invalidated. Correlations are made between the stimulus variable and the six averages, plus the first two introductory questions in the questionnaire, mentioned in the t-test.

The first variable analyzed is attention. This is also found in the composition of a hypothesis of the experiment: *Unconventional methods of promotion are more effective in attracting attention than traditional ones*. In this case the hypothesis is validated because there is a significant relationship between unconventional advertising and consumer attention and the recorded Pearson coefficient is high, close to 0.5, which denotes an average positive relationship (sig. = .001, r = .430). A significant, positive, and strong relationship is registered in the case of the attitude towards the ad (r = .460, sig. = .000). Another hypothesis of the experiment emphasizes the attitude towards the brand: *Unconventional methods, compared to conventional ones, tend to develop a more positive attitude of the consumer towards the brand*. This hypothesis is validated, as the Pearson coefficient took a positive value, but there is also a level of significance between the stimulus and the attitude towards the brand (r = .330, sig. = .010). Thus, the significant link between the variables is proven. Therefore, only two of the five hypotheses of the experiment are valid. All this data can be found in *Table 7*. Next, the results of the interview are presented.

Table 7: Correlations between the dependent variables and the stimulus variable

	r	sig
preference for advertising	.240	.064
advertising consumption	.180	.176
attention	.430	.001
attitude towards the ad	.460	.000
brand attitude	.330	.010
brand recall	-.134	.309
product recall	.122	.335
purchase intention	.224	.086
attitude towards the effectiveness of the ad	.340	.008

Interview

The interview begins with an introductory question that focuses on the objectives of advertising. Two of the interviewees agree that advertising meets its objectives: *...current advertising really fulfills its goals...* (D.S.), *...today's advertising largely meets its objectives...* (A.M.). The third approach differs from the two. The idea that advertising has become a *spam* process is underlined (C.C.). In other words, unsolicited messages are sent to consumers. The specialist believes that *current advertising deserves its fate to be avoided* (C.C.), whereas the objectives which it set itself do not pursue consumers as the *sum of individuals* but rather *an amorphous mass* (C.C.).

The next question introduces the concept of unconventional among experts. Interviewees are asked what unconventional advertising means to them and whether they can exemplify this method of promotion: *everything that deviates a little from the standard rules of traditional advertising* (D.S.). Another opinion says *that crazy, out of the box idea that makes you stop for a few moments and think* (A.M.). Regarding the third opinion, several aspects are highlighted: *unconventional referred to the media on which the message was placed... a reversal of the predictable only at the media level... most of the time, unconventional advertising was reduced to... escaping from the block* (C.C.). Subsequently, his personal opinion supplements the previous statement: *I think it's a place for the unpredictable in terms of content, what and how you say and not just where you say* (C.C.). With these words it is highlighted that unconventional advertising is not only defined by an execution placed in an unusual place but can also be found at the content level through an innovative approach. Two of the three responses points to guerrilla marketing as an example of unconventional advertising. One thing that deserves attention is the use of guerrilla strategy in Romania. According to the specialist, guerrilla marketing *is not very common in Romania, but it is very successful abroad* (D.S.). Of course, the brand recall follows immediately after.

The third question introduces the variables of the research paper to the specialists in the field of advertising. Parallels are drawn between traditional and unconventional depending on these variables. Attention is the first aspect that the specialists analyzed. In this context, all three responses say the same aspect, but in other words: unconventional advertising facilitates attention and brand recall. An opinion in this regard is as follows: *attention in these ads is one that tends to be much better in terms of unconventional advertising, as well as brand recall* (D.S.). The other two reinforce this idea. Regarding the following two variables, three completely different opinions are highlighted. First, the attitude and purchase intention *can be measured and are much clearer and more visible and easy to count for traditional advertising* (D.S.). *In terms of attitude, I consider that I will always be amazed by something out of the box compared to something classic and will push me to buy the product for the simple fact that I found it the approach interesting* (A.M.). The personal opinion from the previous line emphasizes unconventional advertising as a method of promotion as a result of which the consumer's attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention becomes more favorable and increases. The third opinion separates the two variables. Brand attitude is a concept that needs time and patience, and the way of expression must be thought in such a way that *the same message must be executed differently from a creative point of view* and the purchase intention *is influenced by several variables related to marketing, not strictly only by communication strategies* (C.C.). This is where the marketing part comes in, more precisely the marketing mix, which can alter the consumer's intention.

A good promotion strategy is the optimal use of doses of unconventional and traditional advertising. In this situation, by question number four, the opinion of the specialists is requested in order to observe how they would calibrate the respective doses. *I don't know if we can generalize, I don't know if we can say that there is an optimal calibration between these two variables... I could think of a very young audience that is probably much more receptive to unconventional advertising than the older one* (D.S.). Thus, a brand that targets a young audience may be more inclined to dose the unconventional than in the case of an older audience for which the only type of advertising that would work is the traditional one. This view is upheld: *Fortunately, there is no recipe... if there is, the recipe itself is calibrated according to several variables. It's not about calibration, it's about adaptation…* (C.C.). The third answer, however, offers a so-called recipe: *70% unconventional and 30% traditional*.

The next question focuses on the consumer. Advertising changes over time. Are there any changes in the consumer and his role in the advertising process? The role of the consumer in this process *has changed a lot in recent years* (D.S.). The consumer becomes a central element in this phenomenon: *...is the center of the universe for that brand* (D.S.). Another point of view says how the consumer has evolved at the same time as advertising. There was the fascination for the product, then the multiplication of the product where the consumer wanted to be *seduced* (C.C.) by him, and finally the consumer's need to get involved, to *claim the right to an opinion even on the manufacture of the product, the ingredients, the distribution or the price of the product, to express its opinion in all the folds* *and details related to the product and its use* (C.C.). The last approach places the consumer as the producer of changes in advertising, because *being constantly evolving, the consumer always needs something new, something innovative* (A.M.).

The future of advertising is another topic addressed in the interview. A clear answer is given: programmatic advertising. In other words, the future of advertising is about online and digitalization. This aspect is reinforced by another opinion: *...the future of effective advertising will be very much based on online...* (A.M.). Therefore, the unconventional is present in the field of advertising more and more while the traditional is used less and less. A different point of view than the above emphasizes the repetition of history only in a different way: *history repeats itself but not in an identical way* (C.C.). Advertising will focus more on communication and content, there will be an era *of the addressed, creative and relational core* (C.C.). The interview ends by asking the specialists the time spent in the field of advertising and the position they hold. The answers obtained are as follows: eleven years, owner of an advertising agency and consulting in the field, twenty years in the creative process of advertising, managing partner of an advertising agency and three years, event manager & PR.

In conclusion, it can be stated that advertising is in a constant evolutionary process, and the traditional has reached a critical moment. The digitization of content has gained ground today. The traditional is left behind and can be used successfully, but for an older audience. The online part seems to be the one that will dominate the advertising phenomenon in the future. Although online marketing dominates in today's society, this aspect will be more accentuated, and it is possible that the promotion process will become what experts have called *programmatic advertising*. At the same time, the possibility of a future of advertising based on content and communication should not be ruled out given the repetitive nature of the process. Guerrilla marketing is the most dominant form of the unconventional. In other words, unconventional advertising has a fundamental role in building the relationship between brand and consumer or a potential consumer, and the correct dosage between traditional unconventional can lead to an authentic advertising strategy.

Conclusion

In a society dominated by aggressive products and advertisements, where consumerism has reached high levels, guerrilla marketing tries to create a different connection between product and consumer. Through this work, certain existing ideas in the literature regarding consumer behavior are strengthened. Following the hypotheses, it is shown that unconventional advertising attracts the attention of people who interact with it and facilitates the creation of more positive attitudes among consumers, compared to traditional advertising. This is also reinforced by specialists through interviews, the concepts regarding attention and memory. At the same time, the variable that emphasizes the purchase intention has a connection with the unconventional, but not one strong enough to be able to assert the validation of research hypotheses. Moreover, it is proven that there are differences in perception between women and men. The most representative aspect in this context is that there is a negative relationship between the female gender and the brand attitude. This link invalidates the last hypothesis of the study.

Following interviews with specialists in the field, it is concluded that unconventional advertising deviates to a large extent from traditional forms, and that as a basic example of this type of advertising, guerrilla marketing is predominant. The use of these unconventional tools results from an openness to innovative and different ways of promotion. According to specialists, there is no recipe to follow for a successful advertising product, but for a good communication strategy it is necessary to combine the traditional with the unconventional.

Limits of the paper and research perspectives

Although the results of this study contribute to the literature on advertising, there are several limitations that are worth mentioning. Initially, various limitations are found regarding the participants. The fact that the number of women who answered the questionnaire is much higher compared to that of men shows convenience sample. The total number of participants is sixty people. This number is small, unrepresentative and the results of the study cannot be generalized.

For future research perspectives, the methodology of the present study could be applied in another cultural context to observe whether the results are the same or there will be differences. At the same time, the subjects of the experiment are exposed to the stimulus only once. Possible future research could repeat the procedure, so that after these repetitions the results are as accurate and precise as possible.

The question concerning the recall of the brand or product is entered in the questionnaire immediately after the fourth print. In this context, respondents may have chosen the brand or product in question, as it is the last one they saw. Other new research may opt for a different way of introducing the stimulus. The questionnaire consists of a total of twenty-six questions, most of the questions having several items, and the seven-step Likert scale is used to measure the variables. An irritated state that contaminated the results may have occurred among consumers, as the same set of questions is included for each of the four prints. Other ways of measuring data could be used in future studies to rule out this provision. As a last limit, even if the brands chosen for the questionnaire do not exist on the Romanian market, there is a chance that some consumers have had contact with them, their answer being thus influenced according to preferences.

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Head or straw: The efficiency of subliminal messages

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ABSTRACT
Today, we more often meet the idea of manipulation, whether it is from a political background, in the media, advertising, or even between people. Advertising is severely criticized by experts for subliminal manipulation of consumers or potential consumers. Inspired by many experiments on this topic, including James Vicary's, the researcher who started this controversy in the late 1950s, this research, through an online experiment, tries to see if the subconscious plays a part in understanding subliminal messages and if their exposure to them helps to influence the subject's decisions. The experiment was performed on 60 individuals aged between 18 and 30 years, 30 women and 30 men, divided into three equal groups. The hypothesis tested in this study states that subliminal messages in advertising influence the audience's decision in the heads versus tails controversy, which was invalidated among our participants in an advertising setting.

Keywords: manipulation, subliminal messages, attention, subconscious.

Introduction

In 1957, inside a movie theater, the audience of a screened film was unconscious in an experiment by researcher James Vicary. The subjects were shown very short frames during the film, with the messages "eat popcorn" and "drink Coca-Cola". Their exposure was so short that they were not observable. Vicary and his marketing team later said the results of those subliminal messages helped drastically in the increase sales of popcorn and Coca-Cola, without documentation. The immediate reaction of the public to this controversy aroused great tension over this discovery. The discovery triggered concepts such as: consumers became the *targets* of all commercials, television and radio used subliminal messages to manipulate the entire audience, and the media was a lie. The controversy became so popular that Hollywood filmmakers also incorporated the idea of subliminal messages into new films, and Seattle Radio introduced subliminal audio messages "TV's a bore" (Moore, 1982).

A few years later, in 1978, America faced one of the most notorious serial killers. Police approached a different method of catching him, namely to infiltrate subliminal messages through television news. Another such approach was taken by a department store chain in Toronto to prevent store theft. The *sinister preconception* about this new form of manipulation, as the Globe and Mail called it, is also used in political propaganda (Moore, 1982).

Years later, the experiment that triggered this controversy turned out to be fake, so James Vicary admits that he falsified the results of the experiment just to avoid going bankrupt with the company he owned. Even after this confession, researchers and experts have not stopped studying this subject, reports of various forms of subliminal manipulation have since become quite common (Moore, 1982).

To date, three means of subliminal stimulation have been identified for which strong behavioral effects have been claimed. The first involves visual stimuli very briefly, the messages being transmitted so quickly that the viewer does not become aware of their presence. Such stimulation purportedly registers subconsciously and allegedly affects subsequent behavior. Another means by which behavior control is attempted is using accelerated speech in low volume auditory messages. This method has been used in radio stations, and the claim is that although the message may be unintelligible and unnoticed consciously, like all subliminal messages, it is processed unconsciously and gives direction to the receiver's behavior. The third procedure is to embed or hide images or words (usually sexually tinged) in picture ads. They are hidden in such a way that they are not available for conscious examination. However, they have a subconscious effect according to the arguments of specialists (Moore, 1982).

In line with these theories, the following research questions have been reached: **RQ1: Can the audience be manipulated by repeatedly exposing the same subliminal image?** And **RQ2: What is the level of influence of the target audience after watching illustrated commercials with different subliminal messages?**

The objectives of this research are to highlight the specifics of the phenomenon of influencing decision-making through subliminal messages and to illustrate the extent to which they have been influenced. In fact, to reach this objective, we chose the subliminal message to contain a relatively neutral element, without using sexuality like other studies, so we chose the concept of choosing between *head or straw*. Thus, the hypothesis of the research paper is *H1: The suggestive and repetitive subliminal messages in the advertising posters influence the audiences' decision after their exposure to it, in the choice between head or straw.*

Influence, manipulation, persuasion: Theoretical considerations

According to Mucchielli (2005), this form of communication "contains all the issues related to the transition from the structural-expressive model to the rational-systematic model and applied to the phenomenon of influential communication". In the structural-expressive paradigm, the word transmitted to the receiver is perceived as a suggestion, while in the relational-systemic paradigm, the *framing* of the suggestion is a phenomenon that finds in the 'power of the word', so, changing the reference paradigm, the suggestion is understood differently. Mucchielli also emphasizes the 'role of the situation' which refers to social psychology and its way of approaching the interactions between the individual and the situation in which he is placed. This can also include inductive situational elements and competence in relation to the environment. For example, the status of the interlocutor may be an inducing element of the communication that intervenes to channel the response of the receiver. This conductive element is together with other elements to which it is connected, a constitutive element of the communication situation. Therefore, this phenomenon of influence is more related to social psychology, which is why it focuses more on the situation of the subject than on the subjectivity of the subject itself (Mucchielli, 2005).

"Influence is the fundamental phenomenon of communication: communication means influence" (Mucchielli, 2016). The author concludes that communication is an attempt to influence and seeks to convey a meaning of an idea or situation, of a phenomenon, which cannot be achieved without influence. Influence and communication being inseparable, thus forming the same action. At the same time, the researcher develops a theory, namely "integrated theory of communication", which shows that the phenomena of influence (influence, manipulation, persuasion, propaganda, seduction etc.) are one and the same, springing from communication studies and existing between them, as "perfect homogeneity" (Mucchielli, 2016).

However, Nichols (1987) had a different view of the definition of manipulation and persuasion. These terms have been used and defined precisely for centuries, sometimes even almost as synonyms, but there are big differences between the two terms. One is short-lived, fluctuating, and divisible, and the other is long-lasting, builds trust, and unifies. The terms are considered to have the following meanings: manipulation is the achievement of conformity based on illusion, intimidation, or fear, instead, persuasion is the realization of a commitment based on the reality of need, discernment, and conviction, according to Nichols' perspective.

We can say that manipulation has been dominant in our lives since the earliest forms of the human being. It has maintained its dominance throughout human history through certain factors that are still visible. From the perspective of Dawkins and Krebs (1978), we started from a theory of natural selection with the actor and the reactor as two main factors. Natural selection in the past has worked on individuals of the class to which the actor belongs, to improve their power to manipulate the behavior of individuals of the class to which the reactor belongs. Communication is said to occur when an animal, the actor, does something which appears to be the result of selection to influence the sense organs of another animal, the reactor, so that the reactor's behavior changes to the advantage of the actor. Natural selection favors individuals who successfully manipulate the behavior of other individuals even if it is not to their advantage. Of course, selection will also work on individuals to make them resist manipulation if this is to their disadvantage, just as natural selection e works on prey animals to make them less likely to be caught by predators. Predators evolve their adaptations so that they sometimes catch prey, despite anti-predatory adaptations (Dawkins & Krebs, 1978).

"Manipulation consists in substituting the inclination towards reason with the omnipotence of instinctive impulses (impulses of aggression, hunger, authoritarian and sexual impulses) associated with political opinions and attitudes through conditioned reflexes" (Tudor, 2001). Even if the literature offers us a diverse range of ideas on this subject, it is certain that manipulation has a negative meaning and that it is an exploitative, unethical activity. Zimbardo (cited in Ficeac, 1996) classified the manipulations as small, medium, and large, alluding to the magnitude of the *initial changes*. The survey called small manipulations those activities that did not significantly improve social circumstances. Even though logic followed this initial path, it has been shown that the basic improvement is generally not with the results of manipulations. Small manipulations bring minor changes to the social situation, regardless of this reality, they can have a surprisingly vast impact. For example, the expansion of sales of a product will obviously be visible if buyers are promised to lower the price or simply with the help of a raffle. Average manipulations represent important changes in social situations. Also, the impacts they can have on consumers can far exceed expectations. The spread of a rumor and the creation of a protest manifesto can be an example of average manipulation, and large manipulations aim at the total submission of the individual, the manipulator mastering both his thinking, behavior, and feelings (Ficeac, 1996).

However, in the form of a subliminal message, the manipulation may have effects attributed to procedures of which it that may consist: general, nonspecific affective consequences that are thought to have a positive persuasive influence or a direct, specific impact on a particular motive or behavior. The evidence and arguments presented in defense of the effectiveness of these procedures are in contradiction with many specialists such as Moore (1982) and harshly criticized.

The concept of *the threshold* in which the idea that people can respond to stimuli without being able to report their existence is maintained is well-accepted and well-documented (Moore, 1982). Taken literally, subliminal means "under the rug". This concept shows that it proves that people respond to stimuli, but it is not possible to delimit the point at which a person is aware of them or to what extent his conscious can perceive the message.

Silverman (cited in Theus, 1994), in a series of 16 experiments, presented with the help of a tachistoscope "Destroy mother" to an experimental group of depressives and "Thinking people" to a depressive control group. The experiment obtained higher results of depression only for the experimental groups. In further tests with schizophrenics, depressives, homosexuals, and stutterers, Silverman found positive results only when stimuli were specific to their conditions. Further work supporting the effectiveness of subliminal primes has shown facilitation of recognition time for words, improvement of agoraphobic tendencies among patients, and the positive adaptation of schizophrenics when "oneness fantasies" with others of importance are subliminally suggested, according to Theus (1994).

Other studies of a similar nature suggested that psychodynamic effects can stimulate academic performance, reduce pathological thinking, and reduce heroin use among addicts, provided care is taken both to select relevant psychodynamic content and to select candidates for whom there is reason to believe this content is particularly relevant. Research has also shown that a subject's attitudes toward unfamiliar subliminally presented stimuli become significantly more positive with repeated exposures, or that individuals will build positive affects toward objects as they become more familiar with them, particularly if the individual does not have a mental representation of similar objects with which to compare, as synthesized by the same author (Theus, 1994).

Research on brand choice behavior per se seems to be subject to little or no influence by subliminal suggestion. But in looking at research on subliminal perception generally, certain themes might be effectively applied by advertising or marketing specialists hoping to use subliminal techniques to make a difference in consumer attitude and/ or perhaps consumer preference. Limited evidence suggests that need-state behaviors may be stimulated, as well. First, research suggests that the kind of subliminal stimulation makes a difference in effect. Subliminal visual stimuli appear to have a much higher probability of being cognitively processed by subjects than do auditory stimuli. Theus (1994) suggested that advertising through posters, film, video, and other visual stimuli could be considered for good-purpose campaigns, using familiar images and carefully chosen words.

Methodology

The main purpose of this experiment was to determine whether participants' decision-making power can be influenced by certain subliminal elements or messages.

Research design

The experiment was performed on a sample of 60 people from northern Romania, aged between 18 and 30 years old. It was administered through Google Forms and distributed on Facebook, across different groups for students. This experiment has five stages: (1) demographic data (sex, age, occupation, and background); (2) choosing a variant of participation (the group to which it will belong); (3) watching a video projecting 25 advertising posters of recognizable brands; (4) control questions; (5) the choice between head or straw.

Participants had to choose the group they would be part of at the beginning of the experiment without them being aware that this division was into specific groups. They were divided into three groups: the control group, the experimental head group, and the experimental straw group.

Each group was given the task of watching a video showing 25 advertising posters, each poster running for 2 seconds. The video was 2 minutes and 4 seconds long, each poster repeating twice. Subjects participated in this experiment without knowing the real reason for the research until its completion. The concept and name of the experiment presented was called "Study - Perception of Advertising Elements", so their decision at the end of the experiment being influenced only by visually present stimuli (in the case of head and straw groups). Before watching the video, participants were asked to pay attention to the elements of the ads (writing, characters, objects etc.), and then received some questions based on them. The questions for the next post-video task were: "On a scale of 1 to 10, in general, how visually loaded were the ads you watched?", "Which is the most memorable brand of visualization?", and "In general, consider that the ads should be with... fewer/many elements." The reason we chose the control questions after performing the experiment is to challenge participants to use memory stimulation and increase attention to the visualized ads.

The control group had posters with neutral elements, relatively simple, and with few visual elements. This set of advertisements contained five advertisements used for the other groups, without subliminal stimuli, and the rest of the illustrated advertisements did not contain any elements that would stimulate or influence the decision of the subjects. The experimental head group had a set of posters with a single central element or a single character, all the posters having the coin with the head side inserted in visible but subtle areas. All the ads were specially selected, they had ads with a subtle resemblance to that side of the coin, so the images that contained characters were portrait, the main elements being circular and were in the middle. The same method of inserting the coin in posters with the straw part of the coin was done with the third experimental group but the posters had different visual elements, more specifically, they had several elements, at least two characters, and instead of simple and neutral backgrounds like the ones used for the experimental head group, for this group we selected posters with backgrounds as loaded as possible, in nature, with buildings and elements that resemble those on the side of the page: birds, wings.

At the end of the experiment, participants were offered a choice of head or straw, each accompanied by the visual identity of the part of the coin that was used and for the subliminal messages according to the group to which they belonged.

Results

H1: Subliminal messages in advertising posters influence the audience's decision in choosing between the head or the straw was invalidated. The statistics of each experimental group do not coincide with the expectations following the theory, so the participants were not influenced by subliminal messages in the choice between head or straw. We can observe this factor right from the control group that 75% (15 participants) chose "straw", and the remaining 25% the "head" option. However, the part worthy of attention is on the other groups with subliminal visual stimuli, where both chose predominantly the "head" part. We can see a small difference between them, otherwise in the experimental straw group, the percentage for choosing head is 60% (12 participants) and 40% (8 participants) chose straw, but the experimental head group has the highest percentage in choosing head, this being 80% (16 participants), and only 20% (4 participants) chose straw.

Although this research did not confirm the hypothesis and we cannot say that it answered the research questions, a small inclination towards achieving the objectives can be observed. The fact that the results did not live up to expectations, however, leaves open the question of whether behavioral consequences can be induced by subliminal stimuli. Perhaps a larger number of exposures or a different composite subliminal message could influence the behavior of the choice. The present experiment demonstrates that these effects can be quite difficult to achieve and suggests that the resulting associations in such images may depend entirely on supraliminal stimuli, even if not necessarily on conscious cognitive processes.

Conclusion

For future research on this topic, a small volume sample could be a barrier to representativeness, so a larger sample of subjects should be considered. Another limitation could be the method of stimulating subliminal messages. However, no measurement was found for the intensity of stimulation, when it is or it becomes imperceptible, and how it is detected subconsciously. Many studies of subliminal perception are flawed because the investigators assumed that some specific exposure duration or stimulus intensity automatically guaranteed that the stimulus would be sufficiently below threshold that its presence would be undetected for all the experimental subjects on all the trials.

People are often unaware of stimulation or of the processes mediating the effects of a stimulus on a response (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). This is a separate issue from subliminal stimulation, wherein the subject cannot identify the stimulus. However, there is ample evidence that weak stimuli that are not reportable can be shown to influence behavior. It is recommended to deepen the identification and use of stimuli on the subjects.

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The presence of animals in advertising: Its effects on human emotions

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to assess to what extent human emotions are influenced by the presence of dogs within advertising campaigns. The hypothesis (H1) *stated that* the presence of a dog in a commercial generates intense emotions to the public, *and a sociological survey among FPACS students was carried out to this purpose; the 53 respondents are 20 to 23 years old. An experiment with 12 subjects was carried out to check whether emotions have a decisive role in sending an advertising message.*

Keywords: emotions, advertising, animals, Budweiser, brand.

Introduction

It is known that today's society is constantly changing, evolving and, with that, its components are obliged to keep up to be able to resist as much as possible. This evolution of society can be felt both in the IT field and in the educational or advertising field. Over the years, the way advertising spots are made has changed according to the needs of society. Their creators have always tried to identify the needs of the public and to comply with them. However, a constant thing is the appeal to the emotions of the individual exposed in the commercials. Whether they are positive or negative emotions, they have an impact on the attitude of those exposed to advertising campaigns. The role of advertising is to bring to the public the latest products of a brand, causing the consumer to buy that product or to adopt a different type of attitude, all through images and the story of the commercial.

Emotions play an extremely important role in advertising because they influence the mood of the person watching the commercial. On the other hand, it determines whether to buy that product, which is why the people responsible for advertising a product pay close attention to them. Whether induced by different colors and songs, or featuring animals or children, emotions will be generated by the audience, and they will act accordingly (Comiati & Negrea, 2009).

However, the appeal to emotions in advertising must be made very carefully, in relation to the type of product promoted. In the case of some product categories, the appeal to emotions is better perceived by the public than in the case of others. Two other aspects that must be considered in the use of emotions are the social context and the age category of the public to which the advertisement is addressed (Comiati & Negrea, 2009).

Through this study, we tried to identify the emotions felt by a person when watching an advertisement with dogs. Another thing we followed was the impact that such an advertisement can have on the public, both in terms of changing the mood and in relation to the decision to buy the product from the advertisement.

Literature shows that television is an attitude, behavior, and value leader (Someșfălean, 2015); advertising has the same role, influencing the consumers the same way and being associated with television. The present study points the relationships between advertising and emotions, so that it is necessary that we delineate two concepts. Firstly, we talk about advertising, which is a process that takes place in media departments, media planning, market research, which has the purpose to sell a product or service. Secondly, an advertisement is the result of that process, and its purpose is to convince the public to pay attention and, of course, to buy that product (Someșfălean, 2015).

Regarding emotions, many authors consider that information and rationality in this domain are not enough for people to capture the message or the corresponding brand. This way, emotions, and psychological tricks play an important role in what internalizing the advertising message means. Authors say that emotions are the greatest and most powerful weapon when talking about advertising. This paper shows that emotions are the safest way by which advertisers can convince potential buyers, as decisions are based on emotional impulses (Someșfălean, 2015). According to this, we can argue that emotions play an essential role not only in terms of advertising, but also in terms of persuasion and influence.

There is an interdependency relationship between animals and positive emotions. Regarding the connection between emotions and the presence of animals in commercials, it is fair to say the last will generate positive emotions and, also, positive reactions from the public. Animals have been used as communication tools in thousands of commercials and they play an important role in what engagement with a brand means. They play an important part not only in commercials, but in people's lives too, so it is fair to say that authors have a lot of reasons to analyze how the presence of animals in advertising leads to positive behavior from the public. An animal is a powerful symbol, due to its ability to determine positive reactions in people. Moreover, the presence of an animal in a commercial generates transformative experiences and people's perception of a brand may suffer changes in a positive way (Erhan, 2015).

Many authors suggest the fact that the presence of an animal in a commercial leads to associating the brand with an attractive stimulus. This type of advertising has a positive influence on customers' attitude even if there is no connection between the brand and the animal that is portrayed (Braunwart, 2015). Advertisers consider that animals draw attention and there is no need for them to do further research to confirm this hypothesis (Braunwart, 2015). Love, companionship, and affection are the greatest benefits that come from owning a pet, and it can influence the owner's social identity and self-perception and that is because animals can easily become friends or even family members. Other tasks that pets carry out would be transforming people's perspectives on appreciating nature, leading them to be more inspired, selfless, happy, and loving (Lancendorfer, Atkin, & Reece, 2008).

Promoting in marketing is usually based on animals as visual symbols. They have a much stronger effect on people's attitudes towards a brand than celebrities. As advertising symbols, animals play different roles, but the most important one is that they bring meaning to the brands. Moreover, advertisers associate certain animals with certain types of products (Croke cited in Lancendorfer, Atkin, & Reece, 2008), being able to influence the perception of the target groups.

Most of the time, when we think about the emotions that advertising generates, we think about certain types of commercials – babies, puppies, or other sensitive things. In fact, each commercial determines a sort of emotional response, which is an instinctive act. Therefore, emotions are even more important than advertisers think. Our emotional reactions and responses are based on past experiences in terms of ideas and impressions; the same thing applies in the way events change lives. The familiar, unthreatening ones are not paid attention to, while the familiar and pleasant events draw attention and the hurtful ones we completely ignore (Lancendorfer, Atkin, & Reece, 2008).

Lancendorfer, Atkin, and Reece (2008) studied the effects the presence of a dog in commercials has over the way information is processed, using the heuristic-systematic model. It was proven that the presence of a dog in a commercial suppresses systematic processing and favors the heuristic type, leading to a positive attitude towards the commercial. While drawing the main objectives of a campaign, advertisers should pay attention to the type of processing they want to invoke. If advertisers try to invoke heuristic processing, the presence of an animal is the best strategy that can be used, but if the systematic processing is the target, then the advertiser should focus on the message quality, as the presence of an animal would affect this. The companies that consider message processing and trusting the brand to be important should think about how the presence of an animal could negatively affect advertising campaigns. Research shows that Super Bowl commercials in which animals are the *stars* are based on simple messages. Also, some studies point out that, if there is a connection between the animal and the product, it will have positive effects on the memory of consumers and the processing of that commercial. However, it is not known if this is a decisive factor when it comes to the way it is going to be understood.

In Super Bowl commercials, animals have been used as communication tools, Budweiser being one of the brands that promoted products in the 2015 edition. Animals are used to promote a lot of products, but more than half of these commercials promote a type of food or beverage, and they usually portray the relationship between a human and an animal or between two animals. Budweiser's *Lost Dog* commercial portrays both types of relationship, and Braunwart (2015) pointed out that a commercial like this shows a relationship to which people respond positively and resonate with the general idea. The commercial series with the puppy and the Clydesdale horses got positive responses from the public. The main message these transmit is that „best buds never [let] you down" and there have been numerous reactions, *Lost Dog* being shared on Facebook and other platforms more than 2 million times and getting 28 million viewers after the first 3 months of the campaign. The symbolic association between the puppies, horses, and wolves has led to a lot of comments coming from very emotionally invested people. These animals are cultural, historical, folklorical, and religious symbols and represent traits such as masculinity, friendship, and freedom. Cultural and emotional connections are the ones that brought this campaign such success. More important, these animals have been used in Budweiser s campaigns as they express the brand's core values. But there has also been confusion coming from the public, as people considered the association is not the greatest. However, it is not known if this had a negative impact on the way the brand is seen, as negative comments also represent a form of brand engagement. Also, authors suggest that the connection between reactions (positive or negative) and the buying intention is also unknown (Hollis & Brown, 2010).

In conclusion, as a lot of the literature showed, emotions are a key element when it comes to advertising and its purposes. Rationality does not have the power to convince, but emotions play a decisive role in the persuasion and message internalization process of an advertising message. Positive emotions can also mean the presence of an animal – in people's everyday lives or in commercials. Therefore, advertisers understood that, to get the message to the public, this is the solution. A lot of studies have proven that associating a brand with an animal in a commercial leads to a better understanding of the brand's values, an efficient processing of the message, and to associating the brand with positive stimuli. Nevertheless, it is important to say that each and every commercial generates a kind of emotional response from people, but using animals as communication tools remains the most useful strategy. Besides, an animal is an important cultural, historical, religious symbol, so associating it with a brand should be paid close attention to so that the responses are positive. Budweiser is the best example for generating more than positive reactions this way, so an animal can have a decisive role in what the success of a campaign means, a dog being a perfect symbol to be used.

Methodology

Participants

The subjects of this study were both female and male students with ages between 20 and 23 years old, from Romania. All subjects are students in the second and third year at the Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communications Science of Babes-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca. The survey was administered online and had 53 respondents (25,5% males and 75,5% females) from undergraduate level, from both urban and rural areas. The second method we used was an experiment with 12 participants (10 female and 2 male) divided in two heterogeneous groups in terms of gender. The subjects watched 2 commercials presented in a different order.

Procedure

H1: the presence of a dog in a commercial generates intense emotions to the public. Three research questions were also tackled: **RQ1: Does the mood of a person change after seeing a commercial showing animals?, RQ2: What kind of emotions does such a commercial elicit?,** and **RQ3: Does the order of commercials influence people's perceptions of the brand?**

The questionnaire was distributed online, it was active for two days, and its goal was to get a clear general idea on the perceptions and emotions of our target group. We obtained 53 valid answers. The second method was the experiment, carried out on two small samples of subjects. The total number of participants was 12, and they were divided into 2 groups. The experiment took place via Zoom, for half an hour. Before starting the experiment, the participants were asked to fill out a pre-test questionnaire. After watching the first commercial, they filled out a test questionnaire. That was followed by watching the second commercial, and in the end, they had to fill out one last post-test questionnaire. In total, there were two commercials and three short questionnaires. The commercials were presented in a different order to the 2 groups. The stimulus in the experiment were Budweiser commercials.

Results

Survey

The two questions were designed to report the daily time allocated for the internet and television. In both cases, almost 50% of the subjects responded that they do not surf the internet or watch television more than six hours a day. Being asked about how often they watch an ad from beginning to the end, only 15% of the subjects answered with "often" and "very often". However, when asked about preferred types of ads, half of the total of subjects prefer ads with both people and animals (51%) and eight subjects chose ads featuring only animals (17%).

The next four questions are the most relevant for the chosen theme – 98% of subjects have a good opinion of ads with animals, but over 67% from this group prefers dogs in ads. Furthermore, almost 80% of the subjects would like these kinds of ads to pop more often online and on TV. The answers to the eighth question ("What is your emotion when you see an ad with an animal in it?") demonstrate that the intensity of the emotions rises in this situation. More than 65% of the subjects associate the presence of an animal from an ad with enthusiasm and happiness. 77,4% of the subjects contributed to the confirmation of the hypothesis under discussion, affirming the fact that their mood changed after watching and ad with animals. Also, 41% of subjects have dogs as pets.

When it comes to the importance of emotions, 94% of respondents report a connection between emotions and the purchase of a product, while 74% said that they bought a product just because of an attractive ad. On the other hand, 43% claim that they were tempted to buy a product because of watching an ad with animals in it.

From a social-demographic standpoint, 75,5% from the subjects are females and 60% from the total are 20 years old. The area of origin is mainly urban (79%), and their study area is communication and PR (75,5%).

As an interpretation of survey data, we can argue that humans are aware of the importance of emotions in their lives and in advertising. Although they spend a lot of time on the internet (but almost no time in front of a TV), they are not used to watching ads entirely. The ones that do it prefer ads with both animals and people. The answers to another question suggest that when it comes to the presence of an animal in an ad the preferred animal is the dog. This aspect makes us associate their choices with the fact that the majority own a pet dog. Emotions are therefore key elements when it comes to advertising and messages transmitted. If we look carefully into their answers, we might notice that subjects associate ads with positive stimuli. Emotions have indeed a decisive role. It has been communicated, indirectly, through the sociological survey, that humans watch ads that make them feel good. In this case, the stimuli that generated these emotions is an animal whose presence means happiness, enthusiasm. Most of the subjects opted for one of the two variants, although other answers include melancholy and sadness. Through this quiz, our hypothesis was partially confirmed. The presence of an animal in an ad influences the change of mood, but this method has not measured the intensity of the feelings.

Since the answers were anonymous, the subjects are thought to have been sincere. It is important to observe that the results of this questionnaire coincide with the literature discussed in the previous section. This fact helps us in understanding the mechanisms through which the publicity persuades people, but also the way that emotions control reactions and instant responds of everything that surrounds us.

Experiment

The main purpose of this experiment was to observe the impact of the brand Budweiser commercials with animals on our subjects. We selected two types of this brand's commercials, first one had in center a dog, a Labrador retriever, and the second one focused on a person. The experimental group watched the commercial focusing on the dog, followed by the one with the person, and the other group watched them in reversed order. We tracked the reactions of our participants to the experiment, checking for a connection between the order of the commercials and their condition.

As mentioned before, besides those two commercials seen by our subjects, they had to respond to three questionnaires. The pre-test survey had two questions and it was meant to assess the condition (mood) of the subjects and what could change it in a better way. To quantify the condition of the subjects, we used a scale from 1 to 10 (1 - very low, 10 - very high) and we observed that our subjects had different kinds of moods. In the first group, from the total number of 6 participants, only one claimed a very low intensity of enthusiasm. Still, 3 subjects rated with 3 followed by one person who felt a very high level of enthusiasm. Only one person gave 7 points to the level of enthusiasm. In the second group, one person gave 7 points to the enthusiasm, while another one was at the middle of the scale, 5 points. These were followed by another three subjects who gave 3 points. In the end, only one person gave 1 point to the level of enthusiasm.

The intensity of happiness in the first group was rated with 8 points by two subjects. A different person gave 7 points followed by another one who rated the level of happiness with 6 points. To the lowest part, we had 4 and 3 points. Like the first group, the second one has felt happiness in a positive way. They gave 8 and 6 points, followed by one person who gave 3 points and another one with only 1 point.

Enthusiasm is felt differently by both groups. Thus, in the first group we had a variety of grades (8, 7, 6, 5, 3, and 2). On the other hand, in the second group, there was a lack of enthusiasm, the grades being two of 7, a 5, a 4, and two of 1.

The intensity of relaxation encountered in the first group was relatively high, being marked with two of 9, two of 6, and two of 4. In the second group, things are different. The grades are a 9, two of 8, a 4, a 3, and a 1. Our first group gave a middle note to the feeling of relief. Thus, we notice a grade of 8, two grades of 6, a 5, a 4, and three of 1. Instead, the second group assigns the following grades: a 7, a 5, two of 2, and 1. We asked our subjects how overwhelmed they felt during our experiment. The results showed that, in the first group, people felt it quite strong. We had a grade of 8, 7, 5, 3 each, and two of 2. The second group was like the first. The marks given by the subjects were: one 8, 7, 5, 2, and two of 4. Sadness was not strongly felt in the first group. Subjects rated this emotion with a grade of 8, and five grades of 2. Things were similar in the second case: a grade of 6, 4 and 3, and three grades of 2.

In the first group, out of a total of 6 people, four gave 4 to the feeling of concern, with the other two scoring 8 and 2. The answers of the second group are approximately in the middle of the scale, with two grades of 5 and two of 4; in addition, they were followed by a single grade of 7 and a grade of 2. To our surprise, stress had low valences. In the first group, people assigned two grades of 3, a grade of 4 and one of 2; only two people feel the stress more strongly (a 7 and a 9). And in the case of the second group, the grades were relatively low: a 6, two of 5, a 4, and a 3; however, one of the subjects gave maximum note to this emotion. Irritation was the least felt emotion. In both groups, the grades were relatively low. The first group gave a grade of 6, 4, 2, 1 each, and two grades of 3. The second group assigned a grade of 2 and one of 1, and three grades of 3; however, we also encountered a grade of 8.

Talking about sadness, the situation was similar between the two groups. In the first, the grades were: 8, 4, 3, 1, and two grades of 2. In the second group, there were a grade of 7 and 1 each, two subjects giving a grade of 4 and 2, respectively. The offense was scored by the first group with three marks of 1 and a mark of 7, 4, and 2. In the case of the second group, however, the values were at the lower limit: a mark of 4, one of 2, and four notes of 1. Regarding the second part of the pre-test, our subjects have similar opinions: 10 out of 12 (83.3%) believe that their mood can be influenced by a song or the presence of an animal, while 9 of them (75%) believe that the presence of a friend can change their mood. Finally, 8 of the participants (66.7%) state that an event that offers a state of happiness can cause them to change their state.

After watching the first ad, we sent a test questionnaire to both groups. Only 16.7% confess that they did not feel different emotions, while the vast majority (83.3%) say the opposite. Among the emotions mentioned are happiness, sadness, and pity. However, one can see the difference between the two groups and the order of presentation of the advertisements. The first group experienced states such as: peace, joy, tenderness, nostalgia, and an intense feeling of love. In contrast, the feelings of the second group fall into a different typology. The subjects experienced confusion, anxiety, curiosity and, at the same time, were impressed by the protagonist's sacrifices. At the same time, there were elements that attracted the attention of the groups. The music, the dog's enthusiasm, the departure and return of the owner were the key moments noticed during the viewing of the advertisement. On the other hand, the second group was marked by harsher elements. For example, the subjects noticed the storm, the burning boat, and the presence of xenophobia among the people. In addition, they considered that the music, the dark tones, the storyline, and the emphasis on the character's feelings are, in fact, features that highlight the advertisement.

Following the results, we noticed a major change in the moods and emotions of the subjects. Thus, in the first group, we noticed that ecstasy, happiness, stress, and overwhelm increased considerably. On the other hand, anxiety, sadness, anger, and relief decreased overall. However, there was also a stagnation among the emotions of irritation, offense, relaxation, and enthusiasm. Regarding the second group, there was a slight increase in states of relaxation, overwhelm, worry, irritation, stress, and upset. On the other hand, we noticed a significant decrease in enthusiasm, sadness, and relief. However, we also noticed among this group the stagnation of emotions of ecstasy, happiness, and offense.

The post-test consisted of 6 questions regarding the influence of the first advertisement on the perception of the second, the conception of the Budweiser brand after watching the commercials, the first thing they remembered after viewing them, an element and 3 emotions felt after them and, most importantly, we wanted to find out if the subjects consider that their condition has changed following the experiment. Regarding the influence of the first advertisement on how to perceive the second, the results are identical for both groups: 50% of the subjects considered that they were influenced by the first advertisement, and 50% answered negatively.

At the end of the experiment, opinions on the Budweiser brand were mixed. The subjects from the first group stated that the brand had grown in their eyes, promotes friendship and the idea of following your dreams, that it is "a well-known brand" and, not least, an animal lover. In the case of the second group, opinions are slightly different. First, the participants point out that, through complex advertisements, the brand focuses on people, their stories, and the quality of the products. Second, he notes that Budweiser encourages responsible alcohol consumption by engaging in public information campaigns.

Through the post-test we wanted to see what was the first thing that subjects thought about after watching the commercials and what is the memorable element. The first group remembered the promoted product (beer), the animal, the history, the fact that "dreams really come true" and that the brand is "about people, for people". At the same time, the elements mentioned were the animals, the product, and the font of the writing. In the case of the second group, things were a little different. They noticed the creativity and accessibility of the brand, the logo, the fact that "beer can create connections" and, finally, the dog. In terms of highlights, the origin of the brand, the sketches of the beer bottle, the sea, and the quadruped are mentioned.

Happiness, enthusiasm, peace, tenderness, curiosity, interest, and lack of stress are the positive emotions felt by the first group. However, sadness and nostalgia are strongly manifested by several subjects. In the case of the second group, the only emotions that are extra are compassion and courage. Finally, we wanted to see if our subjects feel that their mood has changed and, if so, in what way. The members of the first group unanimously stated that their mood had changed. Some of the ideas they were left with refer to the curiosity to try this brand, the good mood due to the presence of the dog, the fact that "dreams stay there for you, you have to do it for them" and that "things are not so evil in the world".

Unlike the first experimental group, in the second we can really see the impact of the advertisement with the animal. Overall, their condition was marked by the presence of the Labrador, thus forgetting the first video: "much more positive and kind vibe", "made me want to hug the puppies", "a more positive and less stressful state", "it made me want a puppy even more".

Another important element in our experiment is the nonverbal communication of the subjects, observed during the viewing of the two commercials. In the first experimental group, the general mood from the beginning was a positive one, full of smiles. While watching the first commercial (with a dog), 4 of the 6 subjects smiled and laughed. However, I noticed the change in the subjects' facial expressions at the key moment of the commercial (when it seems that the master is not returning home): 3 of the subjects were sad and frowning. With the viewing of the second commercial, the reactions diversified. In addition to a few subtle smiles and frowns, we noticed more attention from them. However, in this advertisement, one of the subjects was non-expressive. Moving on to the second group, I could see that the general atmosphere was sober and serious. Compared to the first group, the subjects did not have too many reactions during the viewing of the first advertisement (with the man), being attentive and maintaining seriousness. However, with the presentation of the second advertisement (with the quadruped), the change of atmosphere was observed. At first, three of the subjects smiled, and then, with the departure of the master, two of them became sad. The end of the ad caught our subjects smiling, one of them with tears in his eyes. To our surprise, the reactions of the second group were totally unexpected, the order of presentation of the commercials playing an essential role in accentuating and diminishing certain emotions.

With the completion of the analysis of the results, we were confirmed once again that the mood of the subjects changes at the end of watching an animal ad. Thus, by separating the subjects into two groups and changing the order of presentation of the ads, we found that watching them influences the way subjects perceive the brand. At the same time, the emotions felt by the subjects vary due to the differences in personality and the state they had before watching the advertisement. However, the main emotions manifested are the positive ones, which include ecstasy, happiness, and enthusiasm. However, negative emotions should not be neglected either. We can say that, through the experiment, we were able to show that the emotions conveyed by an animal advertisement really manage to influence a person's mood.

The presence of errors can be diminished, but never completely eradicated. In this study there are some errors. The first error we encountered is the fact that the group of people selected is represented by a small number of people with ages between 20 and 23 years. Another detected error refers to the unequal distribution of the genders throughout the experiment. There were more females than males; men were underrepresented in both samples. Also, most of the answers were from females, rather than males. That is why we could not analyze and precisely appreciate the extent of the connection between gender and the perception of the emotions that were being transmitted. We can say that another error is the fact that we did not have an equal number of subjects from each department, both in the survey and the experiment.

Conclusion

Data collected through the survey and experiment helped validate H1. Both show an interest of respondents in commercials featuring animals, yet have shown a big change of expression and positive emotions in the moment our subjects watched the commercial with the dog as a main character. The emotions declared by the subjects were positive, happiness, and enthusiasm, and were felt by most of them. This is due to the fact that the majority own a pet, more specifically dogs. These would like to watch more ads of this kind. That is the reason why we think that these ads contribute to the good mood of the public. Furthermore, this kind of ad can influence them in deciding on buying products from the presented brand. Further studies should focus on a variety of animals featured in commercials, such as cats or horses; also, robust data might be collected from larger and more representative samples.

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The role of advertisement music in inducing emotions and influencing recall

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ABSTRACT
Emotions have been playing an important part in advertising ever since the advertising paradigm shifted towards a more emotional, rather than rational, approach. In this study, we examine the effects of induced emotions, with the help of music, aids the level of recall of an advertisement, and of brand recall. We presented an advertisement to 18 subjects, split into 3 groups. We wanted to see what role music plays in inducing certain emotions in advertising. Also, our aim is to measure the levels of recall of certain brand elements and of the story presented in the advertisement. We hypothesized that sad instrumental music would induce a sad mood to the viewers, while happy music would induce a happier state of being. Our last hypothesis affirms that the sad instrumental song would imply the biggest levels of recall of an advertisement and its elements. After conducting the experiment, we measured the emotions induced by the advertisement and the music present in it, while also evaluating the levels of brand recall. Results and possible explanations are discussed further in the paper.

Keywords: emotions, advertising, music, ad recall, brand recall.

Introduction

No advertising researcher, may it be a practitioner, an academic or, as a matter of fact, anyone that has anything to do with this field, would doubt that emotions play a major role in the advertisement process.

For a long period of time, it was believed that advertisements stick into the consumers' minds if they appealed to their rational side, offering information, data, or features. However, it was not long before researchers observed that there is more to the human decision process that rationality. We often make decisions based on feelings like safety, happiness, nostalgia, or even sadness. So why not use those emotions for the benefit of advertisement?

Starting from that point, the emphasis shifted from rational to emotional. To go even further with that, this research paper aims to focus on one key element that can induce emotions when watching an advertisement: music. It is always in the background, even if we observe it or not and it can unconsciously make us feel a certain way, by making a reference to some feelings or by putting us in a specific mood.

But even with music and emotions, how much do we remember after seeing an ad? Brand recall was also associated with rationality, but as emotions started to be in the spotlight, the initial paradigm shifted. What if we remember more when the advertisement awakens an emotion? And, to go on with it, what if a certain emotion can make us recall better than another?

These are some of the questions we asked ourselves when we started this research paper. Therefore, it aims to follow the evolution in the literature of rational and emotional advertising and narrows down to happy and sad instrumental music in ads, what moods can music induce, and how it can influence recall.

The use and importance of emotions in advertising

What makes advertising effective has been the question to which marketing researchers tried and are trying to find an answer. As we look at the numbers, there are more and more advertisements people see daily (5000 per day in 2016) (Hamelin, Moujahid, & Thaichon, 2017). Therefore, it was highly important to determine what are the key elements that make some of the advertisements more effective and can potentially lead to influence buying decisions.

For almost 20 years, research in marketing has mirrored what psychologists broadly call *information-processing theory*, which views the consumer as a decision-maker who searches for, attends to, perceives, and evaluates data to make brand choices. In this light, advertising is seen primarily as an information source that provides input on which customers base purchasing decisions. This viewpoint has largely replaced the earlier emphasis by motivation researchers on emotional appeals (Holbrook & O'Shaughnessy, 1984).

However, there was a need to remedy the lack of information on emotions in advertising, as marketers saw that just plain information would not be enough. Human beings are both rational and emotional. They make decisions based not only on rationality but most of the time based on feelings, emotions, stories, or the ability to empathize.

Thus, from the 1980s, the importance of finding out more about how emotions can determine the effectiveness of advertisements arose on two major grounds: first, according to evidence, choices can be based as much on affective-emotional factors as on rational inputs. Zajonc (1980) argues that *"if we stop to consider just how much variance in the course of our lives is controlled by cognitive processes and how much by affect, we cannot but agree that affective phenomena deserve far more attention than they have received"* (p. 172). Translated into advertising, he suggests that emotions should be researched and used in helping to explain the variance in purchasing behavior. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, purchase decisions are not in themselves the end state of any marketing system. Rather, as Alderson pointed out, we must distinguish between buying and consuming. The former merely serves the latter (Alderson, 1957). What matters most – both for the quality of life and for the likelihood of a repeat purchase – is satisfaction with the consumption experience itself. All of this considered, research cannot guide advertising strategy effectively unless it considers how the brand or product fits into the emotion-laden experience of consumption.

According to the earliest advertising model AIDA, introduced by Strong (1925), an emotional reaction (here: desire) occurred only after consumers had experienced interest for the advertisement or the product. This led to the conception that the advertising process starts with attention (A) and cognitive processing (Interest), which leads to affect (Desire), and then generates behavior (Action) (pp. 75-86). From the 1980s on, the role of emotion changed. Driven by the work of Zajonc, who argued that emotion has primacy over and can function independent of cognition, emotions gained renewed attention and were being accepted as an important mediator of cognitive and behavioral consumer responses to advertising which has led to the general conception that emotions are not a useless by-product but are essential for rational thinking and behavior.

After that, literature shows that the complete emotional experience includes cognitive components involving beliefs, values, and evaluation as well as psychological changes producing feelings and desires leading to expressive behavior (Holbrook & O'Shaughnessy, 1984). Perhaps the most familiar use of emotion is to produce an affect-based attitude or image of the brand or product.

The use of emotional themes, symbols, or other materials in advertising can clearly be effective in developing and perpetuating positive reactions to a product. By generating an array of *feelings* or *moods* and associating these experiences with the brand or product class, powerful images can be developed and maintained (Mizerski & White, 1986). Evoking positive emotional responses is considered a potent strategy to engage consumers from moment to moment in video advertisements. That is, to attract their attention and retain them from start to finish.

All of these lead to another key point when it comes to emotions and advertising, which is their effectiveness. Hamelin, Moujahid, and Thaichon (2017) present in their study that there are five independent dimensions that can be assessed when measuring advertising effectiveness: the first dimension evaluates the target audience attitude towards the ad itself, the second dimension measures the audience's attitude towards the brand, the third and fourth measure the audience purchasing intention and the actual purchase, and the last one estimates recall for the brand and the product being advertised.

The complexity of measuring advertising effectiveness increases if the variable *emotion* is introduced. Emotion has been found to considerably impact the response an individual will have toward a message (Lewinski, Fransen, & Tan, 2014). An emotional message in advertisements increases the audience's attention toward the advertisement and product, boosts product attractiveness, and generates a higher level of brand recall. For example, Page, Thorson, and Heide (1990) found that emotional advertisements are more likely to be remembered than informative commercials.

On the other hand, emotion might play a successful role in an advertising campaign by simply increasing the impact of the message. The most fundamental distinction concerns the difference between positive and negative emotions associated with pleasantness/ unpleasantness, favorability/ unfavorability, or approach/ avoidance. This basic contrast receives support from the second approach, which has generally found three or more bipolar dimensions involving (1) pleasantness (paralleling the positive/negative distinction), (2) activation or arousal, and (3) other aspects such as dominance, competence, potency, or intensity (Holbrook & O'Shaughnessy, 1985). PAD was introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) as three independent emotional dimensions to describe people's state of feeling. They conceived pleasure as a continuum ranging from extreme unhappiness to extreme happiness and used adjectives such as happy-unhappy, pleased-annoyed, and satisfied-unsatisfied to define a person's level of pleasure. Arousal was conceived as a mental activity describing the state of feeling along a single dimension ranging from sleep to frantic excitement and linked to adjectives such as stimulated-relaxed, excited-calm, and wide-awake-sleepy, to define arousal. Dominance was related to feelings of control and the extent to which an individual feels restricted in his behavior (Bakker et al., 2014). This scale was used in this research as well and will be discussed further into this paper.

All of these considered, it is clear for every person who works or does research in the field of advertising that emotions are playing a big role in how consumers perceive the product and influences their buying behavior.

Next on, we wanted to focus our attention on one element that can induce emotions in advertisements, which is music.

Music in advertising

Nowadays, using songs to provoke emotions is commonly applied in advertising, but back in the early 1960s, this technique was encountered only in movies. Thus, Mitch Leigh, the founder of a jingle company, had the spectacular revelation that, through music, he could touch human sensibilities. He focused more and more on *musical psychology* wishing that, one day, he could master the art of creating songs that make ordinary people react emotionally to an advertisement (Taylor, 2012).

Music is an essential feature of every successful campaign and advertisers are aware of this fact more than ever. They understood that the sense of sound is linked to feelings and emotions and impacts the way we see a commercial. As a result, many pieces of research tackle this subject seeking effective ways of generating emotions.

Many experiments try to evaluate the emotional response to advertising messages and the relationship between the induced feelings and their impact on participants. A Spanish team (Baraybar-Fernández et al., 2017) experimented with eight commercials: six of them represented basic emotions (joy, surprise, anger, disgust, fear, sadness) and two of them showed only technical characteristics of the product. To measure the heart and epidermal activity, the researchers used neuromarketing techniques such as ECG and EDA. These research techniques, among a more conventional one, a questionnaire, showed that the commercial regarding sadness was the best-remembered. Besides that, the SickKids advertisement was considered the most captivating, while rational commercials got the smallest percentage of attractiveness.

When a commercial's content is mainly based on affective involvement, rather than cognitive, background music is the most effective (Hoeberichts, 2012). The researcher analyzed the songs of four commercials for Nespresso, Dior, Kit Kat, and Volkswagen. Additionally, she states that products such as jewelry, cosmetics, sportswear, and beer are usually the ones requiring low cognitive engagement. On the other hand, in advertisements for high cognitive involvement, music becomes the least important and has an insignificant impact on consumers.

Other studies explore the relationship between a song tempo or pitch and the listeners' mood and attitude. A fast tempo increases the level of arousal and excitement and is also considered as more pleasant to hear. Holbrook and Punam (1988) found that advertisements with fast background music are associated with more positive reactions than the ones with a slower tempo.

Another experimental design (Kim et al., 2018) tested the therapeutic effect of music. Initially, the music had the same tempo as the listener's heartbeat and then gradually decelerated to induce relaxation. This procedure was successful in stress relieving, well-being level rising, and increasing the peripheral blood flow.

Experience proves that a major mode triggers lively and joyful feelings, while the minor scale is associated with melancholy and depression. An experiment not only supports the previous idea, but it also shows that consumers prefer advertisement accompanied by major or mixed-mode music (Scherer & Oshinsky, 1977). Moreover, participants mentioned that minor-scaled music is more unpleasant and irritating.

Another paper tried to determine if there was a heavy difference in emotional response, brand attitude, and purchase intent between emotionally involving advertisements, with and without music (Morris & Boone, 1998). The experimental design describes two groups: one viewed 12 print advertisements with music playing in the background, while the other one saw the same advertisements without the music.

The results showed a variation between each of the 12 prints across pleasure, arousal, dominance, brand attitude and purchase intent. The most significant contrast between the music and no music group were the ones concerning child abuse, Sony, Anti-fur, cancer, Guess Jeans, and Millennium (Morris & Boone, 1998). In the case of Anti-fur advertisement, the background music helped the participants to empathize better and to feel less pleasure.

Music and recall

Furthermore, one important question that should be asked is: how does the music present in ads (jingles, background music) aids recall? This field of study has been filled with experiments and papers since the 1980s and there are different hypotheses, whether the music helps with the recall or is just a distraction (Wallace, 1991).

Researchers have come to some conclusion, stating that music in an advertisement influences the affective side of the brain. It has been stated to influence some acts on an unconscious level, like walking and eating. When background music is chosen carefully, it can influence some consumer behaviors (Milliman cited in Wallace, 1991).

Recall, on the other hand, is a task that requires our cognition. People need to force their mind, to recall different elements of an ad, a brand, or a certain song (Dowling, Tillman, & Ayers, 2001). Recall, as a psychological behavior, represents a key factor in daily lives. It is considered that recall has a great deal of importance in learning. Previous experiences and knowledge shape our current behaviors. We can extrapolate from this that, if we consider consumer behavior as a constant learning action, recall can be considered a very important factor in the decision process.

According to a study conducted at the University of Liverpool on the impact of music as a learning and recall mechanism, it has been stated that music helps a lot regarding the implicit memory. More exactly, music has aided the subjects of an experiment to remember words and images presented in the commercial, rather than explicit facts, like the story of the advertisement (Alexomanolaki, Loveday, & Kennett, 2007).

Also, the same study suggests that jingles are the most powerful type of music presented in an ad. The vocal context can help the consumer remember some parts of the ad because the lyrics get stored the same way a melody is - *"perceived and stored"*

(Alexomanolaki, Loveday, & Kennett, 2007, p. 67).

The literature suggests that, to enhance the ability to recall, a song or jingle is due to have these characteristics: the lyrics have to be comprehensible; the text of the song has to be congruent with the rhythm and tempo of the song and the pattern should be simple, with ascends and descends of tempo (Wallace, 1991).

As we stated before, the literature is torn between many directions of study. One such direction is the fact that background advertisement music, when not truly congruent with the

message and not capable of retaining the consumer's attention, will do more harm to the brand recall initiative (Oakes, 2007).

Also, another interesting direction that should be taken into consideration is advertisement with charts hits on the background. This has been proved not very efficient, as the message isn't congruent with the advertisement message that the copywriter wanted to portray through the ad. Also, this would steal away the attention from the advertisement towards the well-known hits (Oakes, 2007). For this, we also have evidence shown in a study conducted by Heaton and Paris (2006). The two researchers wanted to see how congruency of the message with the music relates to the recall of the ad.

Although the literature provided grounds for their experiment, their hypotheses were not confirmed. Partly, because the chosen music was added on top of the advertisement, not designed specifically for the advertisement. Another reason, they state, is the familiarity of the song in question. Though the researchers thought that their subjects are familiar with the songs, it turned out after a questionnaire that it was not the case (Heaton & Paris, 2006).

Another important part of the literature suggests that instrumental well-known music could improve the recall elements, because it forces the cognitive area of the brain to remember the lyrics. Here, the greatest limitation of most studies is the chosen song. Not all subjects know the song from the ad, so the researchers could not reach a conclusion about this (Heaton & Paris, 2006).

When talking about well-known music and its parity with an advertisement, we should also watch for the attention that the music itself grabs from the consumer. If not chosen carefully, the music will steal all the attention from the advertisement. Thus, it would not fulfill its purpose, that of improving advertisement recall and ad likability (Oakes, 2007).

The study conducted by Aydin (2014) suggests that the recall of an ad is also influenced by the ad likability. If the song that is used in an advertisement is liked by the target audience that the ad reaches, the level of ad recall should increase.

The present research looks into how music influences ad recall, but somehow different from what the literature already suggests. We tried looking into how sad and happy instrumental melodies would influence the ability to recall some key elements of an ad.

Methodology

This paper started from the curiosity of researching what role do emotions play in advertising, as the use of them started to become more and more popular and it is found at the base of every good advertising strategy. Narrowing it down, we decided to only focus our attention on one element that generates emotions: **music**. Therefore, this paper aims to see **what role music plays in inducing certain emotions in advertising**, if a happy song induces a good state of being and vice-versa and so, how it can induce a certain mood to the viewer. Alongside that, we wanted to see **if musical congruity has a role to play in inducing that mood**. Moreover, we investigated the **recall of the brand elements and of the story** and asked if it has a direct connection with the type of music that runs in the background of an advertisement.

All of these considered, alongside the literature we reviewed, we started this research with three main hypotheses:

H1: Sad instrumental music in advertisements induces a sad mood to the viewers;

H2: Happy instrumental music in advertisements induces a happy mood to the viewers;

H3: The recall of an ad and its elements is better if it has sad instrumental music in the background.

With these in mind, we conducted an **experiment** with 18 participants. This sample was chosen so that we could eliminate demographic variables: we had 9 female and 9 male participants, all students aged 19 to 22 which were divided into 3 equal groups (each group had 3 females and 3 males from rural and city side).

The experiment took place in 3 steps. First, they were asked to complete a **PAD** (Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance) scale so that we could get a taste of how the participants were feeling before the experiment, to try and eliminate the limitation of them already being in a certain mood, and so the advertisement had no role to play. We chose the PAD scale by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) as it was a scale introduced to measure the experience and perception of the physical environment that were difficult to compare (Bakker et al., 2014). We did not have to use all the three dimensions, as the emphasis that we placed was on **negative and positive emotions** induced by music.

The Pleasure dimension that we used, was described by the two researchers purely in terms of negative and positive feelings. We used the most recent interpretations of the adjectives that would describe this dimension: happy-unhappy; pleased-annoyed; satisfied-unsatisfied; contented-melancholic; hopeful-despairing; amused-bored. Thus, the participants had to choose on a semantic differential scale from 1 to 7 (1=totally disagree - 7=totally agree) the adjective that matched their state of being the best. The next step involved our participants to **watch an advertisement**. Here, the important aspects to mention are that each group could only see the video once and that the advertisement was chosen in such way that they would not have seen it before, as it was very recent, and that the brand which advertised was not one that could be found in their country, so we could have a true recalling experience. **Our control group** saw the ad as it was, with no music in the background, just hearing the noises and the dialog. **The first experimental group** saw the same ad, but with our **independent variable** introduced, which is happy instrumental music in the background. **The second experimental group** saw the same ad but this time with sad instrumental music in the background. The happy music was chosen based on a top consisting of 10 songs (Garrigues, 2020) that are scientifically proven to induce positive emotions. Even though the happiest one was *Don't stop me now* by Queen, we thought that its popularity will affect our results. Therefore, we decided to go for *I'm a believer* by Smash Mouth. As for the sad song, a simple YouTube search was enough to find an emotional piano instrumental.

An experiment (Brattico et al., 2020) analyzed to what extent the lyrics of a song affect the way subjects perceive musical emotions, by observing brain activity. The results showed that the feelings induced by a happy song without lyrics are experienced more

deeply. For this reason, we chose the instrumental version for both happy and sad songs. After viewing the ad, the participants had to answer **4 questions that would measure recall.** They were asked about the brand, the product, the tagline, and a last open question about what they remembered best from the ad. The last question was intentionally an open one so that we could see what the participants remembered freely, with no specific question or hints. This was followed by the same Pleasure scale from the PAD, as we wanted to compare the results with those before them seeing the ad. To eliminate the fact that they may have remembered what they answered previously, we doubled the emotional scale with a **25 items GEMS** (Geneva Emotional Music Scale). They had to choose from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) for each of the 25 emotions that they had after watching the ad. It is important to mention that the participants were not asked to describe the ad, but how it made them feel. The GEMS-25 is the brief version of the GEMS-45. The only difference being that it aims at fitting the model with a lesser number of items to provide a shorter measure of the nine musical emotion factors. The best items, i.e., those having relatively high factor loadings all while maximizing model-fit, were the ones retained for GEMS-25. The nine musical emotions factor that we would be able to look after interpreting the results are wonder, transcendence, power, tenderness, nostalgia, peacefulness, joyful activation, sadness, and tension, which are all emotions that can be seen as positive or negative and therefore, would complete the PAD scale.
Lastly, they were asked if they knew the music from the commercial and what kind of music they usually listen to, so to see if their mood was influenced by the familiarity of it, followed by demographic questions.

Results

The control group

Each of our groups was shown an advertisement from the chocolate brand Cadbury-Dairy Milk. However, the control group saw the original advertisement, without music as the independent variable in the background. The control group's ad had the original sound, which consisted mainly of birds chirping and sounds of nature, along with the dialogue.

This group was formed of 6 participants (3 male, 3 female), aged between 20 and 21 years, all of them currently attending college.

After comparing the results of the PAD scale which the subjects completed before and after seeing the ad, the results came along as follows: **Happiness** increased from an average of 5,33 to a 5,66. The level of **pleasantness** grew from 4,33 to an average of 5. Also, the level of **satisfaction** reached a higher average: 4,66 from 4,33. The **amusement** that the subjects felt also increased slightly, from a 4 to a 4,33. Hopefulness was the value that escalated the most: from 4,66 to 5,83. The only feeling that had lower values after the advertisement was shown was the **Contended** one. The values were hanging towards the **melancholy** level, at a rate of 2,83, whereas the first PAD submission showed us an average of 3.16 at this group.

After the PAD scale, we wanted to see more of our subjects' emotional state, especially after seeing the advertisement. We chose the GEMS scale to see how music affects participants. For the experimental groups, that was necessary, and to measure their emotions accurately, we chose to apply the GEMS on the control group also, as it measured feelings of great intensity (Wonder, Tenderness, Nostalgia), feelings that could have been replicated by the story in the ad also, not just by music. After analyzing the results, the data showed us that between the nine emotions that GEMS scale covers, the control group scored best when it comes to Nostalgia, Tenderness and Peacefulness, with Sadness and Tension being last.

The most powerful feeling after seeing the ad is **nostalgia**. This, in relation to the melancholy level from the PAD scale that spiked after seeing the ad, can provide some interesting insights, that will be further discussed in our paper. Also, the feelings with the biggest values are positive feelings, like tenderness, peacefulness, and wonder. Sad feelings are on the bottom side of our table, which shows us that the advertisement did not imply sad feelings, but rather pleasant ones. Thus, we can conclude that both the PAD and the GEMS scale gave us results that lead us to the fact that the emotions felt by our subjects were mainly positive.

We also aimed to analyze the recall of our subjects regarding important aspects of the ad, like the brand presented or the product that is presented in the advertisement. All the subjects in the control group recalled that the advertised product was a chocolate egg. The brand was correctly attributed as Cadbury by 2 subjects, 3 of them had partially attributed it correctly to the Dairy Milk sub-brand, while 1 of our subjects mistook it for Milka, supposedly due to the similarities of the two brand identities. We also wanted to see how our subjects recalled the slogan of the ad - *There is a glass and a half in everyone.* One of them recalled it completely, one partially, while 4 did not remember the slogan at all.

Our last question regarding recall was an open-ended one, where our subjects could tell us what they remembered from the advertisement. Most of them recalled some part of the story, while all of them were able to pinpoint to an exact moment of the ad which made them feel somehow different. While some brand elements were not remembered by our control group subjects, the story was recalled by all of them.

When asked about how much they liked the ad, the values were quite high. Only one subject valued it as a 1, while the other chose bigger values (5,6,7). Also, the story was quite appreciated, but it had the same "1" value as the likability of the ad question.

Though not containing any background music, we asked the control group how much did they like the music and if they knew the song. Here, 5 people answered that they were so and so about liking it, while 1 of them liked it. Regarding the familiarity to the song, 4 of them said they were totally unfamiliar with the song, while 2 claimed to be "not familiar". This can be seen as an error and limitation but could rather stand out as how the subjects perceived the white noise (birds chirping, wind blowing, cars, the wood's sound) as music. This should be further discussed in the later parts of our paper. Therefore, we can conclude that the control group subjects increased their levels of pleasant feelings after seeing the ad. Also, they were able to pinpoint some key brand elements very well and the story of the ad was recalled by every subject.

The first experimental group

For our first experimental group, we **introduced our independent variable: music.** It was a **happy instrumental** from the song *I'm a believer* by Smash Mouth. The PAD scale that we used before and after introducing our independent variable (T1 and T2), showed some differences in the way the participants felt.

This group was formed of 6 participants aged between 20 and 22 years, 2 of them finished college and the other 4 are currently studying.

We compared the answers to the PAD scale from before the experimental moment to those after it. If the 6 participants had an **average of happiness** of 5,60 before, after viewing the ad it increased to 5,83. **Pleasantness** grew from 5,16 to 5,66. **Satisfaction** from

4,85 to 5. **Hopefulness** grew slightly from 5,5 to 5,6 and the **amusement** from 4,0 to 5,0. The only emotion that decreased was **melancholy**: from 5,0 to 3,60. All of these, which you can see in the graphic below, show that even though the difference may seem insignificant, their positive emotions were influenced by the music in the ad, even though the story of the video may have seemed more like sad in the beginning. All the happy emotions increased, and melancholy decreased after seeing the ad, comparing to the initial state the participants found themselves in.

To go even further with the emotions, we doubled the PAD scale with **GEMS**. For each group we calculated the results to see how the music affected participants and what was the emotion they felt after watching the advertisement. As for our first experimental group, the nine emotions that GEMS analyzes revealed that emotions that are associated with a positive state of being are in the first positions. Participants felt tenderness, relaxation, happiness, energy, and nostalgia after viewing the ad that had a happy instrumental in the background. Sadness and Tension are the last 2 emotions in our top. Thus, as both the GEMS and the PAD scales show, positive emotions were associated with happy and positive music.

As for the recall, the data analysis from this experimental group showed that 5 out of 6 participants remembered the product that was presented in the ad, an egg made of chocolate. When it came to the brand that advertised that product, only one person remembered the brand name fully correct (Cadbury). One of them partially remembered and said *dairy milk*, but the main name of the brand was left out. The other 4 participants mistaken the brand for Milka, because of what we supposed to be the color similarity.

We also wanted to see if they could remember the tagline correctly or at least partially correct. The tagline was *There is a glass and a half in everyone.* Only one participant remembered it in this exact form and one of them partially correct (There is a glass and a half for everyone). One more participant remembered some of the words and the rest of them did not remember the tagline, which appeared at the very end of the video.

Our last question regarding recall was an open one, in which they had to tell us what they remembered from the advertisement they just watched. Surprisingly enough, considering the answers to the first three questions, they all remembered the storyline, the characters involved, the moment of the day, the struggle of the boy, and the emotions of the girl, and one person even specified the music in the background. So although the details of the brand were not remembered, the whole story was remembered correctly, from the beginning to the end.

This can be supported by the fact that when asked how much they enjoyed both the ad and the story, they all gave high grades. They liked to some degree the instrumental music in the background as well, but less than the story and they mentioned that they were slightly familiar with that sound.

Therefore, when it comes to the experimental group that listened to happy music in the background, the impact on the positive emotions they felt after watching the advertisement was clear. When it comes to recall, they were much more able to remember the story and the big picture than the details and the elements of the brand.

The second experimental group

For the second experimental group, we changed the independent variable with an **emotional piano instrumental**. Therefore, the participants saw the advertisement with the original sound doubled by sad piano music playing in the background.

This group was formed of 6 subjects (3 male and 3 female) aged between 19 and 21 years, all of them currently attending college.

After analyzing the answers of the PAD scale, we noticed some variations in their general feeling before and after viewing the ad. **Happiness** slightly increased from 5,5 to 5,66, although **pleasantness** dropped from 5,33 to 4,83. **Amusement** reached a higher average after watching the advertisement, from 4,5 to 5,66. The **contentedness** level grew from 3,83 to 4,33. The only feeling that remained steady was **hopefulness** with an average value of 5,83. The most spectacular growth was in the level of satisfaction: from 4,33 to 5,83. Even though the emotional piano instrumental was supposed to decrease the positive feelings, they reached even higher values after the experimental moment. As you can see in the graphic below, the differences are fairly considerable.

For a better understanding of the subjects' emotional state, we applied the same GEMS scale used for the other two groups. As a result, we got a more accurate insight into the way they felt about the commercial. After calculating the results, every emotion included in the GEMS scale got a score which how profound were their sentiments.

We can easily observe that the first positions are taken over by positive emotions: tenderness, joyful activation, peacefulness. However, the strongest one is **nostalgia**. If we keep things in perspective, the overall situation reveals that, after seeing the ad with a sad instrumental in the background, the participants did not focus on our independent variable. Thus, the feelings with the lowest values are sadness and tension. Even though nostalgia and tenderness are not fundamentally sad emotions, they can be easily considered consequences of highly emotional music. This idea will be further analyzed in the discussion section by comparing the results with the other two groups.

Considering both GEMS and PAD scales, we can conclude that despite our intention to influence the subjects' perception of the commercial, their emotions were mainly positive.

We wanted to measure the **recall** regarding the key elements of the advertisement. The product - a chocolate egg - was remembered by 5 out of 6 participants from this experimental group. When asked about the brand presented in the ad, only 2 persons answered correctly (Cadbury), while the others associated it to Milka or did not remember.

When it came to recalling the tagline (*There is a glass and a half in everyone*) from the very end of the commercial, only one subject memorized it completely, 2 partially and 3 could not remember it at all. As for the last question, which requested them to say what they remember from the advertisement, all the participants recalled correctly the storyline. Furthermore, some of them gave details while depicting it: the boy's attempts to bring the chocolate egg to her sister and the moment when she woke up next to her gift. All in all, even though the subjects did not remember so well the branding elements, they recollected the storyline.

We also wanted to know how much they liked the commercial and its storyline. Both were deeply appreciated with scores exceeding 4 (so and so), but the story of the ad enjoyed a warmer reception. We also asked the participants how much they liked the music and if they heard it before. After analyzing their answers, we saw they did not know the instrumental, but they partly liked it.

Taking all into consideration, we can conclude that the experimental group that viewed the ad with sad piano instrumental in the background paid little attention to the sound. Their focus of interest was the storyline, as each of them recalled it correctly. Although we expected a certain emotional impact, not only that the happy feelings remained steady after watching the advertisement, but they even increased.

Discussion

After analyzing the results, we could determine if our hypotheses were validated or not. For a better understanding, we will divide the findings in two: emotions and recall.

If we investigated the **PAD comparisons**, the group that increased its happiness the most was the control group, the one that had no music in the background. Another interesting finding is that, surprisingly enough, the second experimental group, meaning the one that had sad instrumental music running in the background of the ad increased the **level of happiness** as well, even if we are talking about a slight 0,1. It may be that the happy ending of the commercial still managed to induce them a happier mood, despite the sad music that was playing in the background.

Moving on to **pleasantness**, although the control group and the first experimental group increased their level of pleasantness, the „sad music group" did not. Theirs decreased with 0,5, compared to the initial scale. Interestingly enough, the participants may have associated sad music with unpleasantness, even though the story of the ad had a happy ending and that it made them happier. It may be that the pleasantness decreased, but the **satisfaction** increased the most, more exactly with 1,5. We may interpret that they were more satisfied with the happy ending because they did not expect it, as the music was very sad. That would also explain why the „happy music group" had the lowest increase, as they were not so surprised with the ending, because all the elements described happiness.

Hopefulness stayed the same for the second experimental group, but it increased the most for the control group. Another interesting aspect regards **melancholy**: whereas the sad music group was the single group that increased the level of contentedness, which in the PAD scale is opposite to melancholy, the happy music group decreased contentedness the most, with 1,4. So, after watching the ad with the happy music, the participants felt more melancholic. We can suppose that that it is based on them recalling some memories from their childhood or associating the ad with pleasant feelings, as it gives them a positive mood. The last emotion, **amusement**, increased the least in the control group. Therefore, we can say that the absence of music led to a smaller decrease of the participants' boredom, as the experimental groups both had more than a 1,0 difference.

Sticking with emotions, we drove our attention to the **findings of the GEMS scale,** which were at least as interesting. The saddest group was, ironically maybe at a first sight, the group that had happy music in the background. It was, however, the group that had the lowest score in tension, therefore, the music from the background helped with that. The second experimental group has, excepting nostalgia, tenderness, joyful activation, and peacefulness in the top 4 emotions. Meaning that, besides the high grade of nostalgia that was induced by the story of the ad accompanied by the music, **our first hypothesis did not validate.**

However, looking at the first experimental group, we see that the highest values are associated with positive emotions: tenderness, wonder, peacefulness, power. And, moreover, joyful activation has the highest score in this group. Therefore, looking both into the PAD scale that showed increased values in positive emotions and the GEMS one that showed the same thing, **our second hypothesis is valid.** The control group did not have highest values in this scale, meaning that music played a key role in inducing participants certain emotions, as the ad remained the same.

Table 1: GEMS rankings (the highest scores are in bold)

Control Group	Experimental Group 1	Experimental Group2
Nostalgia - 63	**Tenderness - 67**	**Nostalgia - 67**
Tenderness - 62	**Wonder - 63**	Tenderness - 64
Peacefulness -57	**Peacefulness - 63**	Joyful Activation - 53
Wonder - 46	Nostalgia -59	Peacefulness - 52
Joyful Activation - 45	**Joyful Activation - 56**	Wonder - 45
Power - 36	**Power - 50**	Power - 43
Transcendence - 32	**Transcendence - 40**	Transcendence - 36
Sadness - 28	**Sadness -33**	Sadness - 26
Tension - 16	Tension - 14	**Tension - 16**

Looking into the second part of our research, the recall was divided in two main parts: **specific and wide recall.** When it came to the participants remembering specific elements from the ad (in connection with the implicit memory) such as brand, product or tagline, data tells us that the control group remembered more elements correctly, with the second experimental group only remembering more from the taglines correctly. Thus, when there was no music, they were better able to concentrate and remember more specific. Considering this, **our third hypothesis does not validate if we investigate the recall of specific elements**. However, if we look at the second part, when it came to reproduce the elements of the story that they recalled (with the help of explicit memory), both experimental groups were more likely to give more details about the story: the moment of the day, what holiday was it, what emotions did the characters felt, how did they look. They were more likely to write down more detailed elements, comparing to the control group that answered in brief, general words. Therefore, if we consider this second part, it may be beneficial to look more into the two types of recall, **as the third hypothesis may be partially valid**.

As a final thought, most of the participants liked the story of the advertisement they saw, and their taste in music, as we asked about that as well, did not interfere with the music we have chosen, so this was not a limitation.

Conclusions

After our experiment's results and the discussions segment, we would like to draw up some brief conclusions and some directions for further research, also discussing the limitations of our research.

Our first hypothesis, stating that sad music would induce a sad mood, did not stand our experiment and our results. This can be attributed mostly to the ad, as it had a happy ending and nothing from the script denoted a sorrowful mood, except for the song in the second experimental group. We can conclude here that sad music doesn't necessarily induce a sad state of mind, but this should be further researched.

Secondly, we can conclude that happy music in the background of an ad truly bestows a happy mood upon the viewer of the ad. We are more positive about this hypothesis' result because, even though the pleasant emotions raised in level after watching the ad for every group, the levels of the first experimental group, which had happy music in the background, were considerably higher than the other two.

Besides that, we could also draw a conclusion about the levels of recall of an ad aided by induced emotions through music. We hypothesized that sad instrumental music would bring out the best recall of the ad. Our hypothesis did not confirm that. However, recall levels were better on the experimental groups rather than the control group regarding explicit memory of the ad - mainly speaking, the storyline. They were able to pinpoint some important parts of the ad, while the control group was not so stimulated to do it. We can conclude about this that the music could have enticed the viewers to talk more about the ad and force their cognition to further depths, but for this to be confirmed, it should be further researched.

Talking about musical congruity, we can say that both the songs added onto the advertisement were congruent, in a way, with the message of the ad. The sad one could induce a sad mood, which later turned into a happy one once the ad ended and the viewers saw the happy ending. Also, the happy music fitted the ad, as it could have brought back memories of childhood. These, of course, are just assumptions, and we recommend that for further research, the difference in music and message congruity should be much higher, to be certain that musical congruity really influences the recall of different advertisement elements or not.

In conclusion, we can assume that music induces emotions, emotions that can further influence the levels of ad recall regarding story elements in an advertisement piece. Regarding brand elements, we must look further into that, as this research is not conclusive enough.

The PAD scale we applied to see how the subjects felt before and after the experimental moment was translated from English to Romanian. Considering this step, we are aware that our results were altered since some words most probably lost their true meaning. For further research, we strongly recommend conducting the experiment using the scale in its original form.

Another possible limitation of our paper lies in the limited context we had to conduct the experimental part. By this, we refer to the fact that we used an online platform for the experiment. So, display problems or the quality of the sound did not depend necessarily on us, but on everyone's internet access.

Since both music and the storyline influence us on a subconscious level, it is difficult to make a proper distinction between their effects. Therefore, one of our main limitations is that we cannot settle which one - the story of the ad or the background music - is responsible for a specific emotion felt by the participants. These effects should be researched from a neurological perspective to grasp which parts of the brain are activated by the story alone and what changes when the music variable appears. There would be two experimental groups: one viewing an advertisement with no sound and the other one watching the same ad, but with music in the background.

As we already mentioned in the discussion section, we reached the conclusion that the sad instrumental was not that effective, as the level of happiness increased after viewing the ad. However, the main reason for that is the happy ending of the storyline, so we suggest a more neutral advertisement for the ones who want to replicate our experiment.

Our recommendation for further research would imply an experiment about music congruity. We believe it would be interesting to study the effect of a song that does not match with the commercial's story at all.

Furthermore, we would eagerly repeat the whole experience to go even deeper with our third hypothesis: *The recall of an ad and its elements is better if it has sad instrumental music in the background.* The already used methods would be improved by an additional recall examination. A week later after the subjects see the commercials, they would be asked to recollect aspects of the storyline. In this way, we would be able to see which group - the control group, the experimental group with happy music or the one with sad music - scores the highest level of recall. This is how it would have been examined if the circumstances were suitable for our purpose.

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Social distancing through logos: Branding in crisis

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ABSTRACT
This paper analyzes the transformation of international brand logos from March to May 2020, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall purpose was to assess how crisis communication can aid in the effort to keep a brand relevant even in times of great uncertainty. A content analysis was performed on seven brand logos that were reimagined during the said period. For some of the brands, we have also looked at their official crisis communication strategy. The public's opinion on the matter was consulted through a sociological survey using a questionnaire, through which we studied the general response to these modified logos and the likelihood of engaging with the brand in the following period.

Keywords: logo, brand, pandemic, crisis strategy, effective communication.

Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic progressively spread around the globe from the beginning of 2020, more and more restrictions were adopted by governments to slow down the rate of infections. Since March 2020, normal life suffered numerous changes for tens of thousands of people everywhere. Curfews, quarantines, and other measures affected the way people shop, interact, and generally, the way they live. As such, businesses faced an urgent need to adapt to remain relevant and avoid bankruptcy. It is easy to see, then, that their communication strategy also had to change.

Evidently, a communication strategy juggles multiple elements, takes a lot of time to prepare, and needs even more time to be analyzed from the outside. The aim of the current research paper is to look at those companies that have adapted some elements of their strategy. The elements we analyzed were the logo and tagline. It is important to note that many fan-made logos circled the internet, but we decided to analyze only those that were official.

This research, thus, looks at how the logos and taglines were changed and how common the respective change was in the pool of companies analyzed. Moreover, the public's opinion was also consulted to see how they perceived these changes. We considered it to be important because the goal of a communication strategy is to engage the public, and no research of this type should overlook the simple question: **RQ1: (How) does the public perceive brand changes during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Brands and logos

At its beginning, branding meant *to burn*. The term evolved into what it is today because, at the time, burning was the only way to mark goods and animals with their producer's trademark. Over the time, *brand* was used more and more in commerce, until it reached today's meaning (Blackett, 2004).

In the overly saturated marketplace we are living in, brands are struggling to create preference for a product. The logo is a key component of brand identity, that provides instant recognition for the brand and the product. Logos are crossing international boundaries and language barriers because of their visual character. Over time, some companies may opt to change their logo to gain relevance. However, if not done right a logo change or update may be disadvantageous (Kohli & Suri, 2002).

Nowadays, when we think of brand, we think of a product or service delivered by a certain company and, in some cases, we think of the company itself. In fact, we can argue that the general consumer no longer makes a difference between the company that owns a certain brand, and the brand itself. As such, it is clear to see that protecting one's brand is extremely important.

After defining what a brand is and establishing its importance in a company's market success, we reviewed literature on brand management in crisis. Overall, we have found that crisis management is defined as *"strategies that are employed by management when a brand is threatened by [...] a deterioration in consumer and business customer approval and from decline in public trust"* (Greyser, 2009).

However, the crisis we are currently facing does not strictly refer to the points mentioned above. In fact, another type of crisis is threatening the brands of today. With the newly imposed measures to stop the spreading of COVID-19 around the entire world, it is not one brand that is affected but rather, the entire economy. Obviously, entire studies can (and will) be written about the said crisis.

But how are brands affected? In the following years, as more studies emerge, we will see exactly just how much damage was done to the real estate industry, the public transport one and, even more, the event industry. But, for now, we aimed to take a quick look at the efforts brands are putting in right now to ensure future customer loyalty.

Methodology and results

Two research methods were employed in carrying out this research: content analysis and sociological inquiry. To analyze how brands changed their logo and tagline, seven companies were included: Audi, Burger King, Chiquita, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Mercedes, and Volkswagen. The brands were selected conveniently, based on out observation of their change during the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic; seven variables were included in the analysis, as seen in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Content analysis grid

Variables	Audi	Volkswagen	Chiquita	Cola-Cola	McDonald's	Mercedes	Burger King
Includes "visual distancing"	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Changes in Brand Colors							
The change was applied internationally	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Has a more complex communication strategy					✓		✓
Changed the tagline	✓	✓		✓			✓
Changed the logo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Based on the analysis grid, the following observations were made:

- 6 out of 7 brands changed their logos, while only one brand chose to update just their tagline;
- 4 out of 7 brands updated their tagline;
- 5 out of 7 brands included elements that suggest social distancing. Both brands lacking this encouraged staying at home;
- None of the brands changed their colors;
- 4 brands applied change on an international scale; in the other 3 cases, the changes were part of local communication campaigns;
- 2 of the brands employed a larger communication strategy.

Besides the seven variables included in the analysis, some other data was obtained. McDonald's employed a bigger communication strategy, advertising its delivery option via several posts in social media. Moreover, they tackled the COVID-19 crisis by addressing their measures of ensuring food safety over most of the countries in which they operate.

Burger King is the other brand who chose to adopt a bigger strategy. Although no alterations were brought to the logo itself, the tagline was changed to encourage staying at home. Another measure taken was the creation of a new product, called the Social Distancing Burger, featuring 3 layers of onions as a way of "keeping people at a safe distance".

The content analysis enabled us to draw the following conclusions: Companies may count on brand loyalty in driving customers to buy their product. Given the fact that the colors are of extreme importance when it comes to brand recognition, none of the brands analyzed employed modifications to the colors. For most of the brands we analyzed, changing their logo was the only form of crisis communication strategy. We must, however, consider that most of these brands would not necessarily need to adapt their communication because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, those who desperately needed to adapt (being the food chains) are the ones who have taken great measures to ensure a flow of customers.

For Chiquita (American company that grows and distributes bananas) a communication strategy was not a necessity, because contracts that ensured they sell their products to supermarkets were still in place. Car manufacturers as well might not necessarily need a strategy. Although their profits might come to a stop for a while, their industry is strong enough to survive and, even if they were to employ a strategy, it would have little to no effect.

Lastly, some brands changed their logos only locally, in some of the countries where they activate. We do not have enough data to support motives, whether caused by cultural differences, corporate politics, or other factors.

Survey results

Through a questionnaire of 13 questions, we aimed to survey students on the topic of changes employed by brands during the emergence of the pandemic. The respondents were students from the Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences, the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, and Iuliu Hatieganu University of Medicine and Pharmacy, aged between 19 and 22 years old. The sample was selected conveniently, based on access to student groups on social media.

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to check respondents' familiarity with the changes made by the brands selected for the content analysis. We discovered that the most popular logo belonged to McDonald's, followed by Audi and Coca-Cola. The least recognized brand was Chiquita. The second section of our survey aimed to see the perception of the respondents on the chosen brands. On a scale from 1 to 5, the best logo at communicating social distancing belongs to McDonald's, followed by Coca-Cola, Audi, and Mercedes in this order, according to our subjects. Public's opinion on these brands seems to be a very positive one, respondents affirming that the brands care for their customers and they are responsible, not inconsistent, nor are they asking for too much attention.

Surprisingly, the public does not find these brands more attractive than before seeing the modified logos. However, the subjects intended to engage more with the mentioned brands in the future. The least attractive brand was Chiquita and the one with the biggest desire for future engagement in the future was Coca-Cola.

Conclusions

After analyzing the results obtained from the two methods, we have reached a series of conclusions regarding our research question. The public surveyed does not necessarily view the transformation of logos as attractive. Although positive responses were received on the social media platforms of these brands, from our survey it resulted that the attractiveness of these brands did not increase with the change. Still, the brands were not perceived as misleading, fake, or exploitive when adapting their communication to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brand recognition plays an important part in the perception of future campaigns. We saw that those brands that were already well known by the public obtained a better response from the campaign than those who were lesser known. Depending on the market approach, such a crisis communication strategy might be useful, or it might not make a difference. This aspect relies on how the crisis affected the company and its field of activity. Strategies like these can give the public the general feeling that the company cares beyond profits and shows empathy to its customers.

And as a general conclusion of our research, we can mention that we have had a hard time in establishing one clear result. The responses to the survey oscillated and the pool of companies studied was very small. Further research would be needed to confirm our findings, but because of the changing nature of the global situation we are in at the time of this research, it is unclear if such a study can and will be conducted. Moreover, this research was rather exploratory and only capitalized on changes resulting from the emergence of the crisis.

We conclude that updating a logo as a form of crisis communication brand management might be beneficial to some brands and might make no difference to others. When deciding whether to add such a measure to their strategies, companies should take into consideration the market they are in, their specific goals, and the way this change can be integrated in a bigger strategy.

As for limitations of the present paper, the content analysis looks at the effect of the change and can miss the cause. In order words, we still do not know what drove these companies to apply changes to their visual identity. We have drawn a few conclusions, but without inside knowledge as to what led to certain choices being made in the company, we cannot be sure of the accuracy – even if these changes related to the measures taken by the authorities due to the pandemic, such as social distancing.

The brands we analyzed are also very different. As stated before, some might desperately need a crisis communication strategy, while others will probably survive without one. Not having uniformity in company types, results cannot necessarily be generalized. Our pool of respondents was limited. With only 45 responses and because all of the respondents were students, it is without a doubt not enough data to generalize to other categories of the public – even across the student population in Cluj-Napoca, as the sample was not randomized.

Some of these brands had a head start because they are more present in the lives of our respondents. As such, we cannot necessarily compare the results of Coca-Cola with the results of Chiquita, because the former was present in the life of all the participants, while the later was almost at all absent. We cannot be sure that the future engagement rates are accurate, again because the public might be biased in favor of some brands. This means that a person drinking Coca-Cola frequently might, and probably will, continue to engage with the brand regardless of its logo change. It is very difficult to separate the engagement that would naturally follow from the one deriving from this communication strategy. Further analyses are, thus, needed to see how brands adjusted their communication strategy and how effective it was in terms of audience perception and consumer behavior.

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Fundraising innovation in crisis situations

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Abstract
This paper aims to present the relationship between the innovation, fundraising, and crisis situation with direct applicability in non-governmental organizations, mainly Rotaract District 2241 - Romania and Republic of Moldova. From a theoretical perspective, the tendency of the pre-crisis fundraising and its impact on global society is analyzed. This theoretical part is completed by a methodological one, in which the hypothesis is checked, and a solution is proposed. Thus, it is expected that some innovation strategies can be figured out and applied in the case of the fundraising process for both the crisis and post-crisis situation of the clubs which build up the 2241 Rotaract District. The analysis is based on 40 questionnaires and 3 interviews, done online between April and May 2020. The research question and the two hypotheses were validated based on their results. This research is not valid for an entire population, but it is relevant for an organization, in which members agreed to answer questionnaires and the interview. Thus, the main application of this research is to facilitate the transition of the fundraising actions of Rotaract District 2241 from the offline to the online environment.

Keywords: innovation, fundraising, crisis, funds, Rotaract.

Introduction

Richard Nixon affirmed that life represents a series of crises - "life is one crisis after another". From the global crisis of 2007-2010 to the large-scale protests against institutional racism following the death of George Floyd at the start of June 2020, and from the terrorist attacks which destroyed the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001, to the Covid-19 pandemic which paralyzed the entire human race, the Earth's population has gone through all sorts of crises ever since life began on this planet.

The main objectives of this paper are to sum up the current tendencies in fundraising in a period of global crisis, and to create a new steppingstone for the Rotaract network of District 2241 in its future fundraising activities. To achieve this, I have posited one research question and two hypotheses.

The question which stands at the root of my research is: **RQ1: Can there be any innovative elements added to a classical fundraising campaign, such that the campaign can happen during a crisis or crisis period?** I have also posited 2 hypotheses, with applicability in the Rotaract D2241 network:

H1: The more individuals are affected by the crisis or crisis period, the more funds are raised for said cause.

H2: The more public figures and/ or influencers are involved in a fundraising campaign, the faster the required funds are raised.

I find the issue relevant within the current global context, especially the last year. Between 2019 and 2020, humanity has been subjected to a series of crises which, although seemingly situations with easy solutions, have proven to be true catastrophes. Despite that, many individuals have chosen to get involved and raise funds to solve these crises one way or another. Out of these series of crises which have benefited from fundraising I will mention but a few: the fire at Notre Dame and the funds for its renovation, the Hong Kong protests and the funds raised for the protesters, the recent Irano-American incident and the funds raised for the funeral of the Iranian general, the Australian bush fires and the funds for the victims, COVID-19 and the funds for the medical systems or the large-scale racial protests and street fighting in the USA, and the funds that companies invested in order to calm the situation are all opportunities to learn how to raise funds more efficiently in crisis situations.

Crisis, fundraising, and innovation: Theoretical considerations

A crisis is defined as *"the situation in which adverse selection and moral hazard increase, the markets no longer being capable of channeling resources towards the most productive investment opportunities"* (Mishkin, 1991).

Crises are complex phenomena which *"can affect either the entire social spectrum, or just sections of it (economic life, political system, international relations, financial systems, social structure, health and medical services, education and culture, etc..)"* (Coman, 2004).

Several constant elements which are involved in any crisis are found in literature: *"the hard-to-predict breach aspect of the crisis (...); the need for change (...); the lack of trustworthy information (...); the lack of time (...); the lack of efficient frameworks (theoretical and procedural) (...); the unstable aspect of the solution and decision (...); the creation of stressful situations"* (Stepanov & Guzun, 2009).

"The meaning of the term 'innovation' leads us to think about discovery and invention. What do these terms mean? According to the Explicative Dictionary of the Romanian Language, 'to discover' means 'to find a sought thing, unknown or hidden, to find or to understand a secret, a mystery'. 'To invent' means 'to create, to envision something new which has not existed beforehand, to imagine for the first time; to make a technical discovery'. 'To innovate' means 'to make a change, to introduce something new in a field or a system'. 'Innovation' means 'something new, change, transubstantiation'" (Stănescu, 2009).

"Great innovations are made only by those not afraid to make something different". Starting from Georg Ferdinand Ludwig Philipp Cantor's quote about innovation, we can say that the innovation process can appear in any shape or form, in any existing activity domains. Considering the topic of this work, we are interested in the *social* character of innovation. The term 'innovation' and the imperative of innovation in particular have become increasingly widespread at the social level in the last decades and can be found in any field of activity. Social innovation means developing new ideas, services, and models to better face social problems. This implies that public and private actors, including civil society, should be involved in bettering social services.

Matei (2009) claimed that *"social innovation evidences itself as a new analysis field both within the context of developing approaches which consider projected social development feasible and efficient, as well as in the context of other approaches which value* *dispersed knowledge, decentralization, and the capacity of communities and social groups to self-organize and to develop new, specific answers to the issues facing them. The social issue is central to this field: innovation manifests itself as an answer to a new social issue, to the unsatisfactory solution of a social issue or is an enterprise to improve upon existing solutions".*

The concept of social innovation is tied to the one about social development, defined as *"the alignment of a country/region/community/institution towards achieving a desirable state, established as an objective, through a process planned beforehand, achieved using a set of linked actions"* (Zamfir, 2006). The elements of social innovation are the unresolved issue, the new solution, the assimilation into collective practice, and the change made by assimilating said innovation (Zamfir, 2009).

If we were to try to find some examples of social innovation in crisis situations, we would encounter a wide range of such processes. We will mention but a few and shall begin with a press release of the Romanian Air Forces from 2013, in the online publication *Resboiu.ro*: *"An airplane C-27J Spartan equipped with a fire extinguishing configuration took off from Air Transport Airbase 90 on the 6th of August, around 1600 hours in order to participate in a mission to extinguish a forest fire with a high risk of propagation which occurred in the general vicinity of Șvinița, județul Mehedinți. This is the first real mission of its type executed by Romanian pilots"* (Iamandi, 2013).

Within the context of global warming, one such innovation follows approximately the same model and the previously mentioned example, except the purpose is not extinguishing fires, but rather reforestation. It is an initiative through which areas "fallen victim" to axes are reforested, and the process consists of deploying "bombs" (capsules with seeds), most of them biodegradable, in small areas and with low cost.

On the 15th of January 1996 Amber Rene Hagerman, a child aged 10, was kidnapped off a street in Arlington, Texas while biking with her brother. According to an article in the New York Times, following 2 days of search, her corpse was found with severe lesions to the neck area at less than 8km from the area in which she was kidnapped. Shortly after, in the year 2000, the AMBER (America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) program was born, meant to track down and search missing children in real time. This program broadcasts messages on all media channels, on all social media platforms, uses search engines and is in partnerships with Google, Facebook, Bing, and others. A CNN report claimed in 2002 that 75% of missing children in the USA are murdered within 3 to 6 hours from their kidnapping (Maxouris, 2018). Up until 2005, all US states used the program. Starting from 2013 these alerts were broadcast using WEA (Wireless Emergency Alerts), a program which allows the dissemination of the message on all mobile devices within a certain radius. With the advent of WEA, AMBER becomes an integral part in it, alongside other programs for other issues such as fire alerts, natural disasters etc. (CTIA, n.d.).

Another example is Procter & Gamble, which, according to *La Tribune*, was suffering 48% losses in 2009 because French consumers were more scrupulous about prices in their purchases within the context of the economic crisis which hit the world. Their marketing budget rose from 1% in 2004-2007 to 20% in 2008, switching from ATL to BTL marketing, especially in the online medium. They also enter new markets in the male care products sector with the Head & Shoulders Men brand, and the coffee sector with the Folgers brand, which brings a large chunk of their yearly profit in 2008 (La Tribune, 2009).

Similarly, the fundraising sector has had many innovations over time, among the most important being Patreon – a crowdfunding platform for artists and content creators

– and GoFundMe, Kickstarter, Indiegogo – crowdfunding platforms for personal causes and other kind of projects –, which facilitate the search for possible partners and/ or financial backers for businesses or projects. Fundraising is a valuable component in the process of strengthening organizations and communities, the contributions (monetary, in-kind, or otherwise) being a necessary component in achieving their planned activities. Therefore, obtaining resources is a desirable and honorable task. Fundraising is an activity to which everyone should contribute, and which everyone should be responsible for (Tănase, 2011).

When we wish to organize a fundraising campaign, or project we must keep in mind 3 main points: the philanthropic environment, the character and experience of the persons handling the raising of the funds, and the management and strategy of the raising of the funds (Carbone, 1986). Obviously, as in every other field and area of activity, the fundraising area must be measured and evaluated. To this point, Hiles (2010) proposed a set of key performance indicators which any entity organizing humanitarian campaigns must pay attention to: the quantum of annual or per-campaign donations raised; the number of contacts and/ or calls made to secure a backer, total proposals and offers vs the number of successful proposals and offers; a report on the requests of the donors for the organization; telephone audits with the donors concerning the status of the root humanitarian cause; quality measurement indices for start-up programs.

Regarding the areas of interest, religious causes were backed by approximately 31% of donors, the educational sector was backed by 14%, followed by social services - 12%, foundations - 11%, health system - 9%, social and public projects - 7%, international relations - 6%, arts and culture - 5%, animal protection and the environment - 3% and, lastly, individual causes backed by just 2% of donors. By individual causes we mean anything from funeral costs to repairs to areas stuck by tornadoes. Regarding the source of the contributions to the areas of interest mentioned above, 70% of the total funding comes from individuals, 16% from foundations, 9% are funds left by will and only 5% are supported by corporations.

The online platform *Social Media Today* posits that online fundraising has seen a 34% growth in 2010 from the previous year, summing a total of over 20 million US dollars. The average age of online backers was 24-55 years old. Despite this, traditional fundraising comprises 90% of the total raised funds for charitable causes. Only 18% of backers of traditional fundraising have a yearly income of over 100.000 US dollars, as opposed to 32% of digital backers. On average, the first donation online backers make is 62$, almost double the amount given by backers of traditional fundraising, which stands at 32$. Even so, 32% of digital fundraising supporters move on to a traditional form of backing by the second year. The platform *Rallybound* claims that in 2012 online fundraising experienced a growth from 1.7% to 10% of total funds raised globally.

With regard to the medium where fundraising can be held, there are two categories: traditional fundraising, offline (Direct Mail, Direct Bank Transfer or Direct Debit, Special Event Fundraising, Auctions, Major Donor Fundraising, Payroll Giving, On the street & Door-to-Door Fundraising, Telephone Fundraising/ Phonathon, Corporate Fundraising, Grants & Trust Fundraising etc.) and digital fundraising, online (Peer-to-Peer Fundraising, Text-to-Give, Crowdfunding etc.) (Barry, 2011). When discussing innovation in fundraising we must include crowdfunding, recurring donations, creativity in fundraising, novel methods of raising funds and CSR programs.

The European Commission report (2016) regarding crowdfunding splits this digital financing mechanism into several types: investment-based crowdfunding, credit-based crowdfunding, crowdfunding based on invoice transactions, reward-based crowdfunding, donation-based crowdfunding, and crowdfunding based on hybrid models. The greatest risk with most platforms is the complete loss of funds from a campaign page if the minimum required benchmark is not reached (Iovu & Turcan, 2018).

The *Global NGO Technology Report 2019* (Funraise, 2019) highlights an emerging mechanism in the area of fundraising, which is contribution using *cryptocurrency*. The same report estimates that 1% of the organizations based in the USA accept donations in bitcoin. Another Funraise report (2020) estimates that 66% of donors in the future will use an app through which they can contribute, noteworthy being that such an app will use a *gamification* process by which individuals will receive points and virtual badges based on the total number of contributions provided to causes. The same report estimates that in the future 9% of donors will contribute to their preferred causes using voice commands to their personal digital assistant (Cortana, Alexa, Siri, Bixby, Alice etc..) or their car's onboard computer.

Warwick (2009) elaborated a best-practice guide for organizations which intend to raise funds during crisis periods, especially times of economic crisis. Among Warwick's advice we find: creating a common marketing plan, fundraising and communication; increasing the efficiency of the fundraising process by clearly defining and developing the strategy for said fundraising; using the fundraising tools that have worked so far because "different doesn't always mean better"; optimizing and cutting costs using "a scalpel, not an axe"; carefully using Pareto's law, such that the attempt to raise funds during a crisis should focus on attracting people with greater financial power; involving the donors in the organization's cause in such a way that the person contributing feels part of the change and using online platforms and digital tools in order to increase the amount of the target funds (2009).

Another factor of digital innovation in crisis situations is the viral element. According to Visuda Marketing (2016), *"viral marketing means any strategy which encourages consumers of content to distribute it, therefore having said content seen by a very high number of people. The name viral comes from the fact that the content's number of recorded views is so high that one can say it spreads faster than a virus. Other terms also refer to this concept of course, among them being "buzz marketing". Viral marketing is the one which elicits the highest number of emotional responses".*

According to Geyser (2020), Influencer Marketing involves a collaboration between a brand and an online influencer in order to promote or grow the sales of the products or services offered by the brand. This type of marketing is a hybrid concept, comprising both traditional marketing mechanisms and newer ones. Any individual with the power and ability to affect the purchasing decision of another by using their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with their audience can be called an influencer. An influencer is also that individual who manages to build a community of followers with which he or she keeps in continuous contact and communication. Traditional mass-media often makes the mistake of confusing celebrities with online influencers.

What happens when one combines the concept of *influencer* and *fundraising*? A good historical example of Influence Fundraising is the 1985 campaign "USA for Africa", with the hit single by the eponymous musical supergroup – "We are the World". This group counted among its ranks the likes of Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson, Kenny Rogers, Harry Belafonte, Tina Turner, Quincy Jones and 46 other artists. Over 20 million copies were sold, and all funds were invested towards education and population aid in countries like

Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania, Mozambique, Senegal, Chad, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Another example, this time of influence fundraising and viral marketing in fundraising, are the funds raised by captain Tom Moore. Captain Moore is a World War II British Army veteran who turned the ripe old age of 100 on the 30th of April 2020. While attempting to give a helping hand to fundraising for the British National Health Service (overtaxed by the number of cases of COVID-19) on one hand, and to keep himself *young* and exercise on the other hand, he achieved something incredible. At *only* 99 years old, together with his family he organized a crowdfunding campaign which promised that if the campaign would raise 1000 GBP, he would run 100 laps around his yard in Bedfordshire by the time he would reach 100 years of age. The snowball effect caused by the emotion people felt at seeing the optimism and force of this kindly old man convinced him to raise the required fund to 500.000 GBP. By the end of the campaign, on his birthday, according to SOFII.org the final tally was: 1.519.388 donors with a total sum of 32.796.405 GBP.

Rotaract & Rotaract D2241

The organization's official site states that "Rotaract members are young people who wish to develop themselves and the communities which they are a part of. Through the projects we organize we contribute to the evolution of local communities and support the development of leaders in several fields". Over 250.000 members from 177 countries are organized into local clubs which comprise a global effort to bring peace and understanding to the world. This makes them true "partners in service" and key members of the Rotary family.

Every Rotaract club belongs to a Rotaract districtual organization, led by an annually elected representative (DRR – District Rotaract Representative), who coordinates district activity and the district board team. The districtual organization plans both regional (the entire network being split into 6 geographical areas) and districtual conferences, develops different projects, organizes seminars and training sessions for its members and supports special events designed to strengthen the ties between clubs. The 56 clubs of Romania and the Republic of Moldova all form District 2241 – Rotaract Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

Rotaract clubs have weekly meetings during which projects are planned, other clubs are being visited and socio-cultural activities and personal and professional development workshops are held. The time and place of meetings are publicly available information, and anyone who wishes to participate is welcome, as long as they get in touch with either the club president or club secretary. Outside meetings "rotaractians" have a chance to get involved in community or vocational projects, attend conferences or seminars, and meet elite young people from all corners of the world, because Rotaract means, first and foremost, unity and friendship.

Methodology

The main objectives of this research are to map the current tendencies in fundraising during a global crisis, and to create a new steppingstone for the Rotaract District D2241 organization network in their future fundraising activities.

The question which is the touchstone of my research is: *RQ1: Can we bring elements of innovation to a classical fundraising campaign such that the campaign can also happen during a time of crisis?* By answering this question, we aimed to find out whether there are projects which can switch from classical fundraising – offline – to digital fundraising –

online, while keeping the theme of the project, all with applications within the Rotaract D2241 network.

Two hypotheses were also formulated, with applications within the Rotaract D2241 network. These are as follows:

H1: The more individuals suffer because of a crisis period or situation, the more funds are raised for the respective cause;

H2: The more public figures and/ or influencers are involved in a fundraising campaign, the faster the required funds are raised.

To obtain the answers to this question, data was collected using two research methods: sociological analysis as a quantitative measure and the interview as a qualitative one. The quantitative measurement of data obtained using the questionnaire, alongside the qualitative interpretation of the answers provided by persons with expertise on the topic treated in this paper can offer a wider perspective on the possible answers to the research question.

In applying the method of sociological investigation, a questionnaire was designed and administered. The questionnaire addressed exclusively Rotaract District D2241 Romania and Republic of Moldova community members, represented by people aged 18 to 31, inclusively, as well as Alumni members, over 31 years of age. The questionnaire was distributed strictly online, in the network's Facebook groups. Members picked up the questionnaire from these groups and distributed them through other channels but strictly within the confines of the organization. The questionnaire was self-administered, strictly online using Google Forms, with several sections containing both open-ended and multiple-choice questions.

Regarding the interview method, an interview grid tool was used: a structured interview for two respondents and a semi-structured interview for the third. The structured interview was used on Rotaract members who had expertise in Economics, Computer Science, and Innovation, while the semi-structured one was used with a foreign Rotary member, aged 70, with expertise in Investment, Funds, and Entrepreneurship.

The interview grids underlined aspects such as:

a) Innovation and fundraising from the point of view of the respondents' sector of business;
b) Opinions on the Rotaract D2241 network's activities;
c) Opinions on digitalizing some processes.

The research sample is composed of members of the Rotaract D2241 Romania and Republic of Moldova members. Rotaract is the youth wing of Rotary and is an international community of young professionals aged between 18 and 31, a community which offers a personal development framework through its involvement in handling both the physical and social needs of their community.

The sample used in this research was one of convenience, therefore the results of this work should not be taken as representative for the entire population, but relevant to the organization and its members, especially those who chose to answer and mentioned they would like to receive the results. Still, this paper can be used as a starting point for a future representative analysis on this subject.

Results

The first research method used was quantitative and that is the sociological investigation using its allotted tool - the questionnaire. The online distribution of the questionnaire resulted in a total of 40 answers out of 1075 total members across the district. Out of those members 979 are active, the rest being trial members, members-at-large, honorary members, or Alumni. The questionnaire was split into sections, the first one being population data.

Gender-wise, the respondents are mostly male, with 62%, while the females represented only 32% of total. We have no respondents identifying by any other gender except those mentioned above, as there was an option to choose "Other" to that question. As far as the environment of origin is concerned, all respondents come from urban areas, from the geographical organization zones 1 through 5.

All respondents have at least medium education levels, 22.5% studying for a bachelor's degree or equivalent, 35% having earned their bachelor's degree, 37% have finished a master's degree, 5% also have a doctorate, and only 1 member has finished post-graduate studies. These people work in areas like: Medical & Pharmaceutical, IT and Data Analysis, Management, Public Service, Law & Notary, Education & Counseling, Construction, Services, MarCom, Defense, Economy & Investments, Architecture & Design. A single respondent selected entrepreneurship as their main area of activity.

Regarding income, 30% earn 2501-4500 RON/month, 22,5% did not want to disclose this information, 17% earn 4501-8000 RON/month, 12.5% earn at most 1000 RON/month, 10% earn 1001-2500 RON/month, and 7.5% of respondents earn more than 8000 RON/month. The average age or respondents is 22,22, most being 25 years old (20%), the interval being 19-31 years, plus one Alumni member over 34.

The average member involvement in Rotaract D2241 projects is 16,5 projects per member, though the range covers from respondents only being involved in 1 project to more senior members, who have contributed to over 50 projects. As far as the age at which they achieved membership is concerned, 22.5% joined in 2016, 15% in 2018, 12.5% in 2015, 12.5% in 2020, 10% in 2013, 10% in 2019, 7.5% in 2014, 7.5% in 2017 and 2.5% in 2012.

The total quantum of donations which a respondent/ member made to and because of Rotaract initiatives is split as follows: the smallest sum is 200 RON (male) and the largest is 100.000 RON (female). Although the difference is vast, the respondent with the lowest value has earned their membership in February 2020 while the respondent with the highest value in 2013. The total quantum of donations for all 40 respondents is 384.700 RON, resulting in an average of 9617,5 RON per member. If we are to look at the total quantum of donations based on gender, we discover that 131.600 RON were donated by females, with the rest, 253.100 RON, donated by males.

62.5% of respondents marked in the questionnaire that they wanted to be informed on the results of this study.

In the second section, we wanted to find out general information regarding the experience respondents had with fundraising. In this section, respondents were asked whether they ever donated to charity, the result being 100% affirmative, 97.5% of them raising themselves funds for a cause or organizing a fundraising campaign. 5% of respondents donated only once to a cause in the past 12 months, 12.5% donated more than 10 times, 22.5% donated between 6 and 10 times, and the remaining 60% donated between 2 and 5 times in the past year

In the third section, there were questions that gauged respondents' experience regarding fundraising, both traditional and digital. To the first question - "Have you ever raised funds offline?" - 92.5% said they used traditional mechanisms of fundraising. To the second question - "Have you ever raised funds online?" - 72.5% claimed they used digital tools for fundraising. To the third question - "Have you ever applied for grants, government/EU funding or financing from foreign funds together with your organization?" - only 25% of respondents answered affirmatively. To the following question - "Have you ever donated to an online fundraising campaign?" - 92.5% answered affirmatively. Regarding preference for fundraising methods, 45% of respondents claimed they prefer to raise funds using digital tools online, and the other 55% prefer traditional methods in the offline media. Another question regarded the respondents' preferred method of attracting funds, resulting in the top 3 preferred fundraising methods being: sponsorships and partnerships, charitable events, and social media fundraising.

In the fourth section, we aimed to gauge respondents' opinion regarding innovation, crisis situations, and fundraising. We tried to find out which of the specific fundraising projects of Rotaract D2241 they would like to innovate upon. The first question in this section is an open-ended one and encourages respondents to enunciate how they understand the term "innovation". Out of all the answers, we mention a few toward what would aim to be a definition of the concept: "Innovation represents increasing efficiency, adaptation, change, improvement, reinvention, but also progress. Innovation stands for novelty, originality, evolution, creativity, usefulness, and success in overcoming obstacles". The second question is likewise open-ended and encourages respondents to outline how they see the concept of "crisis situation". Similar to the interpretation above, I will attempt to define the crisis situation using the answers to this question: "The crisis situation is a difficult moment, a panic situation, an impasse or even chaos. Being a critical situation, the need for solutions during an unstable situation is urgent". The third point is a statement on which respondents needed to express approval or disapproval. In the case of "I agree with this statement: 'Fundraising is negatively affected by a crisis situation'" 72.5% responded that they agree, with the other 27.5% disagreeing. The fourth item is also a statement, like the previous one. In the case of "I agree with the following statement: 'In crisis situations there is a need for innovation.'" - 95% of respondents agreed.

Item number five is another statement. In the case of "I agree with the following statement: 'Fundraising is a field in which innovation is possible'" - 97.5% of respondents gave a positive answer. For the sixth statement - "I agree with the statement: 'There is room for innovative elements in fundraising during a state or period of crisis, the same as in any field'" - 80% of respondents agreed. On the seventh point of this section, respondents who agreed to the previous statement were invited to explain how they see innovation in fundraising during a crisis period. Among the answers, I will highlight only a few: "There is a need for online applications for computers or mobile phones", "It is necessary to identify and apply some new forms of attracting attention to donate, using new channels to fundraise and finding solutions that are so convenient to the target group of people we wish to raise the funds from that they cannot be perceived as a financial stumbling block", "Intensely using online media. Promoted content must be live, close to the ones that can donate. The personal experience of doing a good deed must be close to the heart of the donor, especially in a crisis. Transparency is super mandatory", "It is necessary to think about easing the donation process before seeking donors".

Item number eight is the actual research question as part of the questionnaire, so that for the question: "*Can we bring elements of innovation to a classical fundraising campaign such that the campaign can also happen during a time of crisis?*" - 85% of respondents gave a positive answer. Item nine is related to item 8, like item seven is related to number six, so for this question respondents who previously gave a positive answer were invited to express their opinion about it. Among the ideas presented, we mention a few: "Creativity should be focused on the digital area and use of electronic devices is offline fundraising is necessary", "I don't think there is a general answer, but we can adapt the campaign to the purpose sought. We can hold open auctions, giveaway campaigns which would involve a donation, aligning a public person or influencer to the cause", "Fundraising by 'donating' the man-hours from our areas of activity and raising funds from different third parties. Subsequently the money raised from the hourly rates would go to a cause.", "Educational webinars - population development", "The online medium is very vast, I think that for each project if desired one can find an alternative solution online"

For the first hypothesis turned into a statement like the ones above - "I agree with the following statement: 'The more individuals suffer because of a crisis period or situation, the more funds are raised for the respective cause'" - 70% of respondents agree. For the second hypothesis - "I agree with the following statement: The more public figures and/or influencers are involved in a fundraising campaign, the faster the required funds are raised.'" - 87.5% of respondents agree.

On the final point of this section, about what elements of innovation that could be brought to the process of fundraising with strict applicability within Rotaract, the respondents had to answer the following question: "To which fundraising activities organized by Rotaract would you bring innovative elements and in what way?" I will mention a few answers: "I believe that introducing donations-by-SMS would fit all projects well", "Introducing online influencers as a promotion tool", "Fundraising activities dedicated exclusively to developing and sustaining the club", "24/7 online donations, separate page for donations to ongoing projects, POS devices available at charitable events".

The last section consists of questions regarding specific projects developed within the organization, with the mention that each and every one of these projects were or are organized by multiple clubs. One such project is the "Rubber Duck Race" (Cursa de Rățuște). It is a project happening in cities which are crossed by a river, upon which the "race" is held. In the period before the event, volunteers sell rubber ducklings to interested parties, sponsors etc., each such duckling having a code or a number. On the day of the event, at the starting line there can be anywhere between tens and thousands of ducklings. The largest such race was in Germany, by another organization which had at the starting line over 50.000 such ducklings. Rotaract Sibiu held on the 1st of June 2020 such an event but moved the entire project online. The entire race was simulated by animation at the appointed time, live on Facebook, and the winner was chosen using a platform similar to random.org, used often for such raffles. Respondents were asked at the first question of this section to answer whether they agree or not with the fact that the manner in which this project was held, moving from offline to online, was a real model of innovation. 92.5% agreed that Rotaract Sibiu successfully brought an element of innovation to this project.

The second question - "What is your opinion on the possibility of organizing the projects "CatrafuSALE" and "Bookurie fara eticheta" in the digital sphere, as an online store?" - focuses on two sales projects: the first, a garage sale from the fashion area, and the second in the education area. CatrafuSALE is an event during which influencers, fashion designers and entrepreneurs and enthusiasts, but not just, put out for sale objects from their personal wardrobe, and donate a large part of the money from the sales to the cause of the organizing club. "Bookurie fara eticheta" is a type of initiative through which anybody has a chance to discover true "treasures" in partner locations. Club volunteers donate books gathered from their friends, antique bookstores and book printing labels, pack them nicely in opaque wrapping, and on the wrapping they write the theme or type of book. Based on a suggested donation, anybody can acquire such a book.

Both projects, and most assuredly many others, were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, so I aimed to gauge respondents' opinions on the possibility of organizing them online as a store. I will mention but a few answers: "The resources needed to make this thing possible might not lead to the best result. Reinventing projects is also a necessity", "The approach is very fitting if one finds the appropriate methodology to organize it", "I think it's a very good idea. The most advantageous would be to achieve a partnership with a courier company in order to better and easier develop the project. CatrafuSALE has the perfect profile for a successful online campaign seeing as how in general we associate with different influencers who have high exposure on social media. I think this should be the first such project implemented online, followed by a campaign for Bookurie. Important, from my perspective, would be to use similar visuals in the two projects (even if they have different profiles) so that people who see them online can associate them with the same brand, and that is Rotaract", "Regarding Bookurie fara eticheta, I would not organize it online for several reasons: 1. I think it's a lot more fun to actually hand the book over to someone and have them unwrap it in front of you and enjoy it and 2 - I wonder what the end results will be. I say this because the project's idea is to choose a random wrapped book. <They> choose the actual book as opposed to us sending it by courier, for example. We also cannot put the books online without wrapping because we lose the essence of the project. We've discussed this in our club and we will be doing this project in open air!"

Another Rotaract-brand project is called "A Cup of Joy" (O Cana de Fericire), the largest and most impactful project within District D2241, held yearly around Christmas time, around the Christmas fairs in approximately 20 cities around the country. The project consists of selling hot wine, hot chocolate, tea etc. in plastic or ceramic cups. These cups have period-specific motifs and are personalized for each city, but the most important element is that they are kept by the supporters of the project after consuming the drink. Each year we thought about how we could raise sales, raise profit, raise the number of raised funds such that our contribution to a cause would have a larger impact. In this context, I have asked respondents the following: "What is your opinion on the possibility of organizing "O cana de fericire" online, selling cups and/or wine happening as an online store, but in partnership with different companies to acquire the products and offering them as a Christmas gift to employees and friends?"

I will again highlight only some of the answers: "Brilliant idea", "OCF (O cana de fericire) is about interaction, about making the public feel like part of the team. The essence of the project is lost online", "We would lose from the event's spirit, but it can still be rethought so we can provide a more personalised and close-up experience to the donors, even if the event will happen as an online store", "Needs resources and timely planning if we want to implement something like that", "It's possible but it loses its charm - 'A cup of hot wine to warm the hands of passersby, in exchange for a donation'", "Yes, it would be extraordinary, especially since the objective is to raise more money. Still, in order to keep the charm of wine drinking "with the family", this idea can come as an addition to the project which happens offline anyway", "Yes, it's an OK idea. We can offer not only cups, but also Christmas decorations, toys etc."

The second research method used was a qualitative one - the interview, with its corresponding tool, the interview grid. I held two structured interviews and a semi-structured one, online using the Zoom video conferencing platform, between April and May 2020. The structured interviews were held with 2 Romanian citizens, aged 25 and 34 years, members of the Rotaract D2241 network. The semi-structured interview was held with a foreign citizen, aged 70, member of a Rotary club (the over-30-year-old structure of Rotary International) from Africa. Respondents have expertise within economic and technological innovation. The non-Romanian respondent is a businessman with vast experience in investment and attracting funds. The three respondents offered some testimonies which support the point of view of questionnaire respondents and expand upon it.

Following the administration of the two research methods, the sociological investigation, and the interview, we can say that we have reached a set of results through which we have both answered the research question and confirmed the two hypotheses. In both instruments, the research question and the hypotheses were transformed into actual questions. 85% of respondents answered affirmatively to the research question. The first hypothesis was validated by 70% of respondents, and the second by 87.5%.

Likewise, by analyzing the answers provided by respondents to the open-ended questions regarding the movement of the different actions from the offline medium to the online one I have reached the conclusion that the research question and hypotheses are validated. Using the second research method, the qualitative one, as mentioned above, the three respondents offered testimonies which support the point of view of questionnaire respondents and expand upon it.

Conclusion

This research helped uncover Rotaract members' perception regarding the organization, what can be improved, what can be changed, what can be discontinued completely. It illustrated the importance of having strategies, procedures, KPIs, and OKRs for development.

In the first part of this research, we discussed global practices regarding fundraising. Thus, this paper could serve as a guide of best practices for the organization, especially since they can compare the global tendencies to the preferred mechanisms of raising funds.

Within the current research, there are several aspects which can be considered limits. First, the way in which the interview was applied limited interaction with the respondents; within the context of the global pandemic, it was necessary to hold the interview using a video conferencing platform, therefore the emotion elicited by an answer, or a question was dampened by the screen. Another limitation was the low rate of questionnaire responses. Compared to the total of 1075 members of Rotaract District D2241 the number of respondents was only 40, a number which represents a rate of 3.72%.

Another limitation is the period through which humanity is going. The anxiety and the period of continuous stress regarding one's personal health has maybe been an impediment to other members in paying attention to my request that they complete the questionnaire. A final aspect which is human error made by the author when formulating an item in the questionnaire, specifically the one regarding "the total quantum of donations". It is possible that some respondents understood this phrasing as referring strictly to donations and others to "the entirety of funds invested in and through

Rotaract". By this entirety of funds invested in and through Rotaract, the author referred to conferences, adjacent activities, charity galas, team-buildings, development, transport and logistical costs, attendances to international events etc.

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Social media and protest participation in the Republic of Moldova: The case of Occupy Guguță protest community

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ABSTRACT
Social media has become a reality that is changing at an ever-faster pace. Its dynamic evolution has repercussions on the way citizens are part of nowadays' protests, even if they do not represent radical and immediate transformations. This very paper analyzes the role of social media in what concerns political protest in the Republic of Moldova. The aim of the study was to provide a clearer view of the specific features of social media protest content, of topics that attract the interest of more users and the role that social media has in this movements. In addition, the research aimed to establish the dominant characteristics that outline the profile of the user involved in social media protest communication. To explore this subject, the first part of this paper reviews how the concept of protest and the roles of social media are approached in scientific research. The second part summarizes the research design. Three methods of data collection were used: social survey, content analysis, and individual semi-structured interview. When discussing results, the focus is on the analysis of social media content of the Occupy Guguță protest community which appeared in Republic of Moldova in the summer of 2018 and whose activity was categorized as an innovative type of constant protest actions aiming to defend democracy. The conclusion of the study highlighted several important aspects related to the online posts of the Occupy Guguță protest movement, referring to the characteristics of protest messages, the role of social media in protests and the extent to which the online protest participation can be correlated with that in the offline environment.

Keywords: protest, social media, online activism, Republic of Moldova, Occupy Guguță.

Introduction

Whether or not the emergence of social media has revolutionized the phenomenon of protest and, if it has, to what extent, constitutes a subject as complex as it is contemporary. Some might categorize it as a topic that has been intensely exploited in recent years and, in relation to which, we would encounter great difficulties wishing to bring something new on the table. We will avoid controversy in this regard, but what we can afford to consider certain after an analysis of the online environment is that social media is becoming a reality that is changing at an ever-increasing pace. Its dynamic evolution has repercussions in the manifestation of the protest behavior of the citizens, even if they do not represent radical and immediate transformations.

These repercussions need to be studied for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social movements. This is what undergirds the present research, which aims to study protest communication in Republic of Moldova on social media, to outline more aspects regarding the protest actions in this state and their manifestation on social media.

This study focuses on the protest messages in social media of the Occupy Guguță protest community, which emerged in the Republic of Moldova in the summer of 2018, its activity being soon categorized as an innovative type of protest actions aiming to defend democracy. The Occupy Guguță community raised a particular social interest, because it is one of the few movements that have approached, in the Republic of Moldova, a permanent way of protest. This is an active protest force in its manifestation both online and offline, which constantly fights anti-democracy phenomena and the rights of citizens of the Republic of Moldova. The community has been active on social media since the beginning of its formation.

This current study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the features of a political protest content that increase its impact on social media?

RQ2: What are the socio-political topics/ issues addressed in social media by the protest community in the Republic of Moldova? Which of these create a noticeable greater reaction and implication of the social media users?

RQ3: What is the role of social media in the protest movements from Republic of Moldova?

RQ4: To what extent can we correlate participation in protest communication on social media with involvement in the offline movements?

To answer the four above-mentioned questions, the following research methods are used: content analysis, individual interview, and sociological survey. The content analysis is the method that helps us studying the protest messages in social media: the Occupy Guguță Facebook community posts were analyzed to this purpose. The second method, the interview, offers the possibility of a qualitative approach of acquiring data related to the protest messages of the community, its manifestation in social media and the participation of the users in the online and offline activity. A third research method used, the sociological survey, focuses on the portrayal of the followers of the Occupy Guguță's Facebook page, emphasizing his level of political implication and how he gets involved in protest communication on social media.

The results of the study are a novelty from several points of view. Firstly, this protest movement is relatively recent, so its messages and its actions have not yet been sufficiently studied in all their complexity. This paper presents important details about the role that social media plays in actions of protest in the Republic of Moldova, as well as the features of protest messages on social media in this country. These aspects, along with the link that can be established between participating in the online environment in protest communication and manifestation in offline movements, but also the portrayal of the user interested in protest communication on social media, analyzed by reporting to the Occupy Guguță community, are among the first steps in studying, from this perspective, the protest actions in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the present research provides recent data, which, relating to the rapid and unpredictable nature of the evolution of social phenomena, is certainly a novelty.

Democracy and political participation: Theoretical framework

„Democracy should be a celebration of involved public. Without public involvement in the process, democracy lacks both its legitimacy and its guiding force” (Dalton, 2013, p. 40).

Democracy is a complex phenomenon that contains a wide variety of structures, relations, behaviors, and ways in which society functions (Radu & Buti, 2016). Hauser and McClellan (2009) argue that representative democracy is the ideal form of governance because *"it gives all citizens an equal voice in determining the course of the state"* (p. 23). What is certain is that it cannot function outside of political participation, which is one of its indispensable ingredients, the essence of government (for and by the people) being de facto the involvement of citizens in political activity. Sartori (1999) makes a clear distinction between an electoral democracy and a participatory one, without considering the electoral participation a real political participation. For him, *"to talk about a simple electoral act as you would talk about political involvement is more than a figure of speech"*. The concept of participation has much more significant weight when it comes to political action and is defined as *an active personal involvement* (p. 120), or *"a permanent self-training of citizens in the decision-making act"* (Radu & Buti, 2016, p. 10), which is the core of a participatory democracy.

For Bădescu (2001), political participation is the term that designates *"the citizens' activities which aim, more or less directly, to influence the selection of government personnel and/ or the actions made by them"* (pp. 223-224). The democratic mechanism integrates political participation in its structure, the existence of a functional democracy being undoubtedly linked to the active involvement of individuals in politics (Sidor, 2012). We can classify the forms of democratic participation in two categories that comprise the most common and studied of them: conventional political participation – which may include voting, election campaigns, community work or contacting officials for personal matters – and unconventional political participation, such as boycotts, informal strikes, demonstrations, petitions, or the occupation of buildings (Dalton, 2013).

Some political behaviors are generally accepted, but others are classified as illegal and violent. According to a scheme created by Dalton, voting, campaign activity, community activity, and contacting officials are categorized as generally accepted political behaviors, while petitions and legal demonstrations are presented as unconventional political behaviors. Another category created by the author is that of direct actions, in which he includes unofficial strikes and boycotts. The author also distinguishes between the category of illegal actions referring to phenomena such as illegal demonstrations and the occupation of buildings, and eventually that of violent actions, which includes acts of destruction and actual violence (Bădescu, 2001).

Based on the approaches analyzed in the introductory of this study, this paper pays more attention to protest participation, as in contemporary society it became an increasingly sensitive issue. With the development of new media this field acquired new meanings and opened new research paths.

Protest: The phenomenon of claiming democracy

The protest is a form of manifestation of democracy and an element of contentious politics. Historically, the protest has been centered around socially disadvantaged individuals, oppressed minorities, or groups allied with political order. From this point of view, the protest represents the expression of frustration and deprivation of these groups. This type of political participation remains the solution suitable to the individuals who feel stuck in exercising their political influence (Dalton, 2013). Fuchs (2006) defines protest as *"a collective search for and a production of alternative meanings and values"* (p. 115). The author indicates three aspects that guide protest practice, arguing that for each protest group we can find an identity, an opponent, and objectives. Thus, a protest movement can be perceived as a process of questioning the dominant values and structures.

According to Taylor and Van Dyke (2004), protest is *"the collective use of unconventional methods of political participation to try to persuade or coerce authorities to support a challenging group's aims"* (p. 263). Referring to the unconventional nature of protest, it is useful to analyze the conclusions of Norris (2006). The scientist considers that protest policy was used, generally, as a supplement of traditional means of political participation (such as voting, civic activism, and/ or party membership) and not as their substitute. Norris (2006) notes that the spread of protest turns it into a mass phenomenon, one third or more of the citizens of Belgium, France, or Sweden participating in a demonstration at some point in their lives. A similar increase can be seen in North Korea, South Africa, or Mexico, which are developing countries. Dalton (2013) also notes that political protest becomes less and less unconventional. The author states that in advanced-industrial societies there has been an expansion in the group of protesters, this way overcoming the group of socially disadvantaged. The wave of students expressing opposition in the '60s turned protest into a form of political action for those with a higher level of education, which conditioned the transition to a new type of protest, the modern one that calls for planned and organized activities. Protests against the Vietnam War, environmental protests, or anti-nuclear protests represent, in his opinion, the new style of protest, a continuation of the conventional type of political participation, but which also differs from it (Dalton, 2013).

The mentioned theorists are joined by Baudouin (1999), who notes the evolution of protest starting with an unconventional form of political participation and reaching a *normalized* one. For him, *"peaceful protests are being used more and more by the young and more educated citizens of Western democracies. For many democratic citizens, the protest is the continuation of 'normal' policies through other methods"* (p. 122).

At the same time, protest can harm society. Blondel (2009) believes that a multiplication of conflicts can lead to the emergence of an 'ungovernable' society, *"due to the weakness of the center and the large number of attacks coming from the periphery. [...] As parties and large groups seem to become increasingly ineffective, as more and more small groups make many specific demands, it is not surprising that there should be a concern for stability and future effectiveness of political systems"* (p. 281).

Theories of protest

To provide explanations for the protest phenomenon, the literature suggests an approach through the perspectives of multiple theories. We focus on three main theories that have garnered most interest in literature.

One of these is *grievance theory*, which assumes that protest is stimulated by dissatisfaction. Gurr (cited in Dalton & van Sickle, 2005) argues that when social conditions change, people experience *relative deprivation*, which significantly increases the probability of a protest. The author presents several societal factors that can cause feelings of relative deprivation and political rebellion: changes in the national economy, inflation rates, growth rates of gross national product, long-term social and economic deprivation. The theorist explains that relative deprivation occurs when people have significantly less than they think they are entitled to and defines it as the *"general spur to action"* (Dalton, van Sickle, 2005, p. 6). At the same time, Metzger (cited in Bumbu, 2016) points out that although this theory provides a reasonable explanation for the reasons behind the protests and rebellion movements, it does not explain why there are a multitude of cases of relative deprivation in which no action is initiated.

Based on variables similar to the theory presented above, the *resource mobilization theory* contrasts with by arguing that to provoke a protest movement requires more than a collective experience of relative deprivation. McCarthy and Zald (cited in Dalton & van Sickle, 2005) argue that the existence of resource base facilitates the protest activity of social movements. According to this theory, connecting dissatisfaction with political action, the existence of social movement organizations is essential, the socio-economic development of a nation creating a resource base that could stimulate collective action. Thus, richer nations, capable of producing dense communication structures, of developing mass education, states that can be characterized by urbanization and a high degree of social mobility factors, provide resources that favor civil society organizations, thus supporting the emergence of protests. With a low level of resources, organizations and individuals may be unable to organize effective protests and be more vulnerable to the oppressive power of the state. It should be noted that these resources can be both material and immaterial. As examples of material resources, Fuchs (2016) notes: money, organizations, labor, technologies, media, and immaterial: legitimacy, loyalty, social relations, networks, personal connections, commitment, solidarity.

The third theory is the one that *"promises a means to predict variance in the periodicity, style, and content of activist claims over time and variance across institutional contexts"* (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004, p. 1458). It is *political opportunity theory* that focuses on how the political institutions' configuration influences the behavior of individuals or groups of activists. Eisinger (cited in Meyer & Minkoff, 2004) gives us an illustrative example. In his analysis of riots in several American cities in the late 1960s, he focuses on the openness of urban political institutions to more conventional means of making complaints. Eisinger found that some cities that were open to restoring dissatisfaction through more conventional means were able to prevent protests, while cities without a visible openness towards participation did not. Dalton and van Sickle (2005) highlight three important topics around which the theory of political opportunity focuses: *the open/ closed nature of the political process* (there is a reduced probability that a protest will occur in a political system that facilitates groups access to institutionalized channels of political influence, that is called open political systems), *the potential restrictions on protest* (Ted Gurr argues that repressive state forces such as police and military forces can delay protests), *the effectiveness of government* (institutional incompetence can cause dissatisfaction of citizens and leads to their frustration (Dalton & van Sickle, 2005).

It is important to understand that history provides us with examples in favor of all these theories. The anti-slavery movement and the miners' strike against Thatcher validate the explanations offered by the grievance theory, while the transition of the Soviet Union justifies the resource mobilization theory. At the same time, in most cases, the reference to a single theory is a simplistic approach, the complexity of the phenomenon exceeding the framework of a single justification. In this context, for example, the US civil rights movement could only be analyzed by combining the two theories. Other theories, trying to answer more and more questions about the protest phenomenon, refer to the framework of political culture or the relationship between benefits and costs. In the present paper we will not display them in detail, as we do not aim to create an exhaustive list in this regard, but only to develop a basic theoretical framework, to which we can refer in the interpretation of the protest.

Internet and political activism

In the contemporary world, protest is closely linked to the use of the Internet. The explosion of the Internet at the end of the last century has raised a wide range of questions about the impact it will have on economic, social, and political life. One of the topics that attracted the attention of researchers was the influence of the Internet on forms of activism. Will the Internet transform these forms of political participation, or will it only accentuate social inequalities?

Early debates on the impact of the Internet on political participation centered around two important theses: the one regarding 'normalization' and the other referring to 'reinforcement'. Proponents of the first thesis, such as Margolis and Resnick (2000), say that the Internet, far from revolutionizing patterns of political behavior, tends more to reflect and to boost them up. Proponents of the second thesis argue that the Internet reinforce the commitment of those who are already employed and participate more and more in a traditional way in political life (Norris, 2001).

Subsequently, researchers began to address a new theory, that of *new mobilization*, which argues in favor of the idea that the Internet can facilitate not only political participation, but also the mobilization of new groups and individuals. The papers provide evidence that groups that previously participated at low levels, such as young people, participate more now due to the apparition of Internet. On the other hand, the biennial analysis of the Oxford Internet Survey, which is a complex and comprehensive analysis of changes in Internet use from 2003 to 2011, did not identify an upward trend in the means of political participation (e.g., signing a petition), but confirms the emergence of new forms of participation, specific only to the online environment, such as contributing to a blog or microblogging site (e.g., Twitter), but also expressing a political opinion on a social networking site (Margetts, 2013).

However, in the analysis on nineteen certain countries, Norris (2001), using the European Social Survey, was able to establish that there is a strong correlation between political activism and internet use. The researcher identified that people who regularly use the Internet are significantly more politically active. Thus, the use of the Internet can be categorized as a predictor of political activism. In this context, some authors argue that the association between internet use and political participation can be explained by reducing participation costs (Margetts, 2013, 430).

Once we discussed perspectives on whether the Internet has transformed the behavior political participation of individuals and groups, we will move forward in the analysis of protest by focusing on how the emergence of social media can influence political protest movements.

The role of social media in protest participation

The emergence and rapid evolution of social media has repeatedly provoked researchers who have directed their studies to analyze the impact that social media has on social movements. Lopes (2014) finds that social media is a fascinating tool of influence over social movements, the most important advantage of it being that it manages to allow citizens to connect and organize with little or no cost. The researcher believes that Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube gave a voice to those who were not heard.

Lopes (2014) hypothesized that a social movement is the effect of opportunity structures. She noted five key aspects offered by social networks and media, which she treats as mobilizing structures: communication, organization, validation, mobilization, and scope enlargement. Shirky (2011), however, claimed that social media replaces the old structures of mobilization regarding social movements, as it manages to meet all five characteristics. Thus, synthesizing factors in favor of social movements, the researcher distinguished between the following structures of opportunity: the economic, social, and institutional context, while indicating that social media is the main mobilizing structure (Lopes, 2014).

It is important to emphasize that the means offered by social media are for the organizers of protest movements an effective way to transmit information about planned events and the evolution of actions. We can assume that this helped some authors establish the link between the use of social media and the spread of political protests in several cities around the world, such as Kiev, Moscow, Cairo, Ankara, Istanbul, Madrid. However, the example of China, a state where the authorities exercise intense control over the Internet by censoring content, shows us that the social media can be a way of suppressing protest activities. In this context, Jost et al. (2018) made a simple distinction between 'cyber-enthusiasts' and 'cyber-skeptics'. The first group is optimistic about the ability of the new media which support citizens living in undemocratic countries to approach new strategies, while the second group is much more skeptical, believing that new technologies create a false sense of participation and do not significantly influence the real physical protest, or even represent an instrument of oppression, as is case of China.

What is certain is that social media has played a significant role in protests in multiple countries. Eloquent examples can be observed in the case of 2004 protests, against Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar, or the 2006 Belarusian protests, organized by activists largely by e-mail, failing because of the political leader Alexander Lukashenko, who exercised control over social media (Shirky, 2011). Other important examples are the June 2009 protests in Iran, also called *the Twitter Revolution* (when Western media broadcast numerous reports of protesters using Twitter or other new media platforms to send and organize their messages) (Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheafer, 2013), a long series of revolutions called *the Arab Spring*, events that took place in 2011 in the states of North Africa and the Middle East. These were boldly called by some *Twitter Revolutions* or *Facebook Revolutions*, mass protests which started in Tunisia and were followed by Egypt and other Arab states: Algeria, Yemen, Morocco, Oman, Bahrain, Syria, Libya, Iran, and Saudi Arabia (Cottle, 2011). Here we can also note the protests from 2009 in the Republic of Moldova, massive protests coordinated largely by messages sent on Facebook and Twitter, which managed to remove the power the Party of Communists (Shirky, 2011).

Scientific discourses regarding the impact of social media on protest provide us with various perspectives of analysis. Far from the intention to generalize, the works of specialists in the field recommend approaching a protest movement by addressing as many factors as possible influencing the collective protest action and avoiding single-causal explanations.

The latest protests of the Republic of Moldova: An introduction

At the time of the study (2019), the latest protests in Moldova are those that took place in 2017 and 2018. As the events took place relatively recently, literature regarding field does not yet offer a comprehensive analysis we can access. Thus, the information we can present linked to the latest protest activities remains incomplete, the main sources being the materials brought up by the media (Radio Chișinău, Europa Liberă, Investigații.md), whose impartiality is debatable.

The protests of the last two years were born as a reaction to several decisions taken by the government. Among them, we can note the following: protests against the change of the electoral system, cancellation of municipal elections in Chișinău, expulsion from the territory of the Republic of Moldova of seven Turkish citizens, employees of the Moldovan-Turkish high school Orizont, but also large demonstrations on 26th and 27th August. For the most part, they did not lead to significant changes, as the claims of the protest participants were not met.

It is difficult to identify, at present moment, studies and reports regarding the impact that social media had on recent protests in the Republic of Moldova. Despite this, we argue that the messages transmitted through social media have played an important role in organizing and conducting events. Naturally for contemporaneity, we can identify in social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) numerous posts that contain protest messages, or contain information regarding their development. During the protests in recent years, social media has been a channel of communication not only for the initiators of protests from political opposition, such as the Action and Solidarity Party (orig. Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate), or the Dignity and Truth Platform (orig. Platforma Demnitate și Adevăr), but also for communities that do not support any political party, such as Occupy Guguță, who declares itself a "permanent protest action for the defense of democracy in the Republic of Moldova", whose activity in the online environment is the studying basis subject in this approach.

Social media use in the Republic of Moldova

An indispensable element in the study of protest communication in the Republic of Moldova is the analysis of objective indicators on the use of social media by Moldovans. Given the fact that in the methodological part of the paper we focus on messages and topics with a greater impact on Facebook users in the Republic of Moldova, we consider relevant to conduct an overall analysis of the preferences of Moldovan citizens in terms of accessing social media platforms, allowing us to identify how this network is positioned in relation to others. In this chapter, we also analyze the latest data to date on Facebook users in Moldova.

According to the *Gramatic Social Media Report* (2019), made public in January 2019, on the website of the digital communication agency, 64.4% of the population of the Republic of Moldova use the Internet at least once a month, while 47.1% - daily, and 74.0% of those connected to the internet have a smartphone through which they have internet access.

The data in the report indicate that the most accessed social media platform in December 2018 was Facebook, with about 1.100.000 users, followed by Odnoklassniki, with about 809,000 users. There are about 610,000 accounts on Instagram. Another platform used by Moldovan citizens is VKontakte, with 208,000 users using this social network every month.

In the last year, Facebook has registered a significant increase, with 190,000 users added to the Facebook community in Moldova. Most Facebook users in the Republic of Moldova are women, 53.0% (41.0% being men) between 25 and 34 years old. The next age segments with a significant share in this regard being 13-17 years and 35-44 years. Of the total number of users, the least numerous are those over the age of 65. Most accounts belong to users in Chisinau, the capital of the Republic of Moldova, Bălți, Orhei, and Ialoveni, and 63% of the users accessed Facebook in December only from their mobile phones. The report also reflects that women interact on Facebook 2.1 times more than men (on the average they appreciate more posts, add more comments, share more posts and access more ads).

Methodology

This paper aims to study the protest communication on social media in the Republic of Moldova, based on the case study of the Occupy Guguță community. In the study, two important directions of research will stand out. On the one hand, the emphasis will fall on the form and content of the social media protest messages. On another hand, we will focus on the role of social media when it comes to protest communication in the Republic of Moldova, correlated with the way in which the user manifests himself in the online and offline environment.

Referring to the two above-mentioned directions, this current study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the features of a political protest content that increase its impact on social media?

RQ2: What are the socio-political topics/ issues addressed in social media by the protest community in the Republic of Moldova?

RQ3: Which of these create a noticeable greater reaction and implication of the social media users?

RQ4: What is the role of social media in the protest movements from Republic of Moldova?

RQ5: To what extent can we correlate participation in protest communication on social media with involvement in the offline movements?

To answer the above-mentioned questions, the following research methods are used: content analysis, individual interview, and sociological survey. The content analysis helps us study the protest messages on social media and posts on the Facebook page of the Occupy Guguță community. The interview offers the possibility of a qualitative approach of acquiring data related to the protest messages of the Occupy Guguță community, the community manifestation in social media, and the participation of the user in the online and offline protest activity. A third research method used, the sociological survey, focuses on the profile of the user who follows the Facebook page of the permanent protest movement Occupy Guguță, emphasizing their political implication level and how they gets involved in protest communication on social media.

The three research methods, on which we will provide more details in the following sections, have developed a complementarity relationship, each contributing significantly into obtaining an adequate answer to the research questions of this study.

Results

Content analysis

We analyzed the posts of the official Facebook page of the Occupy Guguță protest community, which defines itself as "a permanent protest action for the defense of democracy in the Republic of Moldova" (according to the Facebook description). The community was formed in the summer of 2018, in Chișinău, Republic of Moldova, by urban activists who initially protested against the building demolition of the former Guguță cafe, in the capital's Central Park. Activists kept on protesting against other phenomena, turning their activity into a continuous manifestation, which was perceived as a special type of democratic resistance, innovative for the Republic of Moldova.

The investigation tool is a grid comprising several units of analysis and variables. We analyzed each post of the official Facebook page of the Occupy Guguță protest community, starting with December 10, 2018, and ending with February 25, 2019. The day that marked the beginning of the analyzed period was a day with special significance for Moldovan citizens. December 10, 2018, was the start day of the electoral period for the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova, that took place on February 24, 2019. The chosen period was one in which the community manifested itself intensely. We have registered an increased number of posts, especially in the last of the three months, the number of analyzed posts being N=113.

The first of the included categories from the is the type of posts, which refers to the form of content: it could be text, image, link, video, or event (created on Facebook). The following categories measure the number of accumulated appreciations, comments, shares, or views (in the case of video content). They help us to establish the impact that a post had. We also analyze the hashtags use of community. Another used category is the subject addressed by the message, which included political and social issues, topics related to community activity, the Occupy Guguță crowdfunding campaign and others.

The nature of the message and its tone are the following categories included in the analysis. As a result of some previous observations, we related in establishing the nature of the messages to its purpose and orientation, so each message could be categorized as: mobilizing, explanatory (on community activity), resistance, anti-Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), anti-Plahotniuc (politician, leader of the Democratic Party of Moldova), anti-Șor (mayor of Orhei, Republic of Moldova, politician known to be involved in the process of stealing the billion), anti-Dodon (Igor Dodon- President of the Republic of Moldova), anti-state institutions (Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova, Courts of Appeal, Police), or others. The tone of the post was set by referring to the following tags: optimism/ hope, dissatisfaction, irony, neutral tone, pessimism/ regret, or combinations between them.

We mention that the month that summed up the most posts (64 posts, more than half of those analyzed) was February, the month in which the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova took place. It should be noted that this is a significantly higher number than the posts from January (22 posts), or from December (27 posts). The frequency of posts increased in the last 10 days before the election, reaching to 7 posts per day on February 23rd.

After collecting data on the form of the posted content, we obtained the following results regarding:

The form of content: 29 posts (25,6%) being videos, 47 posts (41,5%)- images, 5 posts (4,4%)- text only, 34 posts (30%) containing links and 10 posts (8,8%) being shared events on Facebook.

The subject of posts: 74 posts (64,5%) having a political subject, 13 posts (11,5%)- a social subject, 29 posts (25,6%) being about the community activities, 16 posts (14,1%)- about crowdfunding campaign, and 3 posts (2,6%) having another subject.

The nature of posts: 55 posts (48,6%) having a mobilization nature, 28 posts (24,7%) expressing resistance, 28 posts (24,7%) containing explanations regarding the activities and attitudes of community, 21 posts (18,5%) having anti-government institutions nature, 21 posts (18,5%) being anti- politicians (Ilan Șor, Vladimir Plahotniuc, Igor Dodon), 14 posts (12,3%) being anti-Democrat Party of Moldova (PDM), and 6 posts

(5,3%) having other nature.

The tone of posts: 39 posts (34,5%) having an optimistic tone, 51 posts (45,1%) expressing dissatisfaction, 36 posts (31,8%) having an ironic tone, 25 posts (22,1%) having a neutral tone, 3 posts (2,6%) expressing pessimism/ regret, and 3 posts (2,6%) having other tone.

The total number of likes obtained by the Occupy Guguță community page is 27.290, and the average number of likes for a post is 241,5. We notice that the most appreciated post gathered 4.654 likes. This is a video that captures the moments when the cars with the members of Occupy Guguță, who were going to Nisporeni for a protest, were stopped by the employees of the National Patrol Inspectorate. The members of the protest community were detained, this being motivated by police representatives by the fact that the members of Occupy Guguță did not have the documents certifying the possession of the drums they were carrying for the protest in Nisporeni, the hometown of Vladimir Plahotniuc.

We must notice that the post which have the maximum number of comments coincides with the one that gathered the most appreciations. We identified that the number of comments is much higher than the number of appreciations, respectively the followers were actively engaged in the discussions regarding the topic. We note that the total number of comments that were added to the posts on the analyzed page, during the period included in the research, is 11,587, and the average of the comments added is 102.5 comments per post. It was noted that 7 of the most commented posts coincide with the most appreciated content shared on the page. We can see that, as in the case of the number of likes, most comments are gathered by the content in video form (7 of the 10 most commented posts), followed by those in the form of an image (2 posts out of 10). The topics that are most commented on the community page are similarly those related to political issue. Eight of the ten most commented are directed against a person, political organization, or an institution. We also found that the tone of a message with multiple comments on the community page is rather one of dissatisfaction (6 of 10 posts), ironic (tone set for 5 of 10 most commented posts), or even pessimistic, than optimistic and hopeful. Thus, we conclude, in this respect, that followers are more likely to leave comments under posts that express dissatisfaction and are directed against political entities categorized by them as common enemies.

The analyzed posts summed up 20,725 shares, the average number of shares of the page posts during this period was 183.4. We noticed that the most shared post coincides with the most commented and appreciated content. Also, eight of the most shared posts are the most appreciated. The form of the most shared posts, as in the case of the most commented and appreciated, is the video. We notice, however, a difference in the tone of the messages. Compared to the most commented, the most shared content can be more optimistic or neutral, although, as in other cases analyzed, the tone of dissatisfaction prevails.

We have identified that most of the posted content are accompanied by or represent only images, or video content. Also, community members include in their posts links to other pages or sites, thus directing interested followers to a greater amount of information. Most of the messages focus on topics related to the political situation in the country, political actors, governing institutions, and have a mobilizing nature, urging followers to take direct action to support (through donations) or manifest (proper participation in events) a behavior of protest.

The predominant tone of the posted content is that of dissatisfaction. However, a significant percentage of posts define the community's approach as optimistic when it comes to making changes and finding solutions to the problems they identify. An ingredient that the community could not miss in creating its social media messages is irony, it accompanies almost a third of the page's posts. It is relatively easy to see, after analyzing the results, that the topics that inflict most reactions from users, materialized in the number of appreciations, comments and shares, are those of a political nature, related to politicians like Ilan Șor, Vladimir Plahotniuc, or organizations and institutions such as the Democratic Party of Moldova, the Courts of Appeal, the Central Electoral Commission and Police.

It is also worth to mention that the nature of the page posts with a higher impact is more resistant to the undemocratic approaches of political actors, against which these posts are also directed, and at the same time, mobilizing. In the same context, we note that the results confirm the fact that the chances of having a greater impact of the posts on a protest page increase significantly if they appear in video form or include images.

Sociological survey

The second research method used was the sociological survey, employed through a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered online, being distributed on several Facebook groups, interest groups for the subjects of this study. We mention that the obtained results cannot be extrapolated to the entire target group, as we used non-probability sampling, which does not provide representativeness of the data, and the sampling error cannot be calculated. During the study, elements related to research ethics and responsibility for data stipulations were respected, respondents being assured of the anonymity of their answers.

The questionnaire had 33 questions with closed, open, and semi-open type answers. It was pre-tested on 7 subjects before being active online. The pilot study allowed the verification of the accessibility of the formulated questions, the correctness of the questionnaire construction, but also the identification of some possible difficulties that the respondents might encounter. Following the application of the questionnaire, which was conducted between May 10 and 24, 2019, 61 responses were accumulated, from people between the ages of 18 and 31 years.

The main variables from the questionnaire are the following: level of political participation, level of satisfaction with the political, economic, and social situation in the country, level of interest in political life, political vision (pro-European, pro-Russian vision), the level of involvement in the protest activity on social media, the level of offline involvement in protest activity, socio-demographic characteristics.

The questionnaire was applied to a sample of N=61 people, followers of the Facebook page *Occupy Guguță*, which is the official page of the protest community in the Republic of Moldova, whose social media activity is the basic landmark of this paper. The respondents were between 18 and 31 years old, the largest number of respondents finding themselves (76.9% of respondents) finding themselves between 20-24 years. 83.6% of the subjects were female and 14.6% male. Depending on the origin are, 70.5% of those surveyed come from urban areas, and 29.5% from rural areas. Regarding the professional status of the respondents, 57.4% of them were college students, 32.8% were full-time employees, 3 respondents were part-time employees, one respondent was a high school student, and one unemployed. The subjects' incomes were identified as being, for an equal number of respondents, small and large, respectively 36.1% of the subjects for each category, while the average incomes had 27.9% of them.

An important aspect identified after the administration of the questionnaire was that most respondents, 85.2% of them, did not live in the Republic of Moldova at the time of answering at the questionnaire. Thus, to outline a sociodemographic profile of the subjects of this research, we can see that most respondents are female students, their background is urban, aged between 20 and 24 years, whose income is not homogeneous, it can be equally small, medium, or large.

Among the respondents, 90.2% regularly participate in the vote, 78.7% of them participated in the presidential elections, 88.5% in the parliamentary elections, significantly fewer of them, 59.0% in the local elections, and only one respondent indicated that he had voted in a referendum. It should be noted that 86.9% of respondents participated in the parliamentary elections in February 2019, when the Republican consultative referendum on reducing the number of the parliament deputies and the right to remove deputies from office if they did not take part to it, properly fulfill their obligations. When asked how active they are in the community they belong to, more than half of the respondents, 62.3% of them, answered that they are less active, 31.2% defined themselves as active or very active, and 4 subjects indicated that they were not active at all. It is important to note that 91.8% of those surveyed were not part of a political party.

Thus, analyzing the results regarding the conventional means of political participation, in the traditional sense discussed in the theoretical part, we can conclude that the respondents, respectively users who follow on social media the activity of the studied protest community, are receptive to voting, as the main way of democratic participation. However, they are reluctant to belonging to any party, which can be explained by the general dissatisfaction they have developed with the political situation in the country, because of the activity of various political parties, which we identified in the responses to the questionnaire.

A complementary set of questions regarding the level of political participation of the subjects was the one regarding the unconventional means of participation. 60.7% of respondents stated that they signed petitions of a political nature. A particularly important aspect for the present paper is the fact that, 60.7% of the subjects answered "Yes" to the question "Have you participated in one or more street protests?", but 39.3% of those surveyed did not sign a petition and did not participate in a protest. Most respondents (82.0% of them) did not participate in boycotts or strikes, none of them were part of a building occupation movement, and 98.4% of them did not participate in the destruction of property within a protest action. We find that most study subjects approach unconventional political behavior, expressing dissatisfaction with certain social and political issues, through petitions or street protests, but they avoid actions classified as illegal or violent, and, from this perspective, agree with the stated ideas of the Occupy Guguță protest community, which they follow on social media, which it manifests itself peacefully, evoking as a principle of their activity the respect of the rights and freedoms of all citizens, respectively of the laws of justice.

In attempt to identify the reasons why the subjects of the study choose to show protest behavior, the level of satisfaction with the political, economic, and social situation in the country was assessed. Asked if they were satisfied with their standard of living, respondents provided contrasting answers: 55.7% were generally satisfied with their standard of living, while 37.7% were declared dissatisfied, only one subject indicated that he was very dissatisfied in this regard and another 3 proved themselves very satisfied. The answers to this question may seem surprising, given that, as we will see, most respondents assessed the political, economic, and social situation in the Republic of Moldova negatively, showing an unfavorable attitude regarding the way in which the country is evolving in different areas. A possible explanation for this phenomenon can be considered the fact that most of the respondents, 85.2% of them, did not live at the time of applying the questionnaire in the Republic of Moldova, thus not being directly affected by the situation in the country.

To identify the level of satisfaction of the subjects regarding the evolution of the Republic of Moldova in different fields, they were asked to indicate how satisfied they are with the direction in which the country is evolving in the political, economic, education, health, labor, social protection, and culture areas. It is necessary to note that for all the indicated fields most of the subjects ticked the answer "very dissatisfied", except for the field of culture, for which most respondents selected the answer "dissatisfied". The field for which the largest number of very dissatisfied respondents was registered in relation to the direction in which it evolves, 75.4% of the subjects, was the political field, followed by the economic field, of which 68.8 were very dissatisfied. 60.6% of subjects were very dissatisfied regarding the field of work and health. The field that most respondents were satisfied with was the field of culture, for which 14.7% selected the answer "satisfied". No subject was very satisfied with the field of education and the level of social protection.

Asked what are the problems of the Republic of Moldova that do not please them, the respondents offered various answers, which considered a wide range of issues of a different nature. Among the most frequent answers are those that criticize the high level of corruption in Moldovan politics. Corruption was noted as the main problem by 50.8% of respondents. A large part of the answers (42.6% of them) regarding the most importunate problems of the country referred to the political class and the political system in the Republic of Moldova. Respondents noted as problems the domination of a single party over state governance, the views of the head of state, indifference and irresponsibility of political authorities, their superficiality, political instability, corruption that dominates, in their opinion, the structure of Moldovan politics, which they believe violates democratic principles, citizens' rights, being thus an oligarchic system.

Among the respondents, 37.7% were equally dissatisfied with the problems in the field of education, the low level of education and culture of the population, but also problems related to the educational system itself, which the respondents consider outdated. Poverty, low wages, and lack of jobs were considered some of the main problems of the country by 21.3% of the citizens surveyed. The same number of respondents underlined their level of maximum dissatisfaction with the economic field, discussing issues such as bank fraud, billion theft, tax evasion, inflation, economic instability, lack of specialists, the existence of a cartel market, unfavorable small- and medium-sized businesses. Also, 11.4% of the subjects were the most dissatisfied with health problems, they consider that the health system in the Republic of Moldova suffers from outdated facilities and provides poor quality services, and medical staff cannot be classified as specialists. The emigration of citizens from the Republic of Moldova was mentioned by 11.4% of those surveyed. 8.1% of respondents mentioned as the main problem the manipulation of the media by the political groups, the manipulation of public institutions in favor of the interests of political structures, the manipulation of citizens, both through the media and the capture of cultural institutions by the political power.

Two of 61 subjects of the study referred, in identifying the most critical issues of the state to external influences, noting that what arouses their dissatisfaction is dependence on the Eastern political factor and energy dependence on the Russian Federation.

It is worth mentioning that more than half of the followers of the studied protest page proved themselves, despite the general dissatisfaction with the situation in the country they are citizens of, satisfied with their standard of living. Thus, relating the results to those mentioned in the Grievance Theory explained in the theoretical part of the paper, we find that the 60.6% of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with their level, show a behavior close to that of protest in the online environment, although it does not suffer from a relative deprivation, which, according to theory, occurs when people believe they are entitled to significantly more than they have. Knowing that the vast majority of respondents did not live in the Republic of Moldova, which determines the high degree of satisfaction with their standard of living, we conclude that relative deprivation is not directly characteristic of them, the reasons why they show a political behavior predisposed to protest requiring a different approach than the one proposed by the mentioned theory, which can serve as a good explanation for the other 49.4% of subjects who are dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with their standard of living.

Referring to the questions that aimed to identify the extent to which respondents identify with a pro-Russian or pro-European political vision, we specify that the answers reflect a visible trend towards a pro-European vision, 60.7% of research subjects claim that this coincides with their own political vision to a very large extent. 20.5% of those surveyed indicated that they largely identify with a pro-European vision, 4.9% stated that their vision is a pro-European one to a smaller extent and only 3.3% selected the answer was "to a very small extent", one respondent chose the option "I don't know/ I won't answer". Regarding the pro-Russian vision, 77.0% of the subjects claim that their political vision is to a very small extent a pro-Russian one, 18.0% stated that they identify to a small extent with it. Only one respondent considered he has a pro-Russian vision, and two others refrained from answering.

Another series of questions in the questionnaire aimed to identify the level of involvement of the followers of the Facebook page of the Occupy Guguță community in the protest communication in social media. Asked which protest pages they were watching, only 14.7% of respondents indicated another page in addition to that of the community studied. Among the protest pages mentioned we find the following: FreeMoldova, (protest page of Moldovans from the diaspora, mentioned by 4 respondents), ȘîEu (online community with apolitical purpose, related to the expression of requests regarding the construction and repair of highways in Romania), and Umbrela Anticorupție Cluj, which can be found only in a response, as well as the pages NuPlaha (page created by FreeMoldova, anti-Vladimir Plahotniuc, president of the Democratic Party of the Republic of Moldova), Extinction Rebellion Moldova (page protesting to prevent environmental degradation) and the page Adoptă un Vot, noted by a subject with the mention that he perceives it more as a platform of solidarity than on one of protest. Two of the respondents indicated as pages of protest the pages of the news sites, which they consider independent.

To the question "Where do you usually find information about protests?", an impressive majority, consisting of 77.0% of respondents indicated that they are informed about protests on social media, 9.8% - directly from the website news outlets and the same number of subjects - from acquaintances. One of the subjects indicated that he finds information about protests from influential people in the state, and another specifically indicated that his source of information about protests are the official pages on social media and news sites. Of those surveyed, 60.2% said they were not or are not part of a group on social networks, set up to protest, 32.8% indicated that they are or were part of such a group in social media, and 4.9% selected the answer "I don't know/ I won't answer". To clarify some of the most important aspects of the online activity of the study subjects, they were asked questions that help us to establish the purpose for which the respondents use social media in terms of protest communication.

More than 40 respondents, 68.8% of the total subjects of the study shared information about the country's political, economic, or social problems in social media, and 31.1% did not do so. Although they have a relatively easy-going tendency to express dissatisfaction with the situation in the country in various areas, they are not as receptive to posting comments online about issues that concern them. Significantly higher number of respondents, 57.3% of them, choosing to refrain from adding comments on the country's issues, compared to the number of those who say they post comments of this nature (37.7% of all subjects).

It should be noted that about half of those surveyed, 49.1% of them, shared events involving protest activities, and 45.9% of them did not. We specify that the share of a protest event may be the equivalent of a mobilizing message, but not in all cases, so we considered necessary to ask the specific question related to the role of mobilization of social media in protest activities, as: "Did you distribute mobilizing messages before or during a protest?". 59.0% of the subjects indicated that they did not distribute such messages, 36.0% stated that they did so, and 3 respondents chose the option "I don't know/ I won't answer". Of the total number of subjects, 62.2% urged their friends to participate in the protests online, and 47.8% did not do so. Regarding the role of organization on social media, 62.2% of respondents denied that they used social media to organize during a protest, while 36.0% said they had used during social media protest activities for that.

To assess the extent to which we can correlate participation in social media protest communication with participation in offline protest movements, we asked the followers of the official page of the Occupy Guguță protest community about the interactions with community activity in social media and in real life. Thus, we identified the fact that 54.7% of the respondents responded with 'participation' or 'interested' on Facebook to the protest actions organized by Occupy Guguță, 16.4% shared on Facebook the community events, 19.7% shared community posts. While, in real life, only 8.2% of the subjects participated in the protest activities organized by the community, the majority of 83.6% of the respondents not actually participating in them. We mention that the protests they participated in, mentioned by the four respondents, are the protests against the invalidation of the results of the municipal elections in Chișinau, in the summer of 2018, the protests against the demolition of Guguță cafe in Chișinau, but also the weekly protests near the cafe Guguță, in the warm part of last year, which strengthened the idea of permanent protest of the community.

Among the respondents, 13.1% met, in real life, other members of the Occupy Guguță community, and 77.0% of them did not interact in any way in the offline environment with community members. The 9 followers who met with other members of the community indicated the following contexts in which the meetings took place: at the "Sfaturi" (a type of weekly meeting of the Occupy Guguță community, in which any interested citizen can participate), at protests in the summer of 2018, two respondents indicated that some of the active members of the community are friends, and a subject indicated that he met with them at the Moldovan Club of Intellectual Games and at various trainings and workshops. Also, two other respondents stated that the meetings took place at other events, which were not related to the protest activity of the community.

Regarding the extent to which we can correlate the protest activity on social media of the respondents, of the Occupy Guguță page with real life participation, we conclude that significantly more than half of them are not active in distributing community events and posts, a most of them, 36.0% of them, are, however, interested in community events, reacting positively by indicating that they are interested or participating in events created on Facebook. There is a significant difference between the number of those who express their intention to participate in community-created protest events on social media and the number of those who participate, offline, in these protest actions, which accounted for 8.2% of all respondents. Based on the data collected after the application of the interview, we assume that this difference would become larger and larger as the number of respondents increased. It is worth mentioning that 13.1% of the respondents met in real life with other members of the community, but more than half of them did not interact in a specific framework of a protest action with the other members of the community. Thus, we can conclude that interactions in the offline environment with the activity and members of the Occupy Guguță community are typical of a small number of followers, most of them being limited to the online environment in terms of contact with actions and community members.

Interview

The third method used in the current research was the semi-structured individual interview. The tool used was the interview guide, which consisted of seven basic questions, which provoked, during the conversation with the interviewees, several secondary questions. I intended to talk to the community leaders, but contacting the Occupy Guguță community, I found out that its members are reluctant to the term *leader*, they consider that in the Occupy Guguță community there are no leaders, its members having an equal status. Thus, in the following, we will avoid this term out of respect for the position stated by the community. The interviews were conducted at the end of May, with two of the community members, E. C. and C. O., designated as the ones who deal most with the manifestation on the community's social media profiles.

The questions in the interview focused on several main topics, such as community formation, the most addressed topics by the community, the decision on the social media platforms it is present on, the role that social media plays in protest activity, the disadvantages and the advantages of using social media by a community, but also the principles that guide them in building protest messages posted on social networks. In the following, we will present the answers of the interviewees, whose contribution to achieving the objectives of the current study is certainly a significant one, and which complements the results obtained through other methods, giving us an overview of the research topic.

E. C. (community member, male). The interviewee became part of the community right from the beginning of its formation, since July 2018. He is a young man with studies in the field of sustainable energy, representative of Moldova in the Young leaders in Energy and Sustainability - Europe. He considers that the main event that caused the emergence and consolidation of the Occupy Guguță community was the invalidation of the local elections in Chișinău, which was attended by many young people who had several harsh messages about Moldovan politics. In his opinion, the Occupy Guguță group was formed organically and decided to establish its main meeting place near the Guguță cafe in the Central Park in Chișinău. Asked what he thinks are the main problems the community is fighting against, he answered promptly: *"The biggest problem we are addressing is the lack of democracy in the Republic of Moldova. We want to defend democracy through our demands".*

The interviewee mentioned the first demands around which the community was formed, among which he noted: the claim for local elections in Chișinău, in the summer of 2018, the return of the Guguță cafe building in state possession and the cancellation of the mixed electoral system, which was adopted, according to the community, by a decision that violates democratic principles. An important issue that the interviewee specified was the one related to the illegal constructions in the city of Chișinău, which also includes the case of the Guguță cafe. The member also noted the issues of human rights violations and environmental issues, which he told us had not yet been addressed by the community but will be in the future.

Regarding the social media platforms, on which the community is present, the interviewee informed us that the main communication channel in this regard is Facebook. On this platform there is both the official website of the community and an internal working group. He also noted that a special channel for Occupy Guguță members is the Telegram platform, but that there is less news about the activity of the community, on the same platform they have a separate group, in which they discuss with the team. There are other platforms on which they are present: Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and a community blog, but within them, the community manifests itself significantly less, the main communication channel remaining being the Facebook page. E. C. states that the main advantage of the social media platforms used, especially Facebook, is that it ensures the visibility of protest activities organized by the community. At the time of the interview, the community's Facebook page had about 10,000 followers. This number, according to the interviewee, can be considered an efficiency indicator of how this platform works to ensure the visibility of a content. From this point of view, the interviewee considers that Facebook is a very effective social network.

The member of the community brought into discussion the fact that the video messages posted by Occupy Guguță on social media gather an impressive number of views thanks to Facebook. A relevant example he brings in this regard is the video regarding the detention by the representatives of the National Patrol Inspectorate of the community members heading to Nisporeni for a protest, motivated by the fact that they did not have the documents certifying the possession of the drums they were transporting in their cars. This video is the post that we described in the content analysis, as the most appreciated, commented, and distributed post on the page. It gathered about 428 thousand views, a rather impressive number if we refer to the total number of Facebook users in the Republic of Moldova. Another advantage of using the Facebook by the community mentioned by E. C. was the fact that, being in this social media platform, they are much more visible for the news portals, which can take the news about the community activity directly from its page. By appearing on social media, information about community actions becomes more accessible and increases their chances of being turned into news that can reach even more users.

Regarding the disadvantages of the social media platforms used by the community, the member Occupy Guguță specified the following: "I never thought about the disadvantages of our communication on social media. Facebook and Telegram are very effective channels of communication for us. However, if we talk about Moldova, we cannot reach the elderly in the country through social media platforms, because, in general, they do not have profiles on these channels. [...] But we also make newspapers, in the outings in the territory, through it, it is easier to approach people". Respectively, the only disadvantage of the social media platforms indicated by the interviewee is the fact that they involve a certain audience, which may not include all the segments of the target group to which the protest message is addressed. E. C. specified that, in most cases, people who join protests organized by Occupy Guguță find out about them on Facebook. The most frequent meetings with the followers took place near the Guguță cafe, where Occupy Guguță members were weekly during the warm period of the year, when they organized events called "Sfaturi". In the protests, too, followers approached community members, but to a lesser extent. In the cold part of the year, the community stopped organizing events like "Sfaturi", so that meetings with the followers became less and less frequent.

The interviewee initially refrained from making a profile of the page's followers but outlined the portrait of member Occupy Guguță specifying the following: "In most cases, these are unmarried people, who have no children, and who have a flexible work schedule, which it allows them to be able to do what they do, to get involved in the Occupy Guguță activity". Regarding the people who join the movement, Eugen Camenscic indicated that: "The people who come to us are different, but, in most cases, they are the ones who care about what is happening in Moldova, quite educated people. The diaspora is very interested in what we do. Their age is very different, on average from 20 to 50, sometimes even 55 years old".

Asked about how much the community relies on the mobilizing force of social networks and if one of the goals of Occupy Guguță posting messages on social media platforms is to gather as many people as possible to the organized protests, the community member stated: "We tend, through our work, to reach a certain level of democracy. [...] If we talk about democracy, we want to involve as many people as possible, including protests, but that does not mean that for us the number of people is an indicator". The respondent stressed that, through social media communication, community protest messages are heard and have the desired impact on people, even if they do not physically participate in organized events.

C. O. (community member, female). The second interviewed Guguță member gave us more information about page followers, referring to the data provided by Facebook to page administrators. The community member also provided complex answers to the interview questions, providing a different perspective on the topic studied in the current paper.

Speaking about the period of formation of the Occupy Guguță community, the second respondent also appealed to the two events, which catalyzed, to a greater extent, the formation of the community: the decision on the demolition of the Guguță cafe building in Chișinău Central Park and the invalidation of local elections in the capital. The interviewee explained that, during the massive protests after the invalidation of the elections, some of the young people wanted to protest, but at the same time, they did not want to do so under the symbolism of a political party. About this, C. O. states the following: "We felt we wanted to participate in this march, but the problem was that most people in Occupy Guguță were not generally at these elections, because Nastase is not the ideal candidate for most people who are active in the community. We felt that we did not agree with the fact that the elections were canceled. But, at the same time, we did not feel good to participate under the symbolism of Nastase's party, because we do not exactly identify, at the level of values, with him. And we went out with our own signs. That was the first thing that coagulated us as a group, we were a group of a lot of people, and we succeed to.... I don't know if I mean the word "isolate", but, however, to be a separate group. For us, that always mattered. It mattered and still matters".

C. O. explained that the people who were the basis for the formation of the community had a special importance. She considers that "most of the people who have formed the core of the community have a very large background of involvement in the community, in various projects related to community or heritage, or NGOs fighting for human rights. Most have had experience of involvement before. Most knew each other, even if not very close".

Regarding the issues that the community addresses to a greater extent, the interviewee found that most of the Occupy Guguță protest messages refer to the field of politics. The member of the community considers that a large part of them are reactionary messages, which refer to cases where justice has been applied in an incorrect, selective, or asymmetric way, favoring certain political actors. The interviewee also specified that Occupy Guguță also deals with issues related to urbanism and public space, such as the problem of the Guguță cafe or the arrangement of parks in Chișinău, which they addressed in the posts on the page.

C. O. listed the social media platforms that the community is present in, which we have already mentioned. Motivating the choice to use these platforms, the interviewee specified that Facebook was an obvious decision. In her opinion, this is "a favorable space for community building", which cannot be replaced by platforms like Instagram or Telegram. About Instagram, the respondent believes that it does not meet the needs of Occupy Guguță. She believes that this platform is quite limited and not enough for what the community needs in its communication process. "Instagram, for what we do, seems quite limited to me, it is limited to images, rather fun videos, product promotion. It's not enough for things like Occupy Guguță, but it's useful as an additional element, to maintain and somehow complete the visual part [...], to make the movement a bit "pop", for the snobbish youth, who, maybe, it's only on Instagram, but, certainly, he doesn't give us the same possibilities that are on Facebook and then I think Facebook is the solution", she says.

Concerning Twitter, the respondent noted that in the Republic of Moldova one has a small exposure on this platform, to an audience that one can also find on Facebook, so she does not think that this platform is a vital one for the community. The respondent was skeptical about the strength of social media to mobilize the masses in the Republic of Moldova, at least without resorting to paid advertising. The interviewee believes that it is very difficult to mobilize people in Moldova. "People are fed up of the protests organized by bus, they are so apathetic to express themselves and do something concrete, more than to like a post on Facebook", specified the community member. She also explained that she assumes that, using the possibility of creating paid advertisements, the community could bring more people to the organized protests. At the same time, bringing in as many people as possible is not one of the main goals of the community. The interviewee indicated that the participation of more citizens would be necessary in specific activities, such as marches, but not in all organized protests, so the community does not see the Facebook platform primarily as a tool to mobilize followers and do not rely on it in this regard. No paid advertisement was created through the community's Facebook page, this being a principle of the Occupy Guguță community.

The interviewee does not deny that Facebook is the platform that ensures the most visibility of the community's messages and that it can mobilize, however, some citizens. In this regard, the respondent gave the example in which after a call on Facebook, a follower offered them a set of drums, which he sent from abroad, as he lived in Germany. Specifying that these cases of receptivity on the part of users are not very common, we find, however, that their existence is an advantage of communication on social media platforms.

If we were to refer to the disadvantages of using social networks for the purpose of protest communication, we could note the increase in the degree of vulnerability of members of the protest community. The interviewee specified that the Facebook profiles of several members of the community were subjected to attacks, so that there were other people who had access to the accounts and personal information of Occupy Guguță members, which was quite worrying and determined the members. the community to consider themselves persecuted because of the protests in which they are involved. Thus, the lack of a satisfactory level of security of social media platforms can be considered one of the main disadvantages of using social media in protest movements.

The respondent found that most of those who express a desire to join the community, do so because their online interaction with posts, respectively the activity of Occupy Guguță. At the same time, the community member pointed out that there is a very small number of followers who are actively involved in relation to their total number. "If we talk about the Occupy Guguță community at the level of the active community, we are talking about a rather small circle of people. The number of people who dedicate time weekly to the Occupy Guguță activity is a maximum of 20. The slightly larger circle of people involved in major events is limited to about 100 people, and the circle of people who interact with our posts is much larger (thousands, compared to the number of followers it had page at the time of innervation)", C. O. said.

Asked if the number of people involved in the protests and helping the community increased with the increase in the number of followers, the respondent was reluctant to give us an exact answer, because it is quite difficult to count this. However, she mentioned that there is an increase in the number of followers, especially by the fact that more people donate in community crowdfunding campaigns, but also by the fact that when a message is launched a much larger number of people react.

Regarding the profile of the followers of the community page, the interviewee referred to the data provided by Facebook, since she has the role of administrator of the page. Based on these data, we mention that 56% of the followers of the page, at the time of the interview were women, and 44% men, and their predominant age is 25-34 years old. Regarding the place of residence of the followers, we must mention that almost half of them are part of the diaspora. Most of the followers who are part of the diaspora live in the countries that are part of the European Union, so that the results obtained from the sociological survey on their pro-European political vision seem to be confirmed.

The interviewee added that Occupy Guguță's followers are, in general, individuals with a high level of education. Asked if she can mention the preferences or common visions of the followers, C. O. specified that the Occupy Guguță followers are very different, even the very active members of the community with visions that do not coincide. However, what he believes unites the followers and members of the community in this regard is dissatisfaction with certain politicians and institutions.

Regarding the protest messages posted on the Occupy Guguță page, C. O. told us that, for the most part, as we mentioned before, that they are reactionary, being a response to some actions considered incorrect by community members. "Many of our posts come in response to what is happening in society. Most are political. For example, Șor's trial in Cahul, justice, various cases in which justice was applied incorrectly or selectively or disproportionately, asymmetrically. The case of Petic or the case of Grigorciu, when he slapped Sergiu Sârbu and his pre-trial detention period has now been extended. Țuțu shot a man and was released and acquitted. And the other one, for a slap on the hand of a democrat, must stay closed", said the interviewee.

The community member also stated that humor is an indispensable element for the content posted on the Occupy Guguță page. The respondent specified that many of the community's posts are jokes, made against political actors, institutions, or journalists. "I noticed that humorous posts are very often taken seriously by users who follow us and we started adding hashtags like #AtențieAceastaPostarePoateConțineIronie(#WarningThisPostContainsIronism), because people don't always understand and then misunderstandings often occur, but humor is a very important part for us", said C. O.

Conclusion

The way in which the emergence of social media influenced the protest was approached in a wide range of studies whose authority is difficult to dispute, some of which also appeared in the theoretical part of this paper. Based on these, the present research aimed to study the protest communication in the Republic of Moldova, focusing on the activity of a protest movement considered innovative for the Moldovan state, which managed, in a relatively short time, to manifest itself actively, through a specific form of permanent protest, which attracted the attention of the public.

To answer the research questions, three methods of data collection were used: sociological survey, content analysis, and semi-structured individual interview. These allowed us to create a rich database, to formulate a series of answers relevant to this paper. In the following, we will briefly present the obtained results, trying to provide adequate answers to the questions that sit at the basis of the current research.

Content analysis was the method that contributed the most into establishing the characteristic features of a message of political protest that has a greater impact on social media. Thereby, video content provokes more noticeable reactions. A greater interest was achieved by the protest messages whose topics were related to politicians and governing institutions, whose tone is one of dissatisfaction, but at the same time optimistic about the possibility of a change. Humor, especially irony, is an important element in building a message of protest, which can increase its chances of inflicting more reactions. Furthermore, protest content oriented against some concrete political actors had a greater impact. Referring to the results of this analysis, we emphasize that in the case of Republic of Moldova, the political actors identified as most frequently mentioned in protest messages on social media are Ilan Șor, Vlad Plahotniuc, Democratic Party of Moldova, Courts of Appeal, Electoral Central Commission, and Police. The most addressed topics on social media, that inflict the most reactions from users in the protest communication are those in the field of politics, which are directly related to the issue of corruption and the manipulation of Moldovan justice.

After analyzing the results of both the sociological survey and the interview, we conclude that the role of social media in protest movements is primarily to provide protest communities with a platform that facilitates free expression, thus reaching to many more people. Social media is also seen as a mobilizing force by the ongoers of the protest movements, but protest communities such as Occupy Guguță treat it, from this point of view, in a skeptical manner.

Regarding the extent to which we can correlate participation in social media protest communication with participation in offline protest movements, the answers gained from applying the questionnaire and conducting interviews allow us to conclude that the level of involvement in protest actions offline is less significant than that of participating in online protest communication. Even if the number of followers of the Occupy Guguță page has increased considerably in time (up to about 10 thousand followers, at the time of the research), the circle of active members continues to remain small, limiting itself to barely 20 people.

One of the objectives of this paper was to outline the portrayal of the Occupy Guguță page followers, thus establishing the characteristics of the active protester in social media, regarding the context of Republic of Moldova. In this sense, it was found that the protester's predominant age varies mainly between 25 and 34 years, most of them are rather females, part of the diaspora, living in the urban areas, owning a high level of education, mostly informing themselves in the online environment, manifesting an increased interest in relation to information of a political nature and actively reading both the national and international press. The online protester can also be characterized by an average level of political participation and a pro-European political vision rather than a pro-Russian one.

It is imperative to point out that the realization of this study involved several sources of error. The existing errors in formulating of both the interview and the questionnaire, as well as its construction in general, cannot be ruled out. The possibility of obtaining dishonest or socially desirable answers should not be neglected either. The small number of respondents reported to the total number of followers of the studied page is one of the limits of this paper. In this context, we repeatedly specify that the research is based on a sample of convenience, of a non-probabilistic type, whose representativeness cannot be calculated. There may also be errors in how the features are assigned in the content analysis.

Future research, which would address the same topic, could use other methods that would provide a wider range of information and details. For example, it could use the focus group to investigate what determines the decision of active users of social media protest communication to participate or not in the offline protest environment. Moreover, to obtain more relevant data, the number of respondents of the sociological survey could be increased and a larger number of posts could be analyzed in the content analysis. Eventually, the usefulness of the obtained results of this research is determined by the fact that they can serve as a starting point for the other more complex studies concerning this field. The chosen topic, with specific reference to the case of the Occupy Guguță community, continues to be a novelty for some of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, and represents a topical issue that deserves attention. At the same time, the research can serve protest movements that are still in formation, guiding them in the decision-making process related to communication on social media platforms, including choices about the features of the content they might post.

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Perceptions on Google Assistant: Romanian seniors' point of view

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ABSTRACT
Google Assistant is a personal vocal assistant that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI), developed from Google Now and available on devices running on Android or iOS. Google Assistant can be used for opening applications and devices, for asking different types of questions, for making plans, and for doing a variety of practical activities. Google Home is a compact and multi-functional device that can be used for listening to music, at the same time being a reminder of users' programmed activities, as well as an effective personal assistant that provides news and the weather. In this study, we examine the perception of individuals over 45 years old from Romania about the concept of Google Voice Assistant. Their responses were very efficient in helping us develop an updated Google Home version, as we added a set of new functions and renamed it Google Home Senior. Ten participants took part in individual interviews, both women and men. We decided to divide the group in two sub-groups (45-50 and 61-77), as the responses were quite different from one another. The participants aged between 45 and 77 years old expressed their opinion concerning this program, but also expectations regarding its use. The results reveal the fact that they are interested in such a device and find it practical and useful. However, as much as they would like to try this gadget, they would still have trouble using it, therefore mentioning different obstacles that might come along the way. In addition to its classic features, "Google Home Senior" would present some upgrades suitable for the elder public. The concept of Google Assistant is not very popular in Romania due to technology and linguistic barriers, but our proposal wishes to meet the needs of the Romanian seniors.

Keywords: Google Assistant, artificial intelligence, seniors, Romania, technology.

Introduction

This paper highlights the perception of adults and seniors regarding the new technology based on AI (Artificial Intelligence). In this category are also included the gadgets that use an operational system based on voice assistance commands. This type of modern technology is the most user-friendly from the *Internet of Things* category, as it does not present difficulties in using. Furthermore, the favorable context of today's society makes it easy and accessible to afford and to utilize.

Nowadays, elders (Këpuska & Bohouta, 2018) can take care of themselves a lot better and efficiently than their parents or grandparents used to, precisely because of the evolution of technology that happened somewhere between the XX and XXI centuries. One of the domains that captivated the specialists' interests and resources is the voice recognition-based technology. Seniors can benefit from this technology by easily accessing information in real time, contacting emergency services, or simply using it for daily needs as planning their day or setting alarms. Another area in which technology has flourished is Artificial Intelligence. Intelligence is called *artificial* because it learns from algorithms and not necessarily as humans do. We mention AI because voice recognition is a form of Artificial Intelligence.

These types of technologies have changed over time. The roots of voice recognition (O'Brien et al., 2019) date back to the 1950s, when one of the first public displays of the technology took place at the 1962 World's Fair in Seattle, Washington. The IBM Shoebox, named after its size similar to a shoebox, can recognize numbers from zero to nine and other 16 words. The device acted practically like a computer, as it was able to identify the number and a command to add, subtract and display the total.

This research addresses two research questions:

RQ1: What is the perception of people over the age of 45 in Romania about Google/Voice Assistant technology?

RQ2: How can this modern technology be improved to accommodate our target group?

Literature review

Over time, voice recognition technology evolved through the following phases (Reis et al., 2017):

- identify Bluetooth commands in machines such as sending messages or making calls that do not require typing;
- telephone speech recognition systems that can identify words and phrases to help with a potential problem before calling an actual person;
- helping to turn speech into text for people with speech and hearing disabilities on devices such as telephones and televisions;
- helping with medical documents, as well as searching for medical documents in different systems (it can also be applied in other fields with massive registration bases, such as law).

These voice recognition technologies allow devices to host *virtual assistants*, which can help seniors complete daily tasks, transmit endless information, and be virtually assisted wherever the device is. A 2017 survey found that nearly 36 million Americans will use a voice-activated assistant device at least once a month.

Some of the most popular voice recognition programs (AgingInPlace, n.d.) in the 21st century are:

- Siri: This is the virtual assistant created by Apple. It is the most popular voice assistance device, with over 375 million users on over 500 million devices worldwide. iPhones launched since 2011 have Siri available;
- Google Assistant: Google Voice Assistant is available on over 400 million devices. It debuted in 2016, almost five years after Siri, and is expanding rapidly, especially as voice recognition technology improves.
- Alexa: It's Amazon's virtual assistant. The devices with the software "instantly connect to Alexa to play music, control your smart home, get information, news, weather and more using just your voice," according to the company.
- Cortana: This assistant appears on Microsoft devices, which are largely limited to home systems larger than phones and tablets, such as computers and laptops. Although it is the least popular of the four main virtual assistants since mid-2018, it is now available on over 400 million devices.

The target audience is reluctant to use the proposed product. We are aware that the target audience is difficult to convince because of their preconceptions about technology, so we expect them to have doubts about our product.

The European population (Rodeschini, 2011) is aging, and the elderly today are one of the largest social groups, with a higher growth rate than the general population. Demographic change poses major challenges for Europe and is playing an increasingly significant role in national and European policies. Social policies encourage an idea of aging where older people stay in their own homes and communities, as this is the best solution in terms of health, quality of life, social connections of older people, and the economy. To this end, new information and communication technologies (ICT) and assistive technologies (TA) play an important role.

Methodology

Participants

The target audience chosen for this study is between 45 and 77 years old. It is mainly part of an urban background (8 out of 10 people interviewed living in the city). The choice to analyze an audience that comes from this background is a tactical one, as the chances of these individuals having contact with devices and elements related to technology are much higher. The semi-structured interview guide was built based on literature. The ten questions were designed to address our research questions:

RQ1: What is the perception of people over the age of 45 in Romania about Google/Voice Assistant technology?

RQ2: How can this modern technology be improved to accommodate our target group?

We interviewed 10 people aged between 45 and 77 years old (5 people aged between 45-50 years old and 5 people aged between 61-75 years old). We divided this group into two subgroups based on commonalities within the answers.

Results

The first group of interviewees included people aged 45 to 50 years old, three female and two male participants. We asked for their opinion about private technology, and most concluded that technology is an option to showcase this new market for a device and gadgets. For an individual, technology can be an obstacle. A common thing to all the people was the need for a phone. Only three people admitted that they often use the laptop. This aspect is unexpected because the studies we consulted said otherwise. The people we interviewed recognized different concepts of social media and they use applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Gmail in everyday communication in both personal and professional use. For half of the people, the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative effect in terms of time spent on the Internet. The estimated time spent on the Internet is between 6-7 hours a day, but most of this time it is spent for professional purposes.

We also aimed to find out some opinions about the voice assistant technology. Absolutely all participants expressed interest in such a device, finding it attractive. One of them is specified he owned a voice assistant device but did not use it often because of the language barriers. We also asked them about their memory and mind wellbeing. We expected to receive answers that include an organizational deficit and problems in remembering things, but the results told us otherwise. Participants did not believe that they have major memory problems, and they often use sticky notes to write things down.

Regarding the safety on the Internet, 3 out of 5 respondents said that they have total trust on the Internet and in the way it can manage some private data. This perspective is not documented, and it is mainly based on commonly known information taken from friends or relatives. We ended the interview with a question about the Voice Assistant device because is highly related to the Smart Home concept. The Voice Assistant is considered by people with expertise in this field to be the core of the concept.

Through this research, we expected to find that people are not so pleased with the idea, because of the lack of awareness in the Romanian market. Conversely, it turned out that 4 out of 5 participants said that they would like to implement the concept in their houses, but first, the prices for the technology should lower, so they could afford it. Only one of the participants said that a Smart Home is too much for their privacy, even if they agreed with using technology.

In the second group, we had 5 participants aged 61 to 77 years old, two women and three men. All of them considered that technology is good and a clear proof that we evolve faster alongside it. They are happy with it, and they do not mind using it. What is interesting is that they do not picture technology like being something natural, but something artificial that is not part of nature. All participants said that they use electronic devices every day, from the phone (the most used device), followed by static computers and portable computers (laptops).

The fact that all the participants use at least two devices was a surprise. We asked how they use the devices, and it turns out that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most used apps/ websites because the Facebook platforms are the place where their family members (mostly outside the city) and friends are active.

They also have curiosities sometimes and use the Google Search Engine to find out. One of the participants said that he is using the phone for entertainment, watching YouTube, or playing Candy Crush. Compared to the first group of participants, this group with people over 60 years old, did not spend that much time using gadgets, in medium, only one hour per day. The rest of the time they did other things like gardening, cooking, and watching TV.

Even if they were born before the internet, they learn how to use online platforms from their grandchildren (teenagers), but sometimes their grandchildren do not have the patience to teach them, so they try to figure it out by themselves until "something is broken" and they rapidly close the gadget.

At this age, people start to forget some tasks and believe that setting an alarm or using an app like Google Keep can help. But nobody from the participants seems to use these apps on a regular basis. The Voice Assistant concept is new for them but 3 of 5 said that they would be happy to try to use it. The other participants said that it is a bit too much to handle, and for now, they are happy with a simpler life.

When it comes to security, the group is not worried about cyber-attacks because they feel insignificant, and they conjecture that the risk is low because of that. When asked about the Smart Home concept, they answered as a majority that they like the idea, but it was not something they needed. There is a desire for adaptation but acting very slowly.

Conclusion

We concluded that the attitude of the participants about the voice assistant and the need for it depends on the segment of age. It came as a surprise that the target group did not meet our expectations, but in a positive way, as they all showed an open-minded perspective regarding our reference gadget.

Following the analysis, we argue that people older than 45 use the current technology to some extent, and they slowly adapt to it. During the interviews, we found that the participants were familiar with the concept of Smart Home, but they did not have the chance to test it themselves. In this process, we found some of the motives that drive people to find it helpful and use it, and some improvements that they think are needed to make it more attractive and approachable. Therefore, a Voice Assistance based gadget such as Google Home, would be a perfect fit for the Romanian seniors if it had a more diversified language options from where to choose (Romanian included).

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The impact of social media on people who grew up during the Romanian communist regime

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ABSTRACT
Starting from the fall of communism in the late '90s to the present day, technology has developed, and it is used in everyday life by all kinds of people, for different purposes and through different means. Thus, technology has left its mark on each generation since. This study aims to present the online behavior of people raised during the communist regime in Romania (aged 40 to 78-years-old at the time of the study), and to determine how they currently perceive the information age. Results were collected via the survey and interview methods, as we aimed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. Based on the results, one could easily observe the different perceptions people have on the concept of social media. The results of the study show the adaptability of middle-aged people when it comes to this new concept, as well as the purpose to which they choose to use it, according to their needs.

Keywords: social media, communist regime, online behavior, adaptability, technology.

Introduction

In recent years, the internet has taken over the world, having an undeniably larger influence on young people. Being born in full development of digital creation, the youngsters represent the generation that knows how to use the internet from an early age. There is an obvious gap between young people and the people who grew up during the Romanian communist regime when it comes to technology, thus this paper will address the following questions: **RQ1: How do people adapt to technology considering the fact that they grew up in an age of restrictions?**, and **RQ2: How do they approach social media and in which purposes do they use it?**. The current study investigates the effects of social media by comparing two different worlds, the world of the communist regime and the current world.

In his work, Tismăneanu (2003) emphasizes that in Romania, communism imposed its ideology through terror, fear, and betrayal. The brutality of the Groza ruling, in 1945, and the measures of imposing communism in Romania were considered the first manifestation of the Cold War. Through a violent campaign of intimidating their opposition, control over the media, persecution of the democratic press, Moscow-supported communist leaders had an ace up their sleeves. Until 1989, Romania went through a period of control and strict measures. Events of 1945 brought with them control over the means of communication. As Șercan (2015) argued, the truce between Romania and Allied Powers implemented censorship upon the Soviet Union's request; Article 16 of the convention stipulated: *"the printing, import and spread of periodical and non-periodical publications in Romania, as well as the theatre performances and movies, the operation of the post office, telegraph or phone services, will be executed following the high Soviet command".* The press was gradually transformed from an information transmitting tool to a propagandistic tool. When Nicolae Ceaușescu became the leader of the Romanian Communist Party, the country was enjoying an incredible openness towards the West, many newspapers were being marketed without restrictions, which developed the possibilities to inform people, but control over the media did not disappear, as people were only having access to the information chosen by the Communist Party. Along with enforcing the personal cult of Ceaușescu, the journalists had the responsibility of contributing to the creation of the *new man*.

The term *social media* is increasingly used nowadays. Its emergence is related to the period when people started to use information to communicate over the internet. After a few years it evolved, making the internet an all-inclusive space, and people not only spectators of virtual reality, but also actors. They now can create their own reality and share it with audiences. Moreover, they can give their feedback to other people creating content, and even cooperate. This interaction led to the development of social media as all know it today (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012).

Luttrell (2018) encourages us to reflect upon the fact that over half the people in the world are under the age of 30. These are the people who do not know what it is like to live without the internet, who most certainly own a smartphone. This is the present world in which we live. The period of the communist regime in Romania was characterized by control over every means of communication, censorship, and manipulation of the press, and nowadays people have easy access to all kinds of information. Through this research, we aim to elucidate the differences between the two worlds that have shaped people who experienced both.

Adults' perceptions of social media: Theoretical considerations

As previously mentioned, there are very few studies regarding adults' perceptions of social media in Romania. However, this line of study is particularly rich in Western European countries and in the United States. Most of these studies were conducted in thematic areas such as information technology and health, focusing on how familiar elders are with technology or on the health effects of technology. Some methods of data collection used in such studies are observation, survey, interview, and focus group (Coto et al., 2017). Although most of these studies show that adults over 40 years of age have a harder time adapting to technology as compared to younger people, considering the quick advance of technology in the last few years, they now seem to be more connected than ever. However, many people over 40 with low financial means or low education continue to live detached from social media (Anderson & Perrin, 2017).

Anderson and Perrin (2017) investigated the impact of the Internet on people over 65. According to their study, the number of adults over the age of 65 who own a smartphone has increased from 18% to 42% since 2013. Smartphones are owned by elders according to their age: 59% of people between the ages of 65 and 69 own this type of phone, but the percentage drops to 49% for people aged 70-75. The percentage, thus, gets smaller with age. As social media has become an important platform where people find information, communicate with each other, and share their own experiences, adults must adapt to this new situation. According to the above-mentioned study, 34% of people over the age of 65 use platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. However, many adults still do not use these platforms. The challenge this group of people faces is the lack of confidence in their ability to learn how to use both social media and electronic devices. Along with this mistrust comes the need to have someone showing them how to use technology. Three quarters of people over the age of 65 say that when they buy a new electronic device, they need someone to set it up or explain how to use it.

Lee, Chen, and Hewitt (2011) looked at the many difficulties faced by older people when it comes to learning to use technology and focused on users aged between 50 and 93 years old. The barriers encountered in learning how to use technology were divided into four categories: intrapersonal ("I'm too old to learn," "It's useless to learn," "computers are too complex" etc.), functional (a decline of logical reasoning, decline of memory function, decline of spatial orientation), structural (costs too high to own a computer and learn to use it, high cost of Interned access), and interpersonal ("I have no one to communicate with online," "I have no one to ask questions about how to use the computer"). The first two types of barriers are considered internal barriers, and the other two external barriers. In trying to determine the relationship between socio-demographic data and the factors that prevent older people from using a computer, internal barriers are found much more commonly than external ones; for people in the third age category – oldest in the sample –, learning to use a computer is a much bigger challenge than for people in the first age category – youngest in the category. In terms of functional barriers, people in the first age category seem to encounter them much less often than the other two categories. Lee, Chen, and Hewitt (2011) found that three of the four types of barriers are closely related to age: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and functional barriers, which means that age can prevent some people from keeping up with technology. On the other hand, structural barriers are closely linked to education and income. Therefore, old age is not always the cause of the hostile attitude towards technology. Despite all these difficulties and challenges, there were many adults (58%) who claimed that technology largely had a positive impact on society, while only 4% considered that its impact is a negative one.

What kind of conversations do older people have online? When it comes to preferences for discussion topics, a study that looked at several sites that function as online communities for seniors (Nimrod, 2009) found that seniors' favorite topics of discussion are entertainment (jokes, online games, riddles), followed by retirement, family, health, and well-being. Less discussed topics, but which still contain a considerable number of messages, are religion and spirituality, technology, and travel. Along with the topics discussed, the emotions expressed were analyzed and were found to be predominantly positive.

Do older people view social media in a positive light? This question was asked in a study conducted on people who had no previous contact with social media (Xie et al., 2012). Each participant was familiar with this term, having heard it either through the media or in conversations with close people. Despite the lack of direct experience, most participants expressed negative opinions about social media. But could this opinion change? Although they did not intend to access online platforms, many expressed their interest to learn more about them. One of the participants explained his interest by saying that his niece uses social media, and he wanted to know more about how she spent this time. The arguments of the others were similar, referring to family and friends. So, despite the negative perception of all that social media means, people's curiosity to learn more about it exists. In the same study, people were given a presentation of the main terms used in online settings. This created confusion as participants did not understand why it was necessary to have several platforms that have the same main purpose: communication. Their interest was captured when they were introduced to blogs that discussed soap operas, and participants were excited to learn that they could find people with common interests. After that, their main concern became safety in the online environment. During the study, participants expressed concern about the protection of personal information, but were offered answers to all questions and thus overcame their fear of using social media. From completely negative opinions, the participants came to have a more positive approach to social media, but cautious when it came to the security of personal information. This shows that if older people were more familiar with technology and aware of the benefits it brought, they would not have as many restraints and would be much more open and enthusiastic about using social media. Although it is obvious that the studies discussed did not reflect experiences of people who grew up during the Romanian communist regime, we deem them relevant for this research, because the Internet has had a strong impact all over the world, and these studies may reflect this impact and common technological experiences.

In terms of Romanian studies, the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy conducted a field survey in 2010 to find out how many Romanians express their nostalgia regarding the communist period. It seems that among the respondents, 54% thought that before 1989 people lived better, 68% think that the communist regime was good in theory, but it was misapplied, 30% were members of the Romanian Communist Party, and 37% expressed their regret on the fall of communism. Among people aged 51-65, most believed that Nicolae Ceaușescu was a good leader (49.9%), followed by people who say he was neither a bad leader nor a good one (30.9%), and 15.8% think he was not a good leader. The same research institute in Romania conducted a study (2011) on the use of the Internet in Romania and the Internet behavior of the population. It is well-known that Romanians enjoy one of the fastest internet browsing speed, but what is their attitude towards it? How many Romanians use the internet? Statistics say that of the people participating in the study that use the internet (68%), only 3% do not have access to it at home. The main purposes for which they access the internet are getting information, socializing, music, and movies. The study also shows that 23% believe that they would have no problem giving up accessing the Internet for more than a year, and 11% believe that they would not cope even a day without it. The most recent study relevant to our research, at the time of the study, was conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (2019) and focused on finding out what is the extent to which the Romanian population has access to the information and communication technology. This study showed that among people aged 35-54, only 10.5% have never used the Internet, and 89.5% have used it at least once. Of those who used it, 90.6% used it in the last three months, 7.4% did not use it for a period between 3 months and a year ago, and only 2% did not use it for over a year. Among people over 54, 45.6% have never used the Internet and 54.4% have used it at least once. Of those who used it, 72.5% used it in the last three months, 16.9% did not use it for a period between 3 months and a year and 10.6% did not use it used for over a year. When it comes to the frequency of internet use, 76.3% of people aged 35-54 who use it every day or almost every day and the percentage of people over 54 who use it every day or almost every day is 45%.

Methodology

To collect data relevant for our research questions, **RQ1: How do people adapt to technology considering the fact that they grew up in an age of restrictions?**, and **RQ2: How do they approach social media and in which purposes do they use it?**, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. A questionnaire was designed in order to collect quantitative data, and semi-structured expert interviews with two Romanian academics were carried out to gather qualitative data.

The questionnaire was administered to *N*=52 participants, most of them through self-administration over the internet, and a couple directly applied to individuals from two counties in Romania (Arad and Bistrița). Based on a computation of the age range of our study population, this study addressed Romanian people aged between 48 and 78 years old, yet once launched, the survey collected responses from people of various ages, as follows: 23.1% aged younger than 48, 59.6% aged between 48 and 58, 9.6% between 59 and 68, and 7.7% between 69 and 78 years old.

Results

Survey results

The population in the present study was divided, from a gender perspective, in 65.4% females and 34.6% males, and from a residential standpoint, 72.1% from an urban background, and the rest from a rural one. Moreover, 75% of respondents are still active on the labor market, 17.3% retired, and 7.7% unemployed.

The survey aimed to determine how elders and middle-aged people managed to integrate the technology in their common activities. The newspaper was selected as a driving track, considering it was one of the few information sources they had during communism. Thus, the question about newspaper reading habits gathered 73.1% positive answers. In terms of format preferences, 72.7% of them declared consulting digital newspapers, and 27.3% still read physical newspapers, reflecting the natural news consumption habits given by the technological development. Testing their knowledge of social media, 4 in 5 respondents

declared knowing what social media was, and out of those, 78.8% declared using Google, 76.9% Facebook, and 71.2% WhatsApp, followed by less active user behaviors on Yahoo (40.4%), Wikipedia (30.8%), Instagram (26.9%), and Pinterest (21.2%), whereas platforms such as Snapchat (9.6%), LinkedIn (3.8%), Twitter (1.9%), or YouTube (1.9%) are less popular; moreover, 7.7% of respondents declared not using any of the platforms mentioned. The top targeted purpose of using social media turned out to be information (84.6%), followed by communication, entertainment, shopping, and content creating. An average of time spent daily on social media is for three hours (21.1%), followed by 30 minutes to one hour.
Respondents were asked whether, during communism, they challenged the validity of the information, to analyze how propaganda by the communist regime rose suspicions in terms of credibility of information. Subjects declared an impossibility to discern truth from false because of the little information they were handed, and the lack of sources, but the access to information provided by the digital era seems to be appreciated, as 94.2% of respondents deemed people's access to information a good thing. Respondents got so familiar with using social media that they made it an inseparable part of their program, only 17.3% manifested no problem with stopping their activity. About 90.4% were more satisfied with how they were spending free time now, rather than during communism. A majority of 78.8% deem the emergence of social media as having a positive impact on people's life.

Interview results

Two interviews were carried out with two male academics in communication sciences, both in the age range of 45 to 50 years old, to acquire qualitative data relevant to the research questions posed in this research. Each interview lasted around 25 minutes.

During the interview with R1, it became clear that censorship was a specific trait for the communist regime. Public information was carefully supervised by the political bodies. The information was also filtered, and only those that contributed to the ideology were accepted. From this point of view, it seems that the first effect on people of the communist regime was indoctrination. The goal of censorship was to develop a specific kind of attitude, to form the belief that everything good happening in the country happened so because of the Communist Party and everything wrong because of the enemies of the regime. This way, the leaders of the communist party have created a profile characterized by loyalty, by elements of nationalism, and elements of disdain for the Western values. In certain ways, this was a process of ideological development, which worshiped communism. Complementarily, R2 mentioned that the considerable effect of the communist propaganda was influencing large groups of people, especially those poorly educated, and other groups that believed in different goals than the ones valued by the communist regime. Nicolae Ceaușescu had promoted in his period of glory the national communism. Behind the feelings of belonging to a nation, feelings that every person has in every country, Ceaușescu promoted communist values. Because people had only one source of information, it was easy to influence them by the national propaganda. In terms of people's nostalgia for the communist era, R2 stated that people are simply ignoring the negative aspects of that time because each of them had a job, and every month they received a salary, so a sense of security. Although they had no freedom, the first thing that comes to their mind when they think about that time is their youth, which is the main reason for their nostalgia. Because the concept of social media did not exist at that time, the communist regime left a mark on people's mentality and behavior, a mark on credibility and duplicity. Because of the spread of fear and terror, people are reluctant when it comes to the freedom of speech and its consequences. The communist regime did not affect the interviewee, as education allowed him to realize that all people could not be equal. He could not explain to himself how the Communist Party could say to the people that they were equal, and he often wondered if the leader of the Communist Party ate the same thing that he did or if his house was as warm as his, to which the answer was negative. Therefore, the conclusion was that if the situation was not the same in both cases, then the things that propaganda promoted were not correct. Being aware of that, he could not tolerate communism. He manifested his attitude despite the severity of the regime, stating that he was too young to be assaulted by the Security forces, his opinion being irrelevant. R1 described the period after the year 1990 more difficult for the people who grew up in the communist regime, regarding their ability to adapt. But for those who did not experience the communist regime on a high level, it is easier to adapt to this new era. They can now compare these two worlds. Regarding the fear of social media platforms, R1 claims that it does not exist; people who do not use social media might just not want to be a part of this technology generation or might need assistance in getting familiarized with it. R2 suggested that people who grew up in the communist regime are not overwhelmed by the enormous amount of information in the present, but believes that people do not change, especially after the age of 20. They rather adapt. Thus, the people who were 20 years old in the communist era are not affected now by any social media platform because there is no possibility that they can be influenced anymore, even though they are using these platforms. At that time, people used their memory, read as frequently as they could, and a man who reads is much harder to manipulate than a man who never does. An informed man cannot be influenced easily. Considering the nowadays situation, R2 affirmed that people who grew up in the communist regime are open to social media. He also claimed that this phenomenon is hilarious, as in the communist era, people used to say that they were listened to and followed by the secret police, and it caused outraged because of this situation, but now they reveal everything they do on social media. R2 emphasized his fascination of how society changed, people being now their own snitches. Concerning the need for adaption to the digital era, R2 stated that people never had to do that, and they will never have to because people will not change, and those who grew up in the communist regime will grow old with the same principles.

In terms of ways in which the major change of social media was perceived, R1 stressed that the December 1989 event was by no means a revelation, as he was aware that free information existed. In the communist era, he knew about the existence of censorship and control of the instruments of social media, for example, the two hours program for television or the propaganda newspaper *Scânteia*. Besides, his family used to listen to the radio station *Voice of America* even though they could go to prison if they were caught. The occurrence of social media platforms has positive and negative effects on people, like any other thing. The positive effects are quick access to various information and a high connection with other people, especially with friends and family. The negative effects are characterized by the alteration of relationships and the capacity to socialize face to face, and by the fact that we are losing time on these platforms, not knowing how to select the right information. There are good parts and bad parts, but, in the end, we must wonder why we are using social media and what our purpose is. Some people are working on social media in domains such as marketing and digital media, while others are just spending time on these platforms. The evolution of technology was fast, and due to this development, some people did not manage to integrate into this reality, still living in a parallel universe. The ones named digital natives were raised and developed with this technology from young ages. That is why they found themselves being part of these new communicational phenomena. Although the number of people not using social media platforms is smaller and smaller, R1 argues that in the future, there will still be people who refuse to engage in such a behavior for various reasons. Although the two academics interviewed have different perspectives on the research topic, the current study highlights the fact that most people are trying to adapt to this new digital era. Even though for some people seem to be harder to integrate, because of the considerable change they experienced, they accept this technology evolution, wanting to understand it and be part of it.

Conclusions

How do people who grew up in an age of restrictions adapt to technology? What impact do social media have on people who have lived their lives without the internet and are now faced with a digital life? How do the subjects approach the concept of social media and what is the purpose of their using digital platforms?

The adjustment of the subjects to social media depends on the degree of their information related to the subject. The eventual hesitation when it comes to the subject may be a repercussion of the communist regime in which information was altered with lies and propaganda, to indoctrinate and create an obedient attitude towards the communist party, as R1 argued in the interview. According to the results of the questionnaire, 9.6% of respondents preferred the way they spent their free time during the communist period, compared to the way they spend it now, showing a slight nostalgia. R2 claimed that people do not miss the communist regime as much as they miss being youthful at that time, causing them to deny or even forget all the negative aspects. The subjects are more digitally connected than ever today, they are familiar with the concept of social media and use the internet for the following main purposes: getting information and socializing, according to the answers from the questionnaire regarding the platforms they regularly use. Most respondents to our questionnaire enjoy the emergence of social media and have integrated it as a part of their lifestyle. However, there are many answers related to the negative impact, and 55.2% of subjects think that negative effects can be generated upon children, and 13.8% on everyone. The limitations encountered in carrying out this research are errors generated by social desirability and lack of representativity of the sample. Due to the mentioned error, we can eliminate at least 2 answers from the sample of 52 answers to the questionnaire. There are also non-probabilistic, unrepresentative errors when it comes to the subjects that responded to the questionnaire.

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The *third-person effect* among Instagram users aged 18-24

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ABSTRACT
The immense popularity of Instagram with more than 1 billion active users, 71% of whom are under 35 years old, continues to spark the attention of communication scholars. The current study addresses the third person effect theory. The research aims to investigate the perception of Instagram users of their behavior, the effects they perceive, and the time they spend on this social network. This study analyzes self-perception and perceptions of others. The results show that the third-person effect exists among the studied population and offers an analysis framework which can be used for further studies.

Keywords: youngsters, time, effects, perception, Instagram.

Introduction
People around us are always holding their phones, checking whatever is new on social media, and refreshing the feed. Even though it is well-known that there is a new dependence on smartphones and social networks, people deny that these platforms could take over them. Instead, people do think that it could happen to others.

In 2019, Instagram was rated the most engaging social network after Facebook, and 71% of the billions of monthly active users in the Instagram application were 35 years old (Clement, 2019). It was also noticed that the 18-24 age group is much more active on Instagram than on Facebook, which makes this research more relevant.

The third-person effect
The third-person effect was first conceptualized by W. Phillips Davison in 1983, but then revised and published in *Journal of Public Opinion Research* in 1996 (Balaban, 2009). According to this hypothesis, people believe that persuasive messages and the media have a greater influence on a third person than on themselves. In other words, the media content will not affect *me* or *you*, but rather *them*.

This phenomenon has been extensively studied and found in a wide range of media content, from advertising, news, or politics to video games (Antonopoulos et al., 2015). The effect of the third person happens due on a basic element, namely the subconscious prejudice of people through which others are perceived as less able to detect a situation of manipulation regarding, for example, abortion or passive smoking (Gibbon & Durkin, 1995).

In terms of social networks, this theory has been studied mainly on Facebook. Tsay-Vogel (2016) conducted a series of experiments to investigate a) the difference between Facebook's estimated effects on the self versus others, and (b) the relationship between perceptions of Facebook use and effects on the self versus others. Results indicate that Facebook users tend to report that there is a stronger effect on others than on themselves. Similar to the estimated impact of Facebook, people also reported less use of the platform in terms of both duration and intensity, compared to their perception of the duration and intensity that *other* Facebook users record.

Schweisberger, Billinson, and Chock (2014) concluded that the more a person refers to a person perceived as *someone*, the less they will perceive the effects of using Facebook on them than on the other. In other words, if the question changes from "How much time do you estimate *a friend of yours* spend on Facebook?" to "How much time do you estimate *a normal user* spends on Facebook?", then the answer will vary. Thus, if they estimate spending an hour on Facebook, their friend will spend an hour and twenty minutes, and a normal user will spend an hour and thirty minutes.

Methodology

H1: If Instagram users use the app constantly, they tend to estimate a higher Instagram consumption among others more than among themselves.

H2: If Instagram users use the application constantly, they tend to perceive others as being more exposed to its negative effects than themselves.

H3: If Instagram users perceive negative effects due to the use of this platform, they tend to assume that others feel more negative effects than them.

To collect quantitative data, a sociological inquiry was conducted; an online questionnaire was developed to include demographic questions, questions about their behavior and others' behavior on Instagram, and questions about their perception of the effects of Instagram – on themselves and others. Most of the questions were created on the Likert scale model in order to enable comparative analysis. The questions were randomized to eliminate errors related to suggesting the answer. The online questionnaire was distributed on Facebook and WhatsApp groups, and the respondents were self-selected.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts: respondents' perception of the level of use of Instagram, as well as the effects they felt, and respondents' perception of the level of use of others of Instagram and the effects they think others feel. These two parts were composed of the same questions, but the subject was changed. For example, the question "how often do you follow a new person or a new page?" was transformed into "how often do you think others follow a person or a new page?". To be able to analyze the answers comparatively, most questions were answered using scales from 1 to 5 or from 1 to 7, the larger numbers representing a positive answer or agreement. There were also questions asking for a "yes/ no" answer or an open answer. The effects on themselves and others were assessed using indirect comparisons.

The online questionnaire was distributed in December 2019 on Instagram and WhatsApp. We collected 69 valid responses from participants aged between 18 and 24 years old. Most of them were 20 years old (31.9%), female (69.6%), from an urban background (68.1%) and mostly students (66.7%).

Results

Based on the answers received, we carried out a comparative analysis and we proceed to present the answers to most of the points reached in the sociological survey.

The first variable tackled the amount of time spent per day on Instagram. 31.9% of respondents estimate that they spend on Instagram 'between 30 minutes and an hour', and 27.5% of them say that they spend between 'an hour and two hours'. On the other hand, when asked about how they perceive the same thing compared to others, the majority (43.5%) say that others spend 'between an hour and two hours' on Instagram.

Table 1. Time spent on Instagram

	Me	Others
Time spent of Instagram	30 mins. - 1 hour (31.3%)	1 - 2 hours (43.5%)

This was followed by 5 sentences that they had to evaluate on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 expressed total disagreement and 5 expressed full agreement. In the table below, we can see the differences.

Table 2. Instagram use answers

	Me	Others
Instagram is part of my routine vs. others' daily routine.	3/5- 27.53%	3/5- 40.57%
I feel/ Other people feel that Instagram helps me/ others connect with people.	2 – 42.2%	3 – 37.68%
I/ Others use Instagram in my/ their daily activities.	2 – 34.78%	3 – 40.57%
I/ Others feel tense if I/ they don't use Instagram for a day.	1 – 57.97%	3 – 39.13%
Instagram is my/ others' main source of entertainment.	1 – 62.31%	3 – 36.23%

As can be observed, respondents perceive others as using Instagram more intensely. We can observe, comparatively, both in the way they evaluated (higher degrees in others) and in the significantly higher number of respondents who evaluated others as using this platform more intensively.

Furthermore, when asked "On average, how often do you/ other people follow a new person or new page?", the answers alternated in a similar way. Referring to themselves, 56.5% of them answered that they follow "once every two weeks", while referring to others, 33.3% chose the "every 2-3 days" option, and 30% of them chose the "daily" option.

Regarding their perception of the negative effects that Instagram can have on them/ others, both answers were mostly positive (71% vs. 65.2%). Participants who responded positively were also asked to mention at least 3 negative effects. Among their responses were frequently repeated wasted time/ addiction, social comparison/ low self-esteem, false connection/ poor relationship and even depression.

At the end of the questionnaire there were two more questions that wanted to verify hypothesis 3, according to which if Instagram users perceive negative effects due to the use of this platform, then they will estimate that other users feel more negative effects than them. These two questions were answered on 7 levels of intensity, where 1 = full disagreement, 7 = full agreement.

Table 3. Perception of effects

	Me	Others
To what extent do you think the effects listed above really affect you/ others?	4 – 24.63% 3 – 20.28%	5 – 24.62% 6 – 20.28%
To what extent do you consider that you/ others are influenced by the content you/ others see on Instagram?	4 – 31.88% 3 – 20.28%	6 – 27.53% 5 – 23.18%

Conclusion

Although a brief report of results was presented, one can see that the third-person effect among a small and unrepresentative sample of Instagram users is real, and the three hypotheses are confirmed. Statistical analysis was not employed due to the small sample included in the present study. This limitation should be overcome by future studies.

The first hypotheses stating that *if Instagram users use the app constantly, they will estimate a higher Instagram consumption among others more than among themselves* was confirmed. This research shows that people consider others to spend three times more than themselves, which also confirms the presence of the third-person effect on Instagram users.

Hypotheses no. 2 and no. 3 refer to the effects people perceive, and the responses show that people do know that there are some negative effects, to which they and *others* are exposed. However, further studies with larger and more representative samples should be carried out.

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Young people's need to edit their photos before uploading them on the profile of social networks and the influence on their self-esteem

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ABSTRACT
This research focuses on the influence of social media on young people in Cluj-Napoca who edit their photos before uploading them to their Instagram profile. The purpose of the study is to show why young people edit their photos before sharing them with others and whether editing them influences their self-esteem. The main research tool was the questionnaire, which was administered online, and then, through an interview, we documented the perspective of a specialist in the field, more precisely of a psychotherapist. We focused on a group of young people aged between 18-25 years living in Cluj-Napoca, the final sample being made up of N=901 people. The results indicated that the most widely used social network is Instagram and that, in a large percentage, subjects prefer to spend time on this platform between 2-4 hours. As for editing photos, many have said they prefer to modify their photos in different programs, the most used being Adobe Lightroom, even if they have no extensive experience in this field. Moreover, it has been proven that the number of followers or what is called feed, in other words the visual aspect of each user's profile, influences on some extent the self-esteem of the subjects participating in the research, even though most said that they had not thought about this until they were asked in this research. These conclusions emerged from both the sociological survey and the interview conducted, thus suggesting reliability of results obtained from conducting the two research methods.

Keywords: Instagram, photographs, editing, self-esteem, social networking.

Introduction

With the rapid development of social networking sites, more and more people have become dependent on social media, especially the need, from their point of view, to edit their photos before uploading them on social platforms. Through the development of technology, society began to perceive certain concepts and situations in a different way and if we were to refer strictly to our research, this change meant that there is a real emphasis on the physical, external appearance. Individuals want to show those around them the image that they conceive to be liked in the eyes of the public or social media followers. To complete the last idea, because lately it has been said that the image of a person is all that matters, young people use various photo editing applications before sharing them with those who follow them on social networks.

The hypothesis we started from is the following: *H1: Young people tend to edit their own photos to achieve that ideal of perfection that their followers want to observe.* At the end of the study, we aim to answer the following questions: Why has this aspect of editing become a necessity? Are they aware that this addiction can affect them in one way or another? Do aspects such as appreciations and comments have an influence on young people's self-esteem?.

Because we want to find out why young people edit their photos before sharing them with others and whether their self-esteem is influenced by editing their photos, we proposed the following research question: **RQ1: Why do young people (18-25 years) from Cluj-Napoca feel the need to edit their photos before uploading them to their Instagram profile?** explored in correlation with self-esteem.

From those specified above, we chose to study young people with accounts on social networks from Cluj-Napoca. This choice was based on our curiosity to find out exactly why they choose to edit the pictures they want to upload on their profile and if the appreciations and comments influence them in one way or another. To document these aspects, we used the survey as research methods, with the research tool - the questionnaire and the interview, having as a tool - the interview guide.

Literature review

This research juggles with different concepts, such as social networks, photos, editing, self- esteem. According to American theorists, the definition of social networks is the following: *"We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site"* (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211).

It has often been said that the field of photography has undergone a drastic change many years ago. The transition from film to digital photography has come to be seen as a controversial issue. The idea is also supported by Edwards (2006), who states that *"others suggest that the introduction of digital photography constitutes a radical break with the past"*, this era of technology having a major impact on the contemporary world and photography, further he stating that this aspect *"has also become relatively ubiquitous: when these technologies first appeared they were ferociously expensive and confined to a handful of wealthy institutions and specialists; now digital cameras are often built into quite standard mobile phones"*.

The concept of editing when it involves modifying a photo from several points of view, especially when it comes to editing the appearance of a person is called image manipulation. According to Irwin (2016), *"one of the most popular and current image manipulation processes is called <photoshopping> [...] This software mediates the connection between the user and the digital image [...] Photo manipulation fixes things. Fixing suggests brokenness"*. Now, anyone who wants to edit a photo is at a push of a button. Over time, applications that have appeared in this field have made it easier to edit a photo, and now more and more people are turning to it to fix their imperfections.

To understand what self-esteem is and how it relates to social networks, Hemalatha (2019) argues that *"many authors define the term <self-esteem> as <the evaluative component of the self - the degree to which one prizes, values, approves or likes oneself>. It is an important factor in developing and maintaining mental health and overall quality of life. Low self-esteem is associated with the pathogenesis of numerous mental illnesses, including depression, eating disorders, and addiction".* Several studies have shown that there are conflicting results between social networks and self-esteem. One of the explanations regarding the negative relationship is the fact that all social networks emphasize the self-presentation of each one, which has as main cause the promotion of a narcissistic behavior. Through the abuse of personal promotion, i.e., by the expectations that an individual has when he uploads a photo to his profile, such as likes or comments, these aspects will end up demoralizing him, showing changes in his behavior if the results he wants to achieve have not been successful.

Of course, these young people access virtual spaces to both interact, maintain social relationships, and express their true value, as well as to produce certain media materials, to promote their identity. It is precisely this deterministic vision of technology and the major influence that it has on young people led Prensky (2001) to assert that *"today's students – K through college – represent the first generations to grow up with this new technology. They have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age […] and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives. […] What should we call these "new" students of today? Some refer to them as the N-[for Net]-gen or D-[for digital]-gen. But the most useful designation I have found for them is Digital Natives. Our students today are all "native speakers" of the digital language".*

It is worth mentioning that for most young people the Internet is used with an important purpose in relation to their development, more precisely through it creates new friendships and maintains existing ones. Adolescence is the essential period of formation of the individual in which interpersonal relationships are emphasized outside the family and implicitly lead to different behavioral results. Thus, by living and acting in a diverse media environment, these digital natives exhibit different values, attitudes, and behaviors from those of previous generations.

Hudson (2019) gives the following definition: *"the concept of <social media> refers to websites and applications that are designed to allow people to share content quickly, efficiently, and in real-time"*. In addition, he argues that *"the ability to share photos, opinions, and events in real-time has transformed the way we live and the way we do business"*, in short, the way they relate to reality.

Statistics on SNS use

The most used platform after Facebook (67.73%), according to statistics from October 2019 by Social Media Stats Worldwide, is Pinterest (11.08%). It is worth noting that among young people the most accessed platform, according to the October 2019 study, is Instagram (72%). Instagram is a photo-sharing app that has led Social Network Sites (SNS) users to present themselves through a series of short videos and photos, making this process easier than ever. People use Instagram because of two main motivations: social interaction and self-presentation. More and more personality studies suggest that narcissism underpins *self-promotional* content. At the same time, it is not only narcissistic individuals who spend more time on the SNS, but also individuals with low self-esteem. They find the SNS environment safer than individuals with high self-esteem to express themselves and socialize. The difference between narcissistic individuals and those with low self-esteem is that the latter are negatively associated with the symptoms of social media addiction, being the environment in which they feel safe, therefore spending more time online (Moon et al., 2016).

Moreover, Sheldon and Bryant (2016) argued that *"compared to other SNS sites, Instagram is based more on one's personal identity rather than relational identity"*. They showed that Instagram exists for people to self-promote and, unlike Facebook, it does not focus on social relationships as much. One of the more popular kinds of posts were *selfies*, which are photographs that individuals take of themselves, typically with a webcam or smartphone, which emphasize individuality. Moreover, the authors argue that *"Instagram offers opportunities for people to engage in the social media community as well. One way that social engagement takes place is through the practice of hashtagging. Hashtags can be seen by all people on Instagram, therefore contributing to the social media community"* (p. 90).

Miller (cited in A.R.P.P., n.d.) showed that a long period spent on social media could lead to states of loneliness and envy. Without being able to say exactly whether young people who felt socially isolated resorted to social networks or whether time spent on these platforms caused them to isolate themselves from the rest of the world. Also, findings showed that participants using social media more than two hours a day were twice as likely to feel socially isolated than others who spent less than 30 minutes a day online.

From the above studies, Instagram appears to have both positive and negative effects among young people. The need to be liked and accepted by those around you is a vulnerability that is exploited by this platform, and likes are *a currency of exchange* in the social environment. Those with low self-esteem place great value and seek the approval of those around them by attracting likes and comments to increase self-esteem. Young people always tend to compare themselves to each other. Sometimes this comparison can be a way to aspire to more, to improve ourselves, but sometimes the opposite happens.

Methodology

The research was conducted online, starting from the following research question: ***RQ1: Why do young people (aged 18-25) from Cluj-Napoca feel the need to edit their photos before uploading them to their Instagram profile?*** We thus aimed tried to find out why and how young people edit their pictures, but also how their self-esteem is affected. An online questionnaire was designed; online questionnaires are not just easier and more cost-efficient to apply, but subjects who participate are also able to express themselves much easier and more honestly than if the questions were asked directly. The population studied are young people from the city of Cluj-Napoca. The self-selected sample of this study was a non-randomized convenience one, as we only distributed the questionnaire online, on Instagram and Facebook, on certain groups of students or among authors' friends.

The survey was open for one day and collected N=901 responses. The purpose of the survey was communicated to the respondents before filling in the online form. Participants were also informed that the data collected was anonymous. The questionnaire consisted of 27 questions, related to social networking sites, photography – where the subjects who answered the questionnaire presented their preferences on how to present their photos online –, the influence of social media, their self-esteem, and socio-demographic items.

The second method used was the interview. An individual indirect interview was conducted with a specialist, more precisely a female psychotherapist specialized in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Family Therapy, and Behavioral Disorders in Children, with 15 years of experience. She was informed that the name would remain confidential. The interview guide had ten questions, constructed as follows: the first four questions aimed to map a perspective about social networks, whether the respondent considered them beneficial, whether it affected the self-esteem of young people; the following two questions concerned the interviewees' opinion on editing of photos among young people; the following question proposed finding out from the specialist whether the assessments and follow-ups that young people expect after uploading a photo affect them in any way; the next two focused on her views on influencers; the last question being more of a curiosity for us because we asked her if she ever had a particular case with young people based on this topic.

Results

Survey results

Following the centralization of the data obtained from the application of 901 questionnaires, we considered valid a number of N=888 questionnaires from which we obtained the following data: 99.8% of the respondents have an account on a social network. Of these, 90.2% use Instagram most often, 5.5% use Facebook, 2.9% are Snapchat users, and the remaining 1.4% use other social networks.

Most of them, 45.7% spend between 2 and 4 hours online, 15.3% spend less than 2 hours, 15.1% spend more than 6 hours a day on social networks, and 23.9% spend between 4 and 6 hours. Among the respondents, 58.6% prefer to use a private account, while 41.4% prefer a public one. The main reasons they invoke for using social networks are: 75.9% use them to connect with other people, and 20.6% for personal reasons. In terms of equipment used to take pictures, 78.2% of those surveyed use a smartphone, while 20.3% use a camera.

The reasons why they upload pictures on social networks vary, but the most common are to be appreciated by others, for the quality of the picture, or because they simply like the pictures taken. Of these, 31.4% prefer to edit their photos before posting them, 48.5% sometimes edit them, and 20.1% prefer unedited photos. Of those who edit their photos, 21.3% use Snapseed, 13.1% use Adobe Photoshop, and 12.1% prefer to use Lightroom. The rest use various programs such as Pixlr or Facetune.

Most of the respondents when they want to edit the photos, more precisely 49.9% apply all the necessary changes to the photos, 23.3% prefer not to modify the photos, and 26.8% apply a default filter. In terms of experience, 35.4% are beginners, knowing only the basics, 31.8% are intermediate level, 28.9% have zero experience in editing, and the remaining 3.5% are professionals.

When it comes to influencing self-esteem when posting pictures on platforms, 49.5% say they have never thought about it, 22.1% that it increases their self-esteem, and 28.5% that it remains unchanged. Among the respondents, 85.8% are active users of Instagram, the most used social network at the moment, 83.4% of them state that the number of followers does not affect the way they use the platform, and 5.1% say that it affects them.

Influencers and their perfect posts have an impact on 19.7% of them, while 61.7% say they do not affect them, and 18.6% do not know if they are affected or not by their posts. 78.9% of them are willing not to post anything on this platform for several months, and 15.8% post between 1 and 5 pictures a month on Instagram. Most respondents, more specifically 78.9% are willing to upload an unedited photo on their Instagram account, while 15.4% would not do so in order not to spoil the feed.

Interview results

Following the interview with a specialist, more specifically a psychotherapist, the current study managed to collect in-depth data on the topic. The interviewee claims that social networks have developed rapidly and that they present an important way of virtual communication that aims to create and maintain interpersonal relationships. Because these connections are based on common interests and similarities in real life, the specialist makes a small classification of their goals: "sharing thoughts - Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype; photo sharing - Flickr, Instagram; video sharing - Youtube; career management - Linkedln".

She states that although the biggest advantage of these platforms is the free and fast communication, some pluses end up being traps in the interaction between young people. When *emoticons* take the place of nonverbal expressions, discussions are "depersonalized in the absence of paraverbal elements (intonation, accent), the pressure of others' opinions, authenticity and sincerity are sometimes limited by the desire to <create a good image>". The young people hide behind a profile, they do nothing but strengthen the less good part about them.

The moment she was asked what she thought about the Instagram platform, she did not hesitate to answer: "I remember the expression <You're not online, you don't exist!>, and generalizing <You don't have Insta, nobody knows you!> Here where the visual prevails, the emphasis on beauty is inevitably privileged." Being at this chapter, she was asked to share what she thinks about editing photos that young people use, telling us that editing is one of the primary needs to be accepted because when a person tends towards social acceptance and based on what others say or believe then the premises of desire for perfection are created.

She states that if a person posts constantly it means that he wants to convey something, and when he does not receive comments that validate it, then it is possible that thoughts of non- appreciation may arise, which will lead to a possible decreased self-esteem. She concludes her answer by stating, "It is important to accept that reality is not the way we want it to be, but a mixture of acceptances, refusals, misunderstandings. Reality is how we build it!".

Her opinion about influencers is that anyone can become one today by posting materials that influence young people and that by using persuasion, whether intentionally or not, influencers expose their activity in the social environment embodied in several types of activities, such as lifestyle, clothing, leisure etc. She cannot tell exactly whether they have a positive or negative influence on young people because there are often cases where young people choose to support the ideas created by influencers instead of making the effort to form their own opinions.

She was also asked to tell if in the choice young people make to edit their photos they tend to copy certain celebrities, giving us the following explanation: "Most young people are aware that the photos that appear on Instagram are the final product, they are aware that the images have passed through special filters, but this truth does not prevent them from wanting to get the same result". It depends on each way they choose to reach their personal satisfaction, in the sense that they can choose to edit pictures or change their lifestyle, for example, the difference being the quality of life and the period over which this change extends. She claims that there is a possibility that foreign influencers will be liked by young people, probably because they would have a different cultural content, and those in our country are in the top because young people want examples to follow, they want role models.

Discussions and conclusions

As we aimed to find out why young people edit their photos before sharing them with others and whether their self-esteem is influenced by their editing photos, we proposed the following research question: **RQ1: Why do young people (18 -25 years old) from Cluj-Napoca feel the need to edit their photos before uploading them on their Instagram profile?,** in correlation with self-esteem. The hypothesis from which this research started is the following: H1: *Young people tend to edit their own photos to achieve that ideal of perfection that their followers want to observe.*

In this research project, we have involuntarily committed errors, which are the expression of a lack of experience in the field. One of those would be the very way we applied the questionnaire, specifically online. Because of this, we have not been 100% able to control the subjects who answered the questionnaire. Thus, out of 901 responses only 888 were considered valid because either the persons who responded did not fall within the geographical area chosen, namely the city of Cluj-Napoca, or the age limit was violated (18-25 years), having the effect of the answers considered invalid to our research.

Moreover, there were some errors in the formulation of the answer options, limiting the subjects' freedom to choose the most appropriate option for them. More exactly the option "I do not know/ I do not want to answer" to questions such as "How much time do you spend in every day to social networks?" or "Why do you use social networks?" it did not exist which made the respondents have to choose one of the proposed options. We recommend to future researchers who will address this topic to use other research methods that could bring more information, pay special attention to the formulation of questions, and pay special attention to the respondent-operator relationship because the errors from respondents may change the course of the research.

Following the study we conducted, we found that most young people who post on social networks (Instagram) edit their photos, in most cases, to create that *perfect image*, which contributes significantly to increasing their self-esteem, especially when the number of appreciations and comments is favorable. The Instagram platform is the new *star* of social networks, most young people being dependent on social media, becoming a *business card* for them. The visual plays a very important role now and Instagram is the ideal place where young people can experiment, be creative, and all this is done through exercise, so they start to lose track of time when it comes to social media.

Posting an image on a social network can be stressful for those who consider appreciation a fundamental issue. To reduce the pressure that these users feel, Instagram is testing the hiding of likes in countries such as Canada, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand. Only those who post can see how much appreciation they have received. It is noteworthy that even influencers have an impact on young people. They consider them role models and try to copy them through attitude, clothing, sports they practice, but a greater share claim that influencers do not affect.

Therefore, we can say that youth online enforce patterns from real life or hidden behind a screen, will try to put on a mask, giving rise to various interpretations. We also noticed based on the results of the questionnaire that social networks are time consuming. Here, the mind is the main actor, and it reacts to stimuli depending on the *food* it receives. Some accentuate their state of depression, security and fear, and others, on the contrary, consider them an *oxygen bubble* when they see or post images from nature, art, fashion, travel etc. In any case, no social network will be able to replace that magic of the physical encounter between people with their emotions and energies.

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The attitude of young people in Cluj-Napoca toward school bullying

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ABSTRACT
This study is fully focused on teenagers who live in Cluj-Napoca. Among them there are several victims of the phenomenon called bullying. This research aimed to find out how the bullying they are facing affects them and ways in which we can reduce this phenomenon. To accomplish this, we used two research methods: a quantitative method based on a sociological survey, having as a tool a questionnaire and a qualitative one, the interview, having as a tool the interview guide. After posting the online questionnaire, we collected N=148 answers. From all the students and pupils who answered this questionnaire, more than 66% of them face bullies almost every day. The interview guide was applied on ten people. Out of them, six were victims of bullying and four knew someone who had been assaulted. In recent years this phenomenon has decreased among teenagers but has not disappeared permanently. Throughout the whole period of research, we discovered the teenagers' opinion on others' the aggressive behavior, practiced even in the schools where they study every day.

Keywords: bullying, cyberbullying, teenagers, school, Cluj-Napoca.

Introduction

This paper discusses a phenomenon that occurs more and more often lately, and it continues to spread in a multitude of places, leaving behind a large cloud of suffering. Today's teenagers who act this way think that if they assault someone, they will feel better, that they will be more popular, or that they will achieve something important – such as status among their peers.

One of the biggest problems today is bullying. What exactly does bullying mean? It refers to any kind of aggression of any other human being. It does not only mean physical abuse, but also words, actions, online or offline, whose versions will be discussed further.

Bullying is the physical or mental aggression of a person by another person or a group of people and this is repeated so much that it creates a pattern of aggression and abuse. There are two types of abuse present in schools around the world. Bullying can be both direct (physical, verbal) and indirect (threats, insults, nicknames, spreading rumors, or even encouraging others not to talk to the victim) (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Literature review

Fighting this problem is not easy, teenagers will always continue to behave like any typical teenager and will not care who they hurt or how they do it as long as fun is provided for them. However, there are chances to reduce bullying in schools, legislative change and interventions being essential mechanisms to fight this phenomenon. Parents are the ones who should take the primary initiative in this situation, they need to help their children deal with these problems, both related to online and offline bullying. Both parents and children need to understand exactly the consequences of bullying and how they can prevent it (Abu-Ria & Lungu, 2017).

In recent years, more and more teenagers have begun to express their displeasure caused by bullying. There is a small difference between bullying between girls and bullying between boys. In the case of girls, bullying was largely reduced by the simple fact that they talked about their personal problems. However, in the case of boys, this phenomenon persists and is more difficult to control because their behavior is developed differently from the moment they start to grow and create their own personality (Abu-Ria & Bodrug-Lungu, 2018).

At the same time, several factors appear in this development that negatively influence these "aggressors". It is not entirely the parents' fault, they always try to raise us in the best possible way, but we form our own character. Improper entourage is the main reason why someone becomes a *bully*. In every circle of friends there is that person who negatively influences us, both through behavior, vices, vulgar language and by implementing fear in us. This fear that we already have implemented in our brain changes us completely, later we could end up transmitting the same fear to other people, and this is where the bullying phenomenon is born.

Violence has always been a disruptive factor in schools and has always been something that attracts the attention of the public, teachers and researchers studying this phenomenon of violence and its effects on pupils or students, this fact has also attracted the attention of politicians because violence is something that has been, is and will continue to be a problem in society and it still needs new ways to be diminished or, perhaps, one day, completely eliminated.

Bullying is defined as *"repeated, intentional, harmful and aggressive behavior induced by a person or group of persons who apparently have more power than that person or group"* (Nansel et al., 2001). This behavior is still studied today by specialists looking for solutions to reduce this phenomenon and to create a balance. It is worth mentioning that this is harmful for both the practitioner and the victim, but also the image of the school suffers because, as a result, young people who are going to study at that institution can associate what happens inside the school with what it can happen to them, their thinking can influence others and the school will be seen differently, its prestige being in danger.

Anti-bullying programs have been created specifically to study what bullying is and what effects it can have in schools or other institutions, as well as in the workplace. Programs in school are diverse and their purpose is to help those who are victims of bullying and to make the perpetrators understand that what they practice is not a good thing for society or for them.

An examples of anti-bullying programs is the *Olweus Bully Prevention Program* (Olweus et al., 1999), which tracks the behavior of both aggressors and the ones who are abused, to help aggressors to get rid of this habit. Victims will also be helped and will learn how to combat this type of behavior. Another program is the *Second Step Violence*

Prevention Program, a program that has been very successful in terms of social skills and has managed to reduce anti-social behaviors (Taub, 2001) and to reduce aggression (Van Schoiack-Edstrom, Frey, & Beland, 2002).

Newer programs address this issue through a restorative justice model, which seeks to re-establish the relationship between aggressor and victim through certain techniques proposed by Braithwaite in 1989, such as forgiveness or reconciliation to reduce intimidation (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006). It has also been studied and confirmed that hormones have a strong impact on this problem because most young people who practice bullying are in the period when they have their first experiences with hormones, experiences that can affect them emotionally or mentally, which leads to this behavior. Studies are conducted on children or adolescents and how they process information and how they interpret certain situations, as well as how they use previous experiences to cope with aggression (Gini, 2006).

At the same time, it is debatable that anti-bullying programs can sometimes be ineffective, and it is often believed that aggressors are people who have had many emotional problems in the past or can be normal people who just want to establish social dominance, the possibilities are many.

Based on the technology nowadays, there are several problems for those who use it, for example, the action of cyberbullying is defined as *"intentionally doing harm via computer, phone or other devices"* (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Although almost everyone has access to the internet, most young people who use the internet have experienced this problem or have practiced it as well.

Studies show that cyberbullying is a method of intentional harassment because in most cases the identity of the aggressor is not really known and is the form of harassment that aims to attack other people mentally or emotionally. It is similar to bullying in a way, but there are some small differences like cyberbullying uses electronic communication to harass, threaten, offend or intimidate other people. The most common forms of cyberbullying are threatening messages, posting certain embarrassing pictures or videos with someone on social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or without their agreements and posting certain messages aimed at damaging the image of that person; when bullying itself it is based not only on verbal, but also on physical abuse.

Cyberbullying is differentiated in terms of bullying through which the aggressive identity may be permanently protected by various factors such as fake email addresses, multiple fake accounts, anonymizers or aliases, instant messaging, chat rooms and more others (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010), when there is bullying — aggressive identity is known and often that person is someone in their social circle.

There are not as many rules or restrictions on the internet as we have in real life, so cyberbullying is easy to practice and often the aggressor escapes without being caught. Due to the fact that young people are not closely supervised by parents, teachers or legal guardians when it comes to using the Internet, these opportunities arise more and more often, and the aggressors take advantage of their discretion to act again.

It is estimated that "between 10% and 40% of young people who use the Internet have had this unpleasant experience at least once, depending a lot on the age of the subjects studied" (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). A study by Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) shows that 19% of young people between the ages of 10 and 17 have experienced cyberbullying as a victim or aggressor.

In 2005, data was collected from 3767 students from six different middle schools, and it was found that 11.1% of them were harassed on the internet in the last two months, 4.1% were aggressors, 6.8% were aggressors and victims. Even more recent data from 2007 shows that 10% of high school students have been harassed in the last 30 days, about 17% have been affected by cyberbullying in their lifetime. In the same study, 8% had assaulted others in the last 30 days while 18% had done so in their lifetime so far (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010).

Methodology

Participants

Our study was based on young people in Cluj-Napoca. Several young people from different high schools and colleges, aged 15-25, were self-selected. The first method used was the sociological survey, using the questionnaire as a tool. It was applied to a sample of N=148 people. Of the responses, 77% came from females and the remaining 23% from males. For the interview, 10 subjects (5 female, 5 male) were recruited on a voluntary basis, chosen based on their experience with the subject of the present research.

Research design

This study aimed to highlight the phenomenon of bullying, which is very present in the Romanian society. Our research aimed to study young people in Cluj-Napoca in terms of their attitude toward bullying.

The survey facilitated participation, as the questionnaire spread rapidly, and data was easy to interpret. The sample was self-selected, made of individuals living in Cluj-Napoca; as the instrument was applied online, on Facebook, on private groups of students or groups of authors' friends from Cluj-Napoca, the sample was a convenience one. The questionnaire was set to record responses during November-December 2019.

The questionnaire was made of 18 questions; by self-administrating via an online tool, the participants were able to express better, removing one of the factors that can influence the response, the operator. The first five questions targeted the familiarity of the subjects with the term of bullying and their participation in anti-bullying events. The following seven questions were related to bullying experiences or if the subjects have known a victim. The following three questions concerned their opinion on the phenomenon and the fight for combating the aggressive behavior.

For the interview, ten individuals were recruited from FPACS, the authors' college, 5 female and 5 male, of different ages and study programs. Through the interview, we aimed to gather in-depth data. The questions concerned a better understanding of the attitude of the subjects, victims, or people familiar with school bullying. The interviews lasted, on average, ten minutes, in a face-to-face setting.

Results

Survey

The questionnaire was applied to a sample of 148 people, of which N=140 replies have been valid. *77%* of the replies were recorded from female respondents and *23%* from men. Most respondents were between 19-25 years old. Thus, *84,5%* are college students and *11,5%* high school students.

Asked if they know the term *bullying*, 98% of the subjects responded positively. Then, they had to choose to what extent they agree that bullying is problem in society. Most of them, 69.9% totally agreed with this, and 24.3% only agreed. Two of the questions referred to anti-bullying campaigns. Only *27%* of the subjects participated in anti-bullying campaigns, but *73,6%* of them answered 'Yes' when asked if such events have an impact on young people. We notice that, although some do not take part in such campaigns, most consider them useful and recognize their importance in combating aggressive behavior.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, we asked this question: "How much do you think bullying affects the people concerned?". 85.1% of the answers reflected a very strong agreement, and 12.2% a strong agreement. Another question sought to discover where young people think that bullying is present the most. The most chosen option was *"at school"*, followed by *"online," "in friends' group"* and three other variants mentioned by the subjects.

The following questions concerned their experience as a victim or as an observer of an aggression. From our representative sample, 66.2% said they were victims of bullying, 30.4% of the respondents were not, and 3,4% chose not to answer. At the question of how they have been abused, if they were, they had to choose from a series of answers. Also, there was an *'other'* variant. But the subjects have chosen among the answers already set. Young people therefore face verbal aggression where they are insulted, humiliated, or threatened (84.5%), but also social aggression, when they are socially excluded (75.7%). A considerable percentage is also found in the 'Online' option, 32%. There have been fewer cases of physical abuse among the subjects (12.6%). Of all victims, 53.6% chose to tell someone, and 46.4% did not tell anyone.

According to the results, young people who have been victims of bullying choose to confess, in most cases, equally to friends and parents, 60.7%. Then they choose the 'brother/ sister': 14.8%, followed by 'teachers': 21.3%. Of the subjects, 8.2% opted to speak to a school advisor or psychologist. Subjects who have been or have not been victims of bullying, they also knew or saw someone who has experienced an aggression, in proportion of 88.5%. The other 11.5% were not aware of such victims or chose not to answer. Those who said they had known or seen aggressive situations had to answer the question: "What did you do?". They tried to help the victim 72.5%, they told someone 16%, they ignored 9.2%, and joined the aggressor 2.3%. 64.9% of those polled blame the parents, 52.7% the teachers, 56.1% blamed the friends, and 1,4% blamed society. The rest of them have completed the other variants with their own answers, such as 'Education' or they said no one can be blamed, because bullying always existed.

At the question: "Where do you think bullying is coming from?", 64.9% of respondents have chosen *"inappropriate groups"*, 55.4% chose *"absence of affection from family"*, and 44.6% chose *"different misunderstandings between the aggressor and victim"*. The rest of the respondents wrote answers, such as: *"poor education", "jealousy", "lack of self-confidence", "for fun"* etc. These responses show that there are several factors, environmental or individual, which influences aggressive behavior in some people.

Being asked openly how to fight bullying, those surveyed offered many solutions. On average, most opted for anti-bullying campaigns. They supported their choice, affirming that these events would bring knowledge about the negative effect bullying has on the victim. Another common solution which has been found was to implement stricter rules in schools. The subjects thought that teachers and the family should get more involved in solving aggression cases, both through education and through severity. To fight bullying, as answers have shown, young people should not be seen as targets, but should be encouraged to defend themselves. It was also promoted the action to discuss with the aggressor, the adviser or psychologist and empathy. These answers show that there are various solutions against bullying and young people are willing to practice them.

Interview

Five females and five males participated in the interview, aged 15-25 years or over, highschoolers and students with different studies. The interviews were conducted face-to-face. The purpose of this qualitative method was to deepen and understand the vision and attitude that young people in Cluj have on aggressive behavior. Interviews provided us with some information such as: those who are aggressed remain most of the time with psychologically traumas, bullying is more common in large groups than in small groups, and the school should focus on educating young children about this phenomenon.

Most of the respondents openly said they were victims of bullying. Of them, 4/10 were not victims, but they know people who are. Some of them were verbal assaulted, with fewer of them being physically assaulted. Two people have not told anyone about the victim's situation. The rest, victims or just observers, decided to speak to someone like psychologists or school advisors. Most of them, however, informed parents and teachers. 9/10 of the participants believed that this aggressive behavior called 'bullying' is particularly evident in large groups of people, because in this type of group there are better chances there is a person who is marginalized and prone to aggression.

As regards the risks to which the victim is exposed, the respondents identified the following consequences: trauma, lack of confidence in people and in themselves, depression, anxiety, risks of suicide, or physical risks. All people interviewed said that to eliminate or diminish bullying, schools are responsible for special education programs. Children or those who practice bullying should learn about the risks this behavior has. Also, one person asked for a more severe involvement of teachers in such issues, and another person, the involvement of authorities.

Conclusions

From the results presented, it can be noted that bullying is quite a serious problem, having a serious impact on young people. They are forced to endure aggression from early ages such as insults, physical assault, harassment, derision, and more. Although there are many programs that deal with this issue, no method has yet been found that will work 100% and reduce it altogether.

Most survey replies (85.1%) show that bullying is affecting the victims very strongly, and anti-bullying programs are deemed a necessity, although they do not get rid of the problem altogether. But with their help, the number of cases of bullying has started to drop once the victims have been directed to express their feelings and what they want from their attackers. Most of the answers (84.5%) say that the victims were only aggressed verbally and not physically. The results show that young people are very open to this topic and 72.5% of the responses show that they are willing to intervene when they see a victim of bullying. The results also shows that the main cause of bullying is parental negligence. The number of cases could therefore decrease if the parents gave their interest to their children, intervening occasionally or more often to resolve the problems that arise. Negative groups are also a main cause of bullying. When it comes to the fight against bullying the answers are vast, everyone has a different opinion on the subject, but many find it best to talk about this issue with someone close or someone specialized in this field that can help the victim get out of that situation.

Among the research limits is the small number of answers from the masculine side of the representative sample. Also, it is noted that each person interviewed has a very strict and different opinion. Some say the real problem is the entourage and not the parents or even the other way round. Others said education was a problem and some thought teachers were to blame too. But the answers were different. Their answers could also be influenced by the others interview participants to give the most original answer. We recommend those who want to make further research on this subject to use a sample that is as balanced as possible from the point of view of genders, interviews with specialists, teachers, or parents and have the highest number of answers to make it easier to conclude.

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The comfort zone and young couples

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to explore the consequences of the comfort zone upon young couples and whether the fear of emotional discomfort or making decisions influences the duration of such relationships. The current study reviews perspectives from a total of 82 subjects. The respondents are people between 15 and 28 years-old, in romantic relationships that are longer than 3 months. A survey is administered to a non-probabilistic sample of 67 respondents, and an individual structured interview is carried out on 15 subjects together with a specialist in the field (psychologist). We find that between the two components of the comfort zone approached in this study, only the fear of emotional discomfort can extend the duration of a relationship between couples of a young age, while the fear of making such decisions seems to remain uncertain.

Keywords: comfort zone, young couples, emotions, decisions.

Introduction
Tying connections and relationships with people is the background of our lives, of people. Among the variety of types of relationships that a person can bond throughout their existence, an important place is occupied by romantic relationships, couples. Oftentimes, these relationships, especially those created between young people, face various problems, events, made aware of or not, but with strong implications, among them being the comfort zone. This study aims to create an accurate image that illustrates the

connection between the two, the main question of the research being **RQ1: How does the comfort zone influence the couple relationships formed between young people?**

To facilitate the understanding of the chosen theme, it is necessary to define the comfort zone. Thus, *"the comfort zone is a behavioral state in which a person operates in a state of neutral anxiety, using a limited set of behaviors that ensure a constant level of performance, usually without a sense of risk"* (White, 2009, p. 2).

By young people, the study refers to people aged between 15 and 28 years old, picturing the moment when individuals begin to form more stable, lasting relationships, which is later confirmed in this research, and the age when most of them are already starting their own families. It is necessary to conduct a study on this topic because most research focusing on the comfort zone tackle its influence on the professional and school performance of young people, rather than certain aspects of their personal life, such as a relationship.

The present study correlates the comfort zone with certain factors that influence the couple's relationships: emotional comfort and security in making decisions. Given this fact and involuntarily observing certain opinions and behaviors of young people who are involved in a relationship, we aim to test the following hypotheses:

H1: The fear of emotional discomfort makes young people not give up on the relationships they have, thus prolonging their duration.

H2: The fear of making decisions makes young people not give up on the relationships they have, thus prolonging their duration.

Two research methods are used to collect data, namely the sociological survey and the interview. The subjects include 67 people for the questionnaire and 11 for the interview, aged between 15 and 28 years old, both males and females, from rural and urban areas, high-school students, students with different jobs, or freelancers. The study was carried out during November-December 2019.

By the end of this research, we expect to find out how the comfort zone influences the duration of young people's romantic relationships, whether they are afraid to leave relationships due to a possible precarious emotional state, how difficult it is for them to make decisions, and if it constitutes one of the factors that contribute to the decision to continue a relationship.

The comfort zone and relationships: Theoretical considerations

There are numerous definitions of the comfort zone. White (2009), for instance, believes that only by stepping outside of the comfort zone can one achieve performance, with all its implications. Brown (2008) perspective is similar, stating that only by experiencing feelings of self-doubt and anxiousness, accompanied by achieving success, do people move on from a "*groan zone*" to a zone of development, "*growth zone*". Panicucci (cited in Brown, 2008) shares the same perspective, as at the opposite pole of the comfort zone, the said author places a "*stretch zone*". She says that learning occurs when the individual is in this zone. Intellectual development and personal growth do not occur if there is no imbalance in a person's way of thinking, feeling, or behaving.

In a TEDx talk called *The Power of Vulnerability*, Bréne Brown (2011), based on her research on vulnerability, describes the comfort zone as state where our insecurity and vulnerabilities are minimized, where we believe we will have access to enough food, love, talent, time, admiration, where we feel in control.

In 2017, Joel, MacDonald, and Page-Gould published a study aimed to find out the reasons for which people decide to stay or give up on a relationship. The population they studied included different categories of subjects: students who were or were not in a relationship, students who had recently considered a break-up, and workers in a construction company. Asked what the reasons would be for remaining in a relationship, most subjects selected emotional attachment and the need for emotional security. Moreover, a large part of the subjects said that routine in a relationship is both a reason to continue a relationship, as well as a reason to give it up, as well as the personality traits of their partner. Other reasons, given in the same direction, were the need for validation, to increase self-esteem, or the desire for enjoyment. What seems interesting, in support of the hypotheses of this study, is that dependence (the need to have someone by your side, someone who understands you) and the habit of being with their partner were mentioned by a total of 87 and 47 respondents, respectively (Joel, MacDonald, & Page-Gould, 2017, pp. 8-11).

Another study reviewed a series of studies with 2,050 subjects involved in both long and short-term relationships, to see which of them has more satisfaction declared by partners. To achieve this goal, they divided the couples in each category into those involved in a romantic, passionate love, or a companionate love (Acevedo & Aron, 2009). Through romantic love, the authors refer to a love with *"intensity, commitment, and sexual interest"* (p. 59). Companionate love is defined as *"the love and tenderness we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply connected"* (Berscheid & Hatfield, cited in Acevedo & Aron, 2009) and refers to a deep friendship, sharing of interests, and common activities, which do not necessarily include a sexual desire or attraction. Some authors, referring to the two types of love, consider that there is an interdependence between the two, that in time, there is *"a linear passage of passionate love in companion love"* (Hatfield & Walster, 1978, cited in Acevedo & Aron, 2009) There are also opinions that claim that, *"over time, romantic, passionate love decreases, inevitably collapses, and that, at best, evolves into a kind of friendship or companionship. Social science models emphasize habit and familiarity, the inevitable conflicts of interdependence, and the like"* (Acevedo & Aron, 2009, p. 60).

The same authors looked into previous research on short relationships with subjects such as students between 18 and 23 years old, single, or who were in the process of getting to know or meeting with potential partners, or who were married for less than 4 years and to 10 other studies on long-term relationships with middle-aged subjects, couples who were married for 10 years or more. Companionate love, corresponding to a lower level of satisfaction in both types of relationships, has been associated more with long-term couples who emphasize the greater importance of calmness, friendship, attachment to the success of relationships. At the same time, those who reported experiencing a romantic, passionate love, associated it with a higher level of satisfaction in short-term couples (Acevedo & Aron, 2009).

Methodology

As stated before, the research question and hypotheses underlying the present research are the following:

RQ1: How does the comfort zone influence the couple relationships formed between young people?

H1: The fear of emotional discomfort makes young people not give up on the relationships they have, thus prolonging their duration.

H2: The fear of making decisions makes young people not give up on the relationships they have, thus prolonging their duration.

A questionnaire and an interview guide were designed to collect data in order to address the above-mentioned question and hypotheses. Thus, a mixed-method approach was employed. The questionnaire was distributed online, via social networks, and it included factual questions, to map respondents' experiences with the topic. Variables included in the questionnaire tackled the average duration of relationships in which young people are involved, the age at which they begin to establish their couples, how difficult it is for young people to make decisions, the degree of attachment to their partner and their role in their lives, the dynamics in the couple, the way in which they characterize their partner, possible behavioral changes that appeared during the relationship, separation tendencies, and at the end, demographic items were addressed. There is a total of 32 questions, of which 4 are for identification. Although 72 questionnaires were completed, only 67 were valid, thus not considering the answers of people with relationships shorter than 3 months or who do not fall within the age range of 15-28 years. The interview was carried out individually, face to face for people living in Cluj-Napoca and sent by e-mail to people living in other cities. It was a structured interview, based on the interview guide. Through the open questions, an in-depth approach to the studied subject was attempted. Data was obtained on the following variables: the image of the partner and of the ideal relationship and to what extent the partner fulfills them, the degree of dependence on the partner, the place he or she occupies in their lives (if they see him or her more as a friend), the role that the family plays in the case of a possible decision regarding a break-up, whether routine is a fundamental element in their couple, reactions, behaviors, feelings, in response to a separation. A separate interview was carried out with a specialist, a psychologist. The interview was structured, with open questions, administered indirectly, sent by e-mail. The interview included questions regarding the significance of the comfort zone, how it manifests, the role of fear of emotional discomfort and making decisions in the case of those relationships in which the comfort zone is installed. The interviews were carried out in December 2019.

Subjects

The target group was made of individuals aged between 15 and 28 years old, both male and female, both from rural and urban areas, students, high school students, employees, or freelancers. The sampling method was a non-probabilistic one (convenience sample), the studied population not being representative, as in the case of the questionnaires, 47 respondents are female and 20 males, most of them (51 respondents) are aged between 18 and 20 years old, 12 respondents over 20 years old and only 4 of them are into the category of under 18 years old. Moreover, 38 of the respondents come from urban areas, and the remaining 29 from rural areas. Most of them are students at colleges in Cluj-Napoca, from UBB and UTCN, but there are also answers from students from faculties in Iaşi, Bucharest, and Bacău. The criteria according to which the validity of the answers was checked was the answer to the question of the duration of their current relationship; respondents with relationships shorter than three months or aged outside of the target age group were not included in the analysis.

In the case of individual interviews, a non-probability sampling was also carried out among acquaintances of the authors; 6 subjects are male, 9 female, one person under 18 years old, 7 aged between 18 and 20 years old, and the remaining 7 are older than 20 years, none exceeding 28 years old. The shortest relationship lasted for 7 months, and the longest lasted for 5 years and seven months. No one is married. Respondents are both people who are still in a relationship and people who are currently single. Thus, the studied population is not representative, but it is relevant for the present topic.

Participation of the subjects was voluntary, accessing the link posted on social networks, and for interviews, potential respondents were contacted directly, being informed of the purpose of their contribution, and ensuring them that their identity remained anonymous.

Results

Survey

The questionnaire generated a series of quantitative data on the topic. Based on the filter question on the duration of their relationship, four respondents were dismissed from the analysis. Thus, there are 67 respondents whose answers are analyzed in this section. 54% of the valid answers expressed their experiences with a past relationship, and 46% with the current relationship. In terms of the duration of their relationship and age when they started it, results are grouped as follows: 33% respondents with relationships that lasted less than one year, 63% with relationships lasting between 1 year and 3 years, and 4% with relationships longer than 3 years. Regarding the age at which they started their relationship, the subjects answered as follows: 51% said that they formed their couple when they were less than 18 years old, most of them being 16 years old when they started that relationship, 47% at an age between 18 and 20 years, and 2% at an age of over 20 years.

In terms of decision-making, 44.8% of the subjects declared having medium difficulties in making decisions, while 29.9% said that it was very easy for them to make decisions, while 13.4% consider that it is easy for them to decide, and only 11.9% declared having big or greater difficulties making decisions. What is interesting here is that male respondents were more likely to select answers denoting self-confidence. In terms of deciding on orders when going to a restaurant, 59.7% said they order the same thing as usual, 20.9% tried something new, and 19.4% did not offer an answer. Most subjects prefer to stay in the comfort zone and order something they know tastes well, rather than to take the risk of trying out a new food. In terms of difficulty taking risks, 40.3% answered that it was easy for them to take risks, 26.9% that it is of medium difficulty for them to take risks, 16.4% appreciate that it is difficult for them to take risks, and 13.4% opt for the option of it being a very easy endeavor. Only 3% say that it is very difficult for them to take risks.

When asked about how they would proceed if they went to a college that did not live up to their expectations, 40.3% of the subjects stated that they would wait one year before deciding, 20.9% said they would continue, and 35.8% would give up. 3% answered that they would proceed differently. Based on a pairing of these questions due to what they measure, two of them refer to how subjects project their own image, making it easy for them to make decisions and take risks, and the others refer to exact situations that capitalize on decision-making power. The answers to the latter do not reflect the image constructed by the respondents as their own, so there appears to be a conflict between the two variables.

The next variable measures the interaction between the subject and their partner. Regarding how often the subjects saw their partners, most of them, 48.8%, did so 1 to 4 times a week, 38.8% confessed that they saw each other almost every day, and 7.5% saw their partner only 1 to 4 times a month. The other 3% only saw their partner rarely, several times a year. Another 3% confessed seeing their partners every day. The next item measured the respondents' preference toward going out with their partner, which showed the degree of attachment of the subjects to the partners, because 43.3% prefer going out with them, and 50.7% would not want to give up on their friends, stating their preference for bringing their partner and friends together. Only a small percentage of 6% preferred their friends over their partner. In terms of time spent with their partners, 34.3% spent nearly all day with them, 19.4% of them said 5-8 hours, and the other 31.3% spent 3-5 hours. We notice a dependence on each other, the partner as a person who covers an important need of the individual, that of communication, socializing, the partners ensuring mutual comfort. The subjects were asked whether they had ever wanted to take a break from the relationship and not done it, and 43% responded affirmatively. Among the most common reasons for which they did not break off the relationship were the fear of a possible imbalance, the dependance, the fact that they preferred to indulge in the situation, the desire not to hurt the other, distrust in the decision, the fact that the problems could sort themselves out. The open answers of the subjects considerably support the given hypotheses. For those who had breaks in the couple, we asked for an approximate number of them, the average being 4, the tendency to return to a relationship in which they no longer feel fulfilled being obvious.

To whether they ever thought no longer belonging in that relationship, 46.3% answered *yes*, most of them saying that monotony and routine intervened, the partner became suffocating, thus they no longer felt fulfilled. Moreover, when the subjects were asked how often they and their partners did new things, 77.2% did so often and very often, while 32.8% only tried new things rarely and almost never. We also found out that another reason that keeps young people in relationships is the support they see in their partner. Thus, to whether their partners' presence in their lives make the respondents feel less worried, 68.7% answered affirmatively, and whether it helped solve their problems easier, 71.6% answered the same way, whereas 4.5% stated that most problems were actually created by the partner.

Another variable is the dynamic inside the relationship, the behavioral changes noticed. 52.2% of respondents had not noticed negative changes, while 47.8% had in fact noticed some. About their own person, 52.8% had not noticed negative changes, while 41.8% had in fact noticed, thus a similar proportion. In terms of reasons for these changes, most mentioned the decrease of interest towards the partner and the increase of interest for other people, jealousy, adoption of a more distant attitude, domination by a state of monotony, predisposition to irritability towards their partner.

Beyond the characteristics derived from all the questions previously developed, the reasons why the subjects loved their partners, practically reasons that would determine them to stay in those relationships, showed aspects related to the personality of the partner, the mentioned features being related to the well-being of the subject, what they can receive from their partner. Qualities such as "attentive", "understanding", "thoughtful", "intelligent", "sense of humor" were mentioned. Other reasons consisted in the physical aspect, in the fact that the partner helped them develop individually, the fact that they offered security. Only one subject mentioned sex as one of the reasons why she liked her partner.

In terms of people who were no longer in the relationship described, 21% of the subjects who meet the above-mentioned criterion are those who initiated the separation, 30% preferred the option of common agreement, and 17.5% were abandoned by their partners. Among the reasons behind the separations between young couples, most invoke cheating, partner jealousy, monotony, declining interest, increasing quarrels, different interests, poor communication. 51.4% said it was difficult for them to adapt to the new lifestyle after the break-up.

Interview

Important data was also collected from the interviews, which showed respondents' perspectives, their values, as well as experiences lived in their relationships, the way relationships are based on installation of the comfort zone. All respondents mentioned sincerity and understanding, and attention, communication, sense of humor, respectful were also very common among desirable qualities in a partner. Only two out of 15 people interviewed mentioned physical characteristics. The ideal relationship of the subjects is based on trust, sincerity, communication, lack of jealousy, many mentioning the provision of help when needed, the sacrifice for the one next to you.

In terms of whether the qualities listed in the previous question are met by the current relationships, or by the partners, most responded positively, mentioning there could have been some inconveniences such as jealousy or communication deficiencies. As for giving up on some of the above-mentioned aspects for the sake of their partner and of the relationship, all respondents mentioned giving going out with their friends to spend time with their partners. One of the subjects confessed to us: "My partner is one of my dearest persons and like I gave up certain things for my parents, for him I gave up friends, because that way I could spend more time with him, to be just the two of us".

In determining to what extent the happiness of the subjects depended on their partners. All subjects, except one that was 26-year-old and single, told us that their partners have been a major source of their happiness. One person with a 9-month relationship confesses that "[s]he's the only person who makes me happy". Another person with a 7-month relationship said that "[i]t made me happy, I had someone to talk to". This question also underlines the dependence on the partner.

Asked about whether the respondents see their partners more like a very good friend, all subjects said that their partner was their best friend, two people with relationships of over three years said that there were times when they saw their partners more as friends, not necessarily loved ones, but they got over it because they considered them only *phases* of the relationship. Once again, we find the couple's partner as a person who fulfills a need, that of communication, belonging, affection, offering comfort.

Inquiring about the feeling of curiosity for other people, apart from the partner, among the respondents, perspectives were mixed. A quarter of the subjects declared not having an impulse in this regard towards another person, and not even thinking about what it would be like to be with someone else, while the rest, regardless of gender, the duration of the relationship, answered positively: "Yes, I felt that way, but I refrained", said one of the subjects.

About the comfort zone and its influence on relationships between young people, respondents with shorter relationships said that they still did not feel that routine is the element that ensures the strength of the relationship, but people with longer relationships confirmed, and the separated ones confessed that they felt that passion disappeared and that only the habit of being with each other kept them together. In terms of wanting to take a break from the relationship, most subjects did not go through a break in the relationship, only 3 of them, but it was not initiated by them. As for involvement of their partner with their family or whether family had an influence in making a relationship-related decision, nearly all partners seemed to have gotten to know partner's family, those with longer relationships being considered a family member. Then, it was unanimous that the family would not have an involvement, respecting their decision. Family is not a decisive factor for a couple's longevity, among the interviewees. Lastly, the condition of the respondents after a possible separation, or after the separation of the partner in the case of those who are currently single, was a variable. Data showed different feelings, those who are in a couple looking at it as a tragic issue: "In the post-parting period it was not easy for me, being used to going out with him and talking to him every day, I missed the feelings I had with him, but I resigned to the idea that it was a toxic relationship and that a breakup was the best decision", "I was frustrated, nervous, upset, disappointed, she broke up with me without telling me the reason (…), I didn't have anyone to talk to anymore", "I would feel very upset, lacking motivation, meaningless, destroyed on the inside, the goals I had would disappear, I thought about starting drinking or smoking", "I would feel very alone because I got used to my partner always being by my side, we went out every day". Here, too, routine and dependence on the partner, the emotional discomfort caused by separation, were invoked. The answers come in support of the first hypothesis.

Because this study addresses a complex topic, with psychological implications, the perspective of a specialist was imperative. A female psychologist was thus contacted for a separate interview: the answers matched the information mentioned in the consulted literature. She also mentioned the ambivalence of the comfort zone which can, on the one hand, increase the individual's performance and emotional state, and on the other hand, their ability to provoke the opposite.

Discussion and conclusions

Following the data analysis, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis is fully confirmed. Thus, the fear of emotional discomfort makes young people stay in their relationships. Young people spend a lot of time with their partners, which facilitates problem-solving or contentious tasks. Also, the partners cover the need for communication, belongingness, the need of validation of the subjects, they make the subjects laugh, feel appreciated. The thought that all this could be lost with the disappearance of the partner, makes young people stay in their relationships, although sometimes they feel that it is no longer their place in those relationships, often considering that it is just a passing phase of the relationship. What is confirmed is the transformation of romantic love into companionate love that Grote and Frieze discussed (cited in Acevedo & Aron, 2009).

Regarding the second hypothesis, about the fear of making decisions, it cannot be said that it is fully validated based on our findings because, as indicated in the previous section, there is a discrepancy between the way subjects project their self-image when it comes to their power of making decisions, their willingness, and the way they would act in specific situations in which they should make decisions or show self-confidence, their power to take risks.

In terms of limitations of the present study, one first aspect would be its external validity, as the sampling is a non-probabilistic one, and the results cannot be generalized, especially since the studied population is small, including only 67 subjects. Another error concerns the answers of the subjects for whom we cannot guarantee that they were fully sincere, as social desirability might be a factor to consider. At the same time, not all subjects answered the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, and others answered superficially.

For future research on the subject developed in this paper, the comfort zone and its influence on the couple relationships formed between young people, we recommend several items to verify the implications of decision-making power on the duration of a couple's relationship. Decision power could be measured by scales. Scales can be introduced to measure the subjects' anxiety, this being closely related to the comfort zone, as can be seen from the very definitions of the phenomenon. A more rigorous sampling is also recommended, with a higher degree of representation, and directly addressing of the questionnaires to ensure an answer to all questions.

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The theory of procrastination: Do we indulge ourselves or have we adopted a new form of behavior?

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ABSTRACT
Procrastination is a habit felt throughout a person's life, regardless of the occasion, both in daily activities and in their interpersonal relationships (family environment, groups of friends, professional circles etc.). The main purpose of this research was to analyze the effects that the tendency of postponing has on people aged 19-35 years old. After analyzing the data, we can observe that procrastination directly influences the evolution of people and does not consider the differences of the categories to which they belong (ethnicity, sex, age, religion, education, profession/ occupation). Also, we tried to map types of procrastination we met through our investigation: first of them – when you are not starting tasks, second one – being unable to finish the tasks, and the last one, when someone is putting off their assignments because they require too much information to be done. We concluded that procrastination is inherent to human behavior, using this as a cause or as an explanation, as each person prefers to remain in their comfort zone in most cases where they have tasks that require to be solved and completed.

Keywords: procrastination, delay, willpower, habit, self-control.

"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."

— *Henry Ford*

Introduction

All human beings face this issue. All human beings have a silent and long battle with an invisible force from their character, that being **procrastination.** Everyone procrastinates on something, at some point, in their life. The main goal of the present study was to approach phenomenon from the base of its appearance until the last effect. In a whole process of searching high and low for honest opinions and inner introspections, the study is trying to give an in-depth account of how individuals cope with postponing. Being a current topic of great interest, it was easy to apply sociological research methods, the result of which clarified the cycle of manifestation of the tendency to procrastinate.

Procrastination – a disease of the will, its disorders reaching all phases of the voluntary act. This *hold off* on things could be considered as an issue of human dissolution, with emphasis on the concept of hedonism. In such cases, there is the *problem of free will*: one who consciously decides to place responsibilities on an indefinite plan, enclosing his comfort zone, where he stimulates his instincts and indulge themselves.

And yet most people experience loss or lack of discipline – now they have supreme control over their actions and emotions, and in a few moments, they find themselves overwhelmed by the immensity of the situation. The habit of people to procrastinate is present in the daily activities that require completion. However, even if it seems to be a contemporary habit, perhaps even a dysfunction of this century, we must not forget that procrastination has been present since ancient times. As proof in this sense are the proverbs and sayings passed down from generation to generation. A few are often used, such as: "*Don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today*", "*Postponement is the thief of time*", or "*You may delay, but time will not*" (Benjamin Franklin). We note that the tendency to procrastinate is not a simple fad, but rather a part rooted in a person's behavior (McGonigal, 2015).

Therefore, procrastination is not a new concept, but a process that our ancestors also encountered. It was first of all treated in 800 BC by the Greek philosopher Hesiod, who warned the polis, the city-fortress: *"Do not leave the work you have to do tomorrow or the day after!".*

Procrastination: Theoretical perspectives

We all procrastinate at one time or another, and researchers suggest that the predisposition may be particularly pronounced among students. For example, the academic prevalence is of 80-95%, while 75% of individuals consider that they generally delay tasks, and for about 50% this practice has become a habit (Steel, 2007). Thus, this predisposition to avoid and postpone called procrastination is found especially in academic activity.

Not only students fall into the *I'll do it later!* trap, but also adults – individuals with responsibilities and commitments. Ferrari (2010) claimed that about 20 percent of US adults are chronic procrastinators. Every time someone delay an action, the negative attitude towards it is strengthened. With each postponement, the temptation to avoid further is greater than the desire to act, and the habit of procrastination becomes stronger. In a result, the person avoids accumulating new knowledge and skills, and fears increase throughout this time. The vicious circle grows constantly feed with each procrastination, but it can be broken by active, constant, as fast as possible involvement (Costin, 2015).

The role of a radiography of procrastination as analyzed by specialists is to present the difference between *active procrastination*, which is also a strategy of postponing things as opposed to *passive procrastination*, or between *stimulating procrastination* (Klingsieck, 2013), specific to people who delay everything to the last moment, considering that it works better under pressure and *avoidance procrastination*, when procrastination is based on fears.

In the last 30 years there has been an explosion of empirical interest in research based on the phenomenon of procrastination. Experts from the Procrastination Research Group describe this action as a voluntary postponement of an important thing that needs to be done, despite the awareness that the postponement will have unfavorable consequences. Even if an individual does not have the cognitive basis to organize their time well and to plan his future activities, the inability to manage emotions stage on foundation for this tendency (Jaffe, 2013).

Next, the current study approaches the topic from a biological point of view, where the role of prefrontal cortex is brought to reader's attention. Sapolsky (2017) argued that the main task of the prefrontal cortex is to influence the brain – consequently, to choose the *more difficult path*. For example, when it is easier to protract the project for the next day, the prefrontal cortex is the one that helps you open the file and get to work. The cortex represents the outside layer of the brain. It is the place where we mediate more complex processes as perception, planning, attention; it is a region that is not very developed at birth, susceptible of being shaped by direct experience. Analyzing its structure, we notice three key areas that share the tasks of "I want", "I don't want", and "I desire". The upper left side of the prefrontal cortex specializes in its "I want" power. It helps you start and continue boring, heavy, or stressful tasks. The right side is aimed with the power of "I don't want", which prevents you from giving in to every impulse and every lust. Together, these two areas control what you do and what the actions you take. And the third region, located below and in the center of the prefrontal cortex, keeps track of your goals and desires. The faster its cells take action, the more motivated you are to take action or resist temptation (McGonigal, 2015). Initiated in this biological and objective part of human motivation, the one who is interested in this topic becomes able to understand the origin of the enhancement or diminution of his desire when approaches an activity.

For human beings to develop self-control, they need to know where they are wrong: the best way to improve self-control is to find out how and why they lose control. When a man can understand what makes them give up, this capacity can be understood as an opportunity to refocus their efforts on avoiding the pitfalls that lead to loss of will. A firm will means exploiting the three powers: "I want", "I don't want", and "I desire" (McGonigal, 2015). The mentioned elements embody the origin of being able to achieve general goals, personal goals and to avoid inconveniences.

Every day a patience observer notices how persons work, learn, rest, practice their favorite work. Also, he notices how for a long time they tend towards the goal set, concentrate their physical and intellectual forces, how they face the obstacles that arise in the way and all their attempts in keeping the route as close as possible to the constructed plans. In all this examples the will of man is manifested. Now, after analyzing the biological level, the study moves on understanding the phenomenon from a philosophical and psychological point of view.

Volition can be understood as (Ribot, 1997): a modality of coordinating the activity in general (the will to act and the will to abstain, to be patient, to give up), a superior process of self-regulation (conscious and verbally mediated); or the ability to act in order to achieve a proposed conscious goal. The willpower is the conscious regulation made by man towards actions and deeds that require overcoming internal and external difficulties. According to textbook definitions, willpower is the ability peculiar to man to update and realize his intentions. In another order of ideas, this represents the complex psychic process, through which man mobilizes and channels his physical and spiritual forces and capacities to overcome the obstacles that appear on the trajectory of the activity.

Thus, the will is full of content. Its content consists of representations and notions, with which rationality and imagination operate. At the same time, the will is a specific mechanism of initiation and inhibition. Volitional regulation of behavior is the conscious orientation of intellectual and physical efforts to achieve or retain their purpose (Ribot, 1997).

The voluntary act, preceded by an idea and determined by it, presupposes a reflection and a commitment. Conducts that do not meet these criterions do not depend on will. According to the classical scheme, the manifestation of the voluntary act would involve: 1) designing a project; 2) a deliberation (appreciation of the optimal action); 3) taking the decision; and 4) execution of the action to the end (Ribot, 1997).

Psychic function characterized by the conscious orientation of man towards the achievement of certain goals cannot be maintained at maximum levels permanently, this being characterized by temporality. Maintaining volition requires a special concentration, it is very tiring and therefore very difficult to maintain. In most cases, other things appear that will distract concentration. In order not to lose concentration, a series of methods must be used to keep the manifestation of the will at maximum levels. The result is better when instead of using the will directly in the fight against problems, it should be used mainly in the fight against transformation of the environment, social obstacles, and habits.

From a psychological perspective, the obstacle (weight, impasse) encountered in carrying out a certain activity is not identified with any object or phenomenon of reality or with the internal resistance felt by the individual but is a confrontation between human possibilities and objective conditions of activity. The nature of the obstacle has two relations: external (material) or internal (physiological, psychological). Therefore, in the evaluation of the obstacle can occur: underestimation of the obstacle (failure, leads to procrastination); overrating the situation with obstacle (failure, leads to procrastination); or adequate reflection of it (success, leads to overcoming procrastination and maintaining the previous action plan). Intending to overcome the obstacle, man mobilizes his voluntary effort to the weaknesses. Voluntary effort consists of channeling of a complex resources such as physical, intellectual, emotional, through verbal mechanisms, elements that should be introduced in the treatment against procrastination. In this manner, volition can transform the imperatives coming from outside into internal commands (self-commands), constituting a psychic mechanism of self-regulation, self-government, and conduct. Willpower is a mental trait that a person acquires over time through education and personal experiences. Depending on age, it differs significantly because reasons, goals, principles, and perceptions are in a constant process of changing. They do not remain in a fixed form. The activities carried out make their strongest mark on these changes and, at the same time, outline all the qualities of the will (Ribot, 1997).

The most important qualities of will are: Perseverance - the long-term maintenance of the effort to achieve a goal; Firmness and strength of will - the ability to understand and bear the difficulties encountered during the activities; Independence and initiative - suggests both self-determination and originality of one’s own behavior; Self-control - involves awareness, appreciation and permanent adequacy of one's own qualities and acts; Promptness of decision - the speed with which a person manages to make a decision. Procrastination takes control of the situation when one of these aspects of the volition is not in their fullness (Ribot, 1997).

How can we develop our determination and self-control?

Willpower is the ability to overcome laziness or procrastination, an ability to control or reject unhelpful or harmful impulses. The manifestation of this function is like an instrument that coordinates control over the useless, or even harmful external factors that appear in the development of one’s own activities (Ribot, 1997). Self-control succeeds in strengthening the will, complementing it harmoniously. Through self-control one acquires perseverance, endurance with facing difficulties and physical, emotional, or mental impasses encountered, but also the ability to postpone immediate satisfaction.

To acquire and develop these skills, Ribot deems it necessary to get out of comfort zone by performing various actions that would normally be avoided for various reasons.

Along the way, there can be noticed the appearance of changes that prove to be beneficial in the long run: the inner strength is more determined, the mind manages to obey, and the fortitude is becoming more and more highlighted.

Methodology

To address the issue debated above, this study further employed two research methods: a quantitative one (indirect sociological survey) and a qualitative one (semi-structured interview). The data collection through the online questionnaire took place in November 2019, gathering N=180 participants. 11 subjects were interviewed to gain in-depth information on procrastination, both students and professionals dealing with procrastination. In conducting this study, all elements related to research ethics and responsibility for the data provided were taken in consideration. Interviews were only recorded after the interviewee consent was obtained.

Results

Survey

The total sample was N=180 individuals. Their socio-demographic distribution shows a female majority (55.4%), the remaining 44.6% comprising the male participants. Mostly, respondents are from urban areas 95.2%, and only 4.8% respondents from rural areas. 72.4% people surveyed are between 17 and 35 years old. The sampling used was non-probabilistic, unrepresentative, with respondents from all over the country, in different proportions.

With these in mind, the first aspect clarified in the survey tackled how many people encountered the term *procrastination* and how familiar the concept is within society. So, from the beginning of the questionnaire, the first question asks respondents to find a synonym for the studied phenomenon from the following list: to postpone something, to give something up, to believe in yourself. Analyzing the answers received, 94.6% were able to give a correct answer, finding a suitable synonym. The result reinforced the idea that the disturbance of the action of the will, as a phenomenon, affects a good part of people. Moreover, the vast majority are aware of this pathology of the will. Then, respondents needed to rate how much they tend to procrastinate within a day, on a scale of 1 to 5. The frequency of the action to postpone starting with 1="Very rarely", 3="Sometimes", and 5="Very often". The most present answer is the average one, most respondents admitting to sometimes procrastinating, which suggests the idea that most respondents tend to procrastinate regularly during the day. They prefer to weigh how much time is left in completing the tasks, calculate the level of motivation re-profiled in the future and, in the end, underestimate the time spent on certain activities to be completed. This string is made up of the elements that underlie procrastination.

Trying to map out feelings that arise from procrastination, respondents were asked to explain what moods they feel after postponing the performance of certain tasks, whether they are more complex or usual activities: the feeling with the greatest load after the delay is guilt (nearly half of the respondents), followed by frustration (26%), anxiety (15%), and indifference (9%). Thus, the feelings that come from the activity of procrastination are negative, people realizing that certain tasks had to be completed on time, and lack of motivation causes guilt, disappointment, and inner anxiety.

To better understand this phenomenon, we aimed to identify the type of activities that people tend to postpone. We analyzed and classified the answers received, forming several categories of activities that the participants in the online questionnaire admitted to postponing. The result of the open question is as follows: most respondents (nearly half) postpone academic activities, followed by household chores (13%), activities outside their comfort zones (17%), career-related activities (7%), and activities deemed unimportant (8%).

Furthermore, in a closed question: "Where would you place the procrastination?", with answer options: "In the comfort zone", "Outside the comfort zone", or "I don't know/ I won't answer" respondents needed to situate this concept. Framing the answers - 60.6% placed procrastination in the comfort zone, as a proof that humans are very subjective when it comes to what they want to do, indulging themselves, and what they should do, choosing, mainly, the more accessible and convenient option. The remaining 27.8% placed procrastination outside the comfort zone, whereas others chose not to give an answer.

Based on the answers to the previous question, we then looked at activities prioritized before the tasks to be performed (tasks, obligations, duties). The answers received are the following: sleeping and resting (33.33%), watching movies/ series (15.55%), social media usage (10.55%), relaxing activities (10%), listening to music (4.44%) or solving other urgent issues (4.44%), or reading or playing video games (2.22% each). Based on these answers, we observed that people who procrastinate opt for activities that keep them in their comfort zones, as they prefer to be safe, to indulge in a light tension, to do recreational activities that do not require much effort.

Interview

Data gathered in the 11 interviews carried out face-to-face show that procrastination represents a part of human nature and that almost everyone faces its effects. The statement is supported by the following answers. Asked about their understanding of procrastination, interviewees defined it as "a muscle that you have not worked and that has atrophied, due to its non-involvement in your daily activities. At first it is difficult to bring it back to a form of maximum functionality, almost impossible, but after practicing to go against the tempting desire to leave things and impose yourself - it becomes normal" (R6). Then, asked about social media influencing postponement behavior, they acknowledged being tempted by different social platforms, where they can spend time without obligations and without commitments and where they are not pressed by deadlines: "Yes, we are influenced by social media, because they capture our attention and make us procrastinate on what is important and not give importance to urgent things. We remain somehow absorbed in the virtual world and lose track of time. It often happens to me to scroll through the information in the area with news, through feed, for a long-long time, without understanding why I do it"; "Indeed, social networks distract us, even more than we are able realize. These are like a disruptive factor for what we plan to do and what we really manage to accomplish" (R2); "Social networks can influence the postponement of things as long as you are controlled by these entertainment systems without your will. I think that everyone prefers to see what is the latest in the online environment, not to bother with completing real tasks as soon as possible" (R3).

We then aimed to see where they identified the greatest tendency to postpone responsibilities, based on their experience: "I identify it in children, because they are often attracted to the trap of online, but also to people who fail to learn from repeated mistakes and persist in the same mistakes. Maybe they do it involuntarily or because they don't concentrate enough..." (R5); "In my case, the tendency to procrastinate often exists in terms of faculty: projects, homework, but also it happens to occur in my social life" (R7); "This trend is found all around us, regardless of the groups we belong to. I take my example, most of the time, I choose to postpone certain things only if I have other (urgent) tasks that need to be done or I have a period of time from now and when I need to release them. It depends on the priority of each activity. And, obviously, how inclined you are to procrastinate" (R9).

Rather than being informed about the side effects of this "later/ not now" action, people choose to procrastinate from an "average" value to a "very frequent" one (based on the results gathered from the indirect sociological survey). Hence, in line with the survey results and summarizing the information received from interviewees, the primary cause of procrastination, another key for approaching subject, emphasizes the idea of de-hedonism. Namely, a concept that proclaims pleasure, delight as the supreme good, and the tendency to obtain it, the governing principle of behavior. Equally, receiving a momentary gratification is another way to understand of the procrastinator's behavior.

In terms of reasons procrastination becomes so spread, answers show will fear of responsibilities, inability to take on, anxiety, depression, fear of failure, inability to see the benefits of an action/ activity on the long run. Thus, procrastinators are concerned with making themselves feel good instead of analyzing what makes them feel bad.

Finally, some manage to escape the pressure to hold off tasks through discipline, motivation, and the courage to step out of their comfort zone. The origin of their will? Knowing the goals they need to achieve and their resistance in front of external factors. On the other hand, there are many people who prefer to do things that give them immediate satisfaction (momentary reward/ gratification) and forget about the part of obligations and responsibilities. Thus, it can be stated that the postponement has overcome the barriers of a simple tendency, of an unhealthy habit, becoming a segment of human behavior.

Possible solutions proposed by interviewees were to apply the reward system when you have avoided or overcome the temptation to postpone or to use physical prizes, such as fruit or chocolate. The reward is, for example, you learned an hour and a half for the exam, then you are allowed to spend 20 minutes on your favorite social networks. Encapsulating comments from the respondents' answers, this investigation concluded that procrastination is a vicious circle. The will and the motivation to move the current state represent the breaking of this chain and the acquisition of freedom.

Conclusions and limitations

Based on the results and an analysis of our own endeavor, limitations need to be addressed: one of them lays in the small and unrepresentative sample of students and adults who completed the questionnaire. We cannot state with certainty the representativeness of the sample and the margin of error, because we chose a non-probabilistic sampling. In the synthesis of the results from the survey, there might be errors related to the phrasing of the questions, as well as to the forms of answer, where, probably, the answer might have been suggested. Although from closed questions, the questionnaire also contained some open questions, the answer to which turned out to be superficial or, in some cases, absent. It was possible to acknowledge that to certain questions from survey where awareness is required, existence of social desirability through content delivered both by the participants in the online questionnaire and to the people we interviewed. The issue of our study is a delicate one, not many are able to recognize their faulty behaviors to themselves, but rather in others (phenomenon known as *third-person effect*).

However, this study advances the understanding of procrastination as a phenomenon. The hypothesis formulated in the first paragraphs of the research deems procrastination as a disease of will, its disorders reaching all the phases of the voluntary act. In such cases, the *issue of free will* arises: the one who consciously decides to place responsibilities on an indefinite level; idea which was validated from the analysis of the answers from the online questionnaire, as well as from the discussions with those who shared their experiences with procrastination. Therefore, procrastination is an existing part of human behavior, but it manifests itself differently in each person.

Moreover, based on our findings, human beings tend to do the things they hope to accomplish only if after a process of identifying the high value for themselves and usually, individuals tend to ignore the benefits they could get on the long run from completing a task in favor of the ones that they are gaining now. We finally invited readers to reflect on whether the reasons they delayed an activity were good enough for them, whether that attitude is strong enough when facing a crisis, and how momentary decisions reflect future plans.

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Time management among first year students from FPACS

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ABSTRACT
Proper time management is a basic principle for achieving goals and objectives, both on the short and long term. Time management is an essential criterion for success, used to increase work efficiency and productivity. The aim of this study is to determine whether first-year college students manage their time properly, the means through which they achieve good time management, and the impact it has on their academic life. This research involved participants from the Romanian line of study of the Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences of BBU, average age 19. Research methods employed a sociological survey through which we interviewed 63 students, an interview with a specialized psychologist, and an additional interview with 16 of the previously mentioned students. Data analysis shows a lack of orientation among first-year students as far as their newly acquired independence is involved, a feeling that their sense of autonomy has been undermined, and enhanced procrastination. However, better time management on the part of women compared to men has also been reported. The conclusion is that, although students are aware of the importance of good time management in achieving their goals, few act in this regard, and procrastination is the most common phenomenon among students. The major consequences of most students' inability to properly manage their time are highlighted in their academic results and mental state.

Keywords: time management, students, procrastination, planning, goals.

Introduction

Nowadays, in the so-called *age of speed*, time is the most valuable resource at any individual's disposal, regardless of his or her material condition, of his or her professional status, and so on. Although it is considered a stress factor, good time management makes us more productive and motivated in our work (Airininei, n.d.). Students, especially first-year students, clash at this issue at the beginning of their independent academic life due to the new environment, the new schedule, and the diversity of the activities in which they are involved. To successfully perform their tasks and improve their professional and personal performance, students need self-discipline, i.e., good time management.

Pleșca (2011) stated that today, time management is regarded as an optimization of the planning of students' own activities through the intelligent setting of objectives and priorities, which works in favor of achieving the stated aim, acting briefly, and for a long time. But the program must also be free-of-use to develop a different spontaneous factor. Time is one of the decisive factors in the process of taking a decision or acting both in university and in everyday life. This is one of the reasons why we are trying to identify the capacity to use time, whether efficient or inefficient, in students. *"Regardless of the qualities of a successful student, one factor behind this success is the ability to manage time correctly"* (Reaboi, 2017). The efficiency refers to *"achieving notable results in the shortest time possible or to achieving more results in the same time frame"* (Pleșca, 2011).

Today, there is a growing focus on time management and its importance, addressed by researchers such as Mackenzie, Trueman and Haynes, or Pleșca. They claimed the absolute need for time management in personal lives, but especially in business and professional life. The need for time management comes with the development and evolution of the individual's activity. In addition to the pre-established academic program, students engage in many volunteering, student or scientific conferences and spontaneous, extracurricular activities, which require a well-managed program.

The purpose of this work is to find the answer to the following questions: Do first-year students manage their time well? What instruments are they using? Are students aware of the importance of time management? In this regard, we have formulated the main hypothesis of the research: *H1: First-year students of FPACS fail to fulfill their tasks in time*. The second hypothesis is that *H2: they have a disorganized program and they procrastinate more than during the high school period*.

Time management: Theoretical considerations

"Time management starts with self-managing. The main cause of the failure, both on the professional side of academic learning and in everyday life, is the lack of self-imposed discipline. Self-discipline will help the students understand their behavior and attitude to certain chosen common values, shape this behavior in order to minimize negative effects and misattitudes, on the one hand, and to make learning more effective and to carry out actions on the other" (Pleșca, 2011).

Any individual, when they do not have a particular goal or purpose to achieve on a specific day, tends to waste time. Without a set of goals, life would not have a meaning or a purpose, it would be accidental. Targets are an effective way to increase delivery; but they take time to achieve. The timing for achieving the objectives and setting priorities is precisely the role of time management (Mackenzie, 2001), to structure the activity of a temporary term in order to achieve the goals. Regarding students, they all have certain objectives, more or less clear, short or long term. Mackenzie (2001) claimed that people who do not have clear goals have the greatest difficulties in managing time. If we do not know what direction we are heading, we obviously have no problems with the use of time, or its loss. The first step for good use of time is precisely to set goals. Priorities are objectives placed in order of importance. This priority concept has two aspects: *"long-term importance and short-term urgency"* (Mackenzie, 2001).

Trueman and Hartley (1996) carried out exceptional research on time management, drawing a comparison between time management skills and academic performance of mature and traditional university students. They focused on 293 first year students in

Psychology, they divided into 3 groups: under the age of 21, traditional-entry students (172), students aged 21-25 (50) and students aged over 25 (71), 216 female and 77 male. The authors concluded that women can manage their time much better than men. The third group also had a visibly more effective time management (students over 25 years of age). Aside from linking age to academic performance and time management, no significant differences were found.

How tasks are organized is extremely important for effective management time, *"it is said that performance is derived from: 10% inspiration, 40% sweat, and 50% organization"* (Pleșca, 2011). After having established the importance and necessity of managing time in life of any individual who wants to do something throughout his life, specialists offer us several factors, ways (steps to take) to help us with our own organization.

The most common impediment in time management is lack of planning (Mackenzie, 2001). Planning gives us a key with which we can release from the pressure that our time is too short. It tells us how to get from where we are to where we want to get and identifies the resources we need (Haynes, 2001). We cannot achieve an effective time management by randomly solving the tasks we have to do. A list of objectives and priorities must be reported. We therefore need to analyze what tasks we want to fulfill, the priority order; time, the relationship our short-term objectives have with medium and long-term objectives, and results we have set for ourselves, resistance to disruptive events and time-wasting trends. The tool by which we monitor the performance of tasks and how we planned our work (Mackenzie, 2001) and the most effective and convenient method of structuring them is the *list of things to do*, or the list of priorities. Human memory is not the most reliable instrument, by putting it too much of tasks, deadlines, and methodologies on the back, we risk forgetting things or even disorganizing and missing deadlines. A list or calendar of to-do tasks and goals is an essential technique for optimal time handling. Structured in order of priority, this list becomes a reliable ally in achieving the goals set (Airinei, n.d.). It is important to be aware of the available time, so we use our energy efficiently working on more complicated tasks without interruption. This will lead to an increase in results at the end of day.

Pleșca (2011) carried out a study on 160 students, resulting in the following findings: 75% of students use short-term planning, 62,5% plan their activities for a week, 25% plan their activities for a month. Students find it difficult to establish links between short-term and medium- or long-term objectives and the results they have proposed (25% set them easily, 50% difficult, and 25% are unable to establish links). The study showed that students cannot set their priorities on the daily, weekly, monthly agenda. They waste their time on things that seem important, and consequently cannot fully accomplish their teaching duties. The first step in optimizing time management, according to the cited study, is to improve short-term planning – especially daily planning (Pleșca, 2011).

Time consuming factors represent another considerable problem that wastes our time, decreases the efficiency and productivity of work. To be able to identify these factors and then to resolve the problem, Mackenzie (2001) argues that we need to see how we spend the day in detail, the only tool for this purpose being the thermal journal. According to the author, we are affected by our small interruptions, wasted time on social media, or by searching and organizing materials, books, files etc. For people who use as an excuse the idea that they are too busy to keep and update a time log, the author uses an example that illustrates the problem by a story about a man who was chop trees and thought he had no time to stop to sharpen his ax (Mackenzie, 2001).

Disorganization, according to Haynes (2001), is the main factor generating time waste. Wasting time searching for something, frequent interruptions before you finish your work, cause short-term bottlenecks with a considerable negative effect on the production and completion of work. Table clutter, loading objects makes it difficult for you to work, especially when you spend time searching for something. Haynes (2001) advice is "*a place for cooking and each one in its place*". Things should be organized according to the frequency of use. And if one is interrupted, they should not start another task, but rather return and finish the work. In most cases, one of the causes for constantly taking up new tasks is fear of failure. If the task is difficult, expectations are high, the level of self-effectiveness is not the best, then very hard an individual will get into starting work and will easily delay it. Another cause is lack of interest in the activity. The appearance of boredom drastically reduces motivation and people end up in the situation of delaying even the simplest and fastest tasks. Of course, procrastination makes its negative consequences felt sooner or later. Students with a tendency to delay never complete their part of the project on time, and although they seem to have a relaxed rhythm, *"they are subject to substantial stress through last-minute efforts"* (Mackenzie, 2001). The risk of committing errors in last-minute actions is much higher. The delay of the burden to the last-minute leads in most cases to much weaker results, as there is no time for verification and correction. Consciously delay due to the false impression of the excuse "I work better under pressure" often has only negative effects. *"The tendency to make things more pleasant than necessary is universal. So if a task is unpleasant, delicate, worrying or boring we are strongly tempted to postpone it - even if it is something that we could resolve quite quickly"* (Mackenzie, 2001). Processing is a time-wasting factor, because performing tasks before the deadline, when we are tired, causes much higher energy consumption, errors will be more numerous, and the work performance very low.

The most effective *remedy* for people who procrastinate is self-discipline. We must realize in the first instance that we have control over us and of time, and that we want to change a harmful habit. Self-effectiveness plays a very important role. If we manage to do that, we can do an efficient time management process much easier. The safe way to prevent a crisis is to give you time to resolve a minor problem before it expands into a major crisis. Any task takes longer than we believe, we need to make sure we have a margin of time. We set a deadline and after moving it 20% in advance (Mackenzie, 2001). Excessive social relationships, or too much time spent on social networks can seriously damage the management of your time and work. Once the real priorities are set, we need to move away from time-consuming factors. Students tend to exaggerate social relations because they have not set their real goals well. It all starts from awareness of time and priority actions. If we manage to plan and manage our time well, we save two hours a day. The question remains, what do we do with them? If the gain we make through good time management is not realized, then we haven't evolved anything, we have not managed to add to that day.

"When you learn to use your time more efficiently you can have more time with your family, avoid excessive stress, improve productivity and be more successful in achieving your goals" (Mackenzie, 20001). The work of students involves combining a variety of tasks, ranging from academic, private, seminars, and conferences to voluntary activities, "other formative and development events that are proving to be a training course in employment, and last but not least, spending their own leisure time in a more productive way. Time, as I mentioned, is one of the most valuable resources of the century, which is why the effects

of time management can make a difference in our lives. Today, academic performance for a student is the basis for a prosperous future and is directly proportional to the quality of time management" (Reaboi, 2011). The benefits of time management are visible and concrete. Short-term benefits include achieving the goal, keeping balance in student and personal life, getting an overview of the tasks to be performed, increasing productivity in each unit of time, increasing resilience and easy adaptability to changes and challenges, developing self-effectiveness, self-discipline, timely or even advance resolution of projects and tasks, sense of time control and relaxation. On the long term, we can plan our career and drawing up a plan to help us, keeping the initiative on our own destiny. The ability to keep us informed of everything that is new in our work, which is becoming increasingly important in today's complex world, read work-related materials, work on projects, study new topics, and learn more about innovation, creativity, which are the basis for improving working methods and for new opportunities (Haynes, 2001). Also, we must also have time for relaxation, otherwise, stress can affect our health or exhaust our thinking, good management allows us to have more time so we can initiate new personal relationships, or we can improve existing ones.

"As we have seen in the paragraphs above, time management has its 'golden' rules: Setting the daily routine, using 'energy pools' to make things that require maximum capacity, keeping the deadlines unforgiving, and carrying out the important issues, even if they are unpleasant, eliminate all that is not important (many problems resolve themselves if they are not given too much importance), set block periods for situations where a project is to be completed, pool similar activities, tackle the situation as a whole and do not render it overly vivacious, in order not to lose all and not to waste time when resuming, to take breaks for times when there are 'energy downsteps', select carefully what will be accepted to be fulfilled or to say a determined 'no', when it does not appear to be the right person for the task or project, allocating 50% more time to each task than is deemed to be necessary and leaving some time between the planned actions. This is added to the rule 60–40: Plan only 60% of the time and the rest, 40%, to be cheated for surprise events" (Pleșca, 2011).

Methodology

The study was based on a set of hypotheses: *H1: First-year students of FPACS fail to fulfill their tasks in time*; *H2: They have a disorganized program and they procrastinate more than during the high school period*. Participants were students from the Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences of Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, first year, Romanian line of study. This population is diverse and accessible to the authors, formed by students from all study programs, in their first year of study. Survey administration was based on self-selection of participants; the survey was created and disseminated online, on Facebook groups. The survey was carried out in November-December 2019 and aimed to obtain data on the variables tackled in this research.

The questionnaire was made of 30 questions (factual, opinion, values, motivation, the questions were both closed and open). The questionnaire was distributed among students from FPACS, 1st year, Romanian line, via Facebook groups, and 16 participants were interviewed face-to-face, whose answers were recorded or written.

Participants

A number of 63 participants offered valid answers to the questionnaire. Male subjects were underrepresented in the sample (19% versus 81% female participants). Also, the number of responses from individuals in urban areas was 63.5%, and 36.5% in rural areas.

The second method used was the interview, which included 16 subjects (12 female and 4 male). An expert interview was carried out with a psychologist. The first instrument had 10 questions, and the latter 8 questions.

Results

Survey

Results of the data obtained from administration of the online questionnaire identified 63 responses as valid, resulting in the following numbers: 71% of FPACS first-year students are not currently living with the family, with the remaining 29% still do so. The number of students enrolled in two colleges is minimal, of only 2%. In terms of employment status, 92% were unemployed, and only 8% declared having additional responsibilities beyond university. For those who worked, the answers varied between 4 and 8 hours a day.

Asked about punctuality, 1.6% think they are not at all punctual, 3.2% say they are often not, 14.3% say they could be even more punctual, 39.7% are mostly, and 41.3% say they are very time-specific; thus, most respondents deem themselves punctual. In terms of how they manage their daily proposed tasks, students who never manage to do all they want are the least and represent 1.6% of the total respondents, those who sometimes get through their plans represent 36.5%, and the subjects who are most often carrying out what they want to do are 55.6%, of course not excluding those who always do what they planned, taking up third position by 6.3%.

In terms of how often they watch movies or series, 38,1% declared doing so several times a month, 27% several times a week, 20,6% on weekends only, while only 4,8% stated doing so every day. Asked whether that behavior facilitates their student activities, 76.2% gave a negative answer, while 1 in 4 respondents considered some benefits; in terms of what these benefits are, most answers are developing their vocabulary (their English proficiency), creativity, imagination.

Asked about going out with friends, 19% of students declared going out only a few times a month or during weekends, 7.9% every day, and 50.8% go out a few times a week. About extra activities students practice in leisure time, the questions were open, and the answers were of a surprising variety. Some of them either do not have such activities or take up their time with one or more. Thus, many students are spending their time volunteering, photography, reading, or writing. They are also more active, dynamic people who like physical sports, for example: going to the gym, basketball, running, swimming, dancing, and more. About managing to do domestic tasks on time, most students (41.3%) declared they do so often. 14.3% only have the time sometimes, and 25.4% said that they usually succeed in doing so. The most successful in carrying out their domestic tasks on time are nearly 16% of respondents.

As for time spent daily on social media, the lion's share (52.4%) spent more than three hours, followed by 22.2% who declared being heavy users of over five hours a day, 20.6% use it moderately for one to two hours a day, and only 4.8% declared spending less than one hour a day on social media. In terms of motivations, the most common answers were the lack of activity or boredom. A considerable number of students also responded that one reason they spend their time on social media is to talk to friends.

77.8% of respondents always paid their rent on time, 12.5 usually met the deadline, 6.3% occasionally did so, while only 3.2% never managed to meet the deadline of paying rent. The students are not at all well on the deferred tasks. Almost 62% of them procrastinate, with only 38% doing what they must do on time. The main reason for most students' procrastination is laziness. There were also statements for lack of ambition or fatigue, but the increasing number of respondents turned to lack of motivation, or convenience. Asked about their ability to do their homework and optional projects for college, 55.6% declared doing so most of the times and only 19% always, 22.2% only occasionally, and only 3.2% declared never being able to do so.

In organizing their daily activities, the large majority declared not using an organizer, 20.6% use a notebook, 17.5% use to-do lists, 7.9% reminders, and only 1.6% rely solely on their minds. On the frequency of attending courses, almost half did so most of the times, nearly 1 in 5 do so always, and another 1 in 5 only sometimes. On meeting deadlines of the assignments, more than 66% always do so, and 25.4% do so often. No respondents declared not meeting deadline, i.e., not submitting assignments.

Respondents were prompted to answer what they thought about people who spent more than an hour online. Many of them avoided giving an opinion, and those who have done so have said either that they think they are wasting their time or that they could do something better in their time, with the vast majority having negative views on the subject. The few who also had positive views on this said that people who spend more than an hour in front of the TV know how to relax and are people without responsibilities.

Asked about involvement in volunteering organizations, most students do so (54%), while 46% do not. For those involved in such volunteering activities, we wanted to measure the time they spent: nearly half spent between 1-2 hours on a voluntary activity (45.7%), and a high amount spent even more time (3-5 hours per week, 34.3%); less than one in five respondents spent more than 6 hours a week on volunteering activities. In terms of what they could do to manage their time better, some respondents stated they could stop postponing things and leave everything last minute, others consider sleep a solution, some say they should be more considerate, be less lazy, but most respondents believed that the best cure for more efficient time management would be to get a planner and comply with the terms marked in it.

Interview

The expert interview with the psychologist lasted about 20 minutes and took place in a face-to-face setting, in a college room. The remaining interviews, 16 of them carried out with students, were held with first-year students from the Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences. The interviews were carried out with 12 female students and 4 male students. Each interview lasted around 10 minutes, and were carried out in December 2019, in face-to-face settings in the university campus.

The expert interview was informative in terms of how first-year students think, how they manage their time, and factors leading to procrastination. The expert thought that the degree of adjustment of students to college life depends on factors such as the distance between their home and the city where they study, the ease with which they can share their personal space with their colleagues (especially when they stay at home). Those who come from more remote cities are more affected because they have more responsibilities, according to the psychologist. Moreover, first-year students are thought to enjoy a long time of leisure, but this differs from student to student; it depends on priorities, on how responsible they are. The psychologist argued that first-year students procrastinate the least, compared to second year, third year and so on, because they meet new situations and things, such as the exam session, and do not know what to expect.

The students interviewed were asked about goal planning: some did not use to do that, but most were doing it in general, by writing down only the main things they had to do. We further wanted to know whether this influenced the achievement of objectives. Most interviewees did not plan their daily or weekly activities, while only three participants planned their weekly activities regularly, using a planner, or Google Calendar, arguing that this approach increases my efficiency in achieving planning, creates a certain hierarchy of habits, habits and gives a clear and concrete vision of themselves and what characterizes them. Five other students (4F and 1M) said that it depends on the importance of the tasks they have to carry out. Here, referring to the importance of long time or short-term urgency, perspectives were similar: "I usually plan only if I have important events that require a certain organization of my time, and then I organize myself so that I can complete my plans"; "Sometimes when I have a lot to do in a day or week". The rest of the people, more exactly half of our respondents, said they were not used to planning their activities, whether they were too lazy or not, they thought they were not important due to spontaneity or lack of time.

Asked whether they can make minor decisions quickly, which is relevant to show how easy or how fast students can make decisions, how determined they are, or whether they need a long time to decide, all respondents said that it was quite easy for them to make minor decisions, and they do so quickly enough because "they do not affect my life in the long term and usually don't matter much". Male interviewees have been trained to make even major decisions quite quickly: "Yes, very quickly, on the spot, they do whatever they feel. Major decisions don't take much thought either".

When asked students if they wear things they can work on when they have free time between courses, or activities, just three of the subjects, two F and one M, said they had their laptop or some device with them: "Yes, I usually have my laptop with me and work on projects. I don't do much on it, but I feel better and more productive", "Yes, sometimes I have a handbook and it seems to me that it's helping me, because we often have time off, time which you don't know how to use, and that's what I do". Most students said they needed a certain space, a quiet place where they can focus: "No, maybe if an idea comes to me by chance, I really need my time or space to concentrate on", "I normally don't take my laptop to work on with me. I can work on something when I have time off because I like to dedicate exclusively to a task, in a time when only that is to be done, so that all my attention is focused on that task", "Not always because I used to settle the time specific to each goal when it's the right time and context".

Asked whether on the night before a deadline they are still working on the project, by which we thought of both the degree of procrastination of students and the way in which they take responsibility when they have something to do, only four out of the sixteen interviewees said they can sleep peacefully on the night before a deadline: "I very rarely work one night before the deadline of a project. I like to do it early and leave nothing to do for the last minute, because I think things done hastily are not of good quality", "No, I prefer to finish my homework and projects in advance so that I have more time for other activities, but there are times when I forget I have a minor theme or project to do and do it shortly before (one day before)", "I'm not leaving anything on the last minute. So far I have managed to work well and finish before the deadline, just one evening before I check". Most students said they are postponing the tasks until the last moment, deluding themselves that they have time, and they do so because they do not like the tasks they have to perform or consider them too difficult: "Yes. Sometimes I leave the last hundred because I have more time and I have no time to go on with my work", "Yes. It does not happen every time, but when it happens I get the best, I work well under pressure, I feel more and better ideas come. But sometimes I'm sorry and I wanted to get started earlier", "Yes, clearly 100%, each time. I always think I have time and time and I make that I do and always stay the last hundred", "Yes, usually. Sometimes I forget it happened at high school. I regret every time".

By asking whether our subjects think they can fulfill their scheduled work within a week, we wanted to see how students set their goals, and whether they are able to achieve them. Five of our subjects (three M and two F) told us they were unable to keep or meet their goals, whether they were too lazy, or goals were not important or realistic: "I'm not realistic when I choose my goals, I always keep them too high and do not always succeed in meeting my goals", "No, never because I can't relate to my goals", "No, because I'm not such a punctual person, I know from the start that I'm not going to succeed. I'm lazy". The other eleven people said they are successful, especially if they have important projects, that they are trying to set their priorities and leave minor things undone: "Yes, if I get ambitious, I think I can succeed. And that happens often. I really have times to say I have to do this today and I really do it and I am proud of it at the end of the day", "I usually manage to do everything I set out in a week, because I plan my time so that I can finish all my tasks", "If it is important I am struggling to get it to a successful conclusion, if it is a minor thing and circumstances don't allow me to do it again another day".

In terms of feeling time is enough or being under pressure, most students said stress is a predominant factor in their lives. Looking at the answers, we noticed that both female and male respondents, whether having problems or not with managing time, feel less or much stressed of the tasks they must do. Time is a problem because they have many activities to accomplish, and they do not know how to organize them. Some of the interviewees said: "the day should have more hours", "there are times when time is a problem and I feel pressured". In the answers, we also found the issue of time organization. They are pressured, stressed because they tend to postpone activities, "as I leave it all for the last minute, I don't know how to organize it, where to take it from and where to leave it". Students not experiencing stress were underrepresented among interviewees, but they said that time was not a problem because they do not procrastinate, do their tasks on time, and can combine work with fun. One said, "Yes, I usually take my time because I am focusing on what I consider to be a priority for that day, channeling much of my energy in that direction, leaving the modest workings to the end".

About the difference felt between university and high school, all respondents believed the faculty was different from the high school. The advantages of the faculty are the lighter program with non-compulsory attendance, a specific time frame during which students will take exams. Students embrace this change, but still face time management, with more widespread procrastination. The following answers were the most relevant: "college is very different from the high school, I had a fixed program at high school from 8:00 - 14:00, in college the timetable differs from day to day and it is very difficult to plan for a particular day because there is something in it all the time", "compared to high school, where we learn every day, in college we do not do so because we no longer receive surprise tests, we are no longer evaluated in class. Thus, I learn only at the courses/ seminars I like, the rest of which are left for the session. On the subject of non-compulsory themes, I only do it if I like it, if I have time", "I have few courses now, the teaching methods differ, and I find it much more interesting. I'm always trying to learn but I'm not under stress like in high school because I know I'm only taking exams in session. The best thing is that I can sleep much longer in the morning and feel less tired". Both female and male respondents shared a similar opinion.

In terms of how often they go out in college compared to high school and how that affects planning, some respondents considered having a light schedule in college, and that during high school they went out more often with friends. They see going out with friends as a "good time", which gives them a good vibe and do not see this time wasted, but rather an advantage. One of the interviewees said: "I go out with friends every day, just like in high school. I cannot say that going out with friends takes a lot of my time because I enjoy going out and I am trying to manage my time properly". The rest of the interviewed students were going out more before, during high school. Now the important thing for them is to complete all work, projects and, only if they have time, they go out with friends: "I only go out with friends when I have time off, but these outings are scheduled in advance to be able to do my best".

The last question in the interview was whether the tasks were carried out in relation to the fact that they no longer live with the family. Seven interviewees believed that moving alone, independent from the family, is a great advantage because they are now doing all their things alone and feel more responsible. One student said: "I am now able to organize and work on my own program, because I live alone and need self-organizing". The rest see this change as a difficult thing because now their schedule is much more loaded and they "are changing" in the negative direction. One answer in this direction is: "No, I was under pressure from the family to go to school in time and now on my own I have to be punctual and it's harder from time to time. Compared to high school now it's much more chaotic to my schedule, I sleep less". There is no difference between answers of female and male interviewees.

At the end of the interview, subjects were asked whether there was room for improving the way they manage their time. To this question, one student said: "I think my time is well managed, I manage to do everything I propose, and I don't see any way to improve that". The rest of the students think there is always room for improvement and embrace this idea. They believe that an organized program combining leisure time and activities would be much more effective. Some answers were the following: "yes, by being more specific, to schedule my activities for a day or a week. To set a program with sleep", "absolutely, I would like to see that the deadline met, and I should not be on the last minute, that in the end we get our homework one month before and it is given a month before, for some reason not to leave the last hundred. I think I should live on my own skin once to be extremely on edge, and I think that would make me more organized with time", "yes, I think there's always room for improvement! I personally could improve my time management by learning to say *no* to some activities. As an ambitious and proud person, I like to get involved in much more activities than I could normally do", "yes, all the time. I should find a way to organize my time, to stop being so scattered as now, to stop certain habits. A planner, I think, would help me organize my time, stop making them so spontaneous".

Conclusions

H1 stated that first-year students fail to manage their time correctly, to perform their duties, and that they procrastinate more than during high school. According to our results, first-year FPACS students have difficulties organizing and managing their time, but are aware of its importance, some were even trying to change that. The main hypothesis was partly confirmed. Students succeed in carrying out only the most important or big tasks, such as semester projects, but not the smallest ones, such as weekly or seminar assignments. Our second hypothesis was completely confirmed. According to the data gathered, it can be observed that first-year students have a disorganized program. This is based on the transition from pre-university education to university education, their moving from the hometown to the one where they study, and their starting a life on their own.

Following data analysis of the survey and the interview, we can conclude that a disorganized program, certain factors such as the transition from pre-university to university education, the moving from home to the city where one studies causes an imbalance in the individual studied. We learned that most of them are unable to manage their time effectively, having problems with goal planning and how they manage to take responsibility. Few of those surveyed meet their targets (i.e., projects and assignments) in advance. Those who succeed represent a minority, and from that we concluded that there was a low degree of responsibility coupled with a great one of procrastination.

When it comes to mechanisms used by students for goal planning, we noticed that more than half (50,8%) said they were not using anything, the rest opting for a planner, calendar and other applications (e.g. to-do lists) to score only the most important goals they have to achieve. Another relevant aspect we found was the awareness of the importance of management time in a student's life. All students are aware of how important this is and how much it would help them, and a considerable amount of our participants are willing to improve, there is no concrete action in this direction at the time of the study. Finally, we learned that stress is a factor that prevails in the life of first-year students. More than half of them say they are stressed most of the time because of the new tasks and responsibilities.

To name a few limitations of the present research, we can discuss the choice of a small, non-representative sample, the possibility of false answers and lack of honesty, social desirability, and the fact that most students interviewed came from other cities, so our sample did not reflect experiences of students who did not have to adjust to a new city. This research concluded that first-year students have difficulties organizing their time, fail to plan their goals, and procrastinate a lot, doing things last-minute, and managing to complete only the most important tasks. But, as mentioned above, most of them are aware of the importance and benefits of effective management time and plan to change this behavior.

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Teen depression: What causes it?

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ABSTRACT
Many studies investigating the causes of teen depression have been carried out over the past two decades, indicating primarily factors like difficult family situations, social awkwardness, or genetic inheritance. This paper explores the relation between teen depression and the satisfaction or dissatisfaction teenagers might feel regarding their physical appearance. This research also investigates if there is a connection between teenagers' depressive episodes and the development of their love life. Based on results from a sociological survey and a content analysis on songs, the more dissatisfied teenagers feel about their physical appearance, the more likely they will undergo depressive episodes, and teenagers who have or have had a difficult love life or those who lack a love life are more susceptible to experiencing depressive episodes. Nevertheless, teenagers' love life or the lack of it are not the most obvious reasons behind teen depression. They might as well represent observable indicators of teen depression, rather than distinct reasons.

Keywords: teenagers, depression, physical appearance, love life, early sex.

Introduction

The adolescence is probably one of the most complicated phases in one's life and, even though there are some times of confusion and sadness that are somehow normal for this life stage, the signs that predict depression should not be ignored. There are multiple factors that lead to depression (socially, mentally, or physically speaking), and the consequences are truly concerning, consequences such as social isolation, self-mutilation, or even suicide.

In the last couple of decades, depression has become one of society's most worrying issues. Nowadays, this issue has gained momentum, considering all the platforms that are accessible to all sorts of people, especially teenagers, who expose their lives over the internet, becoming vulnerable to many risks. Cyberbullying is, after all, a cause of teen depression, and it is even more frequent than real-life bullying, because the internet creates a safe place for the attackers who are hiding behind a screen.

Based on previous literature and the aim of this study, the hypotheses tackled in this research are the following:

H1: The more dissatisfied teenagers feel with their physical appearance, the more likely it is that they will experience a depressive episode.

H2: Teenagers' love life influences the occurrence of depression.

As depression is deemed as *the illness of the century*, encountered in a fairly large proportion of young people, negatively affecting not only their mental health, but also their physical health, this topic is tackled by plenty researchers. Kroning and Kroning (2016) identified bullying as one of the factors that can lead to depression. Sabia (2006) looked into a factor linked to depression that had sparked controversy for a long time; namely, whether early teenage sex can cause teen depression. Thus, the second hypothesis of the present study.

Furthermore, since many causes of depression concern the relationship of teenagers with the people around them, this study aims to underline that there are actions taken by some that can have devastating effects on others, and that one must also consider these effects, not just their personal interests. Developing healthy interhuman relationships can be the key to a decrease in the number of teen depression cases.

Therefore, to build on previous literature, this study employs survey research and content analysis, on a population of N=186 young people aged between 15 and 20. The research was carried out in November-December 2019, and it aimed to identify a link between teenagers' physical aspect – their perception of self – and the emergence of depression, as well as whether their romantic relationships play a role in the emergence of depression.

Depression: Theoretical considerations

Depression manifests in all age groups, but especially among teenagers, who are significantly more exposed to social pressure, bullying, or major changes, emotionally, cognitively, socially, and physically speaking. Numerous studies have been carried out on teen depression, both abroad and in Romania, aiming to bring to the public's attention statistics, main causes, and manifestations of depression, but also solutions for its healing.

The* parental *factor plays an important role in the emergence of depression

A study carried out on teenagers in Romania identified the non-involvement of one or both parents in the life of the teenager as one of the causes of depression (Nemeș, Coman, & Cozman, 2011). The named study found that *"12,7% of Romanian teenagers live without both parents because of labor migration, and 21% of Romanian teenagers live with only one parent (mostly, with their mother)"* (p. 5). The cause presented is topical: teenagers with at least one migrant parent are more likely to develop depressive episodes than those who live under the supervision of both parents. So, *"the relations with their parents have proven to be one of the best preachers of depressive symptomatology, the depression being inversely correlated to the level of support, attachment and approval that adolescents enjoy in their family environment"* (p. 6).

Moreover, another result of this research is that the occurrence of depressive symptoms is higher in teenage girls not living with both parents, as they encounter more difficulties in interpersonal relations and networking than their male peers in the same situation. Thus, teen girls who have to live, in the vast majority of time, in the absence of at least one parent are significantly more affected both psychologically and socially, as well as more inclined to experience depressive episodes than male gender representatives from the same age group (Nemeș, Coman, & Cozman, 2011).

Heredity versus bullying and stress factors

Kroning and Kroning (2016) stated that depression is a serious condition, affecting 1 in 10 young people and nearly 3 in 10 high school students, across the United States. According to research cited by the authors, in 2013, 17% of high school students declared having contemplated committing suicide, less than 14% made a suicide plan, and 8% reported having attempted to commit suicide once or more times just in the year before the cited research was conducted.

Kroning and Kroning (2016) pointed to heredity as one of the main causes of depression, responsible for half of the etiology behind depression. Apparently, people with depressive episodes are often the descendants of individuals who have been previously diagnosed with depression. According to the same study, bullying is also a serious factor to consider, as nearly 2 in 10 high school students reported being bullied at school, and 5% less electronically, via email, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, or texting. Although major life events causing stress can facilitate depression, clinical levels are more likely reached by individuals who have a predisposition to such a disease. Like Nemeș et al. (2011), Kroning and Kroning (2016) also mentioned women being at greater risk than men of experiencing depressive episodes, which could be explained by increased response to daily stress factors, or thyroid dysfunction, as well as hormonal changes at specific times.

Does early sex cause teen depression or not?

Teen depression was approached from an interesting angle by Sabia (2006), who tried to establish the link between the premature beginning of teenagers' sexual life and the appearance of depression symptoms. His motivation to tackle this issue was based on a previous study whose results were strongly challenged. Sabia argued that, *as "early teen sex may cause psychological trauma, [...] adolescents struggle with the complicated emotions of physical intimacy at such an early age"* (p. 804), which does not eliminate the possibility that the causal relationship may come from the opposite direction, in the sense that depression is the one that can lead teenagers to engage in sexual intercourse to escape negative feelings, thus being an indicator of depression – rather than a cause.

Methodology

Two hypotheses emerged from previous literature, and are to be tested in this research:

H1: The more dissatisfied teenagers feel with their physical appearance, the more likely it is that they will experience a depressive episode.

H2: Teenagers' love life influences the occurrence of depression.

Survey research and content analysis were employed; Rotariu and Iluț (2001) define the sociological survey as *"a method specific to the socio-human sciences, which involves an exchange of information, more specifically, a communication between the researcher and certain elements (human individuals) of the social reality investigated, the first one being the one that, through the questionnaire, causes verbal behavior by the latter"* (p. 54). Moreover, content analysis is defined as *"a set of quantitative and qualitative research techniques for verbal and non-verbal communication in order to identify and describe objectively and systematically the manifest and/ or latent content, to draw conclusions about the individual and the society or about the communication itself as a process of social interaction"* (Chelcea, 2004, p. 267). Based on these specificities and the topic at hand, the present approach was deemed appropriate to collect data that is relevant in verifying the hypotheses.

The research was conducted in November-December 2019; the survey gathered N=186 respondents, teenagers who self-selected following the questionnaire's distribution on Facebook and WhatsApp groups. The questionnaire has 46 questions, which were grouped as follows: socio-demographic questions, questions about musical preferences, questions about the relationship with their parents and how it affected their lives, questions about their academic situation, questions about their physical appearance and the way it affected their lives, questions about their love relationships and questions about depression and its ways of manifestation.

In the content analysis, 25 songs were analyzed. The eight variables collected and analyzed were the following: the name of the play, the name of the artist or band playing it, the year of release, the general theme, transmitted feelings, significant lyrics, the melody, and elements that have some connection to depression. The songs analyzed were those mentioned by the subjects in a question from the pre-applied questionnaire. The sampling procedure was relatively simple: to narrow down the number of songs to be analyzed, a sampling step of seven-by-seven songs has been applied. Thus, after the non-responses were eliminated, I have reached 171 songs which, after the sampling step was applied, turned into 25.

As for research ethics elements, respondents were assured that their identity would remain anonymous, and that the data provided by them would not be used for any other purpose than to serve this study. Also, no costs were involved in carrying out this research.

Participants

In the case of the sociological survey, the final sample included N=186 adolescents, aged between 15 and 20 years old. Of these, 151 (81,2%) were female, and 35 (18,8%) male. The average age of the participants was around 18 years (18,26). In terms of their status, 57% of participants were college students, 40,3% were high school students, and 5,4% said they also have the status of employees. Most of them (44,6%) lived in Cluj-Napoca at the time of the research, and only 5,08% lived in rural areas. The questionnaire was applied to the subjects indirectly, being posted on three Facebook groups for students and distributed on two groups of WhatsApp. For the selection of participants, a non-probabilistic sample of convenience was gathered, by applying the questionnaire to the people in the groups that self-selected following the call to participate to this study.

Results

The sociological survey

Describing the relationship with their parents, 67,7% of respondents stated it was good and very good. 14% of respondents described it as rather bad or very bad, so a proportion significantly lower the former. However, the relationship the respondents have with their parents affects them on many levels. 38,3% of them responded that the relationship with their own parents has a lot of influence on the way they perceive the quality of their lives. 19,9% of them are rather neutral and only 7,5% declared that it does not affect their lives in any way. Also, 26,9% of them consider that their relationship with parents greatly affects their opinion about themselves, 17,7% give this a very important role in their own personal judgment, while 12,9% do not agree that the relationship with their parents can change their opinion in any way. These three questions were meant to determine how much the relationship that teenagers have with their parents influences their lives, according to their perception.

Addressing another dimension of the subject, the respondents were asked about the importance assigned to their mental health. 26,3% attach great importance to this issue, 27,4% think is important enough, while a majority (29,6%) attaches some importance to their mental health, but do not make it a priority. Only 2,2% of respondents do not consider mental health to be important. By comparison, 43,5% of respondents think that academic performance is just important, while 26,3% think it is of great importance. The proportion of those who do not believe in the importance of academic performance is lower than that of people who do not attach importance to their own mental health (1,6%).

Looking at these descriptive statistics, it is noted that respondents are more concerned about their academic performance than their mental health, which may mean that they tend to neglect their mental health to achieve the desired academic performance.

Asked how satisfied they feel about the image they see in the mirror, exactly half of the respondents said they were satisfied. 25,3% say they are rather dissatisfied, while 15,1% say they are very dissatisfied with it. Only 7% consider themselves very satisfied, and 2,7% of those questioned refused to answer. When asked to justify their answer to the previous question, the one about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their physical appearance, about 5,9% of those questioned refused to give a conclusive answer to this requirement, but there are also many interesting answers. Since most were satisfied with their physical appearance, most of the answers are heading in this direction. A male respondent says: "*Love yourself* is a principle of life of mine. All my "abnormalities" (I have a bigger pupil than the other, and my beard is half white for natural causes (not painted) make me feel more special and make me appreciate myself even more. But I would like to lose some weight (it's not significant and I don't mind it, but I'd appreciate myself even more without the extra weight)".

On the other hand, there have been many cases where respondents said they did not feel satisfied with their appearance. In addition, they related their negative image of themselves to the standard values imposed by the society. Therefore, society and the entourage play an important role in influencing young people's perception of themselves, particularly from a physical perspective. Some answers that prove this are: "Since I was a little girl, I have been dissatisfied with the way I look because of bullying. I did not have the qualities that society requires"; "I wish I was different so the world could see me differently from outside and be satisfied with my appearance. Even if I shouldn't, the way people all around me see me affects me a lot and sometimes I feel the need to change myself for them, both outside and inside"; "I am somehow pleased when I look in the mirror, but at some points complexities arise and these are due to defects that are highlighted both throughout society and at school (most often here)".

Asked about their longest relationship, the answers varied, from a few days to five years, but the target here were the people who had no previous romantic relationship. About 15,6% of those polled admitted that they have had no relationship to date, with some saying they feel something is wrong with them, since they do not seem to attract anyone long enough to form a relationship, and that they may not have one soon. This question was meant to establish whether there is a direct link between depression and the absence of a romantic relationship in the life of the respondents.

With the question whether they have gone through a painful break-up, 47,3% of respondents said they had never experienced a painful break up, while 44,6% responded positively, so the experiences were rather mixed. 8,1% preferred not to give a clear answer. The people who have gone through painful separations were asked to briefly describe what effect those separations had on them. There are some answers where the link between depression and the way in which a romantic relationship in a person's life ends is obvious. For example, a female person says "sometimes I wanted to kill myself, but this is because I didn't have the love of my father when I was a little and I saw that part of his paternal love in boys. I've had a lot of "boyfriends" since 13 and I think that is the reason behind the pain I felt after every splitting". Another person says, "I've become anxious, I thought I was boring, I always wondered why I wasn't good enough to make someone happy, I've come to the conclusion that I was not special, but easy to replace".

To whether they have undergone depressive episodes, nearly 70% of participants answered affirmatively, less than 20% negatively, while 12,4% refused to give an answer. Those who had experienced such an event were asked to write down the age at which those episodes first appeared and to describe how they manifested. There were also people who said they have been through depressive episodes since childhood, but most of them (73,4%) said such episodes only appeared in adolescence. Some admitted they thought they were only age-specific periods and only in a few years' time they realized the scale of the problem. Some (2,3%) admit that they do not even remember when these episodes first manifested themselves. As for the way in which the depressive episodes were manifested, a certain pattern can be found in the answers given by the respondents. Of the 128 who said they had experienced such episodes, only 111 chose to describe how they manifested themselves. There are common elements in almost all confessions: panic attacks, social isolation, existential crises, apathy, frequent disregards, weeping crises, closing in, loss of appetite, insomnia, loss of interest for certain passions, loss of weight, attempted suicide etc.

Asked who they rely on in the case of a depressive episode, 49,1% of the respondents said they rely on friends, 40,2% on their family, 15,4% on a psychologist, 9,5% say they rely on their own person and 3,6% prefer to let things go on for themselves. Asked if they ever thought about suicide, 46,8% of those questioned said no, while 45,2% admitted they did. 8,1% did not provide a relevant response. Instead, when asked if they had ever tried to do so, 14% of those included in the study admitted that they had attempted this kind of thing. 80,1% said they never tried to commit suicide. Through these two questions, the severity of these manifestations was subject to inquiry.

The individual verification of each response shows that, of the 129 who admit having experienced depressive episodes at least once in their lives, 24 are male and 105 are female. Thus, out of the total 35 male respondents to the questionnaire, about 68,6% said they had experienced a depressive episode. On the other hand, out of 151 female respondents, about 69,5% say they have undergone this kind of experience. So, as in the studies carried out by Nemes, Coman, and Cozman (2011) and Kroning and Kroning (2016), this study also shows that female adolescents are more likely to experience depressive episodes – even if the sample is small and rather unrepresentative from a statistical standpoint.

Moreover, 71 of the 129 (55,03%) who said they had experienced depressive episodes also said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the image they see in the mirror. In addition to this, in the whole questionnaire, only 75 respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their image; so, 94,7% of them also say they had at least experienced one depressive episode. Thus, the important role of physical appearance in the emergence of depression – in more or less serious forms – among adolescents can be observed.

Of the 129 respondents who have undergone depressive episodes, 47,3% have also undergone a painful break-up, which affected them on several aspects. At the same time, 17,8% said they had never had a relationship. So, even though it is not one of the most obvious causes, the young people's love life plays a rather important role in the emergence of depressive episodes in adolescents.

Content analysis

One requirement of the questionnaire that was applied to a sample of N=186 teenage individuals was to state their favorite song. Based on this requirement, a content analysis was carried out on the lyrics of the songs. As most respondents stated in another question in the questionnaire that they chose their favorite songs according to their mood, I considered that the content analysis would be suggestive for the current research. To narrow down the number of songs, I have taken a sampling step out of seven by seven songs. Due to 15 non-responses, out of 171 songs, a sample of 25 was derived (see *Table 1*).

The instrument used is the analysis grid, which consists of 8 variables: the name of the song, the name of the artist or band playing, the year of release, the general theme, transmitted feelings, significant lyrics, the melody and, finally, elements which have, to some extent, a connection with depression.

Table 1. Content analysis corpus: Selection of songs

Song name	Artist
Evelyn	Hurts
When the party is over	Billie Eilish
Unravel	Tokyo Ghoul
I never said I was deep	Jarvis Cocker
Drive	David Guetta ft. Delilah Montague & Black Coffee
Bine indispus	The Motans
Hold on	Chord Overstreet
City of the Dead	Eurielle
Move on	Mike Posner
Stressed out	Twenty-One Pilots
Falling	Trevor Daniel
Demons	Jacob Lee
Dancing after death	Matt Maeson
High on life	Martin Garrix ft. Bonn
Let you down	NF
Old days	Riles
Far from home	Five Finger Death Punch
Scars to your beautiful	Alessia Cara
Thoughts	Sasha Sloan
Just like fire	P!nk
Dark times	The Weeknd ft. Ed Sheeran
Remember everything	Five Finger Death Punch
I'm with you	Avril Lavigne
Kissing other people	Lennon Stella
Let me down slowly	Alec Benjamin

Out of the 25 songs, 6 were released in 2019, 5 in 2018, 4 in 2015, 3 in 2017, 2 in 2009 and one in each of the following years: 2002, 2010, 2011, 2014, and 2016. Only 5 songs analyzed are more than five years old. This shows a clear trend among subjects to prefer the most recent songs, as they can relate to their lyrics and style. As for the general theme of the lyrics, 11 songs out of 25 refer to romantic relationships and, more specifically, to their difficulty. Of these 11 songs, 4 refer to trying to overcome a failed/ unsuitable relationship, while 2 send a slightly more positive message, like the rebirth through love. The lyrics of 2 songs out of 11 highlight the disappointment felt when your partner betrays you, while the other 2 refer to the fear of being left by the loved one. One of the 11 songs is about superficiality of the romantic relationships. The lyrics of 2 songs out of the remaining 14 generally refer to the lack of self-confidence, the inability to accept your physical appearance. Another 2 songs out of 14 refer to the desire to return to *the good old days*, to put aside the stress that comes with the adulthood. The lyrics of the remaining

10 songs send various messages, such as: the need to be understood, the feeling that you are a complete disappointment, the crossing of difficult times, the advantages of being different, the inability to adapt to the existing society, love after death, death, the acceptance of your own condition, the fear of your own demons, the need for a person to relieve your pain.

Out of the 25 songs analyzed, in 16 (64%) negative feelings are transmitted (predominantly despair, confusion, pain, loneliness, sorrow, fear, uncertainty, concern, guilt, disappointment, shame). In 7 songs out of 25 (28%), the feelings transmitted are positive (hope, enthusiasm, ambition, happiness), while in 2 songs the feelings transmitted are rather neutral. By analyzing the feelings transmitted by the songs that the subjects listen to, we have tried to establish what kind of feeling is dominant.

Through the fifth variable, which refers to significant lyrics, we have tried to identify lyrics that are related to depression. In 17 songs out of 25, there are lyrics that match the way depression operates. Some significant lyrics in this regard are: "Isn't anyone tryin' to find me?/ Won't somebody come take me home?/ It's a damn cold night/ Trying to figure out this life"; "Sometimes, I just can't control my thoughts/ All I think about is everything I'm not/ Instead of everything I got/ When I wake up, I just don't like what I see"; "She just wants to be beautiful/ She goes unnoticed, she knows no limits/ She craves attention"; "Wish I could feel like I'm still on the track"; "All these voices in my head get loud/ I wish that I could shut them out"; "But now I'm insecure and I care what people think"; "I'm scared of what is in my head/ What's inside my soul"; "I'm broken, lying helpless, shattered/ Surrounded by the world".

As for the melody line, 14 tracks out of 25 have a slow, monotone melody line with tragic accents to accentuate the messages transmitted. 7 pieces out of 25 are a little more dynamic, they have a fast rhythm, either because they transmit positive emotions or because they transmit strongly negative emotions, while 4 pieces out of 25 show just the chorus at a faster pace to emphasize the message.

As for the last variable, elements in the analyzed songs that are related to depression were identified. Out of 25 songs, only 3 have no suggestive elements for the studied issue. The rest of the songs (22) contain, in one form or another, illustrative items for the problem being studied. In 17 out of 22, there are actual lyrics that highlight the link with depression, while in 5 songs out of 22 there are some ideas, feelings, which can be identified to some extent with depression. Also, of the 25 songs, only one comes from a person who has never had a depressive episode.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to check the validity of two hypotheses related to the connection between teenagers' dissatisfaction with their physical appearance and the likelihood to develop depressive episodes, and to whether their love life weighs upon the emergence of depression.

Based on survey results, most subjects (55,03%) who have gone through depressive episodes feel dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their physical appearance. Songs and lyrics preferred by respondents strengthen the results regarding this hypothesis. As for the second hypothesis, the content analysis showed that most of the songs analyzed (44%) focused on romantic relationships. Moreover, in 65% of these, the transmitted emotions were negative. Thus, from the content analysis, it is noted that the love life of adolescents is maybe not a decisive factor, but rather important in the appearance of depression. The survey results revealed that the love life of teenagers plays a fairly important role in the emergence of depressive episodes, because 47,3% of the subjects who had experienced depressive episodes had also experienced at least one painful break-up. Moreover, 17,8% of the respondents who experienced depressive episodes had not even had a relationship, which means that love life can also cause depressive conditions through its absence. However, the role of the love life factor as a trigger for depression must not be confused with the times when the development of the teenagers' romantic life could be perceived as an observable indicator of depression. In addition to checking these two hypotheses, results were also compared to previous research; much like Nemeș et al. (2011) and Kroning and Kroning (2016), young women in the present study are more likely to go through depressive episodes than men from the same age category.

At the same time, findings showed that the outside opinions and the standards imposed by the society play an important role in the way teenagers assess their own image. It is therefore important that, to promote a healthy perception of one's own person and, by extension, to reduce the number of adolescent depression cases, we eliminate the standard values of society and increase tolerance.

As for the limitations of this study, these consist of the relatively short time in which the survey circulated, which led to a small and unrepresentative sample of the content analysis. Another limitation is the (lack of) sincerity with which respondents might have treated the questions in the questionnaire, considering the topic is a highly sensitive one. At the same time, the quite large number of non-responses to some questions could be considered a limit to this study. It is also very likely that, during the content analysis, some subjectivity of the analyzer might have occurred. For future research on this issue, both conventional sexes should be equally represented in the sample, as well as extending the sample beyond the binary division, so that they can determine exactly what the differences between genders are in terms of depression.

Thus, this research showed that most adolescents who have experienced depressive episodes are dissatisfied with their physical appearance and have also experienced difficulties in their love life, but the role of these two factors in the emergence of depression among adolescents is not as great as expected. In fact, depression may result from a mix of factors, and it is difficult to determine which of weighs the most.

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The impact of stress generated by the Baccalaureate exam on 12-grade students in Romania

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ABSTRACT
This study addresses the impact of stress generated by the Baccalaureate examen on 12-grade students in Romania. We started from the assumption that this first significant step into one's adult life has a possible negative impact on students because of the high level of stress it generates. Thus, under the influence of other factors, such as social pressures created by parents, teachers etc., school performance and social skills can decrease dramatically. Starting from here, we studied the role of the Baccalaureate exam, the role of studying (social, academic) in their lives, as well as their inclinations towards certain subjects. The target group consists of 12-grade students, aged 17-18 years old. Following the questions asked in the survey, our hypothesis is validated, and students are even affected by the stress and anxiety before this exam, to a certain extent. Another aspect we discovered is that, despite the negative feelings felt during the last year of high school caused by this test, the Baccalaureate has an important role in the lives of all students, especially because they want to continue their studies.

Keywords: stress, Baccalaureate, students, high-school, exam.

Introduction

Selyle (cited in Cosmovici, 1996) studied the concept of stress, based on physiological studies on animals, and argued that "*in fact, stress is a psycho-physiological phenomenon, leading to biological and psychological disorders. Prolonged stress is a well-known cause of heart disease, ulcer, high blood pressure and of some neurosis. (…) the real stress, the one studied by Selyle, implies a state of great tension and threatens, if prolonged, the physical and mental health of the individual. There are typical reactions of the body to stress, but they don't stand the test. It depends on the physical and moral robustness of the person. Stress is* *harmful and must be avoided"* (p. 218).

"Stress is the natural reaction of our body to a threat it perceives. In moments of urgency, our basic instinct is trying to ensure our survival. In the primitive times, threats required rapid physical responses. When life was threatened by a wild animal, the options were to attack, run quickly, or stay still. In life modern, physical threats may not be the causes of stress; causes often arise from our thoughts, so they can be imaginary rather than real circumstances" (Silverton, 2016, pp. 109-111).

Nowadays life seems to be increasingly stressful, and this phenomenon is happening more and more frequently in every situation: in the workplace, at home, in traffic, in relations, and last but not least, in school. We always hear adults complaining about how stressed they are, and everyone listens to them and pities them, but when a child or adolescent wears to stress, it is often ignored or taken into derision, many people believe that 'you cannot be stressed at a young age'. However, youth stress is increasingly common in many contexts and one of them is school.

We have chosen to look into the impact of stress on the 12-graders caused by the final exams, as we consider it to be a current, not negligible subject, which is often not given too much importance, which has repercussions on the students' results. Also, since we have experienced the final exams recently (from training to results, as the authors are currently college students), we are familiar with this topic, which is why we believe it is important. We have found that there are currently numerous studies on this subject, and some of the ones we have read are carried out by Robu et al. (2010) or Bagana et al. (2011).

Through a survey (N=54, 22M, 32F) and an interview (N=10) carried out on high school students, we aimed to find out how stress is experienced by 12-grade students in Câmpia Turzii, Cluj County. This study aimed to highlight the impact of stress generated by the Baccalaureate exam, starting from the premise that in the life of the 12-grade student, the most important event generating stress (in the school context but with consequences on personal development) is the Baccalaureate exam, and to verify the following hypotheses:

H1: As the Baccalaureate is a stressful event for students approaching it, family and teacher support is important in tackling it.

H2: The Baccalaureate exam has a potentially negative impact on young people, due to the stress it creates.

Literature review

Robu, Robu, & Pasalau (2010) looked into the attitude towards the Baccalaureate exam of Romanian high-school students, through which they questioned the way it was perceived and the students' attitudes. As the authors explain this phenomenon, *"the numerous legislative changes regarding the number of tests, topics, and the way in which the baccalaureate examination is carried out, the folklore on the irregularities in the examination according to the students and the teaching staff (many of them real), the frauds committed in the previous years – which have created a certain public image of the exam. Moreover, the introduction of alternative textbooks for important subject matters (Romanian, maths, physics/ chemistry) and optional (history, geography, English/ French), which led to confusion on the thematic content that students need to prepare, the publication of different topics on the Internet, the uncertainty about the tests for the mocking exam and other factors have weakened the mental of high school students in recent years both of those who have taken the test and those who are preparing to take it, increasing their stress level, their parents'* *and teachers'"* (Robu, Robu, & Pasalau, 2010, pp. 161-162). They also underlined that many students and their parents perceive the baccalaureate as an important event, generating stress, thus must be tackled with maximum responsibility.

They assessed the level of anxiety towards tests and exams through questionnaires applied in Iași, of average age of 16.7, and to a slightly lower proportion of girls than boys, using a scale. Robu, Robu, and Pasalau (2010) found that *"the students' tendency to express a positive attitude toward the high school; thus: 33.5% of students achieved moderate scores (meaning a low polarization attitude toward the Baccalaureate, 49.2% of students scored high (meaning a slightly positive attitude toward the low-level Baccalaureate) and 17.3% of students scored very high (meaning a positive or very positive attitude towards the Baccalaureate). The comparisons between the boys' average and girls' average showed statistically significant differences both in the attitude towards the Baccalaureate exam (...), and as for the attitude toward the school (...) the girls expressed a more positive attitude towards the school and the baccalaureate"* (p. 167). The Baccalaureate, thus, is deemed as a major stress factor for high-school students, as it influences further trajectory into higher education, and previous school experiences, student personalities, school environment, as well as parents' support influence how students relate to this challenging milestone. Based on their findings, the authors emphasize the importance of a positive attitude towards school and the exam, stressing that extrinsic motivation turned into intrinsic motivation is key to life success.

Another study addressing this topic is Baciu's (2014), who aimed to map a multi-disciplinary perspective on young people's perception of stress, main stress factors, and consequences on the human body, highlighting characteristics of this phenomenon. The study carried out in Bucharest showed that *"most of the participants of both sexes believe that young people are very exposed to psychological stress (...). Most young participants consider that the main consequences of stress are diseases, especially mental ones, followed by digestive and cardiovascular diseases (...). A large number of girls who took part in the study believe that they are stressed while the boys believe they are not. Most boys and girls believe that medicated therapy is less effective in tackling psychological stress (...), relaxation being considered the most effective remedy"* (Baciu, 2014, p. 1). So, some of the conclusions of this study would be that *"most participants, regardless of gender, believe that in our society, young people have a high degree of exposure to psychological stress. Unrealistic goals are a source of stress for students, whether it comes from parents or school. The need to be a successful man is very important in modern society, and if this is a motivation that 'haunts you', it can certainly cause a lot of stress. (…) among students, it has been proven that the number of girls who think they are stressed is much higher than that of boys. (…) the study also shows that most boys and girls believe that the main cause of stress to which they are exposed are exams. An exam is stress conductor because it requires a number of specific requirements to be resolved. Stress is inevitable when it comes to exams. (…) Most of the boys and girls participating in the study believe that medication therapy is less effective in tackling psychological stress, with relaxation considered the most effective remedy"* (Baciu, 2014, p. 5).

Bagana, Raciu, and Lupu (2011) aimed, on the other hand, to examine how optimism and anxiety caused by exams weighs upon high-school students' self-esteem. Based on a sample of students in Bucharest, the authors managed to understand this relationship better, as findings revealed significant differences in students' self-esteem as a function of educational context, and significant differences in their optimism or anxiety generated by exams as a function of personal/ individual factors. Their results were in line with previous results, also showing gender differences. This study concluded that *"the perception of students' educational background and personal characteristics is linked to anxiety generated by exams, except that this is only a part of Romanian high school students and that this research could be extended to other parts of the country; it should also be borne in mind that the results are limited by their evaluations"* (Bagana, Raciu,& Lupu, 2011, p. 1337).

Furthermore, Mihailescu (2017) carried out an analysis of education environments from the perspective of stress factors upon students, emphasizing the need for *"addressing the stress of students through research [which] is still not sufficiently explored, but it can open up important avenues in education, given the general interest in improving the performance and the school climate"* (p. 61). The author argued that high-school students are exposed to higher levels of stress in this situation than on previous education matters, but different subjects generate different levels of stress, and gender is also presented as a significant variable. Mihailescu (2017) found that *"on the one hand, the assessments through the national evaluation and the baccalaureate exams increase their self-esteem and regulate expectations related to the certification of competences. On the other hand, these forms of assessment – which expose students to at least one year of great pressure and effort for training – exacerbate anxiety, depression, and affect the image of the self (the personality traits influence the perception of personal value in the process of school adaptability)"* (p. 68). The author recommended that interventions on prevention or reduction of school-related stress upon students should be a priority within measures/ policies regarding curriculum development, organization of assessments, as well as teacher training.

Methodology

Our research project started from the hypothesis that *H1: The Baccalaureate exam is a stressful event for a high-school student in the terminal year, and this has repercussions on several aspects of the students' life*. Some of the most important questions addressed in the present study are the following: How are students preparing for this exam? What are the effects of stress on the physical and mental health of students? To what extent are students supported by their family during this period? What about teachers?

Subjects come from a theoretical and a technical high-school in Câmpia Turzii, they were recruited on a voluntary basis, are 12-graders, and between 17 and 22 years old. They come from various backgrounds, study different core subjects, and have different career perspectives. A survey and an interview were carried out; the survey was implemented online, via Facebook, and the interview was administered individually, directly, in a face-to-face setting.

In the survey, N=54 answers were obtained, but 88.9% of respondents come from the technical college, and 11.1% from the theoretical high-school, so the sample is rather disproportionate in terms of core subjects. The urban-rural background divide is equal, and most participants are female (59.3%).

Results

The questionnaire was designed in Google Forms and distributed online on Facebook, which gave N=54 answers. Only respondents who declared intending to take the Baccalaureate exams were included in the analysis. Asked how much time they take to prepare for the Baccalaureate exams, 44.4% of respondents declared preparing for 1-2 hours a day, and the rest for more, such as 2-3 hours, 3-4 hours, more than 4 hours, or not at all. Asked whether they take private classes to prepare, 56% declared doing so, so more than half. Among the subjects taking private classes, they stated doing so on their own initiative, not because their parents insisted on the matter. We can assume that respondents felt they needed extra help preparing for the exams and showed responsibility by deciding to use this method without being pressured by their families.

Further, the main and most common emotional states experienced by students during high-school or when considering the final exams were considered, such as fear, anxiety, indifference, relaxation, confidence. Among respondents, the most common feeling was fear, selected by nearly 30% of respondents, followed closely by confidence, with 24%, and others were less prevalent.

Asked about the easiest and hardest subjects for the exam, the former were English, physics, history, but the easiest one selected was Romanian language. The latter were mathematics, the most difficult and the one for which most lacked skills and knowledge. In terms of factors increasing stress or mitigating stress during exams, we aimed to explore how family and teachers influence students' lives at this time. Most respondents felt pressure from both parents and teachers during this time, this leading up to stress, fear, or anxiety, as experienced by the respondents. On the other hand, students felt greater support from parents than from teachers.

In the interview, results were quite similar. In terms of how interviewees felt about the exam, many answered by eliciting fear, stress, fatigue, panic, anxiety. These were also present in the survey results (although prompted). In terms of whether the Baccalaureate or the exam itself were deemed stressful, opinions were mixed: some said training was stressful, others thought the exam was stressful, others considered both. However, stress is present in this phase, some of the most representative answers are the following: "I think it is one of the most important exams of my life, on which your future depends, and stress comes at this thought", "everyone is making you feel as much pressure as possible, considering it is a contest, not an exam", "the exam itself is stressful, because you always think about what you're going to get (subject) and you won't manage".

Conclusion

Based on the results, the so-called *maturity exam* is one of the most important evaluations in the Romanian education system. Graduating via taking the Baccalaureate exam means completing a training cycle, and it is mandatory for admission to higher education at top universities in the country. The findings showed that most students finishing 12th grade want to take the exam, most learn by summarizing and extracting main ideas. In terms of negative effects, most students feel stressed, tired, experiencing excessive panic. The exam itself is not so challenging or complicated, but stress and panic are due to people around them pressuring students to perform, such as parents or teaching. Although results are not representative and cannot be generalized beyond out sample, this study gives some important findings, which should be further investigated into more complex research designs.

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The impact of emotional eating among students from Cluj-Napoca

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to find out the extent to which the students from Cluj-Napoca are being affected by emotional eating, as well as the underlying reasons for this issue. The study was conducted on students of all ages from Cluj-Napoca, and the methods used include a sociological survey and an interview. The results of the study showed that students are greatly affected by this issue, as they allow positive and negative emotions to control their eating behavior. The main factors given by students were stress, anxiety, tiredness, and sometimes joy. This problem stems from the impossibility of distinguishing between emotional and physical hunger, the inability to properly manage emotions, and using food as a way to cope with certain feelings. Social context is also a factor that influences the alimentation of students, whether that is in a positive or negative way. Emotional eating manifests itself differently depending on each person, either by not eating enough or by eating excessively, both having negative outcomes most often than not.

Keywords: eating behavior, coping, stress, students, emotions.

Introduction
The topic of emotional eating and its impact among students from Cluj-Napoca, as well as the extent to which it affects them was chosen because we consider it to be a very common and serious problem among young people, having a great impact on their lives. Another reason for choosing this topic is the fact that it has been addressed by numerous other researchers in their studies, all of them having reached different conclusions, so

results are mixed. After reviewing various other research papers, we have decided to address this issue in order to try and find out additional information regarding the alimentation of students from Cluj-Napoca. Some researchers have found a strong link between school induced stress and emotional eating. Students with high-stress levels are more likely to be affected by emotional eating than those with lower stress levels.

The research question that we began our study with was: **RQ1: To what extent are students from Cluj-Napoca affected by emotional eating?** Approaching this topic is very important for a better understanding of the mechanisms behind it, as well as for the students who might not know enough about it. Our findings are similar to those of some researchers who have analyzed the issue of emotional eating, which represents the tendency of eating in response to both negative and positive emotions. As of now, the main causes of this problem are stress, negative and positive emotions, and the lack of proper coping mechanisms. As research methods, we are going to be using the sociological survey and the interview, having the questionnaire and the interview guide as instruments. The study will be conducted on students from Cluj-Napoca, and it will take place over the course of approximately three weeks. Following the research, we expect to discover a link between anxiety, fatigue, stress, different emotions, and emotional eating.

Literature review

Emotional eating is the tendency to eat in response to both negative and positive emotions. Spoor et al. (2007) examined the relationship between negative affect, coping, and emotional eating. Thus, they demonstrated that avoiding problems through various distractions and emotionally oriented coping, in relation to negative emotional states, can be associated with emotional eating, these being present among women with eating disorders and those with good health. Negative emotions have been shown to result in overeating among overweight people, women with eating disorders, and people with normal weight who are on a diet. Therefore, the relationship between food and emotion is influenced to some extent by the characteristics of each individual. According to the psychosomatic theory, people overeat in order to alleviate their less pleasant emotions. Furthermore, numerous other studies have also found that there is a link between increased negative emotions and increased food consumption among both overweight and normal people who are affected by emotional eating (Spoor et al., 2007).

According to the *Limitation Theory*, negative emotions trigger excessive eating among people who limit their food portions. Many experimental studies have shown that such people have a lack of restraint in the face of negative emotions, while people who do not have dietary restrictions eat even less or do not change their food intake. Emotional eating can occur as a result of a process of regulating emotions and avoiding negative feelings. The coping strategy could work as a basic part of this process. Coping is a process by which an individual tries to manage certain requirements perceived as stressful, and the emotions generated by them. Excessive eating can occur in an attempt to reduce negative emotions since it is believed that food can temporarily provide comfort and distraction from them (Spoor et al., 2007).

Different situations and emotional states can affect food intake. In order to determine whether underweight people eat less and overweight people eat more, both after positive and negative emotions, Geliebter and Aversa (2003) used questionnaires among numerous renowned universities and public libraries. Gender did not have a significant effect on the results; regular weight people ate less than underweight and overweight people when they experienced negative emotions. Following positive emotional states, underweight people ate more than those in the other categories. Thus, they were able to demonstrate that as a result of negative emotions, underweight people tend to eat less, and overweight people tend to eat more (Geliebter & Aversa, 2003).

Negative emotions are a part of everyone's life. It has been discovered that, in the case of some people, they lead to an increase in food intake, a phenomenon called *emotional eating*. The process by which they affect eating behavior is a question without an exact answer. It has been suggested that it is not the emotion itself that influences the change in food intake, but the way it is ultimately managed. Evers, Stok, and de Ridder (2010) investigated whether different ways to control negative emotions result in changes in food intake or not. People go through various negative states that they cannot control properly, thus turning to overeating. It is suggested that the problem is not necessarily associated with negative emotions, but rather with the lack of proper ways to manage them. This concept of controlling or regulating emotions refers to the effort that people make to influence their experience and manifestation, being closely related to physical and mental health. Different approaches to this problem can have profound health consequences. Although we cannot avoid negative emotions, we can change the way we approach them, thus avoiding an important factor that controls emotional eating (Evers, Marjin Stok, & de Ridder, 2010).

Early studies of emotional eating tested the simple hypothesis that negative emotions cause excessive eating among all people, including those who eat healthily. However, it is now clear that these emotions do not lead to an increase in food intake among people who eat healthily. Following numerous studies, many researchers have concluded that emotions do not inherently cause overeating. It is argued that it is not the emotion itself that influences our behavior, but our previous experiences with certain feelings. Therefore, people do not eat more as a result of a particular emotion, they do so when faced with emotions that they have learned to associate with eating in the past (Altheimer & Urry, 2019). Early theories suggest that emotional eating is likely learned rather than innate. Over time, if negative emotions are systematically associated with food intake, they can become conditioned stimuli that produce conditioned responses, such as an increased desire to eat. Thus, people who have not learned to associate their emotions with eating are not as prone to experiencing emotional eating (Altheimer & Urry, 2019).

Emotional eating can also depend on the social context. Social norms have a considerable influence on food intake. Following a meta-analysis, Robinson et al. (2014, cited in Altheimer & Urry, 2019) found that when participants were shown other people's different food choices, such as "low-energy" or "high-energy", their likelihood of making similar choices increased. *Social modeling* (when people adjust their food intake to that of the person they eat with) can also play a role in emotional eating. This can inhibit or facilitate food intake, depending on the behavior of the person you are with, even when he/she is not physically present. In different social contexts, emotional eating can manifest differently. For example, in a laboratory, following a recent meta-analysis, participants ate significantly less food when they were informed that they were being observed (Altheimer & Urry, 2019).

Many emotional eating treatments, such as various relaxation techniques, stress reduction based on *mindfulness*, focus on reducing the occurrence of emotions to later reduce eating. But if eating on an emotional basis depends on the previous associations between different emotions and eating, then the treatment for it can focus on eliminating these associations rather than reducing negative emotions. By doing this, overeating can be avoided even when strong emotions cannot be diminished (Altheimer & Urry, 2019).

School-induced stress can be an essential factor that influences emotional eating. Students with a higher level of stress have less healthy eating habits, and increased tendency of emotional eating, and eating at night, than those who are less affected by stress. According to studies conducted on students in Korea, those affected by academic stress ate more and consumed more sugar than those who were not affected by it to such an extent. Other studies have indicated dietary changes associated with important examination periods (Chamberlin et al., 2018).

Chamberlin et al. (2018) investigated the factors related to school as indicators of academic stress and their connection to emotional eating among adolescents. As a result, they found that academic self-esteem, grades, and school worries had a significant impact on emotional eating. The study was conducted among both females and males, with a majority among women. No association was found between emotional eating and gender, indicating that both sexes may be affected by this problem. Contrary to expectations, a positive relationship was discovered between the grades obtained at school and eating on an emotional basis. The researchers assumed a negative relationship because students with low grades were prone to being more stressed out about school, which would have increased the possibility of emotional eating as a coping strategy. However, those with higher grades were, in fact, more affected by this problem. A possible explanation for this result could be that those who maintain their high grades through dedication and determination may have a higher level of stress and may be affected by emotional eating to a greater extent to cope with the pressure of obtaining and maintaining their grades (Chamberlin et al., 2018).

Methodology

Research design

Based on results from previous study on emotional eating behaviors, the question underlying this study is **RQ1: To what extent are students in Cluj-Napoca affected by emotional eating?**

In order to obtain relevant data, two methods were employed, in a mixed-methods design. The first method was a quantitative one, the indirect sociological survey, using a questionnaire administered online. The second method was a qualitative one, the structured interview. The indirect survey was selected due to the fact that it involves a relatively short data collection time, low costs, and an easy interpretation of results. As for the interviews, non-response situations are less likely and one can observe the facial expressions and gestures of people, thus recording non-verbal behavior. They are also useful in finding additional information, details, arguments, and examples. After establishing the methods, the testing of the questionnaire and the interview guide followed. Both instruments were distributed to a number of five subjects for pre-testing to eliminate possible errors in their construction and to check if there were any difficulties in completing them or certain things that we forgot to include. After pre-testing, small changes were made to the interview guide, and then we distributed the questionnaire online and interviewed 7 people. The research aimed to find out the extent to which students in Cluj-Napoca are affected by emotional eating. It was carried out in November-December, 2019. The confidentiality of the participants' personal information was ensured. No costs were involved in conducting the research.

Subjects
In the case of the questionnaire, the individuals were chosen randomly, through self-selectionn, and the method was applied indirectly. We used the docs.google.com app through which we created an online questionnaire, which was later distributed to a group of students from Cluj-Napoca on Facebook. The questionnaire could be completed over a period of 14 days. The sampling method was a non-probabilistic one, the questionnaire being filled in by N=66 respondents (50F, 16M) aged between 18 and 29 years. It consisted of 24 factual, opinion-based, and socio-demographic questions. The questions included multiple choice answers and four of them were open.

The interviews were conducted directly, face-to-face, and the interview guide was a structured one. The sampling method was a non-probabilistic one, the interview participants being chosen from our group of friends, and data collection was done through telephone recording, with the consent of the interviewees. The interviews took place over the course of three days (December 13, 2019, December 14, 2019, December 18, 2019). Seven people were interviewed (5F, 2M) aged between 18 and 21, and the interview guide consisted of 8 questions that asked for motivations, opinions, details.

In the case of both methods, the subjects were informed about the research topic, but also the purpose of the research, which was finding out the extent to which students in Cluj-Napoca are affected by the problem of emotional eating. The approximate time to complete the questionnaire was five minutes, and in the case of the interviews, they lasted no longer than ten minutes. Also, the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their data, being aware that it will only be used for research purposes.

Results
Survey
The questionnaire was applied to a sample of N=66 students from Cluj-Napoca, out of which 50F and 16M, aged between 18 and 29 years. 74.2% of the subjects come from urban areas, and 25.8% from rural areas. A considerable majority is observed both among females and among people from urban areas. Also, most respondents are 19 years old. The questionnaire consists of 24 socio-demographic, factual, opinion-based questions, and others. The questions had multiple choice answers, and four of them were open.

To the question "Do the events in your life affect your diet?" 50% of the respondents answered "Yes", 19.7% "No" and 30.3% "Sometimes". Furthermore, 33 people, representing the majority, said that the events affect them negatively, 6 people said that they affect them in a positive way, and others said that they are affected "Sometimes for the better, other times for the worse. It depends on the event." These answers show that negative emotions have a greater impact on young people's diet, compared to positive emotions.

75.8% do not eat after experiencing positive emotions, and 21.2% do so. However, after experiencing negative emotions, 50% resort to food and 47% do not. Thus, we can see that students are more likely to eat when they are in a bad mood. Either because it leads to an increase in food intake, or because they do not know how to manage their problems and end up resorting to food.

To the question "Do you usually eat alone?" 53% answered "Yes", 21.2% "No" and 25.8% "Sometimes". When asked why they prefer to do this, 26.2% of participants said they do not feel comfortable eating in the presence of other people, and 19% do not want to be judged on the amount of food they consume. It can be deduced that eating on an emotional basis is also influenced by social context. Social context can inhibit or facilitate a person's food intake, depending on the behavior of the person or persons around them. People also tend to eat much less when they are informed that they are being observed (Altheimer, Urry, 2019, 3). Other responses include: “I have no one to eat with,” “I am often home alone,” “I live alone,” “This is often the case. I do not coordinate with other people”.

For those who answered “No”, the answers include: “I can't really eat alone. I feel like dinner should be served with your family or if you can’t see your family, then with your life partner. I don't feel like eating alone.”, “I don't like eating alone”, “Because I like to have at least one person next to me when I eat so that we can talk”, “I eat with my family or friends”, “I prefer to socialize with someone when I eat”, “It’s different each time, either I'm with someone or I eat alone, there isn’t a specific reason”, “I'm always accompanied by colleagues”, “I like to have company when I eat”. These answers depict a slight dependence on other people.

Regarding emotional eating influenced by social context, to the question “Does eating with other people affect your eating habits? (for example, you tend to eat more/less than usual, because the rest of the people do so)”, 27 people answered “Yes”, 35 people answered, “ No”, and 4 people answered “I don’t know/I don't want to answer.” This shows that a significant number of respondents are influenced by social context and therefore by the dietary decisions of the people around them, possibly to avoid any offensive comments about the quantity or quality of food they eat.

Usually, 15 people tend to eat more than they need, 23 people do not, and 28 claim that they only do it sometimes. When asked why do they think that they are doing this, respondents gave answers such as: “Because I like food too much”, “Because I really like certain types of food”, “I love food”, “Because I really like to eat, even if I'm full”, but also answers that indicate eating on an emotional basis: “It depends a lot on my emotional state, events, feelings”, “I tend to fill a void”, “Food makes me happy”, “Sometimes I don't realize I'm doing this”, “Due to stress or less pleasant events”, “Because it makes me feel better”. Most subjects overeat because they think it makes them happy. It is possible that they may not be able to manage their emotions and therefore resort to food to better their moods.

To the question “Do you tend to eat less than you need?”, 19 people answered “Yes”, 19 people answered “No” and 28 people answered “Sometimes”. When asked why do they think they are doing this, 6 of the respondents gave answers such as: “In order to lose weight/to not gain weight”. Many experimental studies show that people who limit their portions of food have a lack of restraint in the face of negative emotions, as opposed to people who do not (Spoor et al., 2007, 2). Seven people think they don't have time to eat, (“I don't have enough time”, “Sometimes time isn't my best friend”, “Lack of time”), and 3 claim that they forget to eat (“I forget to eat”, “Because I forget, I don't feel the need to eat”, “Sometimes I don't think, I surround myself with activities and I forget. If my stomach would not signal through sounds, I wouldn't even eat”). These answers indicate the lack of time management among students, but also the possibility of them being overwhelmed by other things surrounding them, which leads to an unbalanced diet. Other answers include: “That's how I’m used to eating”, “Sometimes the food I make is not enough and I prefer to share it with my roommates even if I'm very hungry and I know I won't be completely full”, “Sometimes I eat less than I need without realizing it”, “Resources are limited”.

43.1% usually replace main meals with small snacks throughout the day, 21.5% do not do so, and 35.4 do so sometimes. As a result of various emotions, people tend to reward themselves with these snacks during the day, although they do not necessarily feel the need to eat or often do so unintentionally, being overwhelmed by emotions and resorting to food as a form of distraction.

To the question "Do you think anxiety/stress/fatigue affects your diet?" 53 people answered "Yes", 11 people answered "No" and 2 people answered "I don't know/I don't want to answer", which shows that the vast majority is affected by these problems, in terms of the quantity or quality of food that they consume. When asked in what way they consider that they are being affected, 42.6% answered "I eat less", and 40.7% answered "I eat more". Other answers include: "There are situations when I eat less and situations when I eat more", "I might eat more, or I might eat less, it's not something stable", "Both, depending on the context", "I either eat a lot, or I eat less. It depends but I don't really know why", "I prefer not to eat in public places, so I eat less". Some students use food to cope with these feelings, but the vast majority of them eat less. Stress, anxiety, fatigue are more and more common among students, and those who are affected by them to a greater extent are also affected by emotional eating, as there is a close relationship between the two. Whether they are caused by school or everyday problems, they often have a rather negative influence on students' diets, both by overeating or undernutrition, which have negative consequences.

To the question "Does food make you feel better after a long and tiring day?" 54.5% answered "Yes", 16.7% answered "No" and 28.8% answered "Sometimes". Also, when asked if they use food to better their mood when they are upset, 40.9% answered "Yes", 37.9% answered "No", 18.2% answered "Sometimes", And 3% answered "I don't know/I don't want to answer". Thus, it can be observed that most of the respondents find comfort and release in food. They eat in order to feel better, to fill certain voids, not physical needs, but emotional hunger cannot be satisfied with the help of food. For a short period of time food can improve the mood of the people who rely on it, but the feelings that lead to it are still going to be present. This problem occurs due to the fact that most students are not able to tell the difference between emotional and physical hunger.

When asked if the problems in their social life affect their diet, 30 people answered "Yes", 31 answered "No", and 5 people answered "I don't know/I don't want to answer". Young people often turn to food when their social life is in decline to give the illusion that everything is fine. These answers show that some young people are easily influenced by the problems in their social life.

For the question "Did you go through a tragic experience as a result of which you have resorted to food to alleviate your suffering?" only 7 people answered "Yes", 55 people answered "No", and 4 people answered "I don't know/I don't want to answer". Thus, we can see that some respondents were not affected by such events, and therefore for most subjects, this is not a factor that could alter their diet. Out of the people who answered "Yes", 3 resorted to food to alleviate their suffering after a breakup, 2 people after the loss of a loved one, and another 2 did not justify their answer. We believe that most young people have not gone through experiences so tragic that could affect their diet, possibly due to their young age. In the case of those who answered "Yes", the recurring reason is the separation from their partner. Such moments often have a significant impact on young people, and most of them tend to resort to food when any other method is unsuccessful.

Therefore, most respondents consider that they are affected by daily events, most of the time in a negative way. Following positive emotions, a considerable number of students say that they do not tend to overeat. When it comes to the negative emotions however, they claim that they do, which supports emotional eating. Almost half of the respondents claim that they eat alone because they do not feel comfortable eating in the presence of other people or they do not want to be judged on the amount of food they eat. Thus, we noticed that emotional eating among students is also influenced by social context.

Also, some respondents overeat because they think that it makes them happy, and for those who eat less than they need to, the main reason is poor time management. More than half of the respondents believe that anxiety, stress, or fatigue have a significant effect on their diet, either because they eat more or because they eat less. A considerable number of students turn to food to feel better after a tiring day or when they are upset, which shows that this is their main way of overcoming such problems. Also, most respondents did not go through tragic experiences that could have affected their diet.

Interview

The interviews were conducted face to face with the help of a structured interview guide consisting of 8 questions, which required motivations, opinions, arguments, examples. 7 people were interviewed (5F, 2M). All 7 people interviewed believe that the events in their daily lives affect their diet to a large extent and often negatively, either because they end up eating more or they end up eating less. Thus, to the question "In what way do you think that the events in your life affect your diet?" one student stated that her diet is influenced differently, depending on the events she goes through: "Well, it depends. If something happens to me and I am sad or stressed, then I do not eat. If I'm nervous or agitated, then I must eat." Two other students consider that their diet is greatly affected by this: "I think quite a lot, considering that you may not have time to eat or to cook at home and you certainly end up eating junk-food when going out", "Sometimes for the better, depending on what happens to me. If I go through an unfortunate event, I become stressed and eat a lot to get over it. If I go through a happy event, I eat a lot because I can't control my enthusiasm. However, I came to the conclusion that it never affects me in a positive way, but always in a negative way." Insufficient time or poor time management can also have an impact on students' eating habits: "Events in my personal life can affect my diet by skipping certain meals or by eating at inappropriate times due to stress or lack of time which does not allows me to follow a schedule".

When asked if they tend to eat more or less as a result of positive emotions, 3 people believe that when they are happy they eat less: "I eat less if I am happy, or I'll eat something sweet", "After experiencing positive emotions I eat less, because positive emotions do not affect me as much as negative ones do", "Over the years I have noticed that as a result of positive emotions I tend to eat much less, trying to avoid unhealthy food". Two other people believe that positive emotions do not affect their diet in any way: "I cannot say that I noticed this in myself. After experiencing positive emotions, I don't feel a change in my appetite", "If I'm happy I don't think it influences me in any way". Another student said: "I think I tend to eat more even after experiencing positive emotions because if I'm in a good mood I try to improve it as much as possible and I try to do that with food so that I can feel better." As a result of negative emotions, however, one person does not eat at all, and two eat a lot to try to change how they are feeling: "When I experience negative emotions I turn to food and eat more than I would normally to try to feel better", “When I experience negative emotions I eat a lot if I don't know what else to do in that situation. If I know how to solve my problems, that's fine, but if I don't, I shut myself down and I eat a lot.” Two other people resort to unhealthy food to try to get rid of these feelings: “As a result of negative emotions, I tend to feel a change in the sense that I have a higher appetite, especially for some foods that are not exactly the healthiest. I do this as a relief from unpleasant situations”, ”Following negative emotions, my body tends to resort to unhealthy food, a lot of fast food” Two other students believe that such emotions do not influence them in any way.

By asking “Do you think that anxiety/stress/fatigue affects your diet?” we tried to find out exactly what are the factors that trigger emotional eating among the interviewed students. Everyone answered “Yes”: “Yes, I think it influences my diet in some way. When you are stressed, you don't have much time to eat, because you have so much to do”, “Yes. Automatically when you are tired or stressed you eat less. You don't even have time to eat”, “Yes, sometimes when I'm stressed I eat a lot and I choose not to finish my work because I think I need a break, and when I'm tired I eat a lot because I work all day sometimes and I don't have time to eat. I get home tired and eat as much as I didn't eat that day, sometimes even more.”, “Yes, because usually when I'm stressed I eat more than I should.”, “Yes, because when you face these conditions a chaotic diet intervenes”, “I consider that these conditions affect my diet by giving me excessive appetite or sometimes lack of appetite, leading to an unhealthy lifestyle.”, “In my case, stress, fatigue, anxiety make me eat less. Most of the time I eat in a hurry and I don't take into account the consequences”. It can be observed that the diet of most of the interviewees is influenced by stress, and they either tend to eat less or they tend to eat more as a result.

When asked if food makes them feel better after a long and tiring day, only one person answered “Not necessarily”, the rest of the answers being affirmative. However, people say that when they eat after such a day, they feel guilty: “For a moment, yes, but the next day or sometimes even immediately after, I feel guilty”, “It makes me feel good for the moment, but then I regret that I spent too much money on food or that I ate unhealthy food”. After a tiring day, a student stated that he sees food as “a reward after a long and hard day”. It can be observed that most of the students interviewed see food as a “reward”. They feel better for a short moment, after which they are overwhelmed by a feeling of guilt, characteristic of emotional eating.

To the question “When you are in a bad mood, do you resort to food in order to feel better?” two people answered “No”, the rest of the answers being varied: “It depends. Sometimes yes, sometimes no, it depends on how bad my mood is”, “I do so just to try to get over it more easily. To change something I'm going through, I have to actually get up and do something, but when I eat it means that I can't do anything in that moment and so I give up”, “Yes, so that I can feel better”, “When I am in a bad mood I can find food as a relief, because it is a necessity first and a pleasant way to feel better and disconnect from my problems for a few moments”.

Two of the 7 interviewees state that they did go through a tragic experience as a result of which they resorted to food to alleviate their suffering, such as breaking up with a loved one. Four other people said that they did not go through such an experience, and one person said: “Not necessarily, but I did go through experiences that have affected me. Not a lot, but yes, in the negative moments I do eat a lot to try and forget about them”. We find that young students have not gone through such tragic experiences that have altered their diet, possibly due to their young age.

When asked why do they think that emotional eating affects more and more young people, most believe that students are affected by it for reasons such as fatigue or negative emotions, but most consider stress to be the main factor: "I believe that emotional eating affects more and more students due to the high stress-levels nowadays, especially during exam periods, when students make a lot of mistakes even without realizing it", "Emotional eating is becoming more common among students as a result of the stress of everyday life.", "Well, I think students only eat because of stress or because they have nothing else to do", "Because more and more students are tired and stressed, and food can help them get over their problems for a while."

Therefore, the interviewed students are greatly affected by daily events, especially the negative ones, as a result of which they tend to eat more. But there are also people who do not eat at all in such situations, which is just as problematic. Following positive emotions, most people say that their diet does not change significantly, because when they experience such feelings, they express their joy in other ways. After a long and tiring day, they claim that they turn to food to feel better, even if they are later accompanied by feelings of guilt. Also, most consider stress to be the main factor that triggers emotional eating, which manifests itself either by overeating or undernourishment. Most people claim that they did not go through tragic experiences as a result of which they had to resort to food, and those who have gone through such experiences have claimed break-ups to be the main reason. Moreover, a considerable number of interviewees believe that, in general, stress is the reason why emotional eating affects more and more students.

Conclusion

The research question that the study began with is **RQ1: To what extent are students in Cluj-Napoca affected by emotional eating?** Following the research, we concluded that they are greatly affected. After applying both methods, we came to the conclusion that their results are similar. With the help of the questionnaire, we were able to find out the general answers on a larger sample of students, and the interviews helped us find out more details about the reasons behind emotional eating.

Both the respondents of the questionnaire and the interviewees state that when they experience negative emotions they tend to eat more, and when they experience positive emotions, their diet does not change significantly. Thus, we can conclude that this is one of the main ways by which students try to get over certain unpleasant situations. Moreover, in both situations, they claim that they turn to food to feel better after a long and tiring day, and they even overeat because they believe it makes them happy. We can deduce that students find comfort and release in food. They eat in order to fill certain emotional needs, not physical ones, without being aware that emotional hunger cannot be satisfied with food. Anxiety, fatigue, and stress can have a significant effect on students' diets, in the sense that most of them tend to eat less as a result of such emotions. The interviews, in particular, helped us come to the conclusion that stress is the main factor that affects the diet of young people, causing them to either eat less or more. Emotional eating among students is also influenced by social context. Students claim that they eat alone either because they do not feel comfortable eating in the presence of other people or because they do not want to be judged for the amount of food they consume.

Also, most students did not go through tragic experiences that would have had a major impact on their diet, possibly due to their young age, but those who experienced such situations claimed break-ups to be the main reason, both in the case of the questionnaire, as well as in the case of the interviews. Our research has some similar results to those found in the cited literature. One of the common factors is stress, a primary reason for emotional eating among students who took part in our research. This is discussed by Chamberlin et al. (2018), although in this research more emphasis is placed on academic stress. Therefore, our research concluded that school induced stress is an essential factor that influences emotional eating. Students affected by academic stress tend to consume more food than those who are not affected by it to such an extent. Also, Altheimer and Urry (2019) demonstrated that emotional eating and social context are closely related, something we also found through our research. People's diet changes depending on the people around them as well as their behavior. Their choices can be easily influenced and thus modified to fit a certain pattern, in order to not be judged by the quantity or quality of food they eat.

Our research has certain errors such as the low number of participants, the result not being representative for all the students of Cluj-Napoca. Also, most of the subjects were female, which is why we could not determine whether or not gender has any relevance in terms of emotional eating. After completing the research we realized that more specific and relevant questions should have been included in the questionnaire, such as the association of emotional eating with academic overload. Another error could be the insincerity of students who could have provided desirable answers. Both the period of gathering information and the conduction of the study were relatively short, which may have affected the quality of the research. We recommend that future researchers use several methods that could provide additional information, such as the experiment. Thus, they can better observe what are the exact emotions that trigger emotional eating among students, as well as the food they choose to consume.

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The implications of empathy in public relations

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ABSTRACT
The present study aims to analyze the effects of empathy in public relations and its main roles in this domain's specific activities. The central research questions are based on the influence of empathy in public relations and the way different communicational channels can affect emotions and empathy, respectively. One of the interesting topics addressed in this paper is crisis communication and the different approaches specialists engaged applying empathy. The final goal of this paper is to create a guide of good practice based on empathy usage for novices and even specialists. To get conclusive results, we used qualitative methods such as a focus group with PR students and elite interviews with PR specialists and PR faculty members. The major conclusion we arrived at is that empathy may be a key element, especially when conducting research where it is important to know the target and understand its needs. Moreover, it is easier and more effective to create a campaign when the target and its feelings are well-known. A proper tool to use in such a case may be empathy.

Keywords: public relations, communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, PR specialists.

Introduction

The main theme of the paper is the importance of *emotional intelligence*, more precisely of empathy in public relations activities because emotions are a key element in this domain. Moreover, it is helpful to know how emotions can influence different situations and the way they can be managed efficiently. This chosen theme is topical because the competition in the field of public relations is becoming more intense, and the specialists from this profession must look for various ways to reach and stay within the preferences of consumers. The efficient use of emotions, but especially of empathy is one of the techniques used to get to know consumers better and to develop materials that attract the public and lead to the company's objectives.

Emotional intelligence has a multitude of branches, and it is analyzed in the literature with references to various fields in which it operates, be they personal or professional. Most areas that address emotional intelligence are from the socio-humanistic spectrum because working with people requires understanding, and this comes from combining several skills and emotions, including empathy. Thus, empathy is a main concept in this paper because it manages to bring together elements complementary to knowing and understanding emotions.

Emotions, especially empathy are perceived, experienced, and transmitted unintentionally by a large percentage of people. Emotional intelligence explains how important it is to change this and make this process intentional and conscious. Public relations advisors constantly communicate with clients, consumers or partners and each communication process is accompanied by certain goals that are influenced by the way they express themselves. As the literature shows, emotions are complicated to manage, but once this skill is developed, things begin to take on a different course. Getting to know the needs, feelings, and the context of the receiver makes communication much more effective. The discourse is directed in such a way that the information reaches the public directly and it is assimilated correctly and completely.

Given that this paper develops a case study that collects data only from qualitative methods and tools, we considered it appropriate to formulate a set of research questions:

RQ1: What are the negative effects of empathy in PR work?

RQ2: How does empathy influence communication between a PR advisor and his or her audience?

RQ3: How is empathy used in crisis communication?

RQ4: How does the communication channel between a PR advisor and the public influence the perception and transmission of emotions?

To reach conclusive data, the focus group technique and the semi-structured individual elite interview are arguably most suitable. The focus group is planned with students in the final year of the Communication and Public Relations specialization. Using this research method, the present paper aims to see what the opinion of future public relations specialists towards the intentional or unintentional use of empathy in specific activities is. Regarding the interview, we used the semi-structured interview guide to find out the beliefs of two different groups of people. On the one hand, teachers, whether they are also practitioners in the field or not. On the other hand, specialists in the field of PR, whether they graduated from a specialized college or not.

The main objectives set out to accomplish in this paper are to analyze the point of view of future PR specialists on the given topic, but especially the vision of public relations experts. Moreover, we want to highlight the differences in perception on the elements that underlie the success of PR practitioners, compared to people whose main profession is teaching in public relations. As a last objective of this paper, we want to offer a brief version of a guide of good practices, resulting both from the literature review, but also from the answers obtained through the research methods.

Literature review

The concept of *public relations* has been used since the nineteenth century, and specific data support this fact, but people in the field believe that before this period was known and practiced the specifics of this concept, under different names. Big names in the field have spoken about it over time, and *"the first data on the concept of Public Relations was revealed to us by Eric F. Goldman, who relates that in 1827 the Rev. OP Hoyt used the term Public Relations with the meaning of correct information of the public opinion. In 1882, attorney Dorman B. Eaton, in a speech delivered in the Yale classroom, also used the term PR, which is quite close to what we mean by that term today. According to Newsom, the term PR, as it is understood today, was first used in 1897 in the Yearbook of Railway Literature. According to Edward L. Bernays, the first to use the concept of PR in its current sense was Theodore Newton Vail"* (Rus, 2002, p. 52).

It is important to mention some technical aspects of this profession, to draw major lines in the subject of this paper and to put certain limits to the context in which will be developed various argued or counter-argued ideas. In general, Public Relations is practiced for both governmental and non-governmental institutions, educational, cultural, or financial institutions. Among the goals that PR people pursue is to persuade the public or even the organization they work for (Coman, 2001). As specific activities, to name a few are the writing and editing of messages, the development of relations with the press, research, management, counseling, event planning, continuously creating a contact list and public speaking (Cutlip, Center, and Broom, 1994 *apud* Coman, 2001).

If it was already mentioned the audiences to which PR is addressed, it is good to know that specialists in this field must pay attention to the attitudes and behaviors that the public or stakeholders show when identifying a problem with the entity that PR represents it. Opinions are also divided, and specialists are required to respond quickly to various situations. Thus, a good knowledge of the public is vital for the PR counselor and the entity he represents (Theaker, 2001). A very good emotional control, but also a thorough professional training are essential in the moments of spontaneity that are encountered in the field of Public Relations. To reach its audiences, people in this field use a wide range of channels, including media products (newspapers, magazines, radio, and television), social media, newsletters, special events, and offline visuals (leaflets, posters) (Wilcox et al., 2009).

Communication

But no matter what happens, a PR counselor must communicate. Whether it is about teammates or customers, they need to find ways to adapt to each person's specifics to maintain and develop relationships with them. "*Communication is the basis of all processes, interactions and interpersonal relationships. Society exists practically due to the communication process, because without it the social structures at micro and macroclimate level would not be able to be formed nor would it be maintained*" (Rus, 2002, p. 12). Communication is defined and conceptualized in multiple forms by specialists in the field, and Kunczik says that this "*is therefore a behavior that, from the point of view of the communicator, aims to send messages, using symbols, to one or more persons*" (Kunczik, 1998 *apud* Rus, 2002, p. 14).

Interpersonal communication is the one that stands out the most in this paper and interpersonal relationships can be considered "*the stage of manifestation of Emotional Intelligence, the dimension that makes it possible to observe and measure, in specific terms, what Emotional Intelligence involves*" (Hughes & Terrell, 2017, p. 73). These relationships are one of the important factors that a PR person needs when doing his work and wants to succeed. Two authors, Stein and Book (2011, cited in Hughes & Terrell, 2017), provide a definition of competencies closely related to interpersonal relationships, saying that they are "*abilities to establish and maintain mutually satisfying relationships, characterized by both the ability to give and the ability to receive, and within which confidence and compassion are openly manifested, verbally or behaviorally*". It is well known that a lot of people are involved in PR work, it is about teamwork, and it must work very well for the results to appear. Thus, it is important that people in this field consider the development of these skills. "*The basic condition for developing and maintaining genuine and lasting interpersonal relationships is a healthy level of empathy*" (Hughes & Terrell, 2017).

Nonverbal communication is another branch that can influence specific activities to the field of Public Relations. It is very difficult to omit these elements, in fact it is important to study and develop to be used for the success of the developed strategies. This type of communication is *"the common denominator in social life; there is hardly any domain of social experience that is not connected to it. NVC is defined as behavior of the face, body, or voice minus the linguistic content, in other words, everything but the words. Nonverbal and verbal channels often have to be considered together to understand conveyed meanings"* (Hall, Horgan, & Murphy, 2019, p. 272).

Emotional intelligence

In recent decades, more and more studies have been conducted to show that Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in various fields, especially in the social-humanistic ones. This concept has been approached since the early part of the twentieth century, but in inconclusive forms. The first people to theorize the term Emotional Intelligence were Mayer and Salovey in the 1990s. The last definition they offered in 2000 states that Emotional Intelligence is *"the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others"* (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). These two researchers delimit through their theory *"four structures of abilities: the perception of emotions, the facilitation of thinking through emotions, the understanding of emotions and the self-control of emotions"* (Hughes & Terrell, 2017, p. 19). Over time, there have been several models of emotional intelligence, but *"most are structured in four generic areas: self-awareness, self-management, social consciousness, and relationship management"* (Goleman, 2016, p. 8). In the same book, Goleman says that the dynamics of this field of research is illustrated by the multitude of models that have emerged and are developing.

Emotional Intelligence has visible effects on Public Relations work, because *"emotions like anger, happiness, and fear, as well as mood states, preferences, and bodily states, influence how people think, make decisions, and perform different tasks"* (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011, p. 89), and a specialist in Public Relations works especially with emotions, with their transmission and management. In his book, which became famous, Goleman says that *"while Emotional Intelligence determines our potential to learn the basics of self-control, our emotional competence shows how much of that potential we have accumulated in forms that can be translated into practically applicable skills. To become experts in a certain emotional competence, such as customer service or teamwork, we need to develop in the substrate a skill from the fundamentals of IE, namely social awareness, and relationship management"* (Goleman, 2008, 15). Based on these ideas, a Public Relations specialist may have the necessary skills to maintain interpersonal relationships and to use emotion as a starting point in promoting a product. But if these skills are not exercised consciously, the work of the specialist may be capped, and the results may stagnate. Besides, *"Emotional Intelligence is hypothesized to influence the success with which employees interact with colleagues, the strategies they use to manage conflict and stress, and overall job performance"* (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011, p. 97).

Empathy

Empathy is defined as *"the ability to be aware of, understanding of and sensitive to another person's feelings and thoughts"* (Battarbee, Suri, & Howard, 2015, p. 61). "In other words, awareness of the inner reality of another person and one's own person is an act of empathy" (Goleman, 2016, p. 75). But Daniel Goleman distinguishes three types of empathy: *cognitive empathy*, *emotional empathy*, and *empathic concern* (Goleman, 2017, p.

4). Obviously, it is necessary for PR specialists to understand people because it is about a field that is based on communication. How can one communicate if not understand with whom, about what and in what context?

"No matter what industry you work in, remarkable things will happen when empathy for your customers plays a key role in decision making" (Battarbee, Suri, & Howard, 2015, p. 61). Well, the field of Public Relations is one that works mostly with and for its consumers. Innovation and increasing the quality of services are increasingly in demand in this market, and the demands come from consumers who want more and more and from these times that are constantly changing. Well, the field of public relations is one that works mostly with and for its consumers. *"Advances in information and communication technologies alter how we work, play, learn, socialize and express ourselves"* (p. 62). By empathizing with different socio-demographic groups, analyzing needs and desires, the PR person may have a better chance of developing a strategy that will lead to success.

There is this common assumption that when we are or have been at a time in situations like those around us, more precisely *in somebody's shoes*, we can empathize more easily. Some experts claim the opposite of this hypothesis. A study published in the United States contradicts, at least in part, this preconception, bringing clear arguments and examples in this direction. In the following we will summarize the main ideas extracted from it.

Some of the experiments showed that people who went through various challenges were less willing to be empathetic to someone who was facing the same problems, and people who had no experience in such situations had a different attitude. But the authors of this study also come up with two explanations for this phenomenon. First, people tend not to remember very clearly what they went through and then underestimate the emotions and pain they experienced, attributing the same feeling of underestimation to people going through those situations. Second, once they have overcome those challenges, they feel confident in their strengths, but are unaware that the person next to them has not had previous experiences that would give them the confidence and resources to easily get over it. Then, combining these two factors results an attitude that says *I know how hard it was, but I managed to get over it*. Thus, the degree of empathy is reduced (Ruttan, McDonnell, & Nordgren, 2017). Following this study, we want to draw a conclusion that it might not be the best idea for a PR advisor to always try to associate the problematic situations of the people he encounters with his own situations. In other words, the PR person should put aside his own emotions and experiences, focusing on the individual ones of others. This can help the PR advisor to better understand clients or consumers, and his work will have better results.

The conflict zone is one that is frequently encountered in the field of Public Relations. Why? Because factors such as stress or pressure are involved in interpersonal interactions, but no one likes to be in conflict situations. Communication is the one to streamline work processes, even when a conflict is expected or has already broken out. *"Empathy determines a much higher degree of accuracy in communication, and the implementation of empathic skills will definitely be worth the time. As a result, productivity will increase, and conflict potential will be reduced"* (Hughes & Terrell, 2017, p. 78).

Thus, a Public Relations specialist must be willing to invest multiple resources to be able to empathize with his audience.

Methodology

Considering that this paper is based on a case study consisting only of qualitative methods and tools, we considered it appropriate to formulate a set of research questions:

RQ1: What are the negative effects of empathy in PR work?

RQ2: How does empathy influence communication between a PR advisor and his or her audience?

RQ3: How is empathy used in crisis communication?

RQ4: How does the communication channel between a PR advisor and the public influence the perception and transmission of emotions?

To find answers to these research questions and to reach conclusions relevant to the specifics of this paper, we chose to use two qualitative research methods. More precisely, the individual interview, using the semi-structured interview guide and the focus group, using also the semi-structured interview guide. Given the topic covered in this paper and especially its interdisciplinary nature, the methods chosen are the best to have research with valuable results.

The focus group was conducted face to face with seven students from the senior year of the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Cluj-Napoca, Communication and Public Relations specialization. Of these, four female students and three male students participated, aged between 20 and 23, from urban areas. The interview guide was largely prepared based on the information provided in the theoretical framework, which resulted in the main topics worth addressing in the case of the chosen technique. Trying to answer the research questions, the topics addressed in the focus group focused on the idea of emotions, to see to what extent respondents can recognize and understand them, both for themselves and especially for those around them, the idea of Emotional Intelligence and empathy as a theoretical and applicable side in professional and personal life, and the idea of effects and implications of empathy in the field of Public Relations.

Results

The students participating in this interview had mixed opinions when contextualizing and detailing the meaning of empathy. A small part of them, namely two people went on the idea of *compassion* and *suffering*, mentioning that the moments when empathy is used are those in which someone is in difficult situations and full of negative emotions ("that quality one has when someone else is suffering or needs help"). Most respondents chose to define empathy through concepts such as *understanding* ("putting yourself in someone's shoes in a certain situation to better understand how they feel and to be able to offer advice"), feeling and imagining. Taking a look at the more detailed part of the Emotional Intelligence, all participants in this group interview concluded that there is a problem in managing their own emotions, rather than understanding those of others. They said that "it depends a lot on the day, mood and different factors".

An interesting thing noticed in the students' reactions and answers is contrary to the theory debated, and their remarks are the best way to highlight this aspect: "it is much easier for me to understand those around me if I've been through what they are going through and it is much harder for me to understand if the situation seems absurd to me".

The students identified a series of professional contexts in which empathy is present and may favor certain elements ("I fail to empathize with people who complain that they have a lot of work, even if I've been through it because it's their fault, they failed to organize", "I don't think you can be a good PR person if you do not have this quality of empathy, you cannot be the one who knows and you have to look at what is required and what is necessary"). The presence of empathy in the specific activities of the field was underlined by the students as necessary ("I don't think there can be a communicator who has not developed this ability"). Knowing the target audience and their needs were the main effects identified, along with a series of actions that a PR person should take to promote them. Examples of situations in which empathy caused negative effects were also mentioned, implying too much dose of subjectivism in the problem presented. This refers to an event at the workplace where empathy intervened in the company's objectives.

The next part of the interview described the students a situation in which the PR person must intervene and put his knowledge into practice. Among the solutions offered by the students were mentioned: "do not panic", "give him a flier to guide him to all the information he needs", "by no means do I think I would tell him that I have no idea what he is talking about", "come with universally valid details". The conclusion they reached refers to the idea that it is important to realize with the help of empathy what a person needs and try to offer him something as close as possible to his need.

The last topic of discussion focused on communication channels, and the central point reached by the respondents refers to the fact that it is more complicated, and more effort is needed when we should express ourselves and offer empathy in writing ("I could also empathize by e-mail, but the message needs to be presented as clearly as possible"). A type of communication that is not mediated by various intermediate channels has much better effects and facilitates the process ("through face-to-face communication I think you can get to know a person better because the elements related to nonverbal language appear").

A central idea that results from all these answers is that future specialists in the field of Public Relations consider empathy as a useful tool in specific activities, perhaps even a necessary element. However, they consider its limits and the negative effects empathy can bring to their work. Among them, the excessive consumption of resources associated with routine activities, which can be based on past experiences, thus using a lower level of resources.

The second research method was the elite individual interview, using the semi-structured interview guide, conducted online. Interviews were designed to obtain informed opinions on how empathy influences PR work. The interviewees are part of two groups: a group of teachers from the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Cluj-Napoca from the Department of Communication, Public Relations and Advertising and a group of specialists in Communication and Public Relations. The questions in the guide were based on ideas such as the definition and conceptualization, the effects it could have on PR work, the differences in work impact between the theoretical bases of the field and professional experiences, and adaptation to crisis situations such as COVID-19.

Starting with the first topic addressed in both categories of interviews regarding contextualization, the interviewees choose similar concepts to associate with empathy, and the most common were *emotional intelligence*, *need* ("attention not only to ourselves and our needs, but also to those around and their needs") and *feeling*. These were followed by *compassion* ("the ability to respond to the suffering of others"), *interpersonal relationships*, *community*, and *understanding*. An interesting approach comes from one of the PR specialists, who told that she associates empathy with the "idea of NVC (non-violent communication)", referring to a book written by Marshall Rosenberg in which he talks about how to use empathy in communication.

Speaking about the effects of empathy in specific PR activities, almost all respondents identified only positive effects, and the negative effects were difficult to find and exemplify. *Knowing the target audience and understanding their needs* were among the main positive effects mentioned. Another positive effect mentioned refers to *consolidating the public, customer loyalty* due to the efficient use of empathy and in the right direction. *Communication in difficult situations*, maybe even crisis situations was mentioned as a context in which empathy acts towards the success of a PR person ("this aspect can form the ability to adapt more easily to people or situations and manage them more effectively"). Among the few negative effects mentioned, more correctly said disadvantages was the intervention of *subjectivity* that can negatively influence a PR advisor ("it is difficult to be 100% objective", "at the CSR level, budgets are managed and the company's objectives are already involved there, and empathy is not necessarily the main ally"). Another negative side of empathy might be about "the customer-supplier relationship - the moment you empathize too much with the customer you put yourself on a secondary level and hurt yourself".

Going in a side direction, respondents mostly identified benefits of using empathy within companies or in relationships with customers. Among the answers we mention that empathy "helps understand the people with whom the specialist works, to a deeper understanding of the people he advises, with whom he communicates and for whom he communicates to the target audience", "the PR counselor, through empathy, will be able to understand much better the personality of the individual he advises and he will identify those promotion strategies that are most suitable for that client", "empathy can help to discover the dissatisfaction within the company". Moreover, the relationship with the people in the same field of activity was mentioned as one of the most important effects of empathy, going as far as the selection of people working with certain projects.

Discussing with the teachers about the elements that have an impact on their work and on their success, *documentation* and *theoretical knowledge* gained are the most important factors identified by all respondents. The central element that was offered by all PR specialists, being put in the first place was the experience. Among the answers are: "in any project I get involved, I start to see if I have ever encountered a similar situation", "I rely on my intuition and experience in the field of psychology". The theoretical side came second in the statements made by the specialists, saying that "the second step is documentation on the field", "constant learning is very important", "the theory is very good to create limits. There is no limitless creativity and you cannot create anything if there are no limits of any kind - a designer needs limits maybe physical, that he can only work in A4 or maybe industry limits, that he can only work with certain colors that are specific to that industry", "the theory is exactly what it does, it gives you the limits and the playground and that is exactly what I find very valuable that the theory tells you in which box to sit and the creativity comes from how you get out of that box without actually leaving the box".

The last topic discussed with the PR specialists was adaptation to crisis situations such as the one generated by COVID-19. The ways in which these specialists manage to adapt to the crisis of this period are diverse, but it is clear, as they also state that "the situation of advertising and PR is quite bad, in the beginning all clients have gave up or paused", "the COVID-19 crisis turned upside down all the communication strategies created for the customers at the beginning of the year". Among the answers that contain solutions are the following: "I try my best to adapt the solutions offered to my customers to the current situation and the way the paradigm of communication and the economic situation of crisis has changed", "before the crisis, the solutions offered by me focused on promoting the image of the companies I work with for commercial purposes. Now I focus much more on activities aimed at creating a strong link between companies and the communities they address, on returning to the basic principles that govern the activity of those companies".

Both in the group interview and in the individual interviews, the researchers followed the ethics and kept the confidentiality of the personal data provided. Given the crisis caused by COVID-19, we tried to create a favorable and conducive context to obtaining valuable information from respondents. Decisions to conduct individual interviews were made with respondents, where appropriate. The communication medium was proposed by the researcher, but in a few cases another channel was chosen based on the arguments provided by the respondents.

Conclusions

Starting from the idea that emotions, respectively empathy play an important role in the specific activities of the public relations field, this paper aimed to highlight how it could influence PR work and what are some of the techniques that require empathy used by PR specialists. At the same time, this paper aimed to observe reactions, but also different points of view of future PR specialists on this topic, but especially the vision of experts on the elements that underlie success in this field.

The present empirical research attempted to identify those elements regarding empathy in the field of public relations and perceptions of it. The approach focused on relatively different samples, on the one hand future communication and public relations specialists, on the other hand teachers and specialists in this field.

Thus, we chose to approach a literature that lays the foundations of the main concepts debated in this paper, namely *public relations*, *communication*, *emotional intelligence*, *emotion*, and *empathy*. Following this process, we extracted some key ideas, such as: specific public relations activities are based on constant communication with various audiences; interpersonal and non-verbal communication are essential to be considered and developed in this area; emotional intelligence encompasses a number of elements, and empathy is one of the most remarkable and has the most implications in public relations work; empathy has a number of limitations and side effects; attracting the desired target audience, creating a brand community and effective communication in crisis situations are based on a high level of empathy.

The main negative effect identified is the high degree of subjectivity that empathy brings in the daily activity of practitioners. Specifically, when making decisions, it is possible for empathy to intervene either in the company's objectives or in the moral or ethical regulation. Other issues mentioned here refer to resource consumption in an inefficient way when empathy intervenes in a repetitive and routine process, seen as a tool that could do more harm than good.

Empathy favors the communication between a PR advisor and his or hers public because it helps the PR advisor better understand the target audience. More precisely, he understands what the problems they face are, what their needs are, but especially what the emotional basis on which the message must be built is, or even the entire strategy. At the same time, empathy is what helps the public understand various aspects of the brand, such as the difficult situations they face.

It was important to address the issue we face during these past months, so the paper was able to answer the question of *how empathy is used in crisis communication*. Maintaining a stable emotional state and creating a plan to adapt to market requirements were among the main elements mentioned. Empathy is used to a large extent in crisis situations, being necessary both to understand the public and for the public to resonate with the brand and the changes it must go through.

The last research question aimed to see how the communication channel influence the perception and transmission of emotions between a PR advisor and his or hers public. As expected, a communication channel has its advantages and disadvantages. However, when we talk about the transmission and reception of emotions, communication channels that do not allow the use of nonverbal communication, such as the use of text messages, negatively influence the emotional dimension. The interpretation of any written message depends on various factors such as a person's expectations, the given context and the relationship between sender and receiver. In other words, creating a written message requires much more effort to try to convey emotion, respectively to show empathy, than if this process happened through a channel that allows the visualization of nonverbal cues.

Beyond what we set out to research in this paper, we found other information valuable to mention. Drawing a parallel with the theory, there is an interesting idea of how people tend to empathize more or less. The studied literature claims that people empathize more with situations little known to them, which they did not go through. The discrepancy comes in the answers provided by the focus group respondents who unanimously mentioned that they offer more empathy to people who go through situations known to them, through which they either went through or knew the details of the process. At the same time, there is a slight differentiation in the strategic approach between PR specialists who have completed strictly studies in the field, compared to those who have a complementary university past. Talking about law studies before those of Public Relations, the vision on the way in which the process of knowing the target group and managing crisis situations is carried out is very much based on clear and logical reasoning. Whereas in the case of people who have only studies in the field, the applicability of these actions is more transposed in intuition and creativity. Following the results of the individual interviews, the interviewees whose basic profession is teaching in the field of Public Relations place the theoretical part and the documentation highest, when it comes to the success of their work. On the other hand, the interviewees who have PR work as their basic profession stated that the experience and skills acquired take precedence in their work. A number of limitations of this study need to be addressed, the most evident being related to the small and unrepresentative sample, which results in the information collected that cannot be generalized. Even if one considers that these conclusions are valuable to the Public Relations work, we cannot generalize them on a large scale of the population. Also, the participants in the focus group knew each other, being even colleagues, and the answers were either influenced into some desirable ones, or the opinions coincided a lot due to common experiences.

Other limitations of the research refer to the use of online platforms for the application of elite individual semi-structured interviews. The way in which the semi-structured interview guide was initially conceived for this technique was very suitable for face-to-face meetings, addressing a series of topics, without setting standard questions for all respondents. Because respondents saw all the questions at once, the answers felt to be desirable. At the same time, asking additional questions or resuming contact to receive additional answers made the whole process much more difficult, and the results were not exactly what was expected.

Future research of this type requires further study, and it is recommended that researchers wishing to address this issue choose a larger sample of people. Moreover, the respondents should be very well chosen both from a socio-demographic point of view, but also from the point of view of openness to the subject, being necessary for them to be available and interested to the studied subject. Probably a third method of quantitative research, such as the sociological survey with the questionnaire tool, would be very helpful in balancing the results and building a better picture of the problem treated.

Practical implications: A good practices guide

Given the specificity of this paper and even the degree of uniqueness brought through the angle of approach, different from some of the research dealing with adjacent topics, we considered it appropriate to try to create kind of a *practical guide for good practices*. This section intends to offer a series of guidelines, or recommendations to follow in terms of involving empathy in the activities specific to the field studied in this paper. These are based both on the literature mentioned in the first chapter of the paper and on the results obtained from the practical part of the study.

The theory we discussed in this paper tells us that active listening is a key starting point for effective communication with the interlocutor. In the case of communication between a PR specialist and his audiences, this process facilitates the knowledge of the latter. Specifically, by appealing to empathy, an entity that wants to address an unknown audience should know the needs they have, the frustrations and emotions they experience. Thus, the strategy to be created will be based on specific information, and the materials created will reach the desired audience more easily, being probably assimilated in the intended way. This listening process can be translated into various methods of sociological research, from participatory observation to sociological surveys with representative samples. Once this process is completed, the attempt to decode and understand how this information can be used is the next step recommended, following the analysis of the qualitative data obtained. More precisely, it is desirable that the identification of the emotions to be translated into solutions that the PR person can implement, to create a connection between the entity or brand he represents and his target.

The world and the various contexts in which a PR person is required to work are constantly changing, and with them, people in turn. Therefore, constant adaptation is a process that involves time and resources. Documentation from specialized sources helps both to improve various operations, but also to avoid capping and stagnating creative diversity. Critical and creative thinking must be adapted to the demands of the market and to the ways of surviving as a brand in a competition that always captures people's attention.

One of the negative effects of empathy that identified in this paper refers to the high level of subjectivity it can bring in the Public Relations work. Although the benefits of empathy are numerous, this disadvantage can have repercussions on the goals set by the company. The financial plan is one of the levels that can suffer from deep involvement. Setting certain limits when making decisions is a beneficial option to consider.

The PR person should make a clear distinction between his own experiences and those of others when he wants to analyze a specific target group. Attributing or connecting the experiences with those of the studied group is a common mistake that can negatively influence the research results. We advise people working in this field to ignore what they think about a situation and to believe what people say. More correctly, what people transmit, nonverbal communication being valuable in the process of empathy and knowledge. It is very rare to guess what people need, without being asking and listening to. The contexts themselves may be similar, but the elements that compose them may be the details that make the difference.

This chapter concludes by saying that Emotional Intelligence and learning to recognize and use emotions is an asset. PR practitioners could use it to achieve the goals more easily. At the same time, attention to the effects that empathy has is essential to be able to adapt its use in various contexts. Finally, managing emotions is a difficult process, but one that can be educated. There are many cases in which spontaneous decisions were made based on intuition, which in turn is based on experience, and all this is based on the ability to adapt and manage emotional reactions to the given context.

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Academic perspectives about plagiarism. Methods to avoid academic misconduct, causes, and consequences

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ABSTRACT
This research refers to the phenomenon of plagiarism among undergraduate and postgraduate students. The main purpose of the study is to discover all plagiarism's causes and methods to avoid academic misconduct. The experiment is based on a sociological survey that involves obtaining information from a large group of people from different environments (different universities and different cities from Romania). Data was gathered via a questionnaire filled in by N=77 subjects. There were also two types of interviews used. The first one gathered a group of 8 individuals who are interviewed separately for combating social desirability bias. The second interview survey is ideally suited for individual/ personal data collection. The participant is a specialist having knowledge about the university field. The collected data indicates that a considerable number of students commit the act of plagiarism, being aware that it is a fraudulent activity. Due to the negligence, indolence, or the lack of time, they mostly use online materials instead of books or scientific papers, without respecting authorship. On the other hand, the sanctions regarding plagiarism and collusion are relevant not only for the respect of copyright but also for the educational development of students. As a solution against academic misconduct, the written tasks must be checked regularly, and the teachers can provide safe sources of information.

Keywords: plagiarism, information sources, fraud, scientific article, students.

Introduction

Plagiarism is a global phenomenon that affects not only the academic field, but society in general. *"Plagiarism must be analyzed in the context of its penetration into the use of people who, at different times in their lives, are actors in carrying out intellectual work"* (Isoc, 2012, p. 8). This attitude can be found in a persuasive way in all environments, but especially in the academia, and the consequence is that *"certain people understood to capitalize in personal interest the favored access they had to limited bibliographic sources"* (Isoc, 2012, p. 9).

This rationale undergirds the present study. Starting from **RQ1: What is the students' perspective of plagiarism and why do they practice plagiarism?**, we aimed to find out how many of them have knowledge of what *plagiarism* means, how many have ever resorted to this fact – aware or not that they are committing an act of fraud –, the reasons why plagiarism has been reached, and last but not least, to identify methods of combatting plagiarism, based on students' experience.

Using the survey method (via an online questionnaire as a data recording tool) and the structured interview method (with open-ended questions), applied to an undefined sample of students (more precisely, our study was addressed to all those who meet the condition of pursuing a higher education cycle, not limiting ourselves only to a certain category of students), we were able to see, from a multitude of opinions, how students see plagiarism.

Plagiarism: Theoretical considerations

According to the National Council for Ethics of Scientific Research, Technological Development, and Innovation (2017), plagiarism is defined as *"the taking over by an author of some elements from the work of intellectual creation of another author and their presentation in the public space as components of an own work. Plagiarism is the result of the act of plagiarism and refers to the work generated by the illegitimate takeover, intentional or not, from a deontological point of view"* (p. 3).

Isoc (2012) argued that *"plagiarism includes both theft or misappropriation of intellectual property and unassigned consistent copying from the text of another's author work"* (p. 36). He also makes a distinction between the two, saying that: *"Theft or illegal misappropriation of intellectual property includes the unauthorized use of new ideas obtained through the effects of privileged access communication"*, while, by consistent, unassigned copying from the text of another's work *"is meant the taking word by word or almost, of sentences and/ or paragraphs with which one tries by material means to mislead the ordinary reader as to the author's contribution"* (p. 37).

ANOSR (the National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania) also had a representative perspective in this regard, stressing that plagiarism and self-plagiarism are defined as taking information without mentioning the source/ author and exposing them in a written work or oral communication. In addition to the written or oral format in which this information may appear, there is also the electronic format. Texts, expressions, ideas, demonstrations, data, hypotheses, theories, results, scientific methods etc. can all be considered plagiarized when taken from other people or from other sources without specifying so.

ANOSR (2016) defined plagiarism as *"the presentation in a written work or oral communication, including in electronic format, of texts, expressions, ideas, demonstrations, data, hypotheses, theories, results or scientific methods extracted from written works,* *including in electronic format, of other authors, without mentioning this and without referring to the original sources"* and self-plagiarism as *"the presentation in a written work or oral communication, including in electronic format, of texts, expressions, demonstrations, data, hypotheses, theories, results or scientific methods extracted from written works, including in electronic format, by the same or the same authors, without mentioning this and without referring to the original sources"* (p.3).

On the other hand, discussing a different study on the situation of plagiarism in across Europe, ANOSR (2016) argued that *"the teaching methods used in our country generally discourage teamwork, which leads to a predominantly individual way of working. Therefore, a situation is practically created in which plagiarism of some works is much easier"* (p. 9). Also, the statistics reached after the administration of the questionnaires indicate the following results: *"51% of students and 21% of teachers surveyed admit that they intentionally plagiarized"*, while *"60% of students and 40% of teachers do not know exactly what are the methods of prevention and detection in the case of plagiarism"* (p. 9). Another thing worth mentioning here is the fact that the study cited by ANOSR revealed that the Romanian university system does not have fully specialized anti-plagiarism software, because *"most of the Romanian universities use free licensed anti-plagiarism software programs, in the context in which they are not prepared to access the specialized Romanian literature or from certain international databases"* (p. 10).

Another study conducted by Glendinning (2014), aiming to find out why students cheat and how they approach plagiarism, employed a mixed-methods approach across 27 EU countries. It carried out online questionnaires, focus groups with students, interviews, addressed both students (bachelor, master, doctorate levels) and EU academics. 5000 responses were obtained in this research, which showed that *"in each country interviewed, there are educational institutions without coherent strategies or policies implemented to deal with plagiarism"* (p. 8).

On the other hand, in addition to plagiarism itself, we also aimed to find methods of combating or how plagiarism is punished today in the academia. According to the Center for Research in Applied Ethics of the University of Bucharest (2014), *"depending on its intent and nature, plagiarism is punished"*.

When plagiarism involves money, the sanctions applied to the university teachers consist of: *"written warning; reduction of the basic salary (preceded by a discussion at the management of the university or faculty); temporary suspension from a management position; dismissal from a management position; disciplinary termination of the employment contract"* (Center for Research in Applied Ethics, 2014, p. 20), sanctions applied in accordance with the National Education Law no. 1/ 2011 (art. 318). As most universities have zero tolerance for plagiarism, one is usually either expelled or removed from that course. Punishments for students (bachelor, master, doctorate levels) are: "written warning; expulsion; other sanctions provided in the University Book", according to the same document. It is also stated that *"the type of sanction is established by the Ethics Commission and applied by the Rector or Dean within 30 days. Undoubted cases of total plagiarism will be sanctioned with the termination of the employment contract or expulsion. In general, the sanctions will be nuanced depending on the circumstances of the case"* (p. 20).

In the guide for identifying plagiarism elaborated by the National Council for Ethics in Scientific Research (2017), penalties and mechanisms to combat plagiarism are presented in a stricter way. Four different degrees of severity are discussed: *"the extension of the illegitimate takeovers, their location in the architecture of the work, the really* *voluntary or involuntary character of the plagiarism acts and the repeatability of the fraudulent acts of the author in different works*" (p. 6). However, they also identify a fifth degree, namely advantages obtained, undeservedly, by the author as a result of plagiarism. It is also mentioned that "*the severity of plagiarism depending on the size of the intellectual fraud is variably sanctioned from society to society, from field to field*" (p. 8).

Specifically, each country/ field has its own sanctions when it comes to plagiarism and depends on the extent to which the information has been taken, consciously or not, by another author. More specifically, it depends on the seriousness of the fact in which the act of plagiarism was carried out. In the guide published by the University of Bucharest (2014), we identify a number of methods combating plagiarism. Thus, to avoid plagiarism you have to think with your own head and "*don't think about how to take other people's ideas*". You can use other people's ideas "*only to inspire you or check your ideas*" to "*complete summaries, mentioning quotations and distinguishing them from their own summarizing thoughts*". We must use quotation marks "*to reference others' ideas and texts*" (p. 20); and last but not least, let us never forget to thank those who have helped us through referencing their work.

Coman (2011) argued that most studies on this subject have been carried out among students as they are the most vulnerable when it comes to plagiarism. He highlighted the distinction between minor and major courts of manifestation of plagiarism. Minor courts or *small plagiarism* refer to student behavior (Bachelor's and master's degree) and this minor dimension comes from three elements: "***The stakes of plagiarism****: it is the promotion of a discipline, when the transferable credit system and the student-friendly regulation offer numerous opportunities to repair failure; therefore, even without plagiarism, students could remedy the unpromoted exam/ laboratory at first instance without insurmountable difficulties;* ***Consciousness of plagiarism****: for students at these cycles, the element of fraud does not appear clearly: many believe that the purpose of student activity is the accumulation of knowledge and the proof of possession of this baggage; not to assign the source of this knowledge and/or to take over 'copy-paste' does not appear as a serious violation of rules, but only as a form of learning activity;* ***Guilt in relation to a non-ethical behavior*** *(labelled by 'others' as): an old and strong university tradition creates and maintains a student counter-culture, in which "tricking" the cheating of the authorities acts as an act of bravery, student achievement and prestige in the reference community*" (Coman, 2011). The major courts refer to faculty and doctoral students. Here, the stakes of plagiarism relate to "*obtaining academic distinctions*".

The existence of plagiarism means that "*those in teaching or doctoral positions know very well that they take the work of others (without mentioning the sources) and do so with skill, i.e., taking certain precautions to mask fraud*" and, in what concerns guilt, it does not value a culture of fraud through enabling infringements of ethical norms. (Coman, 2011).

Isoc (2012) elaborated on his view of plagiarism, listing smaller and more severe forms: from small adventures such as whispering an answer to a classmate, copying in an exam, on a thesis, to more severe aspects such as stealing notes, all of which make plagiarism an act of fraud, a law violation. However, "*in the absence of a minimal unitary framework and a firm attitude towards the phenomenon of plagiarism, the explosion of the Internet affects and accentuates all its manifestations*" (p. 14).

Therefore, "*plagiarism is an abnormal situation of intellectual work*" (Isoc, 2012, p. 190). However, avoiding it can be easily achieved by engaging in an authentic process of intellectual creation, which means working according to one's own way of thinking, because of their natural qualities, education, and culture. It is most natural to consult references, as it is to cite these works and credit their authors. The set of references cited includes works from which the author explicitly takes ideas and/ or pieces of creation for the purpose of analyzing them, criticizing them, completing them, but never for the purpose of assuming credit for their authorship.

So, as we have seen in the previous paragraphs, plagiarism is today considered to be not only an act that violates ethical norms, but above all, it is considered a fraudulent act that is punished by law. These laws are not only enforced in universities. The anti-plagiarism laws are valid in all areas and are applied to those who, consciously or not, at some point engage in acts of plagiarism.

Methodology

This study aimed to find out **RQ1: What is the students' perspective on plagiarism and what are the reasons for practicing it?** Based on the literature consulted, we have formulated elaborated a research design to gather relevant data. The population included in this research is made of university students in Romania. A survey was designed with a set of relevant questions about the topic, conducted on Google Forms, and applied to a non-randomized sample of convenience, through participants' self-selection after distributing a call for participation on Facebook.

The questionnaire was administered during November-December 2019, and N=74 valid responses were collected of the 77 responses. 62.3% of participants were female, 35.1% were male, and 2.6% other genders. The instrument included 25 questions (factual, opinion, measurement of values, motivation, closed and open questions). The interview guides had 8 questions, respectively 9. The interviews were conducted individually, with a focus on the non-verbal side of the discussion. For the first interview, we chose a sample of 8 people that we interviewed for an average of 10-15 minutes. For the second interview, we selected a specialist, precisely to dive even deeper into this phenomenon.

Participants

The subjects of this study were students, mostly from Babeş-Bolyai University, but also from different universities in Romania, so 58 respondents study in Cluj-Napoca, and 18 of them study in: Brașov, Bucharest, Arad, Timişoara, and Iaşi. At the bachelor's level, we found that there are 94.8% of those who responded, 3.9% are master's students, and only 1 is a doctoral student. 72.7% of them are students in the first year, 22.1% in second year, 3.9% being third year, and only 1 respondent is a student in sixth year. In terms of study programs, respondents cover a wide range of fields: Communication and PR, Journalism, Medicine and Pharmacy, Mathematics and Applied Informatics, Law, Psychology, Education Sciences, Agri-Food and Environmental Economics, Applied Modern Languages, Philology, History, Acting.

Results

Survey

The questionnaire started with a question about time allocated for studying: 53.2% of respondents study for about 1-2 hours per day, 31.2% between 2-4 hour per day, 9.1% study for about 5 hours, and 6.5% allocate under an hour for study. To the question about homework or projects assigned as part of academic work, 70.1% had a positive answer, 27.3% a negative one, and only 2.6% said that they occasionally have projects to do.

In terms of looking for online sources to write an essay assigned as coursework, nearly all students (97.4%) declared doing so. Asked to elaborate on sources, many access Wikipedia (44.6%), 24.3% the first site coming up on a search due to commodity or lack of interest in the subject, and other respondents named Google Scholar, Scribd etc.

In terms of making sure that information consulted is correct, 40.3% stated being certain about the correctness of the information, 57.1% said that they are less sure, and only 2.6% said that they are not so sure. About consulting books in parallel, 48.1% said yes, 36.4% said they occasionally consult books or specialized articles, and 15.6% stated a definite no. Further, being asked if they usually mention sources consulted for assignments, 71.4% of students confirmed doing so, 23.4% only occasionally, and a minority of 5.2% declared not practicing source referencing.

In terms of perspectives on plagiarism, 26% deemed it immoral, 40.3% stated it was a fraudulent act, 13% said it was an irrelevant act, and 20,8% of them had not formed an opinion about plagiarism. Asked if ever having drafted an essay with information from different sources that were unnamed without thinking of it as a fraudulent act, 50.6% of respondents declared not having thought about it, 46.8% responded positively, and only 2.6% did not offer an answer. Inquiring about their perspectives on plagiarism slowing the process of writing a paper, 37.7% of respondents responded negatively, 24.7% positively, and 26% of respondents had never thought about it.

As about students' preferences, 68.8% would like to take some time to find quality information, and only 31.2% would prefer quick information over quality content. In terms of being made aware that they wrote information that did not belong to them, 33.8% of students answered positively, and 63.6% quite the opposite. The former were asked about measures taken in their case, and over half (55.3%) said nothing happened to them, and the others got away with a warning.

Further, the participants were prompted to write their thoughts about the importance of sanctions against plagiarism; some perspectives deem penalties important for people to show their true qualities in assignments, others support application of sanctions for stopping this phenomenon. In terms of reactions to a potential expulsion due to plagiarism, 39% of respondents said they would apologize, 15.6% would accept the situation, most (41.6%) would be angry, and 3.9% of respondents would be indifferent.

In terms of reasons why students resort to plagiarism, answers were diverse: some showed ignorance about causes, others mentioned not having enough time to invest in written assignments, and there were also respondents who said they would never steal credits for an idea. On which measures they deem effective in fighting against this phenomenon, nearly 1 in 4 said they would like teachers to offer scientific sources, 10.4% stated teachers should be responsible for checking papers, and most (64.9%) selected both. As for what students find interesting to read, 51.9% of respondents prefer reading an original paper, 41.6% wanted to read a paper based on scientific sources, and only 5.2% of respondents preferred reading an interesting paper found online, from non-scientific sources.

Specialist interviews

An academic's perspective was necessary to complement the perspectives collected from the survey. At the first question about dealing with the phenomenon of plagiarism, we were able to discover, following his answer, that the academic had many such situations in their profession, which were remedied according to the gravity of the deed. The respondent claimed that most of the time the plagiarism phenomenon occurred among first-year students due to unawareness and misunderstanding of this concept, but it is not excluded to intervene in final-year students, even during undergraduate work.

The second question concerns the problems they encountered in trying to combat plagiarism. The responded pointed out that in most of papers, the biggest problems appear in terms of works cited, as students do not know very well how to write a bibliography and how to cite correctly. It has been observed that many students do not know what intellectual theft actually represents and what the consequences of this act are. Therefore, the interviewee believes that it is important to inform students from the beginning what plagiarism is, how it manifests, and how it can be avoided.

As for method against plagiarism, the respondent deemed that once explained how any work should look, be it a thesis or a simple essay, plagiarism should be considerably reduced. Secondly, the respondent argued that it is important for the coordinating faculty to guide students to valid sources, from which they can document their literature review. It also has a lot to do with the institution, as it should provide students with platforms that allow them to access various articles or books. Of course, there are also situations of ignorance, due to omissions in the citation, non-compliance with a postponement, inattention, or even the intention to "deceive the system". All this can be reduced if reference works are brought, in order to be exposed to situations and mechanisms through which information is extracted from books, specialized articles, be they printed or electronic, and further used in their own work.

According to the academic interviewed, plagiarism is a topical issue, precisely because we live in a time in which we can access almost any information we want, in a very short time. It is very difficult to write something that has not been written before, which makes it difficult for students to write original work. Therefore, the authenticity comes precisely from bringing a different personal perspective on the chosen subject.

To the question of whether they acted against plagiarism from the beginning, the answer was a positive one. The interviewee said that, from the very beginning, they explained to the students that no plagiarism situation will be accepted, which is also impossible due to the verification systems of the works.

The reasons why students resort to plagiarism are typical. There are several types of plagiarism, but from the experience of the specialist, only ignorance was attributed as a cause. Such plagiarism can be easily remedied by talking to students and explaining mistakes about information taken from other sources. There are other reasons such as: convenience, taking over ineligible sources, lack of interest in the subject.

The answer to the question about how students are seen after committing plagiarism was worthy of a professional in the field. The interviewee said students were never assigned a certain *label* because it was never the case, but that it is important for students to fully understand the concept in order to avoid it. Thus, the student who inadvertently omits certain aspects that lead to plagiarism is not blamed. However, the most important thing is to know how to communicate with students so that they understand the concept of plagiarism so as not to resort to it. What the respondent would communicate to students from the beginning would be that an original work, in which to fully express your subjectivity on a chosen subject, is much more valuable than one in which you take the ideas of an author, rewriting them in another form.

Regarding sanctions applied to students who plagiarized, the respondent confessed not having applied any, because it was not the case. The works, once passed through the plagiarism filter, could not be contested by students, and if the percentage exceeded the admitted indications of similarity, the work was rejected, and would be rewritten by the student. The works with a high percentage of plagiarism were brought to the students' attention to be able to remedy the situation, not to be punished for their lack of attention or ignorance. The interviewee never applied a punishment for situations in which a student omitted certain citations, and if the situation persisted, they would probably have resorted to other sanctions allowed by the faculty regulations.

Discussions and conclusion

What is plagiarism? How does it manifest? Why do students practice it? How can academics combat this phenomenon? Due to research, we were able to answer all these questions and provide more information on this phenomenon. The results showed that most students resort to plagiarism even though they are aware that it is an act of fraud. This often happens due to reasons such as convenience, lack of time, lack of interest in an imposed topic or even the deadlines mentioned. The majority, respectively 57.1%, are not completely sure of the correctness of the information taken from certain sources they access, but nevertheless resort to this act of plagiarism, bearing the consequences, which in the case of the answers given by them, are not so dramatic.

It was also observed that a rather significant percentage, 24.3% (the highest being 44.6% who access Wikipedia, and the remaining very small percentages accessing other sites) of them access the first site that appears at Google searches, as a result the interest of some to carry out the works is very low, signaling a major problem. On the other hand, young students also consider the sanctions on the act of plagiarism to be very important to combat this phenomenon and to encourage the development of the capacity to study more intensively. Young people claim that the severity of sanctions is necessary in order not to stimulate this phenomenon.

Among the limitations of this research stands, first of all, the small and unrepresentative sample that could not contain a considerable variety of answers. Errors were also encountered in terms of students' answers to open-ended questions, some of which were not taken seriously. Social desirability was again an error-generating factor as some respondents decided to give answers that were not in line with reality. We were able to gather a variety of answers as we tried to include students from different parts of the country and find their opinions concluding in general. In the future, we recommend researchers who will study this phenomenon to apply other research methods to obtain a more complex accumulation of information and to include a larger sample, so that the results are as representative and rich as possible.

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Burnout among Romanian faculty: Myth or reality?

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ABSTRACT
The paper aims to determine whether university professors suffer from burnout and how that influences their work. The research questions and research hypotheses are leading the whole methodological stage into finding out how the dimensions of burnout influence performance at work, but also how important the job resources and demands are in the daily teaching work. To this end, Maslach Burnout Inventory (Core Survey), Goodman and Svyantek's Performance Scale, and a modified version of The Job Demands-Resources Questionnaire were applied to a sample of 50 respondents consisting of university teaching staff who teach at one of the largest universities in Romania. To gather in-depth information on how both teachers and the university administration relate to burnout, the interview method was used. The results are expected to be similar to those of the research addressing burnout, conducted in other countries.

Keywords: burnout, performance, faculty, job demands, job resources.

Introduction
Being a teacher is one of the most beautiful and noble professions. Unfortunately, the huge efforts they make end up negatively affecting them. The most common disorder of recent decades among individuals who have many social interactions is burnout. Teachers, perhaps more than any other category of individuals, encounter hundreds or even thousands of different individuals daily. Each of these individuals comes with a new requirement, a new story, a new way of being, and the teacher must calibrate his whole being according to these criteria, to communicate effectively and to fulfill their purpose, to build mentalities, to train people. This continuous process is, unfortunately, extremely tiring, quickly depleting the resources available to the teacher. If we can consider the fact that in addition to the interaction and teaching part, the teacher must also perform administrative, bureaucratic duties, and maintain a personal life, we can clearly see that this social category, teachers, can easily fall into the category risk for burnout.

This research looks at some general issues related to the phenomenon of burnout among university teachers, such as how its two components, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, influence the performance of teachers in the workplace. We aimed to find out what are the reasons that can cause burnout, using the Job Demands-Resources model as a guide. Once we knew the resources that university teachers have, but also the challenges they must face, we wanted to know what their impact is on the two dimensions of burnout. The ways in which burnout among teachers can be reflected at the level of the educational institution, but also what ways to prevent the disorder can be, are answers that specialists *might be able to provide.*

Burnout: Theoretical considerations

The phenomenon of burnout is a rather weak topic in the literature, due to many contrary opinions about what it is. However, the phenomenon has been known since 1974, Freudenberg being the one who conceptualized it, and the one who established its most obvious symptoms, both physically and mentally: frustration, increased irritability, rigidity in daily activities, distrust compared to the role that those around them have on their own career, but also symptoms that resemble those of those suffering from depression.

A definition, or rather an explanation of the term is provided by Lee and Ashforth (1993), who considered it appropriate to associate the term with a state of continued fatigue, a continuing state of doubt about teammates, and how they affect their own work and an obsessive focus on personal success and task completion. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) completed the explanation, stating that burnout is a reaction to stress at work, manifested by physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. Following an analysis of previous research addressing the issue of burnout in academia, Khan, Din, and Anwar (2019) concluded that *"most research analyzed (75%) report three psychological symptoms of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal achievement. Other psychological symptoms include cynicism, exhaustion, reduced professional efficiency, psychological distress and poor mental health".*

Even if so far there is no clear definition of the term, even in terms of the composition of burnout things are not simpler. There are several models that explain the developmental stages as well as the composition of burnout. However, most researchers agree with the classical model of burnout, which presents the phenomenon as having in its composition three major dimensions (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The first dimension of burnout is exhaustion, both physically and mentally and emotionally; followed by depersonalization or cynicism, characterized by adopting a negative, uninteresting, and cynical attitude towards the people with whom the individual concerned works; finally, burnout has the dimension of low personal performance, inefficiency, materialized by lack of productivity, efficiency (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009). The difference between exhaustion and depersonalization is explained by Taylor et al. (2019): *"Emotional exhaustion is the emotional response to stress, causing the individual to take a distance between himself and others, while depersonalization is a strategy to create distance between an individual and others out of the desire to make situations much easier managed".* In connection with depersonalization, Maslach and Leiter (2016) sound the alarm, claiming that there is a high risk that depersonalization becomes even dehumanization over time, the latter having even more serious consequences on the individual. Khan, Din, and Anwar (2019) concluded that burnout can be determined by both work-related factors, but there is also the possibility that it may occur among individuals with certain demographic or attitudinal characteristics.

The situation becomes more complicated if we refer to the demographic, attitudinal, or psychological predispositions of individuals to burnout. In this case, the studies contradict, although they generally agree that factors such as gender, age, seniority, marital status, or position within the organization can provide a profile of the individual prone to burnout. Faisal et al. (2015) tried to determine whether demographic aspects have a contribution to the predisposition to burnout, relating to universities in Pakistan. They measured two dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion and detachment, where a clear difference is observed when adding variables such as seniority, experience, or position in the university, but no differences are observed for variables age or marital status. Thus, at least in the case of universities in Pakistan, higher levels of burnout are presented by young teachers with less years of experience and university positions such as assistant or lecturer (Khan et al., 2015).

However, stress is probably the most important trigger of burnout, leading to decreased motivation and performance in the workplace, eroding relationships with colleagues and poor communication (Newbury-Birch & Kamali, 2001). Indirectly, the organization in which the individual is part suffers, other signs of burnout being the "lack of performance, loss of job satisfaction, low organizational performance and high absenteeism, along with an increased number of employee resignations" (Zaid, 2019). The effects of burnout at the level of the organization are also presented by Perrone, Player, and Youngs (2019) in two general forms: the desire to quit the job or even resignation and low performance in tasks at work. Maslach et al. (2001) note that, in addition to the negative effects on students or the whole group of having a burnout teacher in the classroom, the greatest danger is that their chances of giving up their job or profession teacher in general grow exponentially. Neumann et al. (1990) present a factor that inevitably attracts attention: teachers and students suffering from burnout tarnish the reputation, image of the institution, which can even lead to future students opting for other educational centers. In this extreme case, we notice that burnout can even lead to the bankruptcy of organizations, if it is not prevented and treated in time.

Methodology

This research follows a methodology similar to most studies regarding burnout, using the self-administered questionnaire to measure the variables involved. Moreover, to create a more complex picture of the phenomenon, the specialized interview will aim at completing the information obtained through the sociological survey.

To gather information in a structured way, the study will answer research hypotheses and questions, as follows:

RQ1: What are the main resources available to faculty in Romanian universities?

RQ2: What are the main challenges/ difficulties faced by them?

RQ3: What can be the long-term negative effects that the higher education institution could face if it does not take measures to prevent burnout among teachers?

H1: There is a negative and significant impact of the emotional burnout dimension on the performance of faculty.

H2: There is a negative and significant impact of the dimension of depersonalization of burnout on the performance of faculty.

H3: Workplace resources are negatively associated with both dimensions of burnout.

H4: Demands at work are positively associated with both dimensions of burnout.

The first method employed in gathering data, both surface and in-depth, is the sociological survey, using the questionnaire, which was distributed online. The questionnaire consists of four sections: the first section covers socio-demographic information such as gender, age, marital status, university position, teaching experience, or number of hours worked per week, all of which are important variables, considered factors with a large influence on burnout and performance in previous research. The following sections directly address the phenomena studied: section 2 addresses self-perceived workplace performance, measured by Goodman & Svyantek's Performance

Scale (1999), section 3 addresses the two central dimensions of burnout (exhaustion and depersonalization), measured by Maslach Burnout Inventory – Core Burnout (MBI-CB) (1996), and the last section aims to find out what resources and demands respondents face on a daily basis at work, using a modified version of the Job Demands-Resources Questionnaire (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

The second research method employed in the data collection process is the specialized interview, using a semi-structured interview guide. This facilitates access to explanations on certain phenomena that cannot be obtained through the sociological survey, information that can explain certain correlations or factual situations. Moreover, the capacity of expertise and experience in the field of the interviewees may provide information that is not found in the literature already consulted.

Participants

A number of N=50 faculty from a Romanian university answered the self-administrated questionnaire. The gender distribution of the study participants is 68% men and 32% women. The age of the respondents is between 28 and 60 years old, with an average of 43.50 for men (s.d. = 6.6) and an average of 37.13 for women (s.d. = 7.9). Of these, most are married (64%), with unmarried and unmarried people accounting for 22%. Most of the respondents occupy quite high positions, most of them being lecturers (n=20, 40%), associate professors (n=13, 26%) or professors (n=8, 16%). In the case of the sample of this study, the average in terms of experience in the university environment is 14.9 years (s.d. = 7.43), the lowest experience being 2 years, and the longest-lived 30 years. The number of hours worked per week varies from 6 (n=1) to a maximum of 70 (n=2), the average weekly hours being 37.88 (s.d. = 15.49).

Results

Reliability of scales

Data was analyzed using SPSS software. As can be seen in *Table 1*, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for burnout is .901 (m = 10.06, sd = 9.509), and for performance .851 (m = 53.30, sd = 5.984). These values are high enough to guarantee the reliability of the data collection tool.

Table 1: Reliability of scales

Dimensions	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Burnout	9	.901
Burnout: Emotional exhaustion	4	.878
Burnout: Cynicism	5	.809
Performance	16	.851

Burnout and job performance

Using the scoring and interpretation of results proposed by Schaufeli et al. (1996), we can say that in the case of the respondents of the present study, the level of emotional exhaustion is small (m = 6.88, sd = 5.99), this result showing that in general the phenomenon is well controlled by the university administration and teachers themselves. In the case of the depersonalization dimension, the level of burnout is also low (m = 3.18, s.d. = 4.28), thus demonstrating that in appearance the teachers from the university environment are quite enthusiastic and involved in the work they do every day.

Table 2: Results for the dimensions of burnout

Burnout dimensions					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional exhaustion	50	.00	28.00	6.88	5.998
Depersonalization	50	.00	17.00	3.18	4.284
Valid N (listwise)	50				

No other notable results were observed related to the correlation of burnout-sociodemographic characteristics, apart from the fact that women suffer from moderate emotional exhaustion (mean = 8.4, sd = 6.83) and the fact that there is a significant and positive relationship between number of hours worked per week and depersonalization (df = 49, r = .339, $p < .05$).

To test the validity of the hypotheses: H1 and H2, simple linear regression was used to determine whether the two dimensions of burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, can predict a significant percentage of teachers' performance decline in the university environment workplace.

Table 3: Linear regression summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	djusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.046a	.002	-.040	6.10325
a. Predictors: (Constant), Depersonalization/ cynicism, Emotional exhaustion				

R^2 has a value of .002, which means that apparently the performance is not explained by any of the dimensions of the burnout.

Table 4: ANOVA analysis results

ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.765	2	1.883	.051	.951b
	Residual	1750.735	47	37.250		
	Total	1754.500	49			
a. Dependent Variable: Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Depersonalization/ cynicism, Emotional exhaustion						

Moreover, the ANOVA analysis shows that the degree of significance does not fall within the accepted values (Sig. = .951, $p > .05$), so that the regression model is not significant.

Table 5: Linear regression results

Coefficientsa						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	53.172	1.323		40.184	.000
	Emotional exhaustion	.058	.204	.058	.285	.777

	Depersonalization/ cynicism	-.086	.286	-.061	-.300	.765
a. Dependent Variable: Performance						

Both in the case of emotional exhaustion and in the case of depersonalization, p> .05 (exhaustion, sig = .777, depersonalization, sig = .765), thus not being significant. Beta also has low values, .058 (emotional exhaustion) and -.086 (depersonalization). These results are explained by the small sample on which the analysis was performed. Significance levels in such analyzes are more likely to be identified in the case of large samples, but in the present research, this is not possible.

Next, to find out if there is still a correlation between teachers' performance in the workplace and the size of burnout: emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, the Spearman correlation test was used.

Table 6: Spearman correlation performance – emotional exhaustion

Correlation Performance – Emotional exhaustion				
			Performance	Emotional exhaustion
Spearman's rho	Performance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.051
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.723
		N	50	50
	Emotional exhaustion	Correlation Coefficient	-.051	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.723	.
		N	50	50

The non-parametric Spearman correlation test shows that there is no linear and significant relationship between workplace performance and emotional exhaustion. (r_s (df = 49) = -.051, p> .001).

Analyzing these results, *H1: There is a negative and significant impact of the dimension of emotional burnout on the performance of faculty*, is partially confirmed, emotional exhaustion really having a negative effect on teacher performance from the university environment, but the impact is not significant, which makes the relationship between the two items irrelevant.

The same test was used in the case of the correlation between job performance and depersonalization.

Table 7: Spearman correlation performance - depersonalization

Correlation Performance – Depersonalization				
			Performance	Depersonalization/ Cynicism
Spearman's rho	Performance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.111
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.441
		N	50	50
	Depersonalization/ cynism	Correlation Coefficient	-.111	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.441	.
		N	50	50

The non-parametric Spearman correlation test shows that there is no linear and significant relationship between the workplace performance of university teachers and depersonalization. (rs (df=49)= -.111, *p*>.001).

In this situation, the results show that *H2: There is a negative and significant impact of the dimension of depersonalization of burnout on the performance of faculty* is also only partially validated, the size of burnout depersonalization dimension really influencing the performance of teachers in the university environment, but in an insignificant contribution, which makes the relationship between the two items irrelevant.

Analyzing both the answers offered to the open-ended questions and the options chosen from the lists of resources and demands at work, we can provide the answer to the two research questions:

RQ1: What are the main resources available to faculty in Romanian universities? According to the answers of the teachers participating in the study, the biggest and most important resources they have at work, resources that motivate them to work despite the impediments are: positive interaction with students and some of their colleagues (n = 49, m = .98), the support and pride of the family towards the profession they chose (n = 46, m = .92) and last but not least, the pride of being a teacher, the pleasure of teaching and constant learning (n = 46, m = .92).

RQ2: What are the main demands / difficulties faced by teachers in higher education? Teachers in the university environment face the obligation to solve many bureaucratic tasks (n = 33, m = .66), which added to the very high pressure on performance (n = 24, m = .48), subsequently leads to time pressure (n = 31, m = .62), and such a circuit, if not controlled and kept below healthy limits, can lead in time to disorders such as burnout.

To find out whether there is a significant correlation between teachers' performance at work and the size of burnout: emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, the Pearson parametric correlation test was used.

Table 8: Pearson's correlation job resources – burnout dimensions

Correlation Job resources – Burnout dimensions				
		Job resources	Depersonalization/ cynicism	Emotional exhaustion
Job resources	Pearson Correlation	1	-.374*	-.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.008	.609
	N	50	50	50
Depersonalization/ cynicism	Pearson Correlation	-.374**	1	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008		,000
	N	50	50	50
Emotional exhaustion	Pearson Correlation	-.074	.702**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.609	.000	
	N	50	50	50
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient test show that there is a negative and significant linear relationship between workplace resources and depersonalization. (r (df
= 49) = -.374, p <.01). This information shows that as the number of resources in the workplace increases, the depersonalization or cynicism of teachers decreases. On the other hand, Pearson's test results show that in the case of the relationship between resources and emotional exhaustion, there is no significant linear relationship. (r (df = 49) = -.074, p> .01). These correlations give us information about the nature of the work that

teachers must do on a daily basis. Such tasks are repetitive, cumbersome, and annoying, as are bureaucratic tasks.

Although there is a significant negative linear relationship only in the case of the correlation resources at work-depersonalization, *H3: Resources at work are negatively associated with both dimensions of burnout* is confirmed, because there is indeed, a negative correlation between resources at work and emotional exhaustion, even if it is not significant.

The same Pearson correlation test was used to determine the correlation between job demands and the two dimensions of burnout, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion.

Table 9: Pearson's correlation job demands – burnout dimensions

Correlation Job demands – Burnout dimensions				
		Job demands	Depersonalization / cynicism	Emotional exhaustion
Job demands	Pearson Correlation	1	.391**	.591**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005	.000
	N	50	50	50
Depersonalization/ cynicism	Pearson Correlation	.391**	1	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005		.000
	N	50	50	50
Emotional exhaustion	Pearson Correlation	.591**	.702**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	50	50	50
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)				

The results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient test show that there is a positive and significant linear relationship between the demands teachers face in the workplace both in relation to depersonalization ($r\ (df = 49) = .391$, $p < .01$), and in relative to emotional exhaustion ($r\ (df = 49) = .591$, $p < .01$).

Thus, *H4: Workplace demands/ difficulties are positively associated with both dimensions of burnout* is confirmed. Increasing the difficulties and tasks that the teacher must perform daily will inevitably lead to increased time pressure and stress on them.

Specialized interview

Finally, the information gathered through the interview provides an answer to **RQ3: What can be the long-term negative effects that the higher education institution could face if it does not take measures to prevent burnout among faculty?** Both specialists agreed that burnout has negative effects both at the level of individual performance and at the level of the institution of which the individual is a part. Since burnout affects an individual's work, then its quality decreases. Impaired individual performance implicitly affects the performance of the educational institution that includes teachers who experience burnout, lower quality work leading to many negative effects reflected on the university. Among the most important negative effects, the specialists mentioned first of all the image problems that the institution may have. If teachers no longer have the same quality of teaching process and interaction with students, then the general perception of the entire university decreases, the university being no longer able to attract new teachers or new students. Another aspect that needs attention is the financial one. Everything that means burnout at the teacher's level, whether it is vacation, mistakes at work or even resignation, all those can be translated from the point of view of the university administration through high and very high long-term financial costs. For this reason, the management of the higher education institution should be concerned with the prevention of burnout, rather treating it and its effects.

Conclusions

This paper addressed the issue of burnout among university professors, as it is perceived by them and the university administration, respectively how burnout influences performance in the workplace, and how it is influenced by resources and demands from work. The contribution that the research brings to the literature in the field at the Romanian level is important because burnout is much less studied in this country, especially in other fields besides the medical one.

The results show that professors who have higher positions at the university do not suffer from burnout at a serious level, but in terms of the size of depersonalization, their performance in the workplace is affected. A recommendation for university administrations in this situation would be to put more emphasis on the transparent communication of the decisions taken at the administration level, respectively the involvement of the professors in the decision-making process.

Workplace resources currently exceed the number of challenges at work, which makes the level of stress among teachers quite low. Unfortunately, challenges and demands change extremely quickly, and resources have the disadvantage that they are not so easy to adopt. The administration must work non-stop to provide employees with the best working conditions.

As for the challenges in the workplace that teachers have said they face, they should be seen as warning signs by the university administration. Bureaucracy, a lot of work, time, and performance pressure, these are the challenges with the highest contribution in energy and resource consumption. The predisposition to burnout in this case is high, and the board of directors has the responsibility to come to the aid of its own employees. Measures to prevent burnout among teachers must be perceived by the administration as a moral duty in the first place and as a form of respect for its own employees.

As I mentioned earlier in this paper, in the process of designing the research and information gathering methodology, we encountered several obstacles. Probably the biggest impediment that could not be anticipated is the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the suspension of face-to-face activity at the university. With the relocation of online courses, the workload for teachers has increased, which has subsequently led to less time availability. This lack of time is one of the likely explanations for the very low questionnaire response rate. Burnout or the tendency to burnout is much better observed in large samples, or in the case of this research, the answers are not enough to be able to observe a general tendency or predisposition to burnout.

We believe that burnout research can be constantly improved. In this sense, future research that has as a starting point the results of this work can go in different directions, such as introducing new variables and studying how they interact with burnout, resources and demands in the workplace. Two suitable variable variants would be home-work inference or coping strategies. Applying the questionnaire to a large sample would be another recommendation that would guarantee a better quality of results and could capture a more complex picture of the phenomenon. Moreover, conducting individual interviews with professors or interviews with people on the university's board of directors could provide valuable insight into how burnout is perceived at the individual and administrative levels. A final suggestion for further research is to conduct a comparative study between the different faculties within a university, to see if there are differences in terms of burnout depending on the field of study taught.

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Social media and beauty ideals

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ABSTRACT
Social media is a phenomenon gaining more and more power. As in any cause-and-effect formula, this paper's objective is to determine the effects of the heavy usage of social media teens are consuming. The study at hand aims to exemplify a correlation between social media usage and beauty standards. Building on existing work and studies of authors with the same subject of research, this study comes as an addition to the exemplifying of theories such as the cultivation theory, body dissatisfaction, the hyper-personal model, social comparison, sociocultural factors in the determination of internalizing beauty ideals, social beauty standards and their origins, self-esteem, and body image. In today's context, this study proves to be a recurrent topic of maximum importance due to the psychological effects social media can pose on teens.

According to previous research, they cyborgian look is heavily praised, being only achieved through the likes of using filters, Photoshop and intense alterations to one's look. This paper also touches subjects such as those referring to the internalization of the thin ideal, where Barbie stands as an idol, an image of the perfect sculpted body, also attainable only through cosmetic surgery. The fact that women are being targeted by these social ideals of beauty that are far from natural has been the cause and subject of many works and studies.

The way this study went about gathering useful data was through an online questionnaire. We distributed our questionnaire exclusively on Facebook, respondents being girls between the ages of 13 and 28. The questions aimed to measure values of self-esteem, body satisfaction, social comparison, societal beauty standards, and their internalization. The way the respondents were chosen was completely random, the only criteria being their age. The study's conclusions show that there is an existing relation to the internalization of the beauty ideals presented and advanced by the online communities and underlying psychological problems, such as those referred to previously.

Keywords: social media, beauty standards, body image, self-esteem.

Introduction

Social media is everywhere. It's in our everyday lives, it's in our phones, in our relationships, in our workplace, it's also at school, in our heads, in our pockets and in our notifications. Social media changed the way of the game and shifted our way of living. Sociologists and researchers have been studying the effects of the digital era and the interest in the field only keeps growing.

Questions have long now been posed regarding the way social media affects our lives, our own person, our relationships, and our multi-dimensional societies, in many different contexts and in numerous intellectual discussions. This study aims to answer these exact questions, only in a more specific matter. Studies show that there are existing negative effects of prolonged social media exposure among teens. Qualitative research, on the other hand, shows that people have a direct say and influence in the interpretation and critiquing of social media content. In other words, social media users can sift the information as they please. The current study aims to pinpoint and measure the impact social media has and its correlation to the internalization of beauty standards.

The science of beauty is not as sought out by researchers as that of social media. This study's unique approach to not only the science of beauty, but the social media science at the same time, in the same context brings, a new perspective and a fresh look on these topics, only as one. Beauty traits and characteristics have been long sought after by women and men. Beauty preferences have evolved numerous times, starting from plants and animals due to sexual selection. These preferences and standards prove the existence of human obsessions towards outward beauty that mirror the characteristics and tendencies of the plant and animal kingdom, as Darwin put it. Although beauty standards vary from culture to culture, from period to period, the underlying selection pressures are the same. Moreover, *"it is not the content of the standards that show evidence of convergence – it is the rules or how we construct beauty ideals that have universalities across cultures"* (Grammer et al., 2003).

Millennials are part of a group of people that do not know a world without social media. Technology is part of their mundane life, used to assist, ease, or fully replace simple tasks. In 2019, approximately 2.95 billion people used social media, according to Statista (2020a). Out of this staggering number, millennials hold the highest percentage of any age group to engage in social media platforms, 90.4% of them have at least one social media account (Emarketer.com, 2019). This segment of the population is highly influenced by the internet in many ways known and unknown. This study aims to find the correlation of heavy social media usage and its role in transmitting societal beauty standards. Their everyday social media usage includes posts, likes, followers, news, events, fake news, and interpersonal communication. The questions that are raised in this context is how young girls are affected by the excessive social media consumption and how this process leads to the internalization of beauty ideals.

In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *social media* is defined as being a *"form of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)".* Through social media, users are able to create and engage in online communities that, some researchers say, come as an answer to society's problems. Social media, nowadays, is characterized by mega platforms such as Facebook, which boasts 2375 million active users, YouTube, with 2000 million, WhatsApp with 1600 million, Facebook Messenger with 1300 million, Instagram with 1000 million, WeChat, TikTok, Reddit, Twitter etc. Besides these staggering numbers that show the large scale of the social media phenomenon, it is crucial to understand the common practice of having simultaneous accounts on different platforms (Statista, 2020b).

In a study conducted in 2019 at the Global Fashion Management Conference in Paris, researchers studied millennials and their buying intentions. Their conclusions highlight the fact that this demographic is one of the most narcissist and materialistic due to their high intake of social media. On the other hand, millennials tend to pay more attention to ethical and moral aspects when buying a product or service. It can be observed that these behavioral tendencies come because of an external factor, social media. The idea that is brought up in this context is the fact that heavy social media consumption is estimated to grow, and through this growth we see the ability to modify and shape characters and personas that have up to this point been influenced by the primary group: family. Not only does heavy social media consumption influence character, but it also can produce behavioral changes (Yoon et al., 2019).

Any activity that is done in excess, that requires an investment of one's time, energy, and attention, can and most often will lead to positive and negative effects. Social media consumption has often been correlated to negative effects such as the shortening of one's attention span, low levels of self-esteem, high levels of upwards social comparison, body dissatisfaction, and in the most extreme cases symptoms of depression and eating disorders. In a meta-analysis, Mingoia et al. (2017) argue that long-term exposure to media can have negative health implications due to the fact that through social media unrealistic beauty standards are promoted. The image of a very thin woman with a below average weight creates an ideal that is unattainable my most, and only through unrealistic and unhealthy methods. Often, women portrayed in the media as beautiful are underweight and anorexic. It is very difficult not to adopt a behavior of acceptance and admiration for these *perfect* women seeing as though consumers are fed with this beauty ideal constantly.

Gerbner's *Cultivation Theory* refers to the long-term formation of perceptions and beliefs about the world because of media exposure (Potter, 1993). This theory, advanced and concretized by the infamous researcher George Gerbner, is based on long term experiments made on TV consumers after the end of World War II. In this period, TV consumption grew exponentially, and researchers were able to observe changes in attitude, ideas, values and realities as a result of this exposure. Gerbner concluded that television had become the main narrator in people's lives, surpassing oral tradition and even tradition, as a transmitter of cultural values (Fortner & Fackler, 2014). This theory, although it originally implied TV consumption, can be applied to other forms of media, such as social media.

The *cultivation theory* has been adopted to political and social sciences to explain how media, and specifically television, can influence people's perceptions of reality, there are many implications that come into play. Gerbner et al. (1994) define the concept of cultivation as *"the independent contributions of television viewing to people's perceptions of social reality"*. Through independent contributions it denotes the development and maintenance of a certain set of beliefs that can then be followed and correlated with the cumulative exposure on television, or in our case, on social networks. These researchers point out that this cultivation process is not a one-way process, but rather a *gravitational process*. This means that although social media can exert an independent influence on a person's perceptions and life experience can later also affect perception of reality. In its simplest form, cultivation theory suggests that indirect experience gained through spending time online will replace direct experience as the main basis for the development of social beliefs and perceptions (Cheng, Otsuka, & Yeon, 2016).

Another important aspect which needs to be covered to be able to fully comprehend the complexity of what our research aims to cover is social comparison. The Social Comparison Theory belongs to Festinger; social comparison is composed of several processes with an essential basic characteristic. It is defined as *"the process of thinking and* *filtering information about one or more people in relation to one's self"*. The phrase *"in relation to one's self"* implies the search or identification of the similarity or difference between another and one's self on the same dimension. This thought process leads to the formation of a judgment, or to confirming a previous belief about one's position in relation to another person (Wood, 1996).

In a study conducted in the United States of America, researchers aimed to study social comparison in correlation to Facebook usage. 145 respondents answered questions regarding the number of hours spent on Facebook and their psychological involvement. The results indicate the validation of the initial hypothesis. High levels of upward social comparison were correlated with heavy Facebook usage, and moreover, people who say they are more likely to compare themselves to others tend to be the people with the highest number of hours spent on Facebook (Vogel et al., 2015).

Following the process of upwards social comparison, an overall dissatisfaction materializes, and is internalized in the subconsciousness of women who are exposed frequently to this phenomenon of ideals and standards. Thus, the ideals to which they must live up to become an integral part of their thought process and affect every aspect of their lives. A relevant concept for this study is that of body image. Many studies show that the use of social networks lead to body image dissatisfaction. Thompson et al. (1999) present the definition of body image as *"the perception of one's own body"*. This theorist says that body image can be conceptualized in a continuous pattern from zero to extremely high. He claims that most people in a population are somewhere in the middle of this model. Body image disorders may indicate serious clinical problems that are directly related to eating disorders and depression (Du, 2015). Body image and body dissatisfaction are closely related to activating on Facebook. In addition to the negative impact on one's body image, exposure to social media beauty ideals produces negative ailments and moods. A study found that spending 20 minutes on Facebook produces an overall negative mood, whereas if we surf the internet casually this does not happen. According to these findings and many more, researchers suggest that prolonged exposure to Facebook may influence users' moods as well as their perception of their body image (Fardouly et al., 2015).

The *Hyperpersonal Model* was designed by researcher Joseph B. Walter and it aims to explain computer mediated communication (CMC). This model is among the first to present the interpersonal interaction that takes place in the online environment. Among other things, this model suggests that online interactions are supported by technological improvements that advance strategic communication. This is where the phenomenon of synchronicity occurs, which is represented by the time interval between the construction of messages and the moment they are sent, thus allowing communicators to carefully select their presentation strategy. For example, the communicator who advances a beauty ideal through social networks can build his strategy meticulously by editing his self-presentation, which means that the final product is optimized (Britt, 2015).

This self-presentation is selective and includes exposing the positive qualities and intentionally omitting the negative aspects, thus contextualizing the content in a format as beautiful as possible. As a result, the reception of these self-selected messages with such precision tends to lead to the over interpretation of the sender, as this is what has been highlighted (Britt, 2015).

With the shift from mass communication to social media in recent years there has been an influx of social media content that perpetuates the ideals of beauty that perfectly exemplify Walter's hyperpersonal model. According to this model, instigators of social networking sites selectively activate self-presentation, while recipients of this content have limited access to nonverbal attributes and other cognitive resources that cause them to form stereotypical impressions of message senders. In other words, people have the most pleasant face in online interactions. These people post the most attractive photos, omitting to post photos that highlight the less pleasant features (Britt, 2015).

Over the years and centuries, women have been subjected to the ideals of beauty. These ideals represented society's conceptions of beauty. It is important to emphasize that this concept of beauty is very ambiguous and can suffer many interpretations. Here, however, it is about a style, a type of hair, a length of hair, a color of the eyes. These beauty ideals differ from one country to another, even from one group to another and this is due to the phenomena underlying the internalization of these standards. Some women are subject to the same standards as others, but they are not affected by them. Others are exposed to the media more often and are strongly influenced by what is beautiful in the moment.

In European history we find specific examples of beauty standards and how they have changed over time. The ideal weight, shape and build of one's body has always been dictated by these ideals and standards dictated by cultures and societies. Some cultures expressed a preference for fine, thin constructions, while others preferred fatter and voluptuous women. A concrete example of these types of ideals present in our societies is the case of China. Beauty in China was measured by the size of a woman's feet. The smaller the foot, the more beautiful the woman was considered (Sherrow, 2001). Clarke (cited in Sherrow, 2001) argued that *"beauty, like wealth, becomes a method of ranking people, dividing them along lines of power. By being beautiful, women not only increase their market value as commodities. They become consumers of an amazing array of devices and substances to build beauty. Beautiful women are used two ways- to sell themselves and their femininity, and to sell all the technology of beauty… in the form of many millions of dollars' worth of cosmetic chemicals, diet regimens and drugs, and reams of printed instructions".* She describes the western beauty ideal as showing a preference towards a woman who is *"pre-adolescent, not mature or grown up, and hence not powerful. A Caucasian, preferably blonde, between 5'3 and 5'8 tall between the ages of 16 and 25 with no visible hair on her legs, thighs, underarms or face (except eyebrows), large eyes, shiny hair, red lips, pore less skin, white teeth, small nose, small ears, no body odor toned slim body with long legs"* (Sherrow, 2001, p. 45).

The Cambridge dictionary defines beauty as *"the quality of being pleasing, especially to look at, or someone or something that gives great pleasure, especially when you look at it".* In the last decade, Instagram has seen an exponential increase in the number of active users, as well as the total number of users. As a result of this growth, the most popular models, the most decorated actresses, but also emerging bloggers have migrated to this platform, posing in the most spectacular ways and places. Migration and intense use of the platform has created a culture of unrealistic, unattainable standards. In this Instagram culture, the so-called cyborgian look materialized. It is represented by an ethnically ambiguous face, borrowing specific influences from a variety of ethnicities to create a utopian look, a fresh face with supple, smooth, perfect skin, full lips, almond eyes, arched eyebrows, thick, high cheekbones, and thin nose. This is almost impossible to achieve, and it is found that those profiles that manage to render such an image use applications such as FaceTune, Photoshop, and filters that are integrated into the Instagram application, according to an analysis published by *The New Yorker* (Tolentino, 2019). As young women grow in the presence of such standards and in pursuit of the few women who manage to meet the criteria of these ideals, they feel pressured to conform and change their own traits. To meet these beauty criteria, many social media users use the same face modification applications, thus creating a pattern that repeats itself endlessly.

Methodology

The objectives of this research are the result of in-depth studies of the above-mentioned topics, which combine both elements of psychology and elements of communication sciences. The main objective of this research was to observe the correlation between excessive social media consumption and the internalization of beauty standards. The main premise was that there is some existing connection between the two elements, and our main goal was to delimit and specify this correlation and all the factors underlying the internalization process. A secondary objective was the delimitation of the beauty standards present in the online environment, especially among adolescents and young girls in Romania. Our respondents were exclusively from Romania. Here we specify the fact that all data collected by us is specific to Romanian girls, but there may be overlaps with what others have found following other studies, with other respondents.

As this study addresses both social media consumption and the internalization process and involves existing beauty standards in the online environment, our research questions are:

RQ1: In what way is heavy social media consumption correlated to the internalization of beauty standards?

RQ2: What are the effects of the internalization process that occurs after engaging in heavy social media consumption?

Social science research can identify many interrelated variables and aim to investigate these variables. In this context, most studies and research in the social sciences are exemplified to explore the relationships between these social variables. Taking this information into account, we chose variables with previous correlations. The basis of these hypotheses are previous studies and research, as well as scientific evidence exemplified by theories, laboratory experiments, or other methods and techniques used in the social sciences.

A set of three hypotheses was addressed in the present research:

H1: Girls with high social media consumption are more likely to experience increased body dissatisfaction.

H2: Girls with high social media consumption are more likely to internalize the beauty standards advances by social networks and platforms.

H3: Girls that have internalized beauty standards want to change their appearance so that it is in line with these beauty standards.

This paper aims to validate or invalidate these hypotheses and to mark the path for future research. We are aware that, although this study focuses on the set of items identified from literature and similar studies, we can gather other relevant and significant data to illustrate the phenomena pursued.

The main method chosen for obtaining data entailed employing a sociological survey. Surveying is a method specific to the human sciences and involves an exchange of information, communication between researchers and subjects whose reality is being investigated. The type of investigation used in this study is indirect, written investigation.

This method was applied exclusively online, on Facebook. For three weeks the questionnaire was open to respondents, during which anyone could access it and fill it out. We asked females between the ages of 13 and 25 to fill in the form, answering questions as honestly as possible. We assured respondents that all data collected is and will remain confidential and reported anonymously.

The secondary method of data collection used was the interview. Some researchers argue that survey and interview are complementary methods in social research due to the similar elements they contain. We deemed it appropriate to use these two methods due to the high degree of control that the researcher has, as well as due to the type of information we can obtain. The interview, in the case of this study, brings a contribution and a completion of the data obtained following the sociological survey with qualitative data.

Results

Following the completion of the online questionnaire, 267 responses were registered. Of these, only N=250 were valid. 12 of the answers to the questionnaires were filled in by people over 26 years of age, and 3 respondents were male. For these reasons, these responses were not taken into account in the data analysis. 100% of the respondents are female, this being a condition for completing the questionnaire. Most respondents were between 19-21 years old, the youngest being between 13-16 years old. The average age was 21 years, the average height 155 cm, and the average weight of respondents was 59.27 kgs. 70% of the respondents to the questionnaire come from urban areas, 30% coming from rural areas.

In analyzing the data that used the Iowa-Netherlands social comparison measurement scale, we drew some conclusions that will later validate or invalidate the research hypotheses. 64.8% of respondents say that they often compare themselves with others in terms of their achievements in life, similar to this statement 50.4% say that to some extent they agree with the statement that they always compare their way of doing something with the way others do the same thing. The values of the statements regarding the social comparison are high, a percentage of 46.26% of the respondents stated that they agree to some extent (from agree to strongly agree). All the statements were formulated in such a way that if a respondent agreed, the process of social comparison was outlined. Therefore, an average percentage of 46.26% of the respondents of the questionnaire present upward attitudes of social comparison.

As for the expected correlations, our findings proved to be interesting. The first relevant finding was the correlation between social media use and self-esteem. We identified a statistically significant negative correlation between social media use and self-esteem (rPearson = 1.190, $p<.01$), which shows that the higher the social media consumption among respondents, the lower the level of self-esteem. This finding is congruent with previous studies, which attest to the fact that indeed this correlation is proven in several contexts, among several respondents and demographic cohorts.

Another interesting discovery is the correlation between the use of social media and the internalization of beauty standards. Following the analysis of the data, we identified a statistically significant positive correlation between the use of social media and the internalization of beauty standards (rPearson = .158, $p<.012$). This correlation validates the second hypothesis and adds to previous findings concerning the relationship between the two variables.

An existing statistically positive correlation between social media use and social comparison was identified (rPearson = .166, $p<.008$). The higher the number of hours spent online, the higher the social comparison of respondents. This social comparison, it was found, paves the way for depressive symptoms, anxiety, attitudes of dissatisfaction with oneself. Other significantly important correlations between the variables are the positive correlation between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem (rPearson = .283, $p<.000$), according to which the more respondents have higher body dissatisfaction, the lower the level of self-esteem.

Discussion and conclusions

Following the analysis of the results obtained from the sociological survey, as well as from the two organized interviews, we can draw some conclusions. We measured phenomena such as body dissatisfaction, social comparison upwards, social media consumption, self-esteem, and the degree of acceptance towards one's own body.

To the first research question **RQ1: How is the high consumption of social media correlated with the internalization of beauty standards?**, we can say that there are links between the two items concerned. From data collection we learned that there is a large percentage of people who internalize the standards of beauty transmitted through social media. In the Romanian online space (here we refer to both Romanian vloggers and celebrities, as well as micro- and macro-influencers), the idea of thin as being beautiful is transmitted. If a woman is thin, she is considered to be beautiful. Based on our findings, respondents agreed with this ideal of beauty, where an overweight woman is not seen as attractive as a woman who is underweight.

Based on data analysis, we obtained the answer to the second research question **RQ2: What are the effects of internalizing beauty standards following the high consumption of social media?** First of all, among the first effects observed after the research is the high degree of social comparison. The constant comparison upwards, when activating on social media, can create a state of dissatisfaction with one's own person and one's own life. This social comparison then leads to a higher probability of bodily dissatisfaction. Also here, the correlation between the internalization of beauty standards and the low level of self-esteem was observed.

Regarding the three pre-established hypotheses, following the analysis and processing of data extracted from the two research methods, two out of three were validated. Our results indicate the idea that the use of social media leads to the internalization of beauty standards. Also, the high consumption of social media has as a direct effect the emergence of the desire to change appearances so that they are in line with the ideals of beauty that are transmitted both online and in society. We have not proven the correlation between high social media consumption and bodily dissatisfaction, but we owe this to an error on our part. Another finding is the desire to change the appearance following the use of social media. People who record many hours on social media daily have a desire to change their appearance so that they meet the standards of beauty.

The current study presents important discoveries for social sciences. This study focused on the correlation between excessive use of social media and the internalization of beauty standards as an effect. While social media influences attitudes about weight, comparisons with people on social media, and self-esteem, most of the expected correlations were proven to be true. An important discovery is the change in perceptions following social media consumption, namely the desire to change the physical appearance so that they conform to the beauty ideals generally accepted. Also, both the primary group and the group of friends are factors that influence the internalization process.

Cultivation theory and social media variables were directly correlated with the effects of internalizing beauty standards. These variables also corroborate existing attitudes, resulting in subjects who access social networks excessively and who share similar attitudes about perceptions of reality. In other words, the idea of being perceived as beautiful is a necessary element to be successful in life, to be accepted in society and to be socially desirable is widespread. This reality can also underline the idea that entourages are formed with people who share similar attitudes, and their social media consumption reinforces these existing attitudes regarding external beauty, body weight, facial features, body shapes etc.

The present research presents some limitations, both in the process of implementing the study and in relation to time and context factors. The biggest limitation is the period of data collection. The questionnaire was posted on Facebook at the beginning of April, when Romania was in the middle of at home isolation due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The present study focused excessively on social media consumption, and by the time the questionnaire was sent out, all schools, colleges and universities were closed, and most people worked remote. This indicates that the number of hours of free time in a day increased exponentially, and suddenly the number of hours spent online has increased, due to lack of activity.

Another limit is the relatively small number of valid questionnaires, 250. With a number of 250 questionnaires, we cannot say that the data collected is conclusive and generally valid, so the representativeness of this study is small. We want to emphasize another limitation related to the sociological survey and the questionnaire. The respondents of the questionnaire were between 13 and 26 years old, and later we found that it would have been more effective if the age range had been smaller. In the range set by us we include both teenagers and young adults. It would have been more useful if we had chosen a single category of girls and if we had specifically focused on the effects of excessive social media consumption in a single age category.

Future research can go in a multitude of directions. One of these directions could be the comparison of results using the same tools during a period of global pandemic versus a period of normalcy, in which young people go to school and work in their usual routine. It would also be very useful if the present research were more representative, at a national scale, where the conclusions could be considered generally valid or could be directly correlated with other findings of other studies conducted with a much larger number of respondents.

In addition, gender is an important factor to consider. Data on male respondents were not collected and used in this study. Men are also susceptible to dissatisfaction with their own bodies, eating disorders, and examining the influence on the male body and attitudes about body weight and shape could be extremely important in creating effective campaigns against the negative effects of excessive social media consumption.

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The influence of the make-up industry on gender perception

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ABSTRACT
This research aims to determine whether there is a direct influence between the expansion of the make-up industry in the last few years and the gender perception of students. In this case, we selected for our study both males and females, between 19 and 23 years old, especially a female audience, from the Faculty of Political, Administration, and Communication Sciences (FPACS), Bachelor's level. To validate or invalidate our hypotheses, we carried out a sociological survey and a content analysis. The quantitative results from these two methods are then compared with the qualitative ones from a focus group. Together, the data helps to better understand the opinions and conceptions of the audience when it comes to make-up and gender perception and, also, to discover if social media affects their image of reality nowadays.

Keywords: influence, make-up industry, perception, gender, social media.

Introduction
A simple question can fuel the desire of discovering a topic. The questions which determined the start or the *time zero* of this study are as follows: **RQ1: Is the gender perception of the students from Communication and Public Relations truly influenced by the makeup industry?** and **RQ2: Does the online expansion of the make-up industry impact upon their gender perception?**

The authors' personal motivation for the topic was doubled by the female students' interest in the make-up industry, faced with a recent growth both online and offline, but also the masculine interest for this domain. In the past, beauty was associated with the feminine part; in recent years, both genders started to be influenced in their way to recreate the perfect image.

After clarifying the research questions, the next steps and objectives will be established. The first one was the literature review which exposed a variety of concepts that helped the development of the study. Some of them are related to self-confidence and social perception because make-up has a real impact on the perception of a person in modern society.

The hypotheses, based on the literature, are the following: *H1: If the make-up industry has a real impact over the Communications and Public Relations students, especially the female part, then the gender perception is influenced by that*, and H2: *If the makeup industry is more present online than offline, then the students from Communication and Public Relations, both male and female, can be influenced*.

Theoretical framework

The present society is governed by the idea of perfection and how those around us perceive and criticize our image. We are tempted to use different means and tools to create an image as close as possible to the ideal, and these tools can often distort the mirror and sense of gender. The training we are using does not only create a more perfect image for us but is directly proportional with the development of certain industry segments that govern us or with different social media platforms. The means that try to produce an image as close as possible to the ideal are make-up products, and this industry has recently experienced an accelerated development. While the cosmetics industry is growing rapidly and people tend to use a wide variety of products of this kind, it is important to analyze how make-up products have a beneficial or harmful impact upon self-esteem, gender perception, or self-perception, but also look at the difference between the essence and the appearance which we often present in social media. Make-up products are not just specific to a particular type, age category, or personality, and once the contact with them has led to partial success, we will tend to use them as often as possible and try to improve our image, regardless of gender or our own beliefs (Silverio, 2010).

In the developing society, but also its personalities, it is very important to connect this area of make-up products to the self-esteem of those who tend to put these products at the center of the market. Self-esteem *"represents the evaluative component of the self and refers to the emotional experience, the emotions the person tries when he refers to himself"* (Macarie et al., 2008). Make-up products, according to the Federal Food, Drug & Cosmetics Act, represent products intended for the human body for cleaning, beauty, promotion, attraction, or modification of appearance, which people turn to create an exterior look as close to perfection as possible (Brinegar & Weddle, 2014). The female public often tends to have lower self-esteem or be controlled by the outside environment and the appearances of the world in which we live. Over time, women have tried to boost their sexuality and femininity through various body products, including make-up products, which reflect and emphasize positive features and hide or diminish negative ones. This definition and the externalization of sexuality and femininity are closely linked to the perception of gender and how each gender assumes and develops self-esteem. Charles Darwin, thus, called this phenomenon sexual dimorphism, resulting in the male public reflecting more stable and strong self-esteem, not resorting to various make-up structures and products (Silverio, 2010).

The use of make-up products has also brought the idea of the other side of the coin to the public, more specifically, the use of products and the image that women had when they were not acquired led to anxiety, regression in personal development, and often social isolation (Brinegar & Weddle, 2014). The make-up industry has also taken the personal and social perception that people reflect in society, both offline and online. This external view often tends to guide our future decisions, personality, or the way we continue to report in society. The numerous studies carried out over time on this subject include that of Miller and Cox, carried out in 1982 (cited in Voorveld et al., 2018), who said that women who have a complex or who do not believe that they can reflect a society-friendly image tend to use more make-up to help them gain a more substantiated perception and give them more confidence. So much of existing studies on the link between the make-up industry and the perception of self-esteem, society, or self-esteem show that whether we are part of the female or male public, this industry and the use of its related products have a direct effect on us. Once we have noticed the direct connection between make-up products and the impact on self-esteem, we must also focus on the online environment that contributes to the rise of this industry and makes differences in the perception of each gender and their image. Before we design the influence of make-up in the online environment, we need to understand what has led companies to move toward social media to attract consumers. Adidas capitalized on the strong connection of new generations to the digital environment and found that success and the key to it can be achieved by a strong openness to new media (Voorveld et al., 2018). Make-up brands have also widened their scope to online platforms, which have become constant content-generators. Among the most widely used are YouTube and Instagram, which, according to Voorveld et al. (2018), are deemed as environments where you can freely express your creativity and common interests.

According to another study, there has been an increase in influence or celebrities on these platforms, such as for the makeup industry: 'Beauty Gurus', whose way of expressing thoughts and opponents has started to have much greater power over consumers than the messages sent by the brands themselves (Forbes, 2016). A series of 'baby gurus' were analyzed according to five defining characteristics, one of which is self-confidence. This trust, together with high popularity among the target group that make-up brands are going to see, makes them invest considerable amounts in the promotion to keep their attention on the public, such as Maybelline. It has been able to strengthen a relationship of its own between the brand seeking beauty and trust and the consumer who is looking for it through 'Beauty Gurus' (Forbes, 2016).

So far, we have looked at the most used social media. We saw large brands reorienting their strategies to the online environment as a fast-growing market. In this area, we can also see the make-up industry that influences the self-esteem of both females and males. In this sense, to be able to better highlight the male impact of the make-up industry, we also included a media article on how make-up is changing masculinities. According to this article (Jones, 2018), half the men in UK have integrated skincare and imperfection correction products in their daily routine. However, the stigma that is brought about by this association leads them to be more reluctant to share these issues. In the Asian-related party, such as that in South Korea, openness to the make-up industry and care products is greater than in the United States and Europe. Statistics show that 80% of men invest $26.90 in makeup. David Yi, the founder of the website for the masculine cosmetics: "Very good light", also supports these aspects, adding that make-up products make him feel more male and stronger in his forces. The online environment has thus become a fluid space for young men to express freely about make-up products. The male roles with which they associated their image in the past have changed, argues Jones (2018).

Methodology

To highlight the impact the make-up industry has on gender perception, and also how subjects assimilate and perceive the connection between make-up and the online environment, we used a research design based on a multi-method approach, made of a sociological survey, a focus group, and content analysis. The research questions and hypotheses tackled were presented above, in the introduction section:

RQ1: Is the gender perception of the students from Communication and Public Relations truly influenced by the makeup industry?

RQ2: Does the online expansion of the make-up industry impact upon their gender perception?

H1: If the make-up industry has a real impact over the Communications and Public Relations students, especially the female part, then the gender perception is influenced by that.

H2: *If the makeup industry is more present online than offline, then the students from Communication and Public Relations, both male and female, can be influenced.*

Results

Survey

A sociological survey was carried out through a questionnaire formed of 23 questions, 4 open ones, 14 closed ones, and 5 demographic ones. Through these, we looked at how respondents relate to the make-up industry, how they use it, how they see themselves, and the impact of online media on them, as well as their gender perception. The subjects were 54 students from the Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences, the Communication and Public Relations program, 49 females and 5 males, aged 19 to 23.

Answers showed that a large part of our audience used make-up products on a regular basis, has a well-founded self-confidence, most are following beauty influencers; 83.8% of respondents use make-up products. While 66.7% of the respondents declared that using make-up products helps them gain a greater self-confidence, 57.4% declared not comparing their image to what they see online (*Fig. 1*).

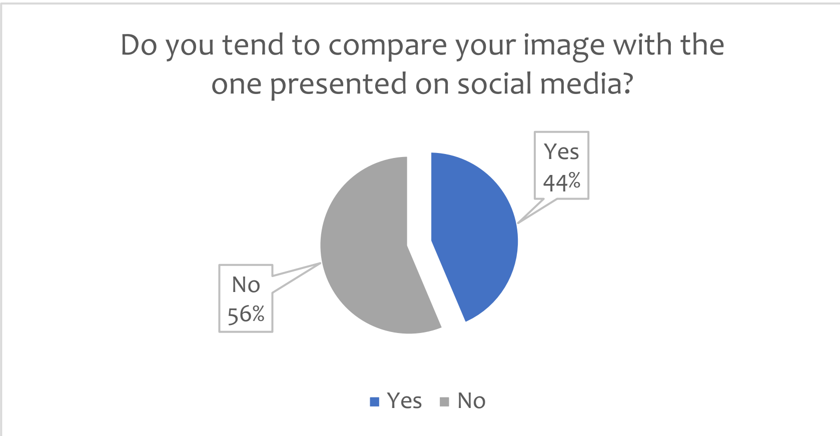

Fig. 1. Distribution of respondents' comparison to social media images

In terms of gender perceptions, 38.9% of respondents stated that the recent growth of the make-up industry has not managed to break gender barriers.

Focus group

A focus group was organized to acquire more information from the target group about the topic at hand, and to compare data with that from the survey. A group of 7 participants was self-selected from the same population, that of Communication and PR students: 6 female/ 1 male, and a set of 8 questions were asked to understand their perception of the influence this industry has on gender-related issues.

Several perspectives stood out that showed that participants deem make-up important:

> *"For many like me, makeup is an occasional ritual. For others, makeup represents a lifestyle and without it, they will feel exposed because makeup offers them confidence and makes them feel better with themselves."; "Makeup contributes to the achieving of the perfect image, but this is just a part of the process. And perfection is relative from one to another."; "The beauty industry is more present online, especially in the lives of the new generations that grow with it. Even if you are not interested in makeup, you eventually find out something from the social media platforms."; "I believe the LGBTQ community contributes a lot to the disappearance of gender perception because they use makeup."; "The makeup industry will remain a powerful presence, at least for another period. Both genders will use it, but in their specific way."*

According to the respondents, the cosmetics industry has grown during recent years owed to social media, and they feel this impact in their lives more than ever before. Moreover, make-up was defined as a part of their lives that helped respondents consolidate their self-confidence.

Content analysis

To further investigate the information obtained from the participants, a content analysis was employed to observe tendencies related to the topic. The research included an analysis of four YouTube accounts and four Instagram accounts of influencers named by our respondents in the survey. On YouTube, the top influencers named were Jeffree Star, Tati, Nikkie Tutorials, and James Charles, and on Instagram, Alina Ceușan, Carmen Grebenișan, Ioana Grama, and Ema Uta. The analysis of posts from the two sets of accounts resulted in the following findings:

- The YouTube content is more engaging, as the viewer can observe the entire process of make-up, the products applied, and the real impressions of the influencer;
- The beauty veterans on YouTube are nearly all LGBTQ+ community members, which supported the perspective of the focus groups participants on gender perceptions;
- The Instagram beauty influencers promote skincare products for a feminine target group, like Vichy or Lancôme – Alina Ceușan, Aimee Cosmetics & Perfumes – Carmen Grebenișan, Vichy or L'Erbolario Romania – Ioana Grama;
- The most evident differences between the two platforms come from the content cultures; they address different types of users, due to the messages and products promoted – Romanian influencers are not specialized or dedicated only to beauty and skin-care products, in contrast with YouTube influencers;
- All influencers define confidence by using make-up products.

Discussion and conclusions

The two research questions and the two hypotheses were addressed in the present study. Among the respondents, make-up has a major influence upon the perception of both men and women. The industry put its mark on the personality of our respondents, as 77.8% declare their image is influenced by make-up and 66.7% believe that make-up helps increase self-confidence, and 38.9% of students believe that make-up will break gender barriers.

This study shows that younger generations feel impacted by the make-up industry. They use such products on a daily basis or occasionally, to feel more confident in their powers. Besides, online media increased the exposure and popularity of make-up products, making them important in consumers' lives. Also, they affect both images in personal lives and social contexts. This study is a good starting point for the topic among Romanian youth, yet a few limitations need to be addressed: the non-representative sample does not allow for generalization of results and there is also social desirability in some answers, as the topic is a sensitive one, that would have needed several focus groups.

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The state of the print sports press: A comparative study between *Gazzetta dello Sport* and *Gazeta Sporturilor*

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ABSTRACT
This paper focuses on analyzing the way in which current traditional journalism (represented by two sports dailies, one in Italy and the other one in Romania) manage to survive and produce enough quality content to support their editorial approach print even now, that we are witnessing the onslaught of the online. We analyze each publication separately but at the same time compare them with each other, in order to realize which are the things that bring them closer and differentiate them at the same time.

Keywords: journalism, sports, social media, daily, sports journalism.

Introduction

Even since the beginnings of journalism, the advantage of accessing information by as many recipients as possible was considered a leverage. Coman (2004) shows the way in which a letter sent by Christopher Columbus to the royal counselor Santángel, by which the famous explorer would describe his journey across the ocean and the discovery of the new road to the Indies, has become, thanks to the press, a *bestseller,* and a worldwide news. *"In early April 1493, the Latin version of the letter that Christopher Columbus had sent to Royal Counselor Santángel was printed in Barcelona under the title of* Insulis Inventis, *describing his voyage across the ocean and the discovery of the new road to the Indies. Reprinted over just one month in Rome (where it knew three successive editions), then in Paris, in Antwerp, Basel and in Florence, the description of the expedition and of the new territories became, according to the formula of the historian Samuel Eliot Morison, a 'bestseller' of the moment. It is the way in which the press turned a personal experience into widely accessible knowledge and some secrets, which would otherwise have been kept hidden by European sovereigns, had become news"* (p. 15).

Journalism has evolved over time to such an extent that the idea of a *universal journalist* has relatively recently taken shape, in the sense that nowadays an employee in the media can be asked to do and must do, if they respect themselves, many more things. For example, the famous ESPN post has brought forth the idea according to which *"in the future, sports journalists must be able to work both in television and in the written press. In a world in which media companies own televisions, radios, newspapers and websites, a journalist who writes for a newspaper or a magazine must also produce news for the radio, television, or for the website"* (Schultz, 2005, p. 10).

In the line of its development, journalism has come to use more and more modern and sophisticated means of communication, so that at present social media is a big part of our agenda and satisfies our need for information on an increasingly large scale. The extension can also be made towards sports journalism, the one that takes its vim from Facebook, perhaps to the detriment of more elaborate materials which would require higher expenses. That sport occupies a leading place in the media, at least through the wide area of its addressability, is a well-known fact. This is widely explained by Andrews (2006): *"Sport is so important for media organizations that even the smallest of them create their own sports departments, formed of experienced sports journalists and include them in their editorial teams. In the journalistic sector, both at national and regional level, sport is one of the three traditional departments - the other two being represented by news and features - which form the editorial team"* (p. 14). Therefore, social media could not ignore sport aspects which, taken over by various publications, become news or starting points for broader materials, including for radio or televisions.

Beyond the definition which refers to the online means by which a community shares everything it wants to be known, social media acquires new values in the field of sports journalism. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and other channels have become tools which reflect sports performance in journalism, joining the traditional channels represented by print, radio, or television. Nowadays a post of a famous or less famous football player, on their personal Facebook account, can become sports news, by its simple quoting in the pages of a publication or a starting point for in-depth material about his life.

Social media rapidness comes to satisfy the taste of sports fans, from posting the composition of a team in real time, before the beginning of a game, by reviewing the latest events before the game or during the game (with real-time images), with results and markers displayed online, to the most diverse details that can influence, for example, the world of sports betting. Social media tools can produce a significant change (in case they have not already produced it) in the role of sports journalism, which moves its center of gravity to originality, detail, speed, perhaps to the detriment of laborious analysis, in the classical terms in which we were used to understanding it. These new approaches have also developed business elements, scientific analyzes on sports journalism, on the status of the sports journalist and their role in the field, but also in society.

Methodology

We intend in our study to focus on the comparison between two sports dailies which we considered relevant, one in Romania (*Gazeta Sporturilor*) and the other one in Italy (*Gazzetta dello Sport*). In recent years, the idea that the life of the press *has almost passed* has been circulated more and more in the Romanian press and abroad. Consequently, the same opinion was expressed in connection with the sports written press. Among the reasons, we can mention: the high costs of printing, the concept that newspaper news is actually *yesterday's news* (as news reaches the reader already on television channels or online), decreased readers' appetite for the print media, and above all, the declining purchasing power of people, who prefer to access news from other media, less expensive or even free.

There is less and less talk in this context about content, about editorial efforts to provide diverse, up-to-date, valuable, attractive, or documented information. Covered somehow by the reasons mentioned in the preamble, journalists from the Romanian print press try to keep a loyal audience. It remains to be seen how they manage to do so, to analyze whether and to what extent high standards are still followed and what is the percent of easy, marginal topics, superficial approaches, or gossip areas.

At a national level, the sports press in the *print* version has remained represented only by *Gazeta Sporturilor*. The competition, the daily *Prosport* has given up the written version for about two years, withdrawing only in the online, virtual environment.

Quantitative analysis entails text observation and content analysis (CA), therefore involving simple analysis of the content of texts, through simplistic interpretation practices, designed to reveal the most important aspects at which the journalistic materials included in the study aim. Qualitative analysis in this paper entails a deeper explanation of the terms, depending on the articles belonging to one or another of the major journalistic genres. It may also include elements of semiology for the understanding of the cultural significance of the elements and of the resulting system, specific to the sports press.

We will analyze the structure of each of the two newspapers, from each day of the week considered. We will try to discover by our approach the links that may exist between the structure of newspapers and the information they contain, between their components and the form that journalistic products take, to finally form a unitary whole. We start the comparison with the first day of our analysis, September 1, 2015.

Results

Analysis of the form

1. *Gazeta Sporturilor* and *Gazzetta dello Sport:* The beginnings

Before starting the comparison between the two newspapers, a short analysis on issues that make them alike and that separate them is necessary, reflecting the two dailies' evolution since their appearance.

Gazeta Sporturilor came to light on 14 September 1924, in Bucharest, and is considered the oldest sports periodical in Romania and the third in Europe, after *Gazzetta dello Sport* in Italy and *L'Auto-Velor*, the precursor *L'Equipe*, of France (according to its website), and *Nemzeti Sport* of Hungary (Moceanu, 2014). However, if we have a look in the press of the time, the first to appear was the newspaper *Sportul*, in Bucharest, in 1880 (February - October) (Petcu, 2012), a bimonthly created by two horse racing supporters (Al. Galeșescu and C. Blaremberg) (Stăncioiu, 2015), which explains the line followed: "*The generic word Sport has a lot of meanings; it means horse racing, body exercises, riding, horse breeding and training, rowing, hunting, billiards, skating, gymnastics, etc. All these point to the vast field that covers the variety and the diversity of the materials that it embraces. Without neglecting the multiple meanings of the word, this newspaper presents itself to the readers with the main concern and preferably dealing with equine issues. …*" (Historicus, 2012). *Gazeta Sporturilor* appeared a few years later, in 1924, under the sign of the Summer Olympics, the 8th edition, in Paris, to which Romania also participated and where the rugby team won the first Olympic medal (bronze) in the history of its participation to this sports competition. *"On the occasion of the Olympic Games, whole legions of sportsmen walked on the stadiums of Paris, representing the hopes of different peoples. It was a sporting celebration as rarely one can see and the excitement of the victories had distant echoes. … The current has become widespread, it has covered all countries without exception and fortunately it has gained ground in our country. Despite the ill will, the movement must be encouraged*" (according to the 1st editorial of *Gazeta Sporturilor*, dated September 14, 1896). If *Gazzetta dello Sport* appeared in the year of the organization of the first edition of the Olympic Games, *Gazeta Sporturilor* comes to light in the last year in which this competition is organized under the presidency of Pierre de Coubertin, the father of Modern Summer Olympics.

Following the general trend of Europe, the information that dominated the newspaper pages would come from boxing, cycling, horse riding, but also rounders/ stick ball – Romania's national sport, and less from football. The beginning of the twentieth century was dominated by individual sports. The newspaper appeared four times a week: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday, on 6 pages, at the price of 3 lei. The left side of the first page was reserved for the editorial while the central part would host the main news of the day. The first directors of the newspaper were Emil Emilian and E. Munteanu, first editor E. Munteanu.

The first steps of the *Gazzetta dello Sport* were taken in Milan, the end of the 19th century bringing to the public's attention sports as a popular activity. The favorites were cycling, horse riding and … walking. The press of the time, either generalist or specialized, would write about all this: Corriere della Sera, Il Ciclista etc. Given the circumstances, a newspaper was required to gather all the information about sports in one place. This is how *Gazzetta dello Sport* came to being in Milan, at the initiative of two newspaper owners: Aliso Rivera (Tripletta, from Turin), and Camillo Costamagna (Il Ciclista, from Milan). The newspaper appeared twice a week, on Mondays and Fridays, as most sports competitions were held on Saturday-Sunday and Tuesday-Wednesday. The editorial board consisted of five people: the two founders, a chief editor, a secretary editor, and an editor. *Gazzetta* was printed on four pages, on light green paper, in a circulation of 20,000 copies, at a price of 5 cents. The newspaper appeared on the market on April 3, 1896, as a supplement to the newspaper *Il Ciclista*, in its second year of existence, reason for which the first page mentions Year II, No. 1. The names of the two newspapers whose owners founded *Gazzetta dello Sport, Il Ciclista* and *Tripletta* were also mentioned. The first editorial of the new newspaper belongs to Costamagna, who argues in favor of editing the new publication, because of the social side towards which sport tends and the increase in the number of people interested in finding out the news in this area. Thus, the athletes who got good results would become topics of discussion, and, implicitly, celebrities in the communities (the future *stars*).

The new newspaper aimed to keep up with the times, to predict competitions results and, most importantly, such results to come true. *"Per trattare quindi lo sport bisogna sentirsi in grado di correre coi tempi, prevedere, arrivare/ To deal with sport, then, you have to feel able to run with the times, anticipate, be there".* The first number of *Gazzetta dello Sport*, contains on the front page information about the most popular sport of the time in Italy, cycling, written in a single column, without photos. The second page announces the addresses where information about sports competitions can be sent as soon as they have ended. In this way, anyone could become a contributor to the editorial. Coincidentally or not, the first number of *Gazzetta dello Sport* appeared three days before the first edition of the modern Olympic Games, April 6-15, 1896, in Athens, so the number issued on April 13 described their opening ceremony "*Lunedì 6 corrente furono organizzate le feste per i giuochi olimpici. L'aspettativa grandissima che vi era per questi giuochi non fu certamente superiore al risultato. La prima giornata fu splendida e per il concorso del pubblico e per i giuochi stessi che dal lato sportivo nulla lasciarono a desiderare".* From April 24, the name Gazzet*ta dello Sport* begins to stand out on the page, the other two slowly decreasing in importance, written in smaller letters, so that in January 1897 they disappeared completely from the front page.

The format established in the first number is preserved: the first page contains information about cycling, exclusively and the other three pages are covered by information from athletics, wrestling, tennis, sailing, horse riding, rowing, archery, but also from “pedestrian sports” – walking. The end of the 1890s brings a series of attempts to printing on different types of paper (yellow, white), experiments completed with the number issued on January 2, 1899 and published on pink paper, a color that established itself as the newspaper brand, from the color of the cycling champions’ shirts (at Maglia Rosa) to the descriptive logo of the newspaper, more than 100 years on: *Tutto il rosa della vita!*, but also the background color of the website www.gazzetta.it. The lack of photos in the newspaper was counterbalanced by the appearance of an illustrated supplement, printed on 16 pages. It was initially a monthly publication but was soon converted to bi-monthly. A feature of the publication was the involvement into the organization of sports events, part of the mission set by the founders, a mission which later on proves to be a good marketing strategy, which makes the publication known at an international level and leads to an increase of the newspaper circulation to ciphers which w become records over records. The first event was a sword competition between the Italian Agesilao Greco and the Belgian Fernand Desmet. A few years later, the first sports competition was organized, in 1902, the Milan-Monza-Milan Rally. The circulation of the publication reaches 36,000 copies during this period.

The beginning of the 20th century also brings competition to the sports newspaper market, therefore *Gazzetta dello Sport* focuses on the organization of large-scale international competitions. The first of its kind was the Tour of Lombardy, in cycling, a competition that has become traditional due to the success it enjoyed at the first edition (1905); transition to its daily publication is experienced throughout the International Bicycle and Motorcycle Exhibition in Milan in 1906. A year later, the publication exceeds the threshold of 100,000 copies, respectively 102,000. Since 1908 it has appeared three times a week, Monday - Wednesday – Friday. The first decade of the twentieth century brings the first novelties in the printing field, the publication adapting itself quickly to them, especially because they were in favor of sales due to its large circulation: the transition to linotype printing, on rotary printing. From 1910, the newspaper’s publishers become employees, with salaries between 100 and 500 pounds (according to the history of the daily publication, as presented on its above-mentioned website).

2. The first changes of direction, before the Second World War

Gazeta Sporturilor: in April 1925 it became the Official of the Bucharest Regional Committee of the Federation of Romanian Sports Societies (FSSR), unlike its Italian namesake, which continued its course under private ownership. As the interest in sports and in the show offered by it increased, the publication adapted permanently, and in 1930 it had a special envoy to the first World Cup, Uruguay, 1930. Only four teams participated from Europe: Romania, France, Belgium, and Yugoslavia (the final between Uruguay and Argentina; 4-2). From January 27, 1942, the Second Series of the publication appears, in 42x30 cm format. The newspaper was managed by V. Popescu, M. Pop and N. Papagheorghe.

Gazzetta dello Sport: in 1913, *Gazzetta* changes ownership and the management of the newspaper is provided by a board of directors. Changes brought by the new leadership: the periodical *Lo Sport Illustrata* appears, which will accompany the publication for half a century; the organization of large-scale sports competitions that bring notoriety and circulation continues; during the First World War it becomes bi-weekly again; in the last year of the war, it printed La *Gazzetta del Mitragliere*, in 30,000 copies sent free of charge to soldiers on the front; the end of the war represents the return of the editorial office to work and the transition to its daily form: May 15, 1919; the newspaper not only organized sporting events and competitions, but also provided financial support to the Italian team at the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp by organizing a public subscription by which it raised 600,000 pounds (compared to 100,000 pounds allocated by the Italian Government). The newspaper consolidation and the increase of its circulation to 500,000 copies in the first two decades of the 20th century are merits attributed to the management of this period, under the coordination of Emilio Colombo.

In 1930 the writing on 7 columns (instead of 6) is adopted, while beginning with 1938 the printing is issued on 8 columns. In all this time, football was of almost no importance, the most edifying example in this respect being the fact that although the football team Juventus Torino won, in 1935, for the 5th consecutive time the title of champion, the information does not find its place among the headlines of the newspaper, being in competition with the Tour of Italy at cycling.

At the end of the 1930s, the editorial changed its leadership again when Emilio Colombo was replaced by the young Bruno Roghi, though with no significant changes in the newspaper's policy, as it was entering the Second World War. The newspaper becomes weekly and is printed on white paper because of the recession.

3. Post-war trajectory

Gazeta Sporturilor enters communism: Once the Second World War ends, Romania enters its communist era, characterized by the nationalization of private property and by the transition to state property. The climax was reached on April 18, 1947, when the publication was abolished, after it had gone in parallel, for two years, with the newspaper *Sportul Popular* of the Romanian Sports Organization.

Articles of some Romanian writers were published in the pages of the newspaper, such as Ionel Teodoreanu, Camil Petrescu, Şerban Cioculescu. In the '60s, *Sportul Popular* changed its name to *Sportul* and remained like this until 1989, December, when the editorial team decided to return to its interwar name. The one responsible for the rebrand is Emanuel Valeriu, "*an extraordinarily brave guy, who would argue and fight strong people from the old communist regime. He wanted journalists not to be considered, as before, providers of propaganda services*" as Graur stated (2012) tells us.

La Gazzetta dello Sport experiences joint stock changes: in 1950, the management of the newspaper changes and the directors Giuseppe Ambrosini and Gianni Brera revolutionize the journalistic style, as they prefer clean, precise writing. They rearrange information into pages, page 2 becomes a mosaic of information from all sports, and page 3 the page of timeless materials, stories. The first material was about Eberardo Pavesi, a cyclist, the winner of four stages of the Tour of Italy. Further, in 1961, an extremely influential figure in the field of football comes to the leadership of the newspaper, Walter Zanetti, who changes the share of football news in his favor, establishes a *cold* journalistic style, without *literature* and sensational graphic accessories. Since the '70s, the television has left its mark on the sports chronicles, because it brings forth *hot* information, while newspapers announce the results only the next day. The way in which Gazzetta adapts to this situation is a new chapter in the history of Italian sports journalism. In 1976, the new director Gino Palumbo revolutionizes the journalistic style. As chronicles of sporting events become uninteresting, journalists are trained to look for controversies and curiosities and in the pages of the newspaper more and more spaces are allocated to interviews. The front page becomes a *showcase* of the entire newspaper, with references to the materials inside, the sure text being that of the editorial. Since 1977, branches are opened, and regional editions appear. It reaches up to a 300,000 circulation. In the '80s, record sales are registered: 1.469.063 copies sold one day after the Football world Cup of Spain and the newspaper arrives in Europe. In America the newspaper arrives in 1994 (according to its website).

4. The two dailies in the modern age

Gazeta Sporturilor in its capitalist version: on December 23, 1989, *Gazeta Sporturilor* reappears, with G. Macovei as chief editor. From this moment, chief editors change at relatively short intervals of 2, 3, 4 years, the publication trying to find its way, adapting itself to the market economy. The newspaper has a serious competition in the daily *ProSport*, of the Media Pro press group, coordinated by Ovidiu Ioanițoaia and Cătălin Tolontan, with which it disputes its primacy in the world of the Romanian sports press (according to its website). At the end of the decade, *Gazeta Sporturilor* had a circulation of 26,026 copies. Beginning with 2001 a new period of reorganization begins, with Dumitru Graur as director and Horia Ivanovici as chief editor. In 2003, the *Pro Sport* team is transferred to *Gazeta Sporturilor*, with Ovidiu Ioanițoaia as director and Cătălin Tolontan as chief editor. The gross circulation at the level of 2014 was 1,100,000 copies, of which 700,000 sales (according to the history presented on its website).

In the 2000s, as important names signed in the two dailies, collaborations widen, and content is improved. For *Gazeta Sporturilor*, the first directors of the newspaper were E. Emilian and E. Munteanu. Before the Second World War, Neagu Boerescu, Jeni Dumitrescu, Octav Luchide, Toma Alexandrescu, Ion Săvescu, A. San Galli, Nae Mărăscu, L. Roşianu, Petre Steinbach, Arthur Vogel, Virgil Ludu, Aurel Neagu, Romeo Vilara signed in *Gazeta Sporturilor*. Over time, the pages of the publication had articles and elite writers, such as Ionel Teodoreanu, Camil Petrescu, Şerban Cioculescu, Radu Cosaşu. In year 1994 the writer Ioan Chirilă became general manager, and from 1997 to 1999 Constantin Firănescu became general manager. Since 2001, *Gazeta Sporturilor* is reorganized, with Dumitru Graur as director, and Horia Ivanovici as chief editor. In 2003, Cătălin Tolontan and Ovidiu Ioanițoaia joined the management team.

As for *Gazzetta dello Sport*, in addition to Italian journalists who have made a career in this daily news (Beppe Severgnini, Mario Sconcerti), businessmen have also laid their hands on the newspaper materials (Angelo Rovelli), together with radio-TV stars (Salvatore Tommasi called Rino, Maurizio Mosca), writers (Gianni Mura, Alfo Caruso), and the cartoonist Carmelo Silva.

Comparative analysis

The editions of the first week of September 2015 of the newspapers *Gazeta Sporturilor* and *Gazzetta dello Sport* are mirrored in a content analysis meant to highlight the similarities and differences between them.

Tuesday – 1 September 2015:

Gazeta Sporturilor (24 pages) opens the first edition of September with a photo of Simona Halep on the front page. An unusual choice, if we consider that we are used to a lot of space allocated to football with and too little to other sports. This time, the editors of *Gazeta Sporturilor* informed the audience, even from the first page, that US Open, the last Grand Slam tournament of the year, begins. Under the title "Air Force Simona" the audience is informed that the player makes her debut against Marina Erakovic from New

Zealand. Surprisingly and totally unusual, the topic on the first page can only be found on page 21. A page dominated by the picture of Simona Halep and the title "The campaign begins, the first battle". The news is brief, maybe of 1000 signs, far below the news with Steaua that we find spread over four pages.

Gazzetta dello Sport (40 pages) opens the newspaper on September 1st, with a classic match between Inter and Juventus, which we further on find very quickly, in its place, treated extensively on the second page. With reactions from both sides, with statistical elements, with generous photos of the main protagonists, with eloquent figures regarding the key in which this great derby is to take place.

The second page of *Gazeta Sporturilor* focuses on the subject of the national team. The Romanian national team was to meet Hungary in three days, in a match within the European Championship Preliminaries. After other three days, the confrontation with Greece was to take place. Two fire matches, decisive for the qualification for the final tournament in France. Before these two matches, Romania occupied the first position of group F, with 14 points and a record of 4 victories and 2 draws. Begun on the second page, the topic related to the national team extends over four pages, during which one finds out that Budescu was called on his birthday by Anghel Iordănescu and that Astra's striker did not have the coach's number, and as a result, Budescu responded with "But who's on the phone? What do you want from me?". This somewhat trivial event can be seen to have received a great deal of attention, a simple miscellaneous fact being presented to us as something of great effect. On the other hand, in *Gazzetta dello Sport*, we have the opportunity to find a thorough analysis of the evolution of all Italian teams of the first league, with exceptional graphics, we are informed on the standard formulas of the teams preparing for debut, with comings and goings to and from teams, with their chances in the next championship, with elements of unbeatable statistics, elements which we find enumerated until the seventh page.

Gazeta Sporturilor allocates four pages to the team Steaua (pages 6-9), pages in which we are informed how Gigi Becali lied when he said that he had taken over Steaua from the 12th place, with a debt of 10 million dollars, the truth being that the team is placed, in January 2003, on the 3rd place. We are further on informed that the owner of Steaua wants to give up the team in case he loses the "war" with the Army for the brand, the record, and the colors of the team. It is assumed that Becali could buy the clubs Viitorul or Astra, two teams which are on an uphill slope, which did not happen though until at least February 22, 2016, and does not seem to happen too soon. *Gazzetta dello Sport* continues the football segment started on page 2 to page 20, and among the materials from domestic football few find an analysis of the most important transfers from the strongest championships in Europe but also a reference interview with Johann Cruijff. We can stop here for a moment, to emphasize the meticulousness, originality, and quality of the information we receive:

Interviewed by Cherif Ghemmour and Javier Prieto-Santos, Johan Cruijff gives in *Gazzetta dello Sport* on Tuesday, September 1st, a series of very interesting answers to questions addressed by the Italian editors. I think that a short review of some of the ideas deserves attention (the interview is extensive, on one page, with data about his career, with many other questions and topics for discussion, but we will stop at just a few):

About freedom: "*My concept of freedom is to always say what I truly believe. For example, when I was promoted to Ajax, to the big team, they wanted to pay me still as a junior, but I didn't agree. It was not necessarily about money, it was a matter of respect*", *"That is how I chose Barcelona, in the Franco era, to the detriment of Real. I chose Catalonia, because it was a region that challenged central power, but also because Michels was on the bench*". About Ajax and about Holland, as a player: *"It was a particular time in society, in general, with the Beatles, George Best, long hair, until then I wore short hair… Then there was the period when we practiced a football-show, with that reversal of positions during the game, it was a synergy between players", "A small country like the Netherlands did not prevent us from dominating the football world, from traveling. We were the first nation to come with football to New York, Indonesia, Ghana, Sudan, we were like the explorers".* The fantastic episode with his son's name, Jordi: *"My son was born in Amsterdam and I named him Jordi, as the spiritual patron of Catalonia. The notary from Spain wanted to register him Jorge in the documents but I told him no, his name is Jordi, I registered him with this name in the Netherlands anyway and if he doesn't want to register him that way, then he can invent any name he wants, it doesn't matter".* About what football means to him: *"And as long as I played and I trained, I wanted to feel good first and only then to win. It also happened to lose, but it was not a catastrophe. The Netherlands played two World Cup finals and lost both. Yes, but how many countries in the world can boast such a performance? Defeat is part of the game, you have to accept it".* Without insisting too much, it is obvious that this page 4 of the *Gazzetta dello Sport*, which focuses on the interview with one of the greatest footballers on the planet, brought something new and captivating, a reading that could not be more pleasant.

In *Gazeta Sporturilor*, on page 13, we finally find a material that can compete, by keeping the proportions, with what we found in the interview with Cruijff, respectively a report, exclusively printed, about FC Botoșani arena. The material is part of a series in which we are informed about the arenas on which the teams from League I play. Not that interesting is page 14, dedicated to *other teams*. We find here short news about Pandurii, CSMS Iași, Rapid, CFR, and CSU Craiova, while on page 16 we find two editorials, both referring to Steaua (about which we had just learned many things on pages 6-9). On page 17 there are the *tips of the day*, a page extremely appreciated by gamblers. We find here daily predictions with high chances of success, according to the tipsters of *Gazeta Sporturilor*. International football finds its place on pages 18-19. Here we find short news about Series A, Primera Division, Premier League, and the first league of France. Materials about other sports can be found on pages 22 and 23, where there are stories and information about biathlon, rowing, rugby, tennis, and wrestling. A subject is missed here, because the 8 + 1 boat of Romania, the most medaled *tricolored* crew, was in danger of missing the participation to the Olympic Games after a disastrous course at the World Championships in France, but not much fuss is made on this issue.

Gazzetta dello Sport includes instead, starting on page 26, a series of extensive materials dedicated to other sports, inclusively a page for motorsport (Hamilton) and a page for motorcycling (Rossi), cycling (Tour of Spain), basketball (internal championship), tennis (US Open), athletics (world championships), boxing, rowing, and volleyball, all rich in illustrations. On page 35, a *Gazzetta dello Sport* trademark, short news of 500 signs full of information, rankings and a calendar of equestrian, athletics, baseball, beach volleyball, ice hockey, polo, Paralympic sports, rugby, and swimming are displayed. A sports corollary meant to satisfy readers' taste for other sports. Quite unusual for a sports newspaper, the last pages, from 37 to 40, are devoted, in *Gazzetta dello Sport*, to generalist, even political news, an innovative and salutary idea for those who opening a sports newspaper can also find out what happens in the world, outside the sporting phenomenon.

We thus read about issues of global warming, about political demonstrations in Kiev, about the exhibition in Milan, about YouTube politics, about the problems of migrants or book critics. This segment is marked on the pages in question with a different color, blue, just to signal that we are being told, at the end of the newspaper, about a different issue.

To conclude, *Gazeta Sporturilor* opens the newspaper with something other than football, has a good report about FC Botoșani; allocates a lot of space to the team Steaua and too little to other sports. The subject of the first page is developed only on page 21 (within the limit of only 1000 signs). *Gazzetta dello Sport* presents a memorable interview with Johann Cruijff, the corollary of other sports (in extensor and brief), final pages (those with information from fields other than sports), richness of illustrations.

Wednesday - September 2nd, 2015:

*Gazeta Sporturilor***:** the wave of immigrants and the fact that they endanger the "game of the year: Hungary - Romania" is the topic that holds the headline of Wednesday. This is because thousands of immigrants have invaded Budapest, and local authorities are undergoing very difficult tests. This topic is discussed in detail on pages 5-7 in a very good report, made in the field by Răzvan Luțac and illustrated by Raed Krishan's photos. We have, therefore, a very successful approach, one that takes us out of the routine of mainly football information, giving a different connotation and dimension to a football game. On pages 2-4 we find preliminary information about the Hungary - Romania game and debates about the way in which Iordanescu should play, on whether it is appropriate for Budescu to appear in the first 11 with Sânmărtean. We are introduced as well to the opinion of the Hungarian Lukacs Bole, the attacker from CSMS Iași, who believes that Hungary will win on the verge and that Dzsudzsak will score from a free kick. Page 8 is also very good, as we find a presentation of the stadium where the game will be played. Groupama Arena is a stadium inaugurated only 12 months ago on the site of the "deceased" Florian Alber. The current arena has 22,000 seats and cost 40 million Euros. It is on the same page 8 that we are introduced to the referee Felix Brych. There is pertinent information, verified, documented, which gives us the dimension of the concerns of the people from Gazeta Sporturilor for this number and thus we realize that they have prepared it properly. From page 9 we find out that the Reghecampf family has been accused several times of dirty games and of connections with the betting mafia. The former mayor of Snagov (where Laurențiu Reghecampf was a trainer), Apostol Mușat, confirms for *GSP*, a dubious game from 2012 in which the couple Reghecampf was involved. Such a subject, for which in Series A for example, teams were relegated, goes almost unnoticed in our country, with an article on page 9. Somewhat strange in context, page 13 is reserved for the tipsters of the *Gazette*, those who offer us again two interesting odds. Steaua has its place. Two pages, 10-11 in which we are given a summary of the press conference held by Gigi Becali. Certainly, topics such as the qualification of the crews of two women oars and four men oars in the rowing events of the Olympic Games could easily take the place of what Gigi Becali said. Or why not, even the US Open to get a place ahead. Or if I still wanted a scandal, we could choose the subject related to the fact that the leaders of the Romanian Boxing Federation wanted to move the Olympic Center from Brăila to Satu Mare. Or the statement of President Leonard Doroftei regarding the *dubious* identified invoices. But all these topics find their place only in two pages, 17 and 18, treated, but not in detail and at their true dimensions.

Gazzetta dello Sport opens the first page on September the 2nd with a photo of the great Mancini, who arrived on the bench of the famous Inter Milan. It is the subject which will be treated on the second page, and which reveals the symbolic return of one of the greatest footballers, as a coach this time, at Inter. Then, beginning with the third page, the most important football players who can leave their prints on the championship, which was preparing to begin in Italy are presented, with their business cards, with their strengths and weaknesses, total analyses made by the newspaper's editors. The main coaches of the first league groups in Italy are also presented, with comprehensive analyzes on their abilities to determine a good course of the teams which they lead. Two exceptional pages afterwards, 6 and 7, focus on the 10th anniversary of the president of Torino, Urbano Cairo, the leader of the Torino team. In addition to the classic interview, a corollary of image-documents with the achievements or failures, year after year, of the leader of this so beloved team of Italy. The first 22 pages of *Gazzetta dello Sport* (out of 40) are dedicated to all the movements in their football, with analyzes of the teams from the first three divisions, colored with selected photos and statistical elements which make reading both enjoyable and efficient (as the reader can be updated on the life of these teams). On pages 24 and 25 we find every information about Formula 1, a page is dedicated to the Tour of Spain (cycling), one to the US Open (tennis), but we also signal the beginning of a journalistic investigation after the World Athletics Championships. We stress these words because from this number on, the journalists and editorialists of *Gazzetta dello Sport* are launching a real campaign to find out the reasons for which Italy, a regular medalist in world athletics, did not get any medal this time. Number after number, day by day, until September 7, materials, interviews, investigations are presented, aiming at revealing the causes of this failure. Investigations go deep, revealing details that would otherwise escape the eye. A very edifying example: journalists have learned that 90 percent of athletics coaches in Italy do not speak English, or it is the very language in which the main international conferences are held where technicians are educated about the news of athletics. Moreover, among the causes of Italy's failure at the World Athletics Championships there is the lack of an Olympic center specialized in the field, which led to the dissipation of sports values in this sport. It was a journalistic approach that once completed, after a week, led to resignations at the highest level of the Italian Athletics Federation. Page 33 is dedicated exclusively to rugby, page 35 contains essential information on rowing, volleyball, archery, baseball, beach volleyball, ice hockey, skiing, horse riding, swimming, water sports, and boxing, a treat for other sports enthusiasts. Classic already, the end of the newspaper is destined, on 4 pages, to general information, such as the Pope's visit, the destruction of a monument by separatist Islamists, the evolution of stock market, e-bay shopping, theater, and film critics.

To conclude, *Gazeta Sporturilor* opens the newspaper unexpectedly, on a topic about the refugee crisis that can affect a football match. It focuses on another interesting topic on page 8, related to the stadium where an international match of Romania will be played and even refers to the referee of that match, portraying him. *Gazzetta dello Sport* starts an investigation into the causes of the failure of Italian athletics, with an impressive series of articles on this issue, a process that later ended with resignations at the top of the specialized federation.

Thursday, September 3rd, 2015:

The football game between Hungary and Romania was approaching with fast steps, as the game was counting for the preliminaries of the European Championship in

France. On the front page of the *Gazeta Sporturilor* we find a kind of tip: "All clues lead to a draw tomorrow night… x with goals?". We are also announced, a little below, that Simona Halep will play against the Ukraine Bondarenko in the second round of the US Open. The urge not to miss the next day's newspaper does not go unnoticed, promising us to enjoy a special edition dedicated to the game between Hungary and Romania. The confrontation in Budapest is widely prefaced in the first four pages. We are given two team options which the coach Anghel Iordănescu could start the match with. One in which the *tricolored* start with two lockers, Hoban, and Prepeliță, as we are on the first place in the group and we do not want to lose this game, and another with only one locker, Hoban, and Budescu and Sânmărtean behind the striker Keșeru. On page 4, however, we are informed that "defeat is not a drama". Victory would have meant 99.99% qualification, but why 'complicate' ourselves? A draw would force us to wait for at least one more stage in the preliminaries to get tickets for the Euro, while a defeat would keep us alive in terms of the net favorable program that Romania had compared to Hungary and Northern Ireland. This considering that before the game in Budapest, Anghel Iordănescu's team was on the first position, with 14 points, Northern Ireland on the second place, with 13 points, and Hungary was on the third position, with 11 points. On page 6 we are also informed on "the opinion of the Hungarians". They would be satisfied with an equal score. The title of this article announces it all: "Good news for Tata Puiu: the Hungarians do not necessarily want victory with Romania. They aim for an equal score!" We find an interesting topic in the next two pages. We are introduced to "Puskas" academy, the counterpart of Hagi Academy. At the base of "Puskas", children sleep in a 300-year-old castle, meetings are held in the former winery, everything is designed by a famous architect. This is certainly where the growth of Hungarian football in recent years comes from. If in the '90s Romania won the duels with Hungary without too much effort, now that our neighbors have invested in young people and raised a new generation, the forces have balanced. From the national team, the subject slides to the favorite topic Steaua, the team led by Gigi Becali which two pages are again dedicated to. A space where we are explained how bad it is that the fans no longer come to the stadium because of its logo issues, records, and the name. We find out here that because of the lack of spectators, but also because of the high costs incurred in each game played on the National Arena, the Romanian champion reports losses after the first 8 games at home. Time has proved it as good as possible, because FCSB plays today in Pitesti. Not on the National Arena and not even in Ghencea. The subject of Steaua continues on page 11, where an x-ray of the team sports in the panoply of the Army Sports Club is made. We are informed how bad the rugby, handball, polo, volleyball, hockey, or basketball teams are doing in comparison, of course, with the football team led by Gigi Becali, a group that has won three consecutive titles in League I. The news about Dinamo, the eternal rival of Steaua players can be found on page 12, along with the TV program of the sporting events and the program of the next stages of League I. On page 13 we find an interesting thing: *the stage team*. The players of Steaua are missing from this ideal 11. And we find an explanation as well. The players were selected for this ideal team based on the data provided by InStat Football, the team not being created by the GSP publishers. Thus, part of the best team of the stage we find four players from ACS Poli Timișoara, two from CSU Craiova, two from Astra, and one from Dinamo, Petrolul, and CFR. In the pages dedicated to international football we find short and very short information about the other games of the stage of the European Championship preliminaries, but also about the way Marica refused to sign a one-season contract with PAOK Thessaloniki and to remain in Turkey. Attitude which proved to be extremely wise, because now the former striker from Schalke and Getafe is playing in League I, at Steaua. Instead of Marica, Berbatov arrived at PAOK. The scandal regarding the Olympic Boxing Center in Brăila continues and finds its place on page 18, anyway… earlier than the preview of Simona Halep's game in the second round of the US Open or than the failure suffered by Romania's 8 + 1 boat at the Championships World. Article title: "We sank!"

Gazzetta dello Sport continues the journalistic approach regarding the failure of the Italian national team at the World Athletics Championships, talking extensively about Gianmarco Tamberi, the only Italian qualified for a final of the athletics events. An extensive interview is presented, occasion on which the readers find out from the height jumper how a medal was missed in this trial as well. The last answer to the question of how we have got here is eloquent: "This is nowadays Italy. The rest of the countries have progressed and we have stopped", says the athlete. Illustrative for the US Open, in full development, is the picture on page 27, with the main protagonists, including Serena Williams and the charismatic Italian Fabio Fognini, who had just eliminated Nadal, a great victory of the Italian sport. Page 25 is also sensational, dedicated to the great Niki Lauda, perhaps the biggest name after the Brazilian Ayrton Senna in motorsport. A material to be framed, with a history of 40 years tied on the car tracks of this great Formula 1 driver. As usual, 20 pages are dedicated to football, with an overview of the foreshadowed start in the Italian domestic championship (the first three leagues) but also with a significant segment of international inter-country games, matches in development at that time. A friendly polo match between Spain and Italy gets an entire page, where we find a lot of information about the history of the meetings between these two polo powers and at the same time considerations about the next game. Always present, four pages at the end of the newspaper with general information from around the world, different from sports related information.

To conclude, *Gazeta Sporturilor* gives a report about Puskas Academy, even though not a Romanian subject, gives a very good example of a very good job. Moreover, even if introduced briefly and very briefly, the signals related to boxing and rowing issues denote a vivid concern for the topics of the day. The permanent predilection for the subject Steaua, a team that receives at least two pages daily, with the national team preparing for the end of the qualifications, Simona Halep playing at the US Open or the subject on the failure of rowing could receive more space. *Gazzetta dello Sport v*ividly continues the investigation into the failure causes of the Italian athletics who could not win any medals at the world championships, a negative premiere for this sport, in Italy. New testimonies appear, new statements, different scenarios are made, and data are gathered to elucidate the secrets of this lamentable failure. There is a collection interview with Niki Lauda. The extra are the football pages, especially the one about the US Open and the one about a polo match between Italy and Spain.

Friday – September 4th, 2015:

Gazeta Sporturilor - The first page of the special number prepared for the match Hungary - Romania day is interesting. Under the title "All in yellow, all for Romania!, encouragement before such an important match comes from everywhere. Even from where you would expect less. Discover by the help of glasses" - there is a message written in Hungarian, which if watched with 3D glasses turns into "Come on Romania and friends know why". We are informed in the following pages on what we have known for a long time: the selector's indecisions continue. Goian or Gregory in defense? Even if Anghel

Iordănescu has outlined his starting formula, this question remains. All else is normal. We will start with two lockers, as that's the only way that fits a team on the first place in the group and undefeated. The phrase 'the best defense is the attack' is unknown to our coach. The oddities announced on the first page continue on pages 4 and 5. For the first time we find information about the boycott prepared by the Hungarian supporters: dissatisfied with some decisions of the federation, the Hungarian ultras will not come to the game in Budapest. Instead, if we turn the page, we find out that "the demand for tickets was huge, so the Hungarian Federation organizes a fan-zone in the park next to the stadium". A huge screen will be placed there and the fans, probably those who did not come to the match from the page before, can watch the game very close to the stadium. Organizers expect 10,000 people to watch the match in front of the huge screen next to the stadium. On pages 8-11 we find a report drafted by Răzvan Luțac and by the photographer Raed Krishan after the two reporters of the *Gazeta* spent a day and a night with the Syrian refugees in the train station of Budapest. We find out how a Syrian woman gave birth in *exile*, how refugees sleep or pray. We also learn how the volunteers from Budapest projected cartoons with Tom and Jerry to children on a huge screen. We can also read the emotional story of the Syrian refugee Amjad Bashir, 28 years old. He wanted to pay and sleep in a hotel in Budapest but was turned down because he was a refugee. We go back to football again. The other games in the European Championship preliminaries, or at least some of them are prefaced on page 12, so that page 13 is destined for the coaches' forum in Nyon, a meeting to which Mircea Lucescu and Ionuț Lupescu (as director of the UEFA Technique Commission) were in the spotlight. That is what *Gazeta* says, we do not know if things were truly like that. As we were about to notice a premiere, namely no page about Steaua, we came across pages 14 and 15. Where, of course, we are informed on the fact that the Army wants to make a football team and Becali sets a huge price for Chipciu: 1,000,000 euros. This amount and this news circulated at the same time seem to at least maintain the dubious tastes of the readers, because a player who is a permanent player in the Romanian champion and who is part of the national team would deserve more, maybe, than the "huge" amount of 1 million euro. How could we call then the 75-million-euro amount that was paid by Manchester City for Kevin De Bruyne? Dinamo once again shares its page with the TV program of sports broadcasts. Which is too much is also too bad for a team that is supposed to be on the second place in the ranking of Romanian fans. However, Dinamo players can declare themselves lucky compared to the supporters of other teams about which not a single line is written in the most read sports newspaper in our country. We move on to other sports. Few, but present. Information about the US Open can be found on page 21. Nothing about our athletes present at the American tournament, only a material dedicated to Mardy Fish, a player who announced his retirement from his professional activity. Fish has been facing a mental imbalance materialized by panic attacks for several years. On page 22 we find news about the disaster registered by the Romanian crews at the World Rowing Championships, where the "tricolors" manage the counter-performance, unique in the history of our country, of not qualifying even one boat in the world finals. On the same page there are also boxes with short news from swimming, cycling, boxing, and rugby. One thing that should make us all sad and make us reflect is kept for the last page. It is about an interview with Alin Petrache, the president of the Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee. Petrache predicts that Romania will participate in the Olympic Games in Rio with only 50-60 athletes, considering that in London we had a delegation of 103 athletes. Mr. Alin Petrache's words say it all:

"The truth must be told. We are not well!". That is right, but if this truth is told on the last page, as an insignificant thing, it will make a big fuss.

Gazzetta dello Sport came out in 48 pages, a record of the week. A match with Malta is presented on two pages, with a complete analysis of the match, with interviews of the protagonists, with a chronicle of the match, with considerations from specialists, with inspired graphic elements, with many illustrations. It was a comprehensive and uplifting analysis for absolutely everything that had happened in this international match of Italy. A special page, with rankings, reveals the situation of all the 10 qualification groups of the other teams on the continent, in a flawless graphic presentation, with played matches, with the recorded results and with the program of the next matches. Five pages, a record, and an inside cover introduce us to the atmosphere of the great international confrontations in Eurobasketball, a pleading for this sport, pigmented with results and considerations of the specialists in the field. Two vividly illustrated pages show us everything that moves in Formula 1, with statements that reveal the latest news in the field and that awaken in readers some of the most special feelings about this very special sport. An item that gives the size of newspaper ads can be found on page 31, where an entire page is bought by a famous perfume company. The ongoing investigation into the causes of failure of the Italian athletics continues, this time with interviews with those responsible at the head of the federation. Tennis, basketball, volleyball, athletics, are indispensable pages at the end of the newspaper, before the last pages, dedicated as usual to international events, other than sports events.

To sum up, *Gazeta Sporturilor* continues the series of questions related to the failure of rowing, even if the story is not taken beyond the level of somewhat rhetorical questions, and there is a good report on refugees from Hungary. The inaccuracies about the Hungarian fans continue, as on one page information make us believe that they were boycotting the game while on another we are informed that all the tickets for the game had been sold. A sad subject, the possibility that our country would have half of the participants from the last edition of the Olympic Games, is introduced on the last page, without the subject developed, but treated only at the stage of a declaration of a head of the Romanian Olympic Committee. As for *Gazzetta dello Sport,* the thoroughness with which the investigation about athletics continues, with authorized voices from the head of the specialized federation who pour ashes on their heads or defend themselves, as the case may be, because of this failure. There is also allocation of generous spaces to the sports phenomena of Formula 1 and tennis, sports that held very important competitions this week.

Saturday – September 5th, 2015:

Gazeta Sporturilor: The front page tells us what we have already known for a long time. "Nobody forced it, so everyone's early anticipated draw came out". The equal from Budapest is illustrated by a duel in which Claudiu Keșeru is involved. From the mimicry of his face, we see a slight helplessness, which characterized the whole team of *tricolored*. Surprisingly maybe, only three pages are dedicated to the game in Budapest. The message, however, is quite clear: "We were content with an equal in Budapest. Although we could have got the qualification points". We also have the record of the game, in which Tătărușanu, Dragoș Grigore, and Gabi Torje got the highest score, 7. We are also provided a photo capture in which we can see how the "tricolors" should have benefited from a penalty kick. Beautiful things, it is such a pity that they are very rare in our sports press. It is still on this page that we can see the other results recorded in the 7th stage of the

European Championship preliminaries, with an editorial signed by Cristian Geambașu entitled "The sleep of reason gives birth to zero football". On page 4, the Hungarian supporters are characterized as unwelcome to the Romanians. If the National adult Team had brought a point from Budapest, the under-21 team lost, without the right to appeal, at a score of 0-2, the match played at home with Bulgaria, counting for the Euro 2017 preliminaries. This topic is discussed on page 5, where an advertisement at a bookmaker takes up exactly as much space as the text of the match news. Pages 7-9 are reserved for international football. On two pages we have the chronicles of the matches Netherlands - Iceland, Cyprus - Wales and Italy - Malta, while on one page we find out how Mircea Lucescu wanted to take his team off the field after a fight in the friendly game with Carpi. On the same page we have a box with short, or even very short news about the championships in England, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Germany. We can claim that a historical thing happens in pages 10-13, where Steaua and Dinamo were allocated the same number of pages, two for each team, something rare to very rare encounter in *Gazeta Sporturilor.* The other sports find their place from page 16 onwards. Meaning on five pages. On the first page we find *crowded* information about triathlon, handball, and cycling. This considering that the Tour of Spain is being in evolution and is one of the important stages in the world of cycling. We find information on this subject in a news item of about 100 signs. US Open reigns on page 17. Here we find a preview of the game between Simona Halep and Shelby Rogers, together with a news item entitled "Relaxing experience" about how Halep and Horia Tecău passed in the second round in the mixed doubles. Pages 18 and 19 are two special pages. We find here an interview with Hari Dumitraș, the president of the Romanian Rugby Federation, a man who has participated to three editions of the World Cup, as a player and a coach, and who, as a president of the federation, is involved in the fourth Cup Career World Cup. Hari Dumitraș reveals in this interview the fact that he is 'condemned' to stay in the box to watch Romania's matches, although he always prefers the role of being on the grass, next to our boys. We also find that the role of a president is to "preside, to ensure good conditions, not to make groups of players". Thing which, I say, is often neglected by the 'colleagues' in football. A comparison is made in this interview between the budget of the Romanian national rugby team, which amounts to 5 million euros, and that of England, the British enjoying a budget of 156 million euros. On the last page of the newspaper, we find an excellent brand new material. It is a story written by Cătălin Oprișan, in his delicious style, about a documentary made by Thiago, the Bayern Munich footballer, who decided to film his recovery period after a terrible injury, from the moment his ligaments parted until the moment he returned to the lawn.

Gazzetta dello Sport: the newspaper has an innovative front page, which contains no less than 15 references inwards, a real record in the matter, especially since they do not give the feeling of a loaded page, on the contrary, it is pleasant to the eye and extremely easy to follow. As usual, 20 pages are full of football, with the most diverse and at the same time comprehensive information. A very interesting page is the one numbered 31, in which we find information about the great cyclist Pantani, who died in strange circumstances in 2004, according to some because he used banned substances. A remember of the life of a great cyclist. Italy - Turkey, in Eurobaschet receives two generous pages, with excellent photos and texts from the category of those who elucidate everything that moves in connection with this important match for the two countries. The game Wales - Italy from the Six Nations Tournament also receives two pages, with infographs, photos, statements, interviews, probable teams, match referees, weather, and turf. The analysis about athletics is also present, with new clarifying information. Unusually, the last page is one with an advertisement, and not just any advertisement, but one advertising for the most famous swimming equipment company.

To sum up, *Gazeta Sporturilor* marks an extremely successful publication of the newspaper, with some interesting pages and topics: the interview with one of the great rugby players of Romania, Hari Dumitraș, the story of Oprișan, the most professional approach of the game between Romania and Hungary, with chronicles and pictures of the protagonists, the distribution of a somewhat balanced space for Steaua and the other teams of the internal championship. As for Gazzetta dello Sport, the recall of the figure of Pantani, one of the most beloved and charismatic cyclists of all time. At the same time, two pages are dedicated to cycling, because the Tour of Spain was still taking place those days. Allocation of generous spaces to inter-country rugby and basketball games, games for which Italy had high hopes and which were treated at the importance of the event itself, and a continuation of the athletics series.

Sunday – September 6, 2015:

Gazeta Sporturilor: The game in Budapest has passed and the confrontation with Greece will follow on our grounds. The front page is divided unequally between Simona Halep and the national football team. In the upper part, on about a quarter of a page, we are informed that Simona Halep has qualified for the Champions Tournament in Singapore. Below, on the rest of the page, we have a picture of Lucian Sânmărtean and Constantin Budescu and the title: "Father Puiu has become brave ... Fantasy against the Greeks", a bit optimistic, knowing that in recent history, the Romanian national team has not ever left room for fantasy but rather for seclusion/ lack of imagination. On page 2, calculations begin. We would get 4 points, say the journalists of *Gazeta*, given that Romania still must play with Greece (home), Finland (home), and the Faroe Islands (away). Then, on page three, we are given a team version, with two lockers as well, it was just a matter of fantasy however, only that one of them could be Sânmărtean. On page 4, in addition to an editorial signed by Ovidiu Ioanițoaia who claims that we were content with little in Budapest, we also see an analysis of how the *tricolored* played with Hungary. The idea is very good, only when it comes to writing, the GSP journalist wrote a sentence about each player. Then, on page 5, we have the opinions of some football specialists, as they are called in our media. The president of the Romanian Football Federation, Răzvan Burleanu, is satisfied with the equal score from Budapest, the same as Ionel Ganea. On the other side, on the side of the dissatisfied, we find Ciprian Marica, Cornel Dinu, and Sorin Cârțu. On pages 6 and 7 we find materials on the way in which the supporters of the two representatives behaved. After the final whistle of the game, the Hungarians unleashed hell on the streets of Budapest. Thousands of supporters and law enforcement clashed around the stadium. It was left with serious injuries, damaged cars, and broken trams. In our camp, things were approximately the same, except that the scandal moved in the stands, where the Dinamo fans got into a fight with the fans of Steaua. Both galleries are there to encourage the Romanian national team. We move on to League I championship that is allocated pages 10-13, where we find information about Steaua, Dinamo, ACS Poli, Pandurii, surprisingly, the people from Gorj have even allocated an entire page for an interview with Vasco Fernandes. Page 14 is dedicated to the Universitatea Cluj. It is the first time in a week that information about League II appears as news. The material in question refers to the superb gesture of the Red Caps fans, who came to the game with UTA Arad, played on Saturday on Cluj Arena, directly from the Hungary - Romania game. On this page we can also find a box with the program and the ranking of the two series of the Second League. Page 18 is again divided into handball, rowing (where the World Championship disaster was sweetened after Romania qualified for three events for the Rio Olympics) and Formula 1, a topic that may have many readers should it provide more information. The fact that Simona Halep got the tickets for the Champions Tournament in Singapore is kept for page 19. A page where we find news about the US Open as well, a tournament that Nadal left in the third round. The last page of the Sunday *Gazeta Sporturilor* looks just like that, a filling page. We find there Daiana Andon, the girlfriend of midfielder Laurențiu Buș. She is considered, by GSP journalists, as one of the most beautiful friends of footballers from Transylvania.

Once again, *Gazzetta dello Sport* decides to open with something other than football, allocating the front page to Formula 1 news. Additionally, on the first page there are 14 references within, very interesting by spotting the topic in several hundreds of signs for each topic. The idea of the front page is fully sustained by a main on two pages (pages 2 and 3), full of information and illustrations about Formula 1. Moreover, until page 8 the information is all about Formula 1. On page 28 we find a vast material about Mussolini and his connections with football. Cycling receives the entire page 32 and rowing the entire page 33. US Open has its share on two pages, 34 and 35, the place of honor being the performance of the Italian Fognini who took the great Nadal out of the fight. Basketball also occupies two pages, 36 and 37, in a corollary of events related to Eurobasketball. The rugby game between Wales and Italy also receives a page of chronicles and impressions after the game, with spectacular illustrations. And again, a last entire page paid by a great equipment company.

To conclude, *Gazeta Sporturilor* could be evaluated as follows*:* a very good idea to give pros and cons after the result of the national team game, even if the selected people are not the most suitable ones (Ionel Ganea, for example, a coach without great results); it allocates, for the first time, a large space to a second league team; it allocates an entire page to a team other than Steaua, we refer to Pandurii Tîrgu Jiu, a team that surely deserves such an exposure. *Gazzetta dello Sport:* entire pages are devoted to cycling, to the Tour of Spain, an approach that continues daily on two pages. The other sports that have ongoing international competitions have dedicated large spaces, namely basketball and high-level tennis. The events in Formula 1 receive full pages, at an exposure that such a great competition deserves, moreover, the newspaper opens with Formula 1, a sign of consideration for motorsport.

Conclusions

The two dailies have the same editorial line, as they intend to create a synthetic image of the sports movement in Italy and in Romania, but at the same time both try to reflect international sports phenomenon. Even though they both illustrate a concrete sporting reality, the means of expression are not identical as they are modeled on the particularities of the receiving public. If *Gazzetta dello Sport* grounds its approach on the premise that its audience is educated and very pretentious when it comes to sports, *Gazeta Sporturilor* deliberately lowers the bar sometimes trying to catch the taste for ease that the Romanian public still does not seem to reject.

The media discourse is influenced, in the case of *Gazeta Sporturilor*, by the readers' appetite for can-can, but especially thanks to the Romanian editor-in-chief, Cătălin

Tolontan, high quality information is present, sometimes it manages to take even the pulse of the Romanian press as a whole. The journalistic investigations of the Tolontan brand have made the agenda of the Romanian population lately, through the quality of the journalistic act, through the impact on the entire society and especially through the change of some mentalities and actions following the appearance of the press materials from *Gazeta Sporturilor*.

Gazeta Sporturilor seems to be too focused on major political surveys (even if 80 percent of them are related to the world of sports, such as the issues of the national stadium or Gala Bute), to the detriment of similar surveys that would strictly target sports field. No later than during the period under analysis, a statement of the president of the Romanian Olympic Committee appears tangentially, on a last page, informing that we will have only 50 athletes in Rio de Janeiro, in 2016, after we had over 100 in London. This number represents a real negative record in the modern history of Romanian Olympics and the subject would have been an extremely tender one: the causes of this decline.

Moreover, the predilection for football and especially for the team Steaua is obvious. A team that has not stood out much lately receives generous spaces, at least two in the period under analysis to the detriment of other teams which, for example, remain unmentioned in the period of reference. It also captures this predilection especially at a time when the focus is on the national team but also at a time when Gigi Becali may deserve, however, a slightly less dense exposure.

The subject *Simona Halep* is mentioned though not enough. However, Romania gives world tennis the 2nd place player in the hierarchy and for a week, exactly at the beginning of a Grand Slam tournament, we find out too little about her preparations or games. We hardly or simply tangentially find in the pages of *Gazeta Sporturilor* in the period of reference information about the second league football, and we do not find information about big competitions in progress during that period, such as the World Volleyball Cup, the European Basketball Championship, or Formula 1, a sport otherwise very popular with many sports lovers. As for the presentation of sports other than football, information is scarce and little, sometimes completely missing, as if they did not even exist.

However, compared to the news and information on the central market of sports media (we refer here to all other publications issued in the online) *Gazeta Sporturilor* maintains whatever remains to be maintained on the market. The writing level of the editorialists is very good, and the reports made GSP are classy and professional. Investigations are also a registered trademark of *Gazeta Sporturilor* and in most cases have been proven to be thoroughly conducted, since they have led to resignations of high dignitaries or even to their arrest. *Gazzetta dello Sport* appears all over Europe, up to date. It may be the reason why its topics go beyond the walls of national news and focus on international topics with the ease of the one who feels powerful.

Even though more than half of the newspaper is dedicated to football, from the total of 40 pages, more than a third of the other sports are also debated. And its remaining pages cover not only a few sports but many, some that in Romania we have not heard of over the years, such as ice hockey, swimming, baseball, archery or, why not, Paralympic sports. The newspaper's investigations are serious, focused on sports issues, an obvious direction even in the period under analysis. After a week of hard writing on the failure of Italy's national athletics team at the World Championships, senior federation leaders have resigned. The interviews are exceptional in the pages of the newspapers under analysis even the one with Gheorghe Hagi, a sign that his efforts for the revitalization of Romanian football did not remain without echo in Italy. The interview with Johan Cruijff is another memorable interview, with amazing statements from the Dutchman, some of which shock or make you reflect in the most serious way.

The illustrations are very rich, professionally made, and eloquent for the subjects under debate and are accompanied by photo explanations that complete the visual information. Statistical elements, which are of outmost importance for sports enthusiasts, are impeccably presented in graphic forms that are easy to understand and especially to assimilate. An important element, perhaps too little approached in the activity sphere in Romania is the follow-up. Many times, we are fed with news and events in Romania, without being afterwards given a follow-up, their development or settlement. In *Gazzetta dello Sport* this follow-up is strictly observed. Ads are obviously important since there are even fully covered pages, meaning that the material support comes in the most serious way from these sources. We can conclude that while *Gazeta Sporturilor* sometimes replaces the coaches' opinions, making and breaking teams, occupying the pages of the newspaper with more or less important news about a single football team and its owner, *Gazzetta dello Sport* publishes interviews, analyzes, chronicles and adopts perfect marketing strategies, allocating relatively equal spaces to rival teams in Milan, attracting supporters of both teams as readers.

Thus, returning to the mission outspoken by the founder of *Gazzetta dello Sport*, Eugenio Camillo Costamagna, more than a century ago: "In order to write about sport, we must be able to adjust to times, to anticipate and to be there. Sports newspapers don't just have to give news. And to get to the end we have to dare. Let's hope that this will be the case anyway, that we will not be missing goodwill and energy in what we set out to do". But is this mission accomplished?

If we look at the newspaper on the famous pink paper from the outside, we could say that his mission has been accomplished. From the inside, however, the writer Marco Malvaldi concludes in our place: "There was a time when football was focused on in the Gazzetta only out of courtesy, an emblem on which football is written during the summer. The rest of the newspaper was dedicated to athletics, swimming, cycling or boxing. Today, however, football has the power of a monopoly, starting from the first page with hypotheses about transfers from one club to another, which may or may not be confirmed later".

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Cash savings and price informativeness: the case of renewable energy stock markets

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ABSTRACT
The study investigates the relationship between cash savings and price informativeness on a sample of 125 companies from the renewable energy sector. These companies are engaged in the generation and distribution of renewable and clean energy using alternative energy sources like solar, wind, biofuels, biomass, hydroelectric, and geothermal to meet the need for a low-carbon society. Investment in renewable energy has increased rapidly in the last decades as a response to the unequivocal climate change. Investors worldwide recognize the importance of the sector and the opportunities for value creation it presents. In this framework, the companies' development and success are closely related to the resource management. Those companies that have the means to pursue new solutions and/ or technology that encounter the global challenges and concerns are in better position to grow and expand.

By focusing on the informational role played by stock prices on cash savings, this paper provides evidence that decisions on corporate cash savings depend on managers learning from the stock market. Using two measures of price informativeness – idiosyncratic volatility or firm-specific variation and price non-synchronicity – and a set of control variables designed to capture a number of factors that affect cash savings decisions that may also directly correlate with stock price and its informativeness we follow Chen, Goldstein, and Jiang (2007) and examine the relation between the informativeness of stock prices and the sensitivity of savings to price. Our unbalanced panel results show that firms appear to save more when they experience positive shocks to their stock price, therefore cash savings become significantly more sensitive to stock price when firm-specific return variation is high. Therefore, prices with large content of private information provide managers with new information, which, in turn, affects their savings behavior.

Keywords: price informativeness, renewable energy, cash savings, stock markets.

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Introduction

In recent years, many finance researchers have been trying to understand if and how managers learn from the evolution of their stock price on the market. The stock price reflects various categories of information via the trading activity of different investors and managers may not have yet some of these specific information. This new information may concern financing opportunities, future investment (see Dow & Gorton, 1997; Subrahmanyam & Titman, 1999), the future demand for the firms' products, firms' relationships with their different stakeholders or future competitive changes. Thus, to the extent that prices really inform managers, cash savings and other corporate decisions should be influenced by the informational content of prices. In addition, if managers learn from the stock market and use this information properly, they can adjust their decisions and allocate the resources more efficiently, which in turn reflects on the firm value. Understanding this learning process is very important in assessing the impact of financial markets on the real economy. Yet, researchers have been concerned so far with the effects of managerial learning on corporate investment (Bakke & Whited, 2010; Chen, Goldstein, & Jiang, 2007; Durnev, Morck, & Yeung, 2004; Luo, 2005) and have focused very little on the economic mechanisms underlying the companies' saving process.

This study provides strong evidence that managers learn from their stock price when they make corporate savings decisions and contributes to the literature in several ways. First, by focusing on the informational role played by stock prices on cash savings behaviors, the paper highlights that the availability of information appears to be a key factor in explaining the firm's cash policy and fills the gap in the existing literature on this subject. Both theory and economic intuition show that managers can collect a large diversity of useful information from the stock price that also includes the information that has not been incorporated into the price yet. Because the managerial learning process is more intense when a larger fraction of private information from investors is impounded in stock prices, cash savings should be more sensitive to price when the price contains more private information, i.e., information that is new to managers. Second, it is the first study that examines the relation between cash savings and price informativeness focusing on renewable energy stock markets. We choose this sector due to its growing importance and impact on our everyday life. According to a report of United Nations Environment Program, investment in sustainable energy is rapidly increasing and continues to attract strong capital investment at all stages of the financing lifecycle as a response to a number of global challenges and concerns, including climate change, increasing energy demand, and energy security. The investment community recognizes the importance of the sector and the opportunities for value creation it presents. Consumers and companies are supporting the roll out of a new energy infrastructure and a change in individual and corporate behavior. Most importantly, governments and policy makers are introducing legislation and support mechanisms to accelerate the development of the sector. In this framework, the companies' development and success is closely related to the resource management. Those companies that have the means to pursue new solutions and/ or technology that encounter the global challenges are in better position to grow and expand. Cash savings provide an important advantage over product market rivals (Boutin et al., 2009; Frésard, 2010), represent a useful tool to manage firms' relationship with their suppliers (Itzkowitz, 2010), and may counteract costly or limited access to external financing (Acharya, Almeida, & Campello, 2006; Almeida, Campello, & Weisbach, 2004).

Literature review

The idea that managers learn from the stock markets relies primarily on Hayek's (1945) work. He argued that managers can improve the allocation of resources by analyzing the informational content of stock prices which efficiently aggregate information from various participants. Grossman and Stiglitz (1980) or Kyle (1985) sustain that this aggregation is due to the trading activity of diverse speculators that transmit their private information into market prices, information that managers may not possess, and thus help reduce the information asymmetry between them. Dow and Gorton (1997) developed a theoretical model that reflects the transfer of important information from the stock market to managers guiding them to better corporate investment. Similarly, Subrahmanyam and Titman (1999) conclude that between public and private financing, the former one enriches the informational content of stock prices. Thus, when information is very important for the allocation of corporate resources public financing is preferred. Other studies that reveal the impact of financial markets on the real economy reflected in improved efficiency of managers' decisions and increased firm value due to the transfer of information via stock prices are those of Chang and Yu (2004), Dye and Sridhar (2002), Foucault and Gehrig (2008), Goldstein and Guembel (2008), Morck, Shleifer, and Vishny (1990), Stein (2003).

On the other hand, the vast majority of the empirical studies have exclusively and surprisingly focused on the relation between the informational content of stock prices and investment decisions. For example, Durnev, Morck, and Yeung (2004) show that more informative stock prices have a significant impact on the efficiency of firms' investments. A similar result is obtained by Chen, Goldstein, and Jiang (2007) or Bakke and Whited (2010). They conclude that managers use the information they extract from observing their stock price to adjust their investment decisions. Foucault and Frésard (2012) analyze a sample of foreign firms that cross-list on U.S. exchanges and highlight the positive impact of stock price on corporate investment. But, given the fact that managers may benefit from new information reflected in stock prices, informative prices are likely to influence other decisions managers must make.

Besides their well-known impact on future investment, we show that saving decisions are sensitive to the information that managers learn from the stock market. In this context, because cash savings are related to investment prospects, they will react to price if prices transmit important signals about prospects. Numerous studies document that companies accumulate cash in order to finance future investment, therefore, cash savings can be considered a specific type of investment in financial assets. For example, Almeida, Campello, and Weisbach (2004) and Acharya, Almeida, and Campello (2007) sustain that firms are cautious and save cash to finance future projects especially when other sources of future financing are uncertain. Dasgupta, Noe, and Wang (2011) or Denis and Sibilkov (2009) reach similar conclusions. In addition, to the extent that stock prices comprise different strategic dimensions (e.g., the evolution of other competitors in the product market or changes in the relationships with employees and suppliers) cash savings can be sensitive to the informational content of prices.

Data and methodology

Data

The study was conducted on an unbalanced panel of 125 equities from 17 developed markets and 7 developing markets over 7 years, from January 2013 to December 2019. In forming the sample, we started with all the stocks listed on the stock markets which are included in the field of renewable energy and could be found on Thomson Eikon database, respectively a total of 393 titles. The final sample of 125 titles was obtained by applying cumulatively three types of filters. First, for the period 2013-2019 we selected those stocks for which there were data available for the study variables in at least 5 of the 7 years. In the second stage we applied the filters proposed by Jin and Myers (2006) - each year, we removed the stocks that were not listed for at least 26 weeks - obtaining a sample of 158 companies. In the third stage, because of the unavailability of data for control variables, we removed several companies from the developing markets, obtaining the final sample of 125 stocks from 17 developed markets and 7 developing countries.

Table 1 presents the structure of the final sample and shows the countries, the name of the stock markets where the stocks are listed, the stock market indices on these markets and the number of stocks on each market. For each of the 125 companies we downloaded from Thomson Eikon the weekly close prices (Friday to Friday) to determine price informativeness measures and accounting data.

Table 1. Sample structure

Country	**Stock market**	**Stock market index**	**No. stocks**	Equally-weighted R^2	Equally-weighted $\log(\sigma^2_{\varepsilon,j})$
Developed countries					
Australia	Australian Stock Exchange Ltd/National Stock Exchange of Australia Ltd	S&P/ASX 20 Index	2	0,2023	0,0976
Belgium	Euronext Brussels	BEL20 Index	1	0,1854	0,0888
Canada	The Toronto Stock Exchange/TSX Venture Exchange - NEX	TSX-Toronto Stock Exchange 300 Composite Index	3	0,2775	0,1065
Denmark	OMX Nordic Exchange Copenhagen A/S	OMX Copenhagen 20 Index	1	0,3910	0,0431
France	Euronext Paris	CAC 40 Index	3	0,2363	0,0709
Germany	Frankfurt Stock Exchange	Deutsche Boerse DAX Index	4	0,2021	0,1491
	Xetra	Deutsche Boerse DAX Index	4	0,2674	0,0543
Hong Kong	The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Ltd	Hang Seng Index	17	0,2354	0,0816
Italy	Milan Stock Exchange	FTSE MIB Index	1	0,2764	0,0638
Japan	Tokyo Stock Exchange	Nikkei 225 Index	4	0,2636	0,0711
Netherlands	Euronext Amsterdam	Amsterdam Exchanges Index	1		
Norway	Oslo Stock Exchange	OBX Price Index	1	0,2677	0,1025
Portugal	Euronext Lisbon	Euronext Lisbon PSI 20 Index	1	0,2867	0,0663
Singapore	Singapore Exchange Securities Trading Ltd	FTSE Straits Times Index	2	0,2177	0,1003
Spain	Madrid Stock Exchange	IBEX 35 Index(L)	1	0,4343	0,04426
Sweden	OMX Nordic Exchange Stockholm AB - cash	OMX Stockholm 30 Index	2	0,2291	0,1170
UK	London Stock Exchange	FTSE 100 Index	7	0,2260	0,0882
US	NYSE/NASDAQ	Standard&Poor's 500/Nasdaq 100 index	20	0,2935	0,0889

Developing countries					
China	Shanghai Stock Exchange/ Shenzhen Stock Exchange	Shanghai 50	23	0,3666	0,0578
India	BSE Ltd/National Stock Exchange of India	Nifty 50 Index	8	0,2601	0,08811
Korea (South)	Korea Exchange – KSE/ Korea Exchange - KOSDAQ	Kospi 11 Index	7	0,3112	0,0593
Philippines	Philippine Stock Exchange, Inc	PSE Composite Index	1	0,1826	0,0675
Poland	Warsaw Stock Exchange	WIG20 Index	1	0,1665	0,1084
Taiwan	Taiwan Stock Exchange	Taiwan Weighted Index	9	0,3021	0,0565
Thailand	The Stock Exchange of Thailand	SET Index	2	0,2708	0,0579

Measures of stock price informativeness

To determine the informational content of stock price, we use two measures: price non-synchronicity and idiosyncratic volatility. These two measures are interchangeable only to some extent, the role of the informational environment in choosing the best proxy for firm-specific returns variations being very important (Bartram, Brown, & Stulz, 2012; Li, Richardson, & Tuna, 2014). For example, when the information environment is heterogeneous idiosyncratic volatility could be a better proxy than price non-synchronicity (Zhang et al., 2016).

In computing the first measure, we estimate annually the coefficient of determination from the expanded market model of Jin and Myers (2006):

$$r_{i,j,t} = \alpha_{i,j} + \beta_{1,i} r_{L,j,t-2} + \beta_{2,i} r_{L,j,t-1} + \beta_{3,i} r_{L,j,t} + \beta_{4,i} r_{L,j,t+1} + \beta_{5,i} r_{L,j,t+2}$$
$$+\beta_{6,i} r_{US,t-2} + +\beta_{7,i} r_{US,t-1} + +\beta_{8,i} r_{US,t} + +\beta_{9,i} r_{US,t+1} + +\beta_{10,i} r_{US,t+2} + \varepsilon_{i,j,t}$$

where $r_{i,j,t}$ is the weekly return of stock i of country j in week t, $r_{L,j,t}$ is the weekly local market return of country j in week t, and $r_{US,t}$ is the weekly US market return in week t. $R_{i,j}^2$ is an inverse measure of price informativeness, thus we compute the difference $1 - R_j^2$ to obtain the price non-synchronicity measure, where R_j^2 is the annually equally-weighted average of the $R_{i,j}^2$s of the individual stocks in country j. A higher value of $1 - R_j^2$ indicates that the stock price is more informative, more firm-specific information being embedded into the stock price, i.e., a significant portion of a stock return variation is not explained by market movements. Because $1 - R_j^2$ measure is bounded within the $[0,1]$ interval, in regressions we used the logistic transformation of it:

$$\psi_j = log\left(\frac{1 - R_j^2}{R_j^2}\right)$$

The second measure of stock price informativeness($\log(\sigma_{\varepsilon,j}^2)$), idiosyncratic volatility or firm-specific variation, is the logarithm of average residual sum of squares from the market model of Jin and Myers (2006). In fact, ψ_j is the result of a balance between firm-specific variation and market-wide variation:

$$\psi_j = log\left(\frac{1-R_j^2}{R_j^2}\right)\log\left(\frac{\sigma_{\varepsilon,j}^2}{\sigma_{m,j}^2}\right) = \log(\sigma_{\varepsilon,j}^2) - \log(\sigma_{m,j}^2)$$

Panel methodology

We follow Chen, Goldstein, and Jiang (2007) and examine the relation between the informativeness of stock prices and the sensitivity of savings to price, through the following model:

$$Savings_{i,t} = \alpha_i + \beta_1 Q_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 PI_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 (PI_{i,t-1} \cdot Q_{i,t-1}) + \delta \cdot Firm\_Control_{t-1} + \eta_t + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

All the variables are described in Table 2.

First, we include $\mathrm{PI}_{i,t-1}$ separately to control for the impact of private information on cash savings. Second, we include the matrix $Firm\_Control$ to control for several factors that affect cash savings decisions and may also be directly correlate with stock price and its informational content. Specifically, we consider the $Size$ of the company to eliminate its impact on the true need to accumulate cash. We include $Cash$, the cash holdings at the beginning of period, because the corporate decision to save or not depends on the available stock of cash. Because it is indicated to maintain a precautionary attitude when transforming cash inflows into cash savings, we include cash flow (CF) as a control variable (Almeida, Campello, & Weisbach, 2004; Riddick & Whited, 2009). We account for time-invariant firm heterogeneity and time effects by including firm fixed effects as well as time dummies (α_i and η_t). We follow Petersen (2009) and the standard errors are double clustered at country and year levels. Finally, we allow the error term to be serially correlated for the same company. In our model, the coefficient β_3 presents the main interest. If it is significantly positive, then savings decisions are influenced by the amount of private information impounded in the price.

Table 2. Variable description

Variable	Description
PI	Price informativeness measure (price non-synchronicity/idiosyncratic volatility).
Cash	Cash and short-term investment scaled by total assets.
Total assets	Total assets (in million USD).
Savings	Cash and short-term investment minus 1-year lagged Cash and short-term investment divided by 1-year lagged total assets.
Q	Market value of equity plus book value of assets minus book value of equity minus deferred taxes, scaled by total assets.
ψ_t	Price non-synchronicity – firm-specific return variation computed as $\psi_t = \ln\left(\frac{1-R_{i,t}^2}{R_{i,t}^2}\right)$, where $R_{i,t}^2$ represents the R^2 from the expanded market model proposed by Jin and Myers (2006).
$\log(\sigma_{\varepsilon,j}^2)$	Idiosyncratic volatility – logarithm of average residual sum of squares from the expanded market model proposed by Jin and Myers (2006).
Size	Logarithm of total assets.

CF	Sum of net income before extraordinary items and depreciation and amortization scaled by total assets.
Capex	Capital expenditures computed as capital expenditures minus sales of property, plant, and equipment divided by total assets.
NWC	Net working capital computed as current noncash assets minus current liability divided by total assets.
Δ NWC	Change in net working capital ($NWC_t - NWC_{t-1}$).
ShortDebt	Short-term debt computed as short-term debt divided by total assets.
Δ ShortDebt	Change in short-term debt computed ($ShortDebt_t - ShortDebt_{t-1}$).
Individualism	Cultural dimension from Hofstede 2010.
UAI	Cultural dimension from Hofstede 2010.

Empirical results

Model (1) from *Table 3* (in *Table 4* it is missing because the estimations would be identical) presents the results of a simple OLS regression of cash savings ($Savings$) on stock price (Q). We observe a positive and significant relation between $Savings$ and Q, with a coefficient for Q estimated at 0.0029, significant at 1% level. The result is similar with that obtain by Almeida, Campello, and Weisbach (2004) and Riddick and Whited (2009) and confirms that savings are positively correlated with prices. The more informative is the price, respectively the larger is the content of private information embedded in price, the more intense is the managerial learning process, which, in turn, influences the savings behavior. When firm-specific return variation is high, cash savings are more sensitive to stock price, therefore firms apparently save more when they experience positive shocks to their stock price. This effect has a small but non-negligible economic magnitude.

Model (2) from *Table 3*, respectively Model (1) from *Table 4* display the central finding of this paper. The coefficient for $\mathrm{PI} \cdot \mathrm{Q}$ is positive and statistically significant (0.0002 with a t-statistic of 2.32, respectively 0.0019 with a t-statistic of 2.96). Cash savings are more sensitive to stock price when the price contains a larger amount of new information which means in fact private information. Managers appear to save more following a positive signal given by the market price, when this signal contains a larger amount of private investors' information.

After we introduced more control variables in regression, the results remain unchanged (models (3), (4), (5)). In addition, regardless the measure of price informativeness, the positive coefficient for $PI \cdot Q$ remains significant.

Table 3. Idiosyncratic volatility and Saving-to-Price Sensitivity

	Dependent variable: Savings (annual change in cash holdings)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Q_{t-1}	0.0029*** (4.15)	0.0029*** (3.44)	0.0028*** (2.73)	0.0023** (2.50)	0.0022** (2.43)
PI_{t-1}		0.0619 (1.49)	0.0763* (1.88)	0.0422* (1.93)	0.0398* (1.69)
$Q_{t-1} \times PI_{t-1}$		**0.0002** (2.32)**	**0.0002** (2.02)**	**0.0001* (1.96)**	**0.0001** (2.22)**
CF_t			0.0056 (1.55)	-0.0344 (-0.85)	-0.0305 (-1.06)
$Size_t$			-0.0103 (-0.57)	-0.0137 (-1.02)	-0.0169 (-1.53)
$Cash_{t-1}$			0.3629* (1.80)	0.2223* (1.69)	0.2007 (1.54)
$Capex_t$				-0.0130	-0.0092

				(-1.07)	(-1.19)
ΔNWC_t				0.0586 (0.41)	0.0549 (0.48)
$\Delta ShortDebt_t$				-0.0481 (-0.41)	-0.0500 (-0.52)
Individualism					0.0003 (0.92)
UAI					-0.0007 (-1.48)
Country effect	FE	FE	FE	FE	RE
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R – squared	0.021	0.036	0.059	0.412	0.415
Observations	857	834	712	706	706

Note: $PI = \log(\sigma^2_{\varepsilon,j})$

Table 4. Non-synchronicity and Saving-to-Price Sensitivity

	Dependent variable: Savings (annual change in cash holdings)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Q_{t-1}	-0.0005 (-0.40)	-0.0012 (-0.79)	-0.0024** (-2.03)	-0.0029* (-1.85)
PI_{t-1}	-0.0226 (-0.93)	-0.0442 (-1.43)	-0.0251 (-1.44)	-0.0393* (-1.90)
$Q_{t-1} \times PI_{t-1}$	**0.0019*** (2.96)**	**0.0023*** (2.85)**	**0.0027*** (4.36)**	**0.0028*** (3.99)**
CF_t		0.0067 (1.42)	-0.0346 (-0.84)	-0.0300 (-1.04)
$Size_t$		-0.0224 (-0.90)	-0.0207 (-1.41)	-0.0249*** (-2.16)
$Cash_{t-1}$		0.3592* (1.70)	0.2211 (1.61)	0.1950 (1.47)
$Capex_t$			-0.0142 (-1.12)	-0.0098 (-1.22)
ΔNWC_t			0.0634 (0.44)	0.0591 (0.52)
$\Delta ShortDebt_t$			-0.0448 (-0.38)	-0.0470 (-0.49)
Individualism				0.0008*** (2.69)
UAI				-0.0009* (-1.76)
Country effect	FE	FE	FE	RE
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R – squared	0.022	0.049	0.410	0.415
Observations	834	712	706	706

Note: $\mathrm{PI} = \psi_t$

Conclusions

This study analyzes the relation between price informativeness and cash savings on a sample of 125 companies from the renewable energy sector over the 2003 – 2009 time period. The results suggest that more informative stock prices are associated with more efficient decisions and managers use the information they learn from the stock market and adjust their saving behavior accordingly. This result remains unchanged regardless the estimation methodology and the proxy for information embedded in price. This fact is not surprising because similar conclusions have been obtained in case of other industrial sectors.

For future research, there are some challenging directions to explore. First, it would be interesting to investigate if the managerial learning process also influences other decisions besides the ones related to cash savings, such as dividend policy or capital structure decisions. Second, it would be necessary to understand what kind of information managers really learn from observing the behavior of their stock price to examine how this information is transposed into better corporate decisions.

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Information literacy - An essential competence in modern society: A comparative study

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ABSTRACT
In a dynamic society, the need for communication is of utmost importance. Information is abundant, and the ability to select, to receive messages correctly, regardless of the field and the way of presentation, to translate them into new situations are indispensable elements in the professional activity, but also in the personal development of each citizen. These abilities are found generically under the umbrella of *information literacy*. Information literacy is a complex competence, which includes several skills specific to different fields. For a correct communication in a knowledge society, information literacy offers a wide range of skills to support the individual in an approach anchored not only in the professional field, but in various social areas. For Romanian education, this type of literacy is relatively new. Even if, sporadically, during the educational activity, certain skills which are found in the composition of information literacy are pursued, the interconnection of such skills in a complex competence remains at the level of a desideratum. Information literacy must be formed during schooling, following various, well-defined standards and increasingly elaborate descriptors as the student progresses through the stages of schooling.

Through this paper I aimed to present information literacy and the importance of this competence in today’s society. Correct and efficient communication in a knowledge society can be achieved based on skills which are included in the domain of information literacy. I will also introduce a comparison between the standards of information literacy in pupils and students, based on standards developed by international associations. The juxtaposition of the mentioned elements can be a starting point for the educational field in our country to structure an innovative educational approach. The purpose of this approach would be to equip young people with a new competence: information literacy. This is a transversal competence, essential in the complex training of young people. I want this intervention to contribute to the innovation of the local educational approach, by highlighting some concrete theoretical aspects from design to the applicative part.

Keywords: literacy, information literacy, standards, students.

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Introduction

In a society ruled by knowledge, the need of communication is potentially increased. The information is numerous, and the capacity of selection and correct reception of the information, regarding of the field, and of transposing them to new situations are indispensable elements for any professional activity, but also for the personal development of each citizen. The ethics of using information is an essential aspect of this ability, and the youth's acknowledgement of this aspect makes this competence a highly important one. These abilities are generically referred to as *information literacy*.

Literacy – conceptual delimitations

A conceptual delimitation of the term is required. What is literacy? The word ***literacy*** is not to be found, at least for the time being, in the dictionary of the Romanian language, having its origin from the English: *literacy*. The term *literacy* can be translated as *alphabetization*. Due to the desire of not determining any ambivalences between the basic alphabetization (reading, writing and elementary counting, as basic intellectual skills) and the functional alphabetization, we will further on use the term *literacy*. Literacy is defined in several manners, and these definitions are in a continuous evolution. The term *alphabetization*, for example, sometimes refers only to lecture, sometimes to reading and writing and sometimes, although more rarely, to reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The term *literacy* is defined by OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) as *the ability to understand a text and to use written information in daily life, at home, at the workplace, in a community, to such an extent as the person in question can reach certain personal goals and can enrich his/her knowledge and abilities* (OCDE, 2000).

Cambridge Dictionary defines literacy as *"the ability to read and write"*, the meaning of this definition being the basic alphabetization. A more detailed definition of *literacy* was formulated by UNESCO (2019) as the capacity of reading and writing, of identifying, understanding, interpreting, creating, communicating, and calculating using printed and written materials, as well as the capacity of solving problems in an environment gradually richer in technology and information. Therefore, literacy consists of both abilities of text reception and of using the read information for personal and professional purposes, and of abilities of writing and calculus.

Information literacy is a set of abilities forcing the individuals to *"recognize the necessary information and the capacity of efficiently evaluating and using these information"* (ALA, n.d.). Another definition of information literacy could be *the ability of "knowing when and which information you need, where you can find such information and evaluate it, use it and communicate it in an ethical manner"* (Goldstein, 2018). Information literacy is defined also as the ability of thinking critically and correctly analyzing the information we find and use (CILIP, 2018). Knowledge and information represent the basis of learning during the entire life course. This type of literacy is common to all subjects, to all learning environments and to all levels of education. The necessity of forming these abilities is increased.

Information literacy is an extremely complex term which incorporates several levels and types of literacy, meaning abilities of using information from diverse domains: arts, media, culture, digital field (computer), library etc. A person proving abilities of information literacy can discover necessary information, can use them, and can produce new data in several domains. The correct reception and transmission of information are essential elements of this type of literacy.

Information literacy is graphically represented in the scheme from below (*Fig. 1*):

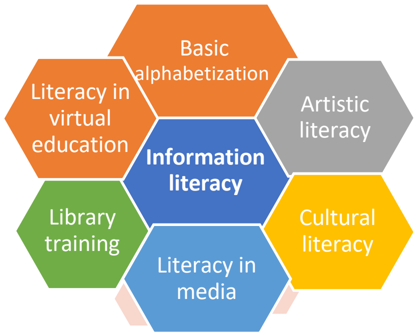

Figure 1. The scheme of information literacy (adaptation after https://sumberdigital.wordpress.com/resources-2/information-literacy-standards-for-student-learning/)

The necessity of information literacy is to be found in all the fields of social life (Seker, 2018). Thus, in daily life, it proves to be important for verifying the information in the on-line environment, for the performance of on-line transactions, and for the use of social networks. In the field of education, it determines critical thinking, it implies the forming of learning strategies for students, and it empowers students within their own learning process (Arnold-Garza, 2014). At their workplace, employees/ employers must need to know when/ how information is used to reach the company's goals, to contribute at problems' solving, and to significantly and efficiently use information and technology (Eisenberg, 2008). From the perspective of active citizenship, information literacy is important for understanding the contemporary society, the proximal and distal social environment, and involvement in citizenship decisions, the recognition of false/ incomplete information and the identification of false information (Rivano Eckerdal, 2017).

This type of literacy was chosen for a comparative study due to its complexity, the component parts of information literacy including elements of functional literacy. Information literacy can be considered as being a superior level of functional literacy. It is not sufficient to have competences of information literacy if you do not have competences of functional literacy. Informational literacy is a complex component which must be followed not only along the path of compulsory schooling, but also on superior levels of schooling.

Another reason for which the detailed presentation of this type of literacy was performed is the fact that the standards of information literacy are to be found, to a large extent, within the structure of any categories of professional competences: the ability to select information, to find the correct resources of information, to value discovered information, to use information in an ethical manner, to respect rights of intellectual property, to use technology in a responsible manner are descriptors which must be a part of the professional competence of a professor, in the structure of each component.

Information literacy is essential in a society of knowledge. As graduated reaching this level is a primary goal, a constant preoccupation for the application of literacy strategies within the educational activity of the formal education is mandatory. As can be noticed from the synthetic presentation of the components of information literacy, one can conclude that it includes a complex of types of literacy, the formation of each of them requiring a constant preoccupation and involvement in this respect.

The complexity of information literacy and its utility in the contemporary society are arguments for following the presentation of standards on different stages of the formation of the mentioned competence. With this competence acquired by students, we will have persons preoccupied with the capitalization of the information, but also with abilities of using correctly, constructively and in an ethical manner the data depicted from diverse informational environments.

For the Romanian educational system, the systematic forming of the competence requiring this type of literacy is a highly new aspect. Elements of the information literacy are occasionally followed, being mentioned by school programs, but are not explicitly mentioned in school documents or by educational politics, nor are they evaluated in a systematic manner. The aspects involving students' ability to find information and to use them in an efficient, but also ethical manner can be evaluated through different methods and instruments of evaluation, but these instruments are left at the professor's disposal.

Methodology

For this present research, the specific methodology of comparison of some concepts was used: the juxtaposition of the studied phenomena, the formulation of the comparative hypothesis, the actual comparison, and the formulation of some conclusions.

The annexation or juxtaposition of the studied phenomena is the stage during which the studied phenomena are presented. Thus, the central element of this research will be the juxtaposition of some abilities specified to the competence of information literacy on high school students and college students in order to analyze similarities and differences between the two levels of the competence, but also for highlighting the fact that these prove a continuity, the high school students' competence being the basis of information literacy for college students.

In performing a comparison of the mentioned educational elements, one will depart **from the comparative hypothesis:** *there are common elements between the standards of information literacy for high school students and the standards of information literacy for an increased level of education (colleges or universities), and the first category of standards grounds the formation of the abilities described through the standards of the second category.*

The table below describes the standards of information literacy for students during the schooling period, during training and for those considered to be proficient in information literacy, after finishing their schooling and enrolling in a superior education path.

The standards on which this present analysis will be made were selected from the category of standards issued by the American Library Association - ALA and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology – AECT (1998).

The standards for students in the process of schooling consist of three categories, nine standards and twenty nine indicators. The main results of the learning which are most directly linked to the services provided by media programs in school libraries are to be found in the three standards and thirteen indicators from the *information alphabetization* category. The other two categories – three standards and seven indicators for an independent student in the process of learning and three standards and nine indicators for the *social responsibility* – are based on the information competence but describe more general aspects of learning in the case of students for whom the school library and the media contribute, as well, in a significant manner.

Taken as a whole, the categories, standards and indicators describe the content and processes related to the abilities the high school students must master to be considered as proficient in information literacy. The standards offer a conceptual framework, but also a support material for the efforts of students and professors. The table from below presents the standards of the competence of information literacy, as well as the indicators defining the reaching of said standard associated with the standards of information literacy for college students. A correlation both between the standards, and between the indicators and descriptors will be performed (*Table 1*).

Table 1. A comparative presentation – standards of information literacy for high school students and college students
(adaptation from *Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning*)

Standards	Students Period of schooling	Performant students in information literacy
1st standard	**Field: information literacy** 1. The student **efficiently accesses the information** **Indicators:** 1. Recognises the need of information; 2. Admits that exact and complete information represent the basis for taking intelligent decisions; 3. Formulates questions based on the needs of information; 4. Identifies a variety of potential sources of information; 5. Develops and uses success strategies for locating the information.	1. The college student **determines the nature and volume of necessary information.** **Descriptors:** 1. Defines and articulates the need for information; 2. Identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources of information; 3. Takes into consideration the costs and benefits of obtaining necessary information; 4. Re-evaluates the nature and volume of the need for information.
2nd standard	2. The student **evaluates the information in a critical and competent manner**. **Indicators:** 1. Determines the accuracy and relevance of the information; 2. Distinguishes between diverse points of view and opinions; 3. Identifies inaccurate and misleading information; 4. Selects the information corresponding to the problem or question in question;	2. The college student **accesses the necessary information in an effective and efficient manner.** **Descriptors:** 1. Selects the most adequate methods of investigation or systems of recovery of information for accessing the necessary; 2. Builds and implements efficiently projected search strategies; 3. Recovers on-line or personal information using a variety of methods; 4. Improves the search strategy if necessary; 5. Extracts, registers, and manages the information and their sources;
3rd standard	3. The student **uses the information in an accurate and creative manner.** **Indicators:** 1. Organizes information for practical applications; 2. Integrates new information in his/her own system of knowledge; 3. Critically analyses the information and applies them when solving problems;	3. The college student **evaluates critically the information and their sources and incorporates the selected information in his database and value system.** **Descriptors:** 1. Resumes the main ideas which must be extracted from the collected information;

	4. Creates and transmits information and ideas in an adequate form;	2. Articulates and applies the initial criteria for the evaluation of both the information and their sources; 3. Summarizes the main ideas in order to build new concepts; 4. Compares new knowledge with prior information in order to determine the added value, the contradictions or any other unique characteristics of the information; 5. Establishes if the new knowledge has an impact on the individual's system of values and takes measures for the reconciliation of the differences; 6. Validates the understanding and interpretation of the information through a discourse with other persons, experts in the field and/or practitioners. 7. Determines if the initial interrogation should be revised.
4th standard	**Independent learning** 4. The student **is culturally informed and follows the information concerning his personal interests.** **Indicators:** 1. Searches information concerning the different dimensions of personal wellbeing, such as career interests, health problems and recreational activities; 2. Projects, develops, and evaluates information and solutions concerning personal interests.	4. The college student, **either individually or as a member of a group, uses the information in an efficient manner to reach a certain purpose.** **Descriptors:** 1. Applies new information and prior to planning and creating a certain product or performance; 2. Revisits the proves of product or performance development; 3. Communicates the product or performance in an efficient manner to others.
The 5th standard	5. The student **is informed in full knowledge and appreciates the literature and creative aspect of the information.** **Indicators:** 1. Is a competent and self-motivated reader; 2. Grasps the significance of the creatively presented information in a variety of other forms; 3. Develops creative products in a variety of formats.	5. The college student **understands several of the economic, legal and social problems regarding the use and access of information and uses them correctly from an ethical and legal point of view.** **Descriptors:** 1. Understands many of the ethical, legal and social-economic problems around information and information technology; 2. Follows the laws, regulations, institutional politics and etiquette concerning the access and use of informational resources; 3. Recognized the use of the information sources in communicating the product or performance.
The 6th standard	6. The student **tries to excel in searching for and generating knowledge** **Indicators:** 1. Evaluates the quality of the process and search products for personal information;	

	2. Issues strategies for the revision, improvement and updating of knowledge discovered through self-learning.	
The 7th standard	**Social responsibility** 7. The student **recognizes the importance of the information in a democratic society.** **Indicators:** 1. Looks for information from different sources, contexts, disciplines, and cultures; 2. Respects the principle of fair access to information.	
The 8th standard	8. The student **has an ethical behavior in what concerns information and information technology.** **Indicators:** 1. Respects the principles of intellectual freedom; 2. Respects the rights of intellectual property; 3. Uses information technology in a responsible manner.	-
The 9th standard	9. The student **efficiently takes part in group activities to follow and generate information.** **Indicators:** 1. Shares his/her knowledge and information with others; 2. Respects the others' ideas and recognizes their contribution; 3. Cooperates with others, both personal, and through technologies, for identifying problems of information and searching for solutions; 4. Cooperates to project, develop and evaluate information products and found solutions.	-

The actual comparison

By analyzing the standards presented above, one can notice that for students in the process of schooling, grouping is performed on three categories: the field of *information literacy*, the field of *independent learning* and the field of *social responsibility*. One can notice the standards beginning with the level of use of the information up to the level of making the shift from a consumer to a creator of knowledge and information, respecting the intellectual rights of people around. For students/college students with a high level of education, five standards are established, each recouped in three or five descriptors/ indicators, to evaluate in a more rigorous manner the reaching of the standards. In comparison, the two large categories of standards show similarities, but one can notice that the second category – that of students with a finished educational path and enrolled in superior studies, is based on the first category of standards, moving to a higher level, however. Even if fewer from a numerical standpoint, the standards for a higher educational level are more concise and, moreover, correspond to an increased level of capacities and abilities. There are standards common for both categories, even though they are not formulated in an identical manner. Their graphic depiction can be found below (*Figure 2*):

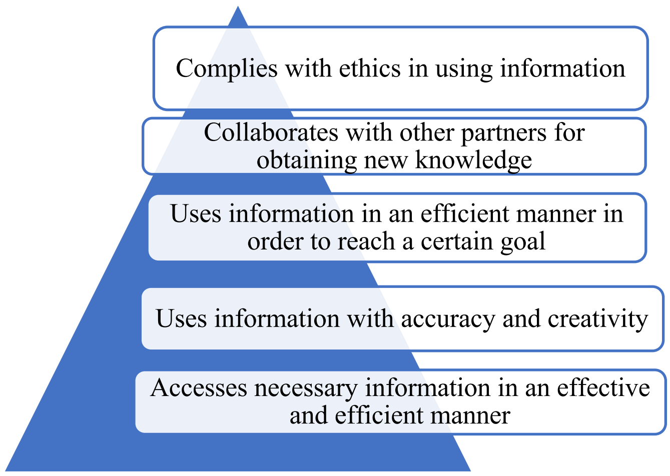

Figure 2. The standards of information literacy – aspects common to students and persons with a high level of education (college students)

In the category of abilities of students still on an educational path, those of independent learning are found, as they are not specifically mentioned in the second category of standards, but are included in all standards: the inclusion of the information in an own system of values, the creation of new information, the compliance with ethics in using information, the selection of essential information from a given context etc.

Synthetically and graphically, the standards for the level of information literacy in both cases can be projected through a conceptual map, such as in the representations below (*Figure 3*):

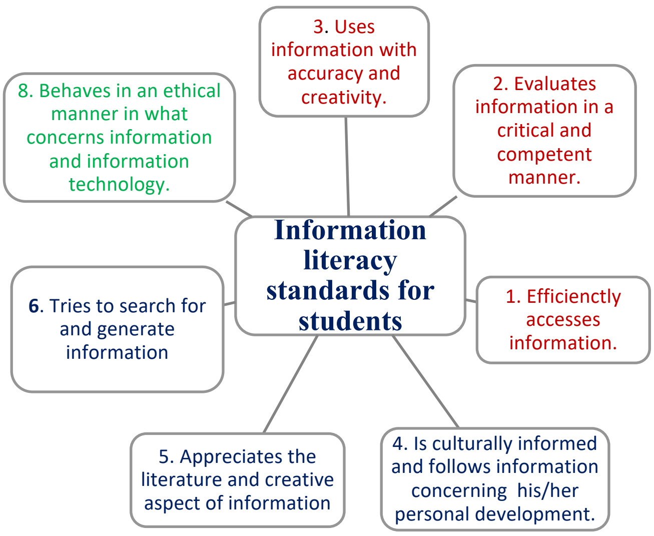

Figure 3. The standards of information literacy specific to students (adaptation after ALA)

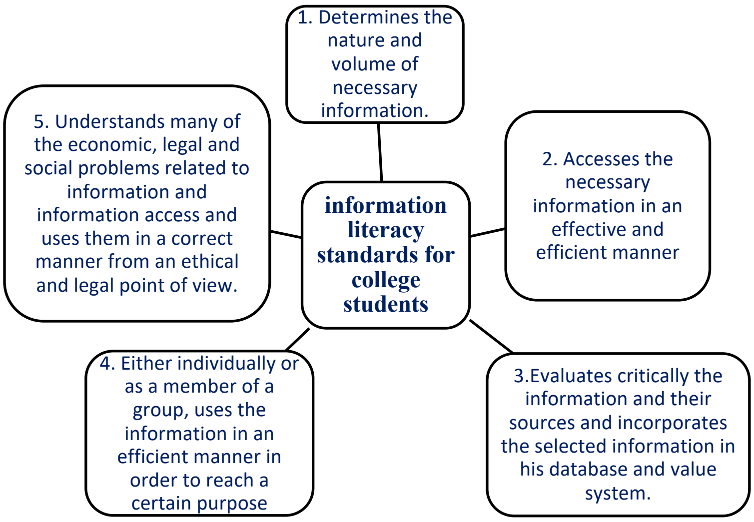

Figure no. 3. The standards of information literacy specific to a high level of education (adaptation after ALA)

Presented as a graphic and attempting to directly correlate the two categories of standards, one can reach the representation from below:

The standards of information literacy specific to students	The standards of information literacy specific to a high level of education
•1. Efficiently accesses information;	•2. Accesses the necessary information in an effective and efficient manner.
•2.Evaluates information in a critical and competent manner;	•3.Evaluates critically the information and their sources and incorporates the selected information in his database and value system.
•3.Uses the information with accurancy and creativity.	•3.Evaluates critically the information and their sources and incorporates the selected information in his database and value system.
•4. Is culturally informed and follows information concerning his/her personal development;	•3.Evaluates critically the information and their sources and incorporates the selected information in his database and value system.
•8. Behaves in an ethical manner in what concerns information and information technology;	•5. Understands many of the economic, legal and social problems related to information and information access and uses them in a correct manner from an ethical and legal point of view.
•9. Efficiently participates at group activities in order to follow and generate information.	•4. Either individually or as a member of a group, uses the information in an efficient manner in order to reach a certain purpose

Figure 4. The direct correlation between the standards of information literacy (adaptation after ALA)

Conclusions

Following the analysis from above, certain conclusions can be formulated:

- Students' reaching the standards of the information competence represents the basis of a high level of said competence in college students;

- The establishment of standards for different stages of education – high school and a higher level of education (colleges or universities) highlights the continuity of the level of capacity in information literacy, and therefore the above-mentioned statements support the hypothesis of a comparative research.
- The knowledge of the standards of information literacy helps students and professors, who can acquire a sense of direction in their instructive-educational activities for the purpose of reaching said standards.
- One can notice the preoccupation of institutions and different associations involved in education activities to co-work with educational institutions for the purpose of reaching well-established goals related to the training of the young generation.
- The manner through which the standards for each category can be reached is not mentioned, neither its modality of evaluation, and certification of said competence. Thus, professors have the freedom of choosing the most adequate path for each educational group, by means of which they will train these competences and evaluate them. The types of literacy in school subjects (*content aria literacy* and *disciplinary literacy*) can include elements of information literacy, and abilities can be formed in parallel from the mentioned categories of competence.

"Information literacy entitles persons from all the fields of life to search for, evaluate, use and create information in an efficient manner in order to reach their personal social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion in all nations" (UNESCO, n.d.).

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Application of morphemes to multilingual text search with or without declination

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ABSTRACT
The present paper offers a software application for Natural Language Processing and Machine Translation that can facilitate cross-language research, text disambiguation and comprehension by eliminating the need for proper translation. By applying a morphemic pluri-linguistic text analysis through algorithms, cross-language comprehension can be done without translating every document. Morphemes can be used as a mechanism for representing the roots of words that are common among languages that are members of the same family, and by the generation of a system to store these relationships and appropriate text processing, morphemes may be used as a mechanism to provide cross language search without the need for translation of the source documents (with the proviso that the documents must be in languages that belong to the same language family). The same type of algorithm can work in all languages families, needing only the addition of certain linguistic particularities for more detailed results. It can first be better implemented in Indo-European languages because they already have larger data bases but as Machine Translations continues to evolve, eventually all language families will have the proper data bases for this. Machine translation tools used by companies such as Google and Skype are already hybrids between data base and statistical systems but do not work properly for cross-language disambiguation. The software development of this system of linguistic analysis will improve cross-language communication and research, intelligence gathering, textual comprehension and analysis and online communication. Online research and communication will no longer be slowed down by language barriers and the content of texts can become available to anyone who needs to assess their content or look for specific information.

Keywords: morpheme, NLP, machine translation, disambiguation, cross-language.

Introduction

As the world is becoming more connected, and as information systems are becoming more important to the fabric of society (the growth of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and global news accounts), the problem of being able to locate that content is compounded and largely rendered impractical by the language barriers that naturally exist between the various regions in the world. Information discovery could be enhanced significantly by the provision of a system that allowed language neutral search, enabling a user to extract relevant content no matter which language they were working in.

This article offers a system for achieving this aim – the ability to search across content in multiple languages without needing to first translate either the search term or the document corpus into a common language (which would negatively impact the nuance and subtleties in the document corpus and the search term). The applications for this technology are in news gathering, internet search, and further textual analysis which can require as large a sample of content as possible.

In the world today, there are many linguistic families, most of them written with some form of alphabetic script. A linguistic family represents all the languages that are derived from the same language of origin and that are proven to be related to each other. The major linguistic language in Europe and the Americas is the Indo-European one and most languages in Europe can be traced back to an ancient common Indo-European, which has later spread to Europe and Asia. This does not mean that all the languages in this family are mutually understandable or even visibly related but upon analysis they belong to it. The closeness of one language to another is given by their branch, a subgroup of the great family that split from it directly at some point in the past. This split resulted in a special, distinct language which later gave rise to other distinct languages derived from it. A typical example is the Latin branch of the Indo-European family, that created the Romance languages of today, which are indeed, visibly related. Another branch of this family are Germanic languages, which are as well visibly related and sometimes mutually understandable. Depending on the closeness of these linguistic subgroups and how recently they divided from one another, they can still hold common traits and many similarities in vocabulary. The vocabulary however is also dependent on the geographical proximity of the spoken languages as well as on the cultural influence that a certain language has had at a given time in history. English for example is a Germanic language that has been strongly influenced by Latin languages, especially Middle French, which has had a significant contribution.

The dominant language family in the Middle East is the Semitic one, that can be traced back to Mesopotamia and that has come to dominate the Arabian Peninsula, parts of Asia minor, parts of Africa and parts of Central Asia. This means that although in all these places people speak a different version of Arabic, these languages have the same origin and have similarities in grammar and vocabulary.

This article presents the linguistic framework that enables such a search system to be developed, starting from Indo-European languages as they are the best researched group and contain most of the internationally used languages in the western world today. It shows how they are related and how they are connected through their origin, evolution, and loanwords. It also makes a connection to Semitic languages and shows how they too can be explored by the same system. By extension and working on the same theoretical framework, any language family may follow the same principles.

Languages: Theoretical framework

Indo-European language families

Europe's largest language family are the Indo-European languages, which are the national languages for most European countries, as well as the Americas and Australia. This family includes the contemporary languages like English, French, Spanish, and Russian, used as international languages throughout the world. They all come from the ancient Indo-European common language, that left no written texts but has been reconstituted by scholars. In earlier stages, Indo-European languages had many more similarities with each other than today, both in grammar and vocabulary.

"It seems that the social structure of Indo-Europeans has allowed their expansion on two continents and the emergence of this variety of languages. There was no centralized power, only tribes grouped around a leader and when another strong leader appeared, he gathered around him a community with which he then moved to another area to have autonomy. Thus, a gradual migration took these populations further and further away from their place of birth" (Monteil, 2003, p. 33). They brought their language with them wherever they went and left its structure and words as inheritance to the world.

"An example in this sense, although with a sinuous evolution is the order of the parts of speech from the common Indo-European to the modern languages. In the common Indo-European language, the order of the words was flexible and depended on musicality, a phenomenon that later disappeared in Greek and Latin, which were subject to greater rigor" (Casas, 2007, p. 16).

But the descendants of ancient Latin have returned to a syntactic flexibility similar to the original. Thus, the similarities with the original are preserved even if they were not transmitted directly. Most European languages today have the same origin in the common Indo-European language and belong to the major linguistic branches: Latin, Slavic, Germanic. But this does not mean that the connections between them are obvious to their speakers. This is due to their separate evolution, but also to the influences they have endured over time, resulting in languages that sound and behave very differently from each other but belong to the same family.

A first reason is the phonetics where, in addition to the universal phonetic system, there is also the particular phonetic system of each language. Due to the phonetic richness existing in the world, each language sought to develop a system as suitable as possible for its structure. There are phonemes that are only used in one language and are not applicable in another.

Vowels are the basic sounds of any language, mainly the five most common: A, E, I, O, U, which do not present pronunciation difficulties. Consonants, on the other hand, especially their combination, are much more particular to one language or another. *"According to universal phonetics, there are sounds, vowels and some consonants, such as l, m, n, v produced by the participation of vocal cords and deaf sounds, such as p, t, f produced without the participation of vocal cords"* (Casas, 2007, p. 35). *"Not all consonants are found in all languages and especially not every combination, which makes their pronunciation difficult. However, there are also difficulties when it comes to the pronunciation of certain consonants such as the difference between French T, dental apical occlusive and English T alveolar apical T, the second being a soaked T that should be taught as different consonants to have a pronunciation and a correct accent"* (Malmberg, 1954, p. 46).

"Although a correct pronunciation is important, people have the ability to understand several pronunciations, although it sounds different because the most important is communication and for this the phonetic sounds considered different are perceived as identical. The human ear considers them the same, although they are not and strives to identify the basic word" (Malmberg, 1954, p. 105). This phenomenon is related to the way of learning and storing language based on morphemes, independent particles that are completed with vowels and connected between themselves but not based on phonemes. Pronunciation is a problem only if it interferes with comprehension, so we are talking about phonetic tendencies and less about universally valid phonetic laws.

"The spelling of one language may be more appropriate for one accent than another. For example, in British English, the Northern accent is more appropriate for writing words

than the Southern accent, although the latter is considered more elegant and polite. Thus, for learning a non-phonetic language, certain accents should be favored due to their matching with writing." (Carney, 1994, p. 53).

In the case of phonetic languages, however, another type of accent is more important because it gives the cadence and rhythm of speech and can link or separate languages from the same. Another important phenomenon in the evolution of languages that can cause major changes within the same family and the same language branch: layers and influences. *"The basic structure of a language consists of the substratum - the linguistic background of the conquered people, super stratum - the linguistic background of the dominant people at a given time and trained - the influence of the people and/ or the neighboring peoples"* (Malmberg, 1954, p. 118). They can create major differences between languages with the same origin.

Latin and romance languages

In ancient Latin there were both long vowels and short vowels, which disappeared from later Romance languages but left traces. All Latin languages today have inherited the five basic vowels: A, E, I, O, U, but none have systematically kept the distinction between long and short vowels. In the case of consonants, there were some differences related to the regionalization of the language and the particularities of each area. In Romanian several Slavic phonemes have penetrated, in French some Germanic, in Italian the pronunciation varies from one dialect to another etc. The western Latin languages inherited the synonyms of some words from the eastern Latin languages, such as Romanian. This is due to the geographical distance between them and the isolation of the Eastern languages but also to the origin of some of these words. In Romanian, the Latin words come from the ancient background, the super stratum or from French neologisms of the 19th century.

"The Latin language of the Roman Empire evolved differently depending on the geographical distance from the cultural centers located mainly in Rome and the Mediterranean area and later in Northern Italy. The periphery of the empire, such as today's Spain and Romania, has preserved already archaic forms of the Latin language since antiquity. The linguistic developments that took place in the cultural centers dissipated very slowly towards the edges or did not reach at all. Part of the vocabulary transmitted to today's Castilian or Romanian is older than that transmitted to Italian, which was formed based on late Latin in Tuscany" (Penny, 1998, p. 20). *"In Western Romance languages, many words come from medieval Latin and its use as a lingua franca during the Middle Ages. Ancient Latin and medieval Latin are not identical, and many terms used in the Middle Ages had a different meaning from ancient Latin"* (Guiraud, 1988, p. 26). Thus, words can have a logical and direct or arbitrary etymology, according to a singular linguistic phenomenon, which is due to historical circumstances or contextual realities.

For example, in classical Latin, the preferred term for horse was *equus*, while *caballus* was only used by poets. Later, in popular Latin, caballus appears in the spoken language. The word has survived in almost all modern Latin languages. Its origin is disputed, perhaps coming from the language of the Welsh caballos. The ancient Greek alternative is *καβάλλης* (*kabállēs*, "runt/ nag"), which could come from a Balkan, Anatolian, or Northeast European language; its origin can only be traced back to a certain degree.

Languages related through loanwords

Latin is considered an ancient, extinct language that is used today only for scientific medical and biological terms. But its disappearance as an influence is less distant than previously thought and through its Romance descendants it remained in circulation until the nineteenth century. It can be argued that even today it still appears, marginally, especially in jargon, but for now it is not as popular as it used to be. If we consider its ancient origin, it is a language that has cast an influence for 2000 years, long after its disappearance from speech.

Although the study of grammar began with the Greek language and the Greek vocabulary remained influential especially in the field of science, the study of the Latin language is what has become the frame of reference in Europe. This phenomenon is due to several factors related to the evolution of Romance languages from their creation until now and their interaction with each other and with the surrounding languages. Latin vocabulary is not just a linguistic layer that was transmitted once but that has returned over time, revised, and modified but essentially the same.

"The first stage of its transmission takes place in Late Antiquity and includes elements of late Latin that form the popular language in Romance languages - vulgar Latin, spoken in all corners of the empire that will first become dialects, then independent languages" (Penny, 1998, p. 233). The transition to the early Middle Ages, from the fourth to the eighth century will mark a new stage in the transmission of Latin, which will be used as a cultured, religious language and will be borrowed by peoples who converted to Christianity and were not of Romance origin. That is why there is an ancient Latin base in languages such as English, German and some Slavic languages. Classical Latin will continue to be used as a language of worship and chancellery in the Middle Ages and will undergo changes so that we can speak of a medieval Latin with specific terms and grammar. During this period part of the vocabulary will again be taken over by the peoples who used it as a vernacular language and will form the second Latin layer.

"It was believed that the best way to learn a second language was by studying the grammar of the native language. This belief led to the idea that Latin grammar, based on the eight Greek categories, was the best model for studying other languages. Thus, Latin with its grammar became an important component in the school system. When other foreign languages began to be studied in educational settings, Latin grammar was still used as a linguistic model. The study of Latin grammar was also seen as a development of the mind, a standard model" (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 2).

The choice of Latin as the standard language of modern science in the eighteenth century is linked to its history as the language of culture and reason throughout the Middle Ages. Keeping it as the main scientific language allowed it to continue its millennial journey to Modernity.

"The Renaissance and the Enlightenment will bring a dispersion of pre-modern Latin vocabulary from one language to another. It is no longer medieval Latin but scientific and medical Latin, used as a cult language, which will continue until the nineteenth century and partly in the twentieth century" (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 234). The scientific world remains a Latin world.

Propagation from one language to another had a winding path that was determined by the dominance of one culture in each period and the contact it had with others. It is not about occasional language borrowings, from one to another, but about decisive influences at a certain stage. French was directly influenced by medieval Latin, as was Spanish. After the Norman conquest of Britain, English will be created as it is structured today. In the Renaissance Italian will lend vocabulary to French, Spanish and Romanian. From the 18th century until the beginning of the 20th century, French will dominate and bring new words in Spanish, Italian and Romanian. There are loanwords even in languages such as Serbian and Russian from Italian and then from French. Latin did not die as a language with the disappearance of the Roman Empire but continued to live and be an influence through its descendants in Europe and later in the world.

This millennial phenomenon means that the vocabulary of most European languages today has a common part, which overlaps with the inherited Indo-European structure. As it is used in modern international scientific or technical vocabulary, it can be said that all modern European languages contain a Latin part and approach each other not through origin, evolution, or interaction, but through modernity.

The neuroscience of morphemes

Human memory is of many types: visual, auditive, kinetic etc. When it comes to language learning the visual and auditive types are most important as information is stocked both morphologically and phonetically. For an efficient learning we need to understand what we learn phonetically and what we learn morphologically. All languages have both components, but they tend to be more relevant in one or another. To better show how important clarifying what they mean is I will mention Idrissi, Prunet, and Béland's study (2008), focused on Arabic, a Semitic language in which the morpheme structure is crucial for grammar. In Semitic language words can be reduced to their root which is made of three or four letters or signs, all considered to be consonants. Vocalization is made by the speaker and in writing vowels can be left out entirely. This means that there always was and continues to be a great variety of pronunciations and phonetic changes are easily made. It also means that processing and storing of the lexicon by the human mind is done differently to phonetic languages. The research done on consonantal languages can be extended to non-consonantal ones.

The named study presented evidence from an aphasic subject that argued for the morphemic status of Arabic consonantal roots. The authors predicted that inaudible glides in weak roots should resurface in metathesis and template selection errors, but at the time the relevant data were unattested. Obtained from a new series of experiments with the same aphasic subject, data show that Arabic hypocoristic formation offers another case of glide resurfacing, and both sources of data confirm that Arabic consonantal roots are abstract morphemic units rather than surface phonetic units (Idrissi, Prunet, & Béland, 2008).

Thus, if in Arabic the consonantal roots are processed by the human mind as abstract morphologic units and not superficial phonetic units, then the human brain has the capacity to learn certain linguistic particularities as pure abstractions, that it then manipulates to create meaning. The fact that this can be concretely connected to Arabic word roots show that they are not just abstract concepts as cognitive linguistics stipulates but very practical realities. First, the entire learning process can be structures according to these morphemic patterns, especially when it comes to grammatical structure and comprehension. Secondly, this discovery offers interesting solutions in the digital world of machine translations, computational linguistics and cross-language text analysis and disambiguation.

Application of morphemes in multi-language text search and disambiguation

Morphemes are the smallest grammatical units in a language, usually comprised of two or three phonemes at the least. A phoneme is the written representation of a sound, which can or cannot be the equivalent of a letter. All letters and groups of letters have a phoneme, depending on the language.

Morphemes can be full words or parts that create a word but are not stand-alone letters or signs. Phonetic scripts have a separate letter for each sound while non-phonetic ones can have an empty sign that can take several sounds when needed. This usually happens with vowels in consonantal scripts, like Semitic ones for example. These scripts show in the clearest way the relation between the morphemes that form a word and their written sign. Signs can be letters, or they can be hieroglyphs or pictograms. For the modern scripts, we mostly deal with letters and alphabets.

Derivation of words from morphemes

A word stem is the part of the word around which everything else is built through suffixes, prefixes, derivation, and word composition. It carries the basic meaning of the word, and it can show its origin. It is the base morpheme that can link a modern term to its ancient original counterpart. It is also the stem around which its word family is built, whether it's a noun, verb, adjective, or numeral. Each language and language group or subgroup has its own suffixes, prefixes and derivations that are added to create new words from the initial stem. These added particles are different depending on whether the new word that is created needs to be a verb, noun, advective, or adverb so they are distinct from one another. In time it is possible to add more than one particle and result in elaborate word constructions that, however, can still be broken down to the base stem. If the language group or subgroup is still closely related or has become split into distinct languages more recently, these added particles will be similar and sometimes identical. Which means that an adjective for example, will have an identical or similar ending or shape in different languages, making it easy to identify as a morphological part of speech. The same phenomenon happens to other parts, be they verbs, nouns, or numerals.

A stem morpheme usually consists of consonants and sometimes of vowels acting as consonants, due to their stronger sonority and the fact that vowels are the first to change as a language evolves.

The following is an example from English:

Hunt – noun carrying the stem morpheme HNT/ verb carrying the stem morpheme HNT
From Middle English *hunten*, from Old English *huntian* ("to hunt"), from Proto-Germanic **huntōną* ("to hunt, capture"), from Proto-Indo-European **kend-* ("to catch, seize"). Related to Old High German *hunda* ("booty"), Gothic 𐌷𐌿𐌽𐌸𐍃 (*hunþs*, "body of captives"), Old English *hūþ* ("plunder, booty, prey"), Old English *hentan* ("to catch, seize").
First Known Use of hunt: verb - before the 12th century, noun - 14th century;
Closely related to Hound = dog.
The words family:
Hunter – noun, derivate from the base stem by a masculine suffix ER;
Huntress – noun, derivate from the derivate Hunter by a feminine suffix ESS;
Hunting – noun derivate from the base stem by typical verbal gerund suffix ING;
Hunted – past participle/ adjective derivate from the base stem by passive suffix ED;
Huntable – adjective, composite from HUNT and ABLE.
Each suffix added to the stem morpheme creates a new word with a very particular meaning, that cannot be confused with the others, but the base stem morpheme remains.

Cross-language similarities

Language families present many similarities in terms of grammatical structures, vocabulary and of course stem morphemes, as they share the same origin. This means that a stem morpheme with a certain meaning and word family can be found across different languages belonging to a certain subgroup or larger branch. The meaning might not always be evident at a first glance but when it is analyzed etymologically, it will reveal their initial connection and shared significance.

We shall consider the Latin term: *canis* – *dog*, and its Romance language derivates: Italian – *cane*, Romanian – *câine*, French – *chien*, Spanish – *can*, Portuguese – cão; and even the Albanian – *qen*, of unknown etymology, possibly Latin.

By leaving out the vowels, which rarely form a fixed part of the stem, unless they are regarded as consonants, we are left from the Latin with the stem **c_n** (where the underscore signifies a vowel) which can be found in Italian, Romanian, French, Spanish, partially in Portuguese, where it keeps the vowel A as part of the stem. The stem can even be found in Albanian **q_n** – a language of a different branch but dating back from the same time when Greek and Latin came to Europe.

By taking the stem **c_n** as basic stem for a noun meaning dog in these languages, defined as being x letters long, **x<=5** in this case, we can do a cross language search in texts to find out if this word appears and if it checks out as meaning dog. After that we can analyze the prefixes or suffixes that can appear around this stem and decide if they transform it into an adjective, adverb, or in some cases a verb. If said morpheme/ stem has been transferred into other languages outside of a certain branch, the search can be extended there.

Mapping the proximity of certain consonants and their usage in related or geographically close languages, we can also check if the stem exists in them too, like Albanian. C-K-Q-H-G are an example of related consonants, from a phonetic point of view. This can be applied to nonphonemic languages as the stem will keep the original sign, even if it's pronounced differently. If said stem morpheme has been transferred into other languages outside of a certain branch, the search can be extended there.

We can take another example, the Indo-European word for *night*: English - *night*, German - *nacht*, Danish – *nat*, Icelandic – *nótt*, Norwegian and Swedish – *natt*, Dutch – *nacht*, Yddish – *נאַכט* - for the Germanic subgroup, Lithuanian – *naktis* - Latvian – *nakts* – for the Baltic group; Greek - *nýchta* – for the Hellenic group. We notice a pattern – **n_k_t/ n_ct** or **n_t**, for the Germanic, Baltic, and Hellenic groups, with a word that is **x<=5.** Latin – *noctis*, Romanian – *noapte*, Italian - *notte*, Spanish- *noche*, Portuguese – *noite*, French – *Nuit* – for the Latin group. Albanian – *natë* - for the Illyrian groupe; Bosnian, Croatian – *noć*, Bulgarian *нощ*, Belarussian – *ноч*, Czech – *noční*, Czech – *noční*, Macedonian – *ноќ*, Macedonian – *ноќ*, Polish *noc*, Russian *ночь*, Serbian – *ноћ*, Slovakian – *nočné*, Slovenian – *noč*, Ukranian – *ніч*. We notice the disappearance of the C in the Romance, Illyrian and Slavic branches with a pattern of **n_t** or **n_c** (transliterated across alphabets) with a word **x <=6.**

At this point, there are two versions of the stem, valid across several language groups, in various stages of proximity to each other but belonging to the Indo-European great family. There are also cases where one stem morpheme can be confused with another, as in this case the negation: not, where NOT can be defined as **n-t** or **n_ct** for the Germanic branch. However, this is not a problem as the negation is not a noun and it will always accompany a verb in the sentence, so its position will make it easy to differentiate from another word and it does not have the same vowel connecting the consonants.

Cross-language mapping

The examples we have taken so far come from the Indo-European language family. To cross language search into other linguistic families is also possible using the same idea of a stem morpheme, it just needs to be connected to its counterpart, after which they may be likely to behave in the same way. As in, there are specific particles that mark a noun, verb, adjective, or numeral that form patterns within the language family.

The principles of a stem morpheme search will be now applied for Semitic languages for the same word as before – *night* – which was analyzed in Indo-European language branches so far. The first step is to identify the stem morpheme for night in the Semitic languages and then link it to the Indo-European one. The examples are taken from the major Semitic languages spoken today: Hebrew – *layla* – לילה; Arabic – *layl* ; ليلAmharic – *lelīti* - ሌሊት; Maltese – *lejl.*

By comparison we can extract the stem morpheme for night – **l_il** – where the usually vocalic "I" acts as a consonant. In fact, in Semitic languages "I" is indeed considered a consonant. The stem morpheme is identical except for Amharic, where the signs have been turned around to **l_li**. This phenomenon is quite common in languages and follows set linguistic rules which can be applied when trying to verify if a certain word has the same origin with another of a related language. If one wants to connect an Indo-European word family with a Semitic one, we can just connect the morpheme of a specific word with its counterpart, in this case **n_ct** with **l_il**. This means that the word family of **n_ct** will also be linked to the word family of **l_il**, as they have specific particles for verbs, adjectives and adverbs derived from the stem morpheme. Thus, it's easy to find out the equivalent of an adjective derived from night from English, French or Polish in a language like Arabic or Hebrew.

For example, if we consider the English – *nocturnal*, the French – nocturne and the Polish – *nocny*, with the stem morpheme **n_ctx/ n_cx** where **x** is the adjective suffix and we link that to the Semitic **l_il**, we get the Hebrew –*leilet* / לֵילִית, following an exact pattern of **l_ilx** and the Arabic: **l_ilx** with a prefix– kl *layla* / .كل ليلة The same can be applied when looking for a verb or another part of speech within a certain word family.

Grammatical cases and their role in machine translation

The non-syntactic structure of cases and declinations can be applied in the field of Natural Language Processing and Machine Translations as well and developed into a general algorithm than can afterwards be adapted to suit each language. It can also be used to create connections between languages that share this sort of linguistic phenomenon, namely most of the Indo-European languages of today and even some outside of this linguistic family, like Arabic. If there is a stemming mechanism developed in said language then it can be applied along with it, but it works as an independent process as well. The basic structure is simple and needs only a limited amount of data to work.

Starting from the declination/ ending, having a specific meaning when applied to a noun, then adding the prepositions to change said meaning. Because there is a limited number of endings, with a limited number of prepositions creating a limited number of meanings, there should not be any overlapping or confusion between them.

Word/ noun $\rightarrow$ meaning A

Word/ noun + ending 1 $\rightarrow$ meaning B

Word/ noun + ending 1 + preposition X $\rightarrow$ meaning C

Word/ noun + ending 1 + preposition Y $\rightarrow$ meaning D

Example: house

Дом + - а → дома (of the house)
Дом + - а + возле → возле дома (near the house)
Дом + - а + из → из дома (from the house)
Дом + - а + до → до дома (to the house)

*The equations above have been simplified for clarity. The construction of the language requires that the prepositions are placed before the noun.

For example (возле + Дом + - а)

Adding a different declination to the same parameters:

Word/ noun + ending 2 → meaning E
Word/ noun + ending 2 + preposition X → meaning F
Word/ noun + ending 2 + preposition Y → meaning G
Дом + - у → belonging to the house
Дом + - у + по → through the house
Дом + - у + k → towards the house

*The equations above have been simplified for clarity. The construction of the language requires that the prepositions are placed before the noun. For example (по + Дом + - у)

Then it can be connected to the declinations/ endings with the same meaning in another language: Ending 1 in Russian = ending 3 in Romanian = ending 5 in English = ending x in Arabi; a (e.g. дома in Russian) = ei (e.g. casei in Romanian) = 's (e.g. house's in English) = i (e.g. بيت l-bayti in Arabic).

No matter the word that is declinate, the meaning of the ending will stay the same so cross language analysis is possible without translation. Using a dictionary of base words, it is possible to isolate the noun independently of endings and prepositions. Further processing would then yield the ending and the preposition and give the idea of an abstract semantic meaning. Since this abstract meaning is language independent, running the process across disparate documents, gives implementation paths for cross-language meaning extraction, syntactic graph construction and cross language search without the requirement of full translation (Onutz, 2019).

Conclusion

By using the morpheme-based structure for cross language search, many steps that are now necessary can be avoided or become redundant. There is no need for translating the entire text to analyze whether a certain information is there or not, one language can directly be connected to another from its language family and then to a completely different one. Morphemes are not a novel thing in linguistics, but they have not been applied this way before. Most linguists and philologists will be familiar with what a morpheme is, but not many people outside of those fields are. The research that has been done with them has been in neurolinguistics or morphological analysis.

Rarely have they found a place outside of morphology but the emergence of NLP and Machine Translation along with much private interest in language technologies take the once mostly theoretical field of Linguistics to the center of new technologies. With major players like Google and Skype working on perfecting their language processing technologies, there is always a search for better options and possibilities. Artificial Intelligence is also an emerging technology that is starting to require language processing software, so the implementations of language mappings seem almost endless at this point.

The next step of the present research is using morphemes to map linguistic families and develop the software to do it. The structure for such a software has been established and is awaiting application and would make the subject of a second article. Although language may seem random at times it has a logic of its own that, when determined correctly, it can connect the entire world.

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