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Social Analysis
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Editorial Foreword

We are glad to offer you the second issue of the *Social Analysis* journal within the larger family of *Acta Universitatis Sapientae* series. After a promising start with valuable studies in various aspects of social phenomena and processes of the post-communist Europe (particularly Hungary and Romania), the standards have been set high; thus the task of compiling a consecutive issue on a special theme with similarly high standards laid a difficult charge on the guest editor, freshman in the business of journal editing.

The special topic of this second issue, *social media*, required a different set of references, contacts as compared to the previous edition – both for articles and for the peer reviewing process. Seeking for new contacts in the field of new media communication, after exhausting a quite extensive immediate acquaintanceship of professionals in the domain, is an uneasy but exciting enterprise, and it has brought an unexpected wide response from the international palette. Authors and reviewers volunteered not only from several CEE countries, but also from the US, the Russian Federation, Turkey and even India. While unreliability of digital correspondence hindered in some cases collecting material and the editing process, in the end articles have been gathered in a number far exceeding the limits of a single issue of the *Acta Sapientiae*. A circumspect and meticulous selection based on quality, topic and relevance was needed to conform the number of articles to the journal issue parameters. Besides, the problem of harmonizing content emerged: a whole set of relatively interrelated conference papers faced a nice number of independent articles in very diverse topics. In the case of several articles the editors opted for publication in the following issue of the *Acta*.

As formulated in our call for articles, this special issue of the *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae*, *Social Analysis* is focused on the theme of 'Social media in post-communist Europe'. We sought to investigate the many facets, challenges and risks social media can play in the making and remaking of today's society, being especially interested in empirical studies and theoretically well-grounded discourses which analyze the rising of network society in post-socialist contexts.

Common wisdom assesses that this part of the world constitutes a laggard in terms of Internet penetration and access to digital devices. Meanwhile, Internet, social media, web 2.0, etc. represent an emerging social reality in these countries as well. We wish to look beyond the common sense and to seek answers to the following main questions:

How social media are received and used in these countries in order to link different levels and strata of the social? How and to what degree can the Internet contribute to the dissolution of social inequalities or, on the contrary, are we legitimated to talk about new, specific, Internet-mediated inequalities in this part of the world?

How the Internet and social media are used, misused and abused in specific areas of the social (e.g. education, research, health-care, business, leadership, etc.)? How and to what degree the Internet in general and social media in particular can contribute to social and political campaigns and mobilizations?"

Apart from specific problems of the technical, communicational, pragmatic aspects of social media, we were interested in the problems characteristic for the Central-Eastern European region (from the Balkans to the Baltic) as compared to the West and other areas of the world, but also in the similarities that may occur. Internet penetration varies from country to country, it is generally well behind the western part of the continent, and also digital division is prominently sharp between urban and rural areas as well as age categories (see here in this regard Balas et al, Rohn, Bakó: Preoteasa – Comanescu). And while the political, administrative, economic, and institutional spheres, as well as society in general move relatively slowly, it seems nevertheless that the youth in particular is keeping up the pace with the western trends in matters of social networking and state-of-the-art mobile multimedia devices – as we may conclude from the articles in this journal issue (see especially Balas et al, Gajić, Baraković, Serafimovska & Markovik, Kazaka, Rohn, Kopacz and Salló).

The structure of this issue is composed of three thematic sections plus the regular book review chapter, as follows: The first part titled *Social Impacts of Social Media: Edifications of a Conference* contains five papers presented at the "*Social Media and Future of Leadership*" *Conference held in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 12–13 May, 2011*, by the animator of the conference, Andrew Balas and mainly researchers from the countries of former Yugoslavia. The second part, *Changing Landscapes by Social Media: An Eastern European Panorama*, containing three case studies, takes the same questions and problems regarding social media discussed in the first part to other countries of Eastern and Central Europe (Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia, Germany, Russia). We titled the third chapter *Social Media as New Generation Communication: Theory & Practice* to stress the more general character of the three studies included in it, dealing with the same topics from rather interdisciplinary aspects as varied as communication and media theory, social psychology, linguistics or visual analysis. The last part contains three book reviews – two closely related to the special theme of the issue, social media, and the third one represents the general orientation of the journal itself, namely social studies.

The first section, *Social Impacts of the Social Media*: *Edifications of a Conference* comprises five selected papers presented at the "Social Media and Future of Leadership" Conference held in Tuzla, BiH, on 12–13 May, 2011.

In the first article *Social Media and Future of Leadership: Call for action in the Balkans* Andrew Balas from the US-based Forerunner Federation and his colleagues from Eastern Europe summarize the conclusions of this conference. As the researchers state, social media may bring considerable improvements, mobilization, better results and easier communication in such varied domains as higher education, political life, or business administration. They see in new media a potential to promote more inclusive social interaction that respects minorities and minority views. These general rules and trends however – according to the referred statistics – are less present or have weaker impact in Balkan countries. Out of this consideration, (as suggested by the subtitle), the study is concomitantly a call for action in this area, requesting fundamental progress in Internet-penetration and change of mentality towards a more competitive stance in the globalizing knowledge society.

Zlatomir Gajić from Serbia investigates the role of *Websites as Teaching Tools at the Department of Media Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad.* His *case study* presents how the Internet, an independent medium and basic journalistic tool, is used in specialized courses as teaching instrument at the Department of Media Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. The author describes three sites that have been created for the purpose of serving as teaching tools and public media platforms at the same time: e-papers written for the Internet journalism course, a web address for reporting on natural and man-caused catastrophes and finally a website for the lectures on Media for children. We are also informed about a multifunctional web portal set up by the Department serving as an open medium for communication, internal message board and information-source as well as a server for the other three sites.

Šejn Husejnefendić and Mirza Mehmedović provided an article dealing with *Social Media and Marketing Application in South-Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina Region*. In this study the authors look at the practical use of social media by news-portals in south-eastern BiH, analyzing the applicability of social media, especially social networking sites, by news portals with their potential of marketing and advertising in everyday advertising. The paper quotes a research that confirms a direct correlation between the visibility of news-portals and their presence on social networks. Unsurprisingly, the study also shows that most users of social media are students and young people under 35 visiting social media on a daily basis, and out of this stratum as high a number as one fifth visit news-portals exclusively through links on social networks. The portals use "Facebook statements" as a marketing tool both for finding advertisers and making profits and for establishing business cooperation with other sites.

Vedada Baraković from Tuzla University in her study titled *Facebook Revolutions: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina* analyzes the aspects of political activation of social networking sites in her homeland within the larger context of the 2011 revolutions around the Mediterranean basin. She compares the role of social media in shaping political reality in North Africa and the Middle East to the simultaneous but less confrontative initiatives of the Balkan countries, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina. The failure of cyberactivism through social media in this latter country was related by the author to the ethnic and political division in B&H. Still, the attempt of organizing anti-government protests via social media showed that activism depends both on social media users and on various social factors, which transgress from the offline world into online communities.

From the Republic of Macedonia, Eleonora Serafimovska and Marijana Markovic also investigate the role of networking social media in their article *Facebook in the Multicultural Society*, approaching the issue from another aspect: the subversive effects of the social networks. The study reveals from a psychological aspect how a real-life event transgresses, expands and aggravates in the virtual space of social media. An incident sparked between two ethnic groups of Skopje around the issue of building a Church-Museum in the Kale Fortress area, resulting in a clash between the mainly ethnic Macedonian supporters and mostly ethnic Albanian opponents of the construction of the Church-Museum building, moved into the virtual space, where the real war with words continued to be fought on Facebook. New sites dedicated to the Museum-Church at Kale Fortress were being opened with offensive language, vulgarities, threats and calls for revenge, for a 'final fight'. The study discusses the reasons for misbehaviour in cyberspace, showing that the good side of humans often 'loses the battle' with regard to issues connected to the differences in such a multicultural society.

The second chapter: *Changing Landscapes by Social Media: an Eastern European Panorama* continues the investigation of social media sites with a wider picture of Eastern Europe, offering case studies from Bulgaria up to the Baltic area.

The article titled *Between 'Dear Diary' and Changing the World*: *Assessing Motivations and Impact of Bloggers in Bulgaria* written by Christopher Karadjov from California State University offers an insight into the challenges facing the Bulgarian blogosphere. It is a first overview of Bulgaria's blogs and beyond examining the extant literature, the study uses in-depth interviews with bloggers to highlight pertinent characteristics of Bulgarian blogosphere and discover bloggers' motivations and perceived impact through illustrative examples.

In her study *Corporate communication in social media in Latvia*, Olga Kazaka presents us another aspect of the use of new media, namely in the public sphere and the business sector. As she demonstrates, such social media as blogs and micro-blogs, social networks, content communities, forums and wiki in Latvia are becoming increasingly popular among users, a fact that also motivates

companies to communicate in this environment. The research findings show that social media entering a small country, where the communication area is comparatively new, meets difficulties due to the lack of experience among communication specialists in relation to social media, as well as the inability to change their communication strategies.

Ulrike Rohn of Tartu University, in her article *Cultural and Geographic Proximity in Social Network Sites* offers us *a Comparison between Estonian, Russian-Estonian and German SNS Users*. Starting from the premise that as in many other European countries, the US-owned network Facebook has taken the lead over domestic and local SNS amongst German and Estonian SNS users, the study shows that members of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia, however, prefer SNS that originate in Russia. The article discusses the results of the focus group interviews performed with German, Estonian and Russian-Estonian SNS-users, revealing diaspora-like attitudes and behaviour of the interviewed Russian-Estonians and an implicit separation between the ethnic Estonians and Russian-Estonians in SNS.

Labeled *Social Media as New Generation Communication: Theory & Practice*, the third set of articles was sorted together based on their interest. These studies take the issue of social media on a more general level, without being concerned with country-specific aspects. Discussing both theoretical problems and observations emerging from empirical data, the three articles incline to interdisciplinary approaches rooted in humanities and psychology.

Erika Fám from the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität in Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany in her essay *Post-mediality versus Global-mediality* sets out on a quest of theoretical relevance for defining the place and nature of the new community media within media in general. The author shows that while the concept of the media has been redefined many times, the medial interpretation of post-mediality is only a critique of existing media-approaches and actuality. Starting off from W.J.T. Mitchell's approach that media is more than a medium, but rather relation and all media are mixed, the essay draws paralleling contrasts between the concept of totalmediality and the concept of postmediality. In media-philosophical terms the study treats totalmediality as theoretical possibility for overcoming postmediality in Mitchell's interpretation of media and emphasizing the dominance of visuality in the community media.

Ildikó Kopacz, resuming her thesis written at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj, titled her article tellingly "*Say lovely things about me so that I know I am like that*!" in which she analyzes *the role of positive photo comments posted on social networking websites in the development of the self-image*. Since psychology stresses the contribution of self-image in the formation of self-esteem, virtual feedback on SNS is just as important as real-life appreciation, so investigating online social media can provide us valuable information in this regard. In this light,

the study investigates the effects of the positive photo comments on the self-image. Based on a digital questionnaire examining the self-image, the study processes data collected from 41 young Hungarian people from Romania owning a Hi5 SNS-profile. While the first hypothesis, presuming that positive comments have a positive effect on the people's body image perception proved to be false, the second hypothesis according to which women were more affected than men by the positive comments was validated by the empirical data. The author also shows that men's and women's self-image didn't reveal significant differences.

Szilárd Salló, fellow of the Szekler Museum of Ciuc dedicates his article titled *The Faces of Messenger* to the visual interpretation of the language of *emoticons in the virtual communication*. Written communication, lacking the supra-segmental elements of orality that would assure a more accurate expression of emotions, is favourably assisted by emoticons in CMC, especially in instant messaging. The study examines the virtual communication related habits on Yahoo Messenger, focusing especially on the role of the potentially emotion expressing icons in the online speech, based on a research consisting of structured interviews completed by spontaneous instant messaging conversations. Apart from rating the emoticons into categories, the study investigates what kind of general and individual meanings are associated to emoticons, how do these complete written communication, and what do they indicate regarding the relationship between discussion partners.

In the review section of this journal issue two of the three book reviews are organically complementing the panorama offered by the studies.

The first one brings additional data that contribute to the rounding of the Eastern European picture. The report *Mapping Digital Media: Romania* written by Manuela Preoteasa and Iulian Comanescu as part of the *Mapping Digital Media Project* (Open Society Foundations, 4 December 2010, Country Report) is presented by Rozália-Klára Bakó. As the reviewer points out, the most important finding of the report is that in spite of its diversity, content quality of media products remains low in Romania. With television strengthening its supremacy as the main source of entertainment, the audiovisual news market is controlled by five large commercial players and the public service broadcaster, losing audiences, in spite of its leading role in the process of switch-over from analogue to digital technologies.

The other review, of Alexandru-Brăduț Ulmanu's book "*Cartea fețelor. Revoluția Facebook în spațiul social*" (*The Book of Faces. The Facebook Revolution in the Social Medium*) (Humanitas, Bucharest, 2011) presented by Dénes Tamás offers an insight into the phenomenon of online social networking, gaining ground also in Romania. The book presents in an easily readable journalistic style, how the appearance of Facebook and other community websites have radically changed and keep shaping important sections of social life.

This journal issue is closed by Ionuț Butoi's review of a book by Zoltán Rostás: *Strada Latina 8. Monografişti şi echipieri gustieni la Fundaţia Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (*8 Latin Str. – Gustian Monographers and Team Members at the Royal Cultural Foundation "Prince Charles* [*of Romania*]") (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing House, 2009). Rostás' book is a study in the history of Romanian sociology, as the reviewer states: a mandatory reading for the social science researcher who wants to adequately understand the phenomenon of the Gustian School of Sociology. The reader can follow how a project of monographic research and social reform, inspired by Professor Gusti's ideas, takes shape, grows and eventually ends, gaining an insight into the group's organization, functioning and its relationships with the state and various other institutions.

The eleven articles, together with two of the book reviews in this issue of the *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae – Social Analysis* offer not only a clear snapshot image about the transition of the Eastern and Central European countries from post-Gutenberg galaxy to the post-McLuhan galaxy in the past first decade of this new millennium, with all its particularities within the globalizing context of the new media environment, but also provides through the analyses of empirical data and theoretical interpretations a better understanding of the impact of social media on nearly every aspect of society as well as of the trends slowly shaping (in) our everyday actual and virtual reality. With many thanks to all the authors, reviewers, referees, and those who facilitated correspondence and material gathering; the editors proudly proffer the rich and diverse content, and invite the readers to think further and continue the investigation of the questions, ideas raised and phenomena analyzed in this special issue on *Social Media in Post-Communist Europe*.

László-Attila HUBBES, guest editor

Social Media and Future of Leadership: Call for Action in the Balkans

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Abstract. In the new century, social media and user generated content are profoundly transforming not only communications in general but also business, political campaigns and higher education. This paper is a summary statement coming out of the "Social Media and Future of Leadership" Conference held in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 12–13 May, 2011. Based on recent experiences, social media in higher education can help to overcome local challenges and respond to global opportunities. Social media in political campaigns can contribute to social mobilization of large groups, to combat the political apathy of youth and to increase transparency. Business applications of social media have been successfully used for sales, marketing, public relations and internal communications. The new media can promote more inclusive social interaction that respects minorities and minority views. However, Balkan countries need to make fundamental progress to increase access to the Internet and fully understand the logic, professional opportunities and democratic character of this new tool of communication. In order to compete effectively in the globalizing knowledge society, Balkan nations have to recognize the benefits of social media in education, business and politics.

Keywords: social media, higher education, research, political campaign, business

Introduction

In the 21st century it is a fundamental reality that we live in a rapidly changing world where the digital information dominates every aspect of our lives. This changing world is increasingly interconnected and there is a rapid flow of information and experiences on a daily basis. Those who do not participate in this digital world will find it difficult to succeed.

The Internet makes possible even in the most remote locations to communicate and succeed on a region-wide, national or international level. The new communication technologies are tools for modernization and competitiveness, they offer societies new methods of communication and social dialogue, enhancement of democracy and even reduction of social and geographic discrimination.

Over the last few years the Internet, and recently the social media, have had a profound effect on the private and professional lives of citizens, on an economical, political, social and academic level. They offer a wide range of new possibilities for accessing information, exchanging ideas, gaining new knowledge, making business and learning goals. Social media tools provide fast, efficient and low-cost ways to access any kind of information and knowledge. They are highly accessible, scalable, interactive and web-based technologies that support social interactions. In business terms, it is consumer generated media that creates value (like YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Blogger, Wikis, Skype, Amazon, Flickr, Twitter etc.).

The present paper is a follow-up study of the *"Social Media and Future of Leadership" Conference* held in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 12–13 May, 2011. The conference project flowed from the premise that Internet and social media technologies are radically transforming the character of leadership all over the world. In the era of globalization and digital technologies traditional leadership is no longer valid. Today leadership requires a new approach, new mind-set, and new skills. One of the most important characteristics required for today's leaders is connectivity.

The aim of the conference was to bring together academic and business leaders of the Balkan countries for the study of digital social networking and for advancing public participation, educational progress, small nation and minority success, regional economic development and globally inclusive, well-connected leadership. It is of utmost importance to strengthen the ability of leaders to be effective, competitive and connected not only locally but globally as well, in order to be competitive in a digitalized global economy.

The conference was sponsored by the University of Tuzla and the Forerunner Federation USA. Participants were from the following countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and the United States.

Emerging professional use of Social Media

Since its creation in the early 1960s, from commercialization to private use in the 1980s and its expansion to popular usage in the 1990s, the Internet has become a global network with a huge impact on people, culture and the economy (Varga, 2010). Connecting between people started in the 1970s, with emails and discussion groups, and the possibilities for interaction are improving along with the development of new Internet applications like on-line real-time games (1978), chat (1988) and blog (1993), sites that provide a range of services (Yahoo!, GeoCities, Ebay) and social networking sites (Varga, 2010: 112). According to the World Internet Users and Population Statistics the number of Internet users worldwide reached two billion. This means that between 15 and 20 percent of the world's population is on the Internet.

The development of Internet technologies has led to the transformation of Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. It is argued that a basic similarity of social media Web sites is the user-generated element characterized by openness and collaboration (Smith, 2011). As opposed to Web 1.0, Web 2.0 is considered an ideal platform and context for social networking enabled by different social media. Features of Web 2.0 are enabling remarkable opportunities regarding access to information, data sharing, communication and collaboration in comparison with what was possible a decade ago (Varga, 2010). In addition, social media encourage an active and interactive Internet usage. It provides users with online networks and communities for multi-directional communication and knowledge exchange and allows them to publish and share digital contents (Redecker, Ala-Mutka and Punie, 2010).

There is no doubt that social media and social networking websites have bloated rapidly over the past few years. According to recent statistics, Facebook has grown exponentially since 2006, and now more than 51% of all Americans have a Facebook page (WebMediaBrands). Twitter, once a small micro-blogging website, now has around 200 million members worldwide.

The potential of these interactive social media tools and technologies exceeded the mere entertainment function and are becoming essential ingredients of educational programs, research projects, business ventures and successful political campaigns.

Social media applications in higher education and research have expanded the possibilities for modernizing the educational institutions, innovating the teaching processes and preparing a competitive and effective young workforce. According to Redecker and his colleagues (2010), social media can lead to innovation in education in five different dimensions: (1) facilitates access by students learning content and information, making institutional processes more transparent; (2) integrates learning into a wider community; (3) supports the exchange of knowledge and collaboration among learners and teachers; (4) increases academic achievement; (5) implements

pedagogical strategies to support and improve learning processes. These technologies give students an unprecedented ability to create their own information-rich environments, available everywhere all the time and linked by friendships and community affiliations.

The social media usage is increasingly spreading not only among students but among teachers and professors as well. A survey conducted among 1000 college professors in the United States shows that four out of five professors use social media (Tinti-Kane, Seaman and Levy, 2010). A little more than half use podcasts, video, wikis, and blogs for their classes. About 30% use social networks to communicate with their students, and almost 25% of the professors had four or more accounts on social networks. However, the study shows that just 10 to 12 percent of the professors ask students to use social media tools to create something or post comments. It was also revealed that the most widely used social media service is Facebook.

Being an extremely effective tool for interactions, social media sites attract millions of people to sign up, which is changing the functions of these sites in higher education. Barnes and Mattson (2010) found that at least one form of social media is used for recruiting prospective students by 95% of colleges and universities. Furthermore, benchmarked with the Fortune 500 companies, 51% of colleges and universities admissions offices have a blog for their school, while only 22% of companies have a corporate blog. In addition, online videos are also used by universities to provide virtual tours of their institutions, campuses and sample lectures from faculty members.

The social media usage in higher education institutions in the Balkans is somewhat different due to the specific context and global challenges they face. The Bologna Process and the Europeanization of higher education is undoubtedly one of the most challenging global processes, while local challenges reveal through the economic instability, political disorder and loss of values and norms caused by the conflicts in the 1990s.

In addition to these challenges, higher education institutions have to reckon with fragmentation, international isolation and massive brain drain. It is argued that fragmentation is a main source of problems not only for education institutions, but for governance, management and administration as well. This inheritance from the past leaves its mark on academic teaching, learning and research processes (Cuckovic, 2006). In most of the institutions the amount of student scientific research in the first and second cycle of higher education is still very low. It is part of the thesis work in some cases, but it is not included in curricula.

There is an urgent need to adapt to these challenges and face successfully the changes caused by the market forces, technological development and new knowledge providers. It has to be realized that without bringing profound and lasting changes in institutional level, in governance and management structures of

higher education, every kind of renewal in the teaching, learning and research process as well as the students' assessments will have less chance to be achieved successfully.

The main challenge higher education leaders face is the sustainable development in education, research and innovation. An evaluation of the universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina made in 2004 shows that most of the universities do not have professionally trained administrators who are capable of providing essential functions a modern university needs (EUA, 2004). The universities need to realize how great responsibility they have in their own development, they need to be less dependent on the state and more innovative regarding the overall performance. For this reason, to keep a competitive academic leadership has an utmost importance. We can witness that the traditional leadership approach is no longer valid, a new entrepreneurial style has to be set. This means on the one hand new directions and orientations in visioning, planning and managing, on the other hand requires connectivity, networking and relationship building.

The crucial role of science in higher education has to be also recognized. On the one hand, science education is the key to the success in the globally competitive world, on the other hand students must be prepared for this challenge. More and more jobs require educated workforce, who can respond flexibly to complex problems, communicate effectively, manage information, work in teams, and produce innovative results.

The active usage of social media in higher education can contribute to cope effectively with the global and local challenges mentioned above and to sustain a recognized and competitive higher education system in the Balkan countries. The increasing number of studies and best practices suggest that social media has efficiently worked its way into higher education.

Political campaigns are also affected by social media. During the 2008 elections in the United States it was observed that Barack Obama had a large social media presence. As an article in New York Times wrote: "*were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not be president*" (11/7/2008). Obama's presidential campaign changed the way Internet is used for political purposes, specifically social media in political campaigns. He focused on social media to connect with voters and supporters, to mobilize millions of volunteers, to reach young voters and receive donations. The major social networks used in the campaign were Facebook and YouTube. During the election period Obama had 2 million Facebook friends (currently has more than 20 million), while John McCain had only 600,000. In addition, Obama supporters uploaded 1,800 videos, while around 300 videos were loaded to McCain's YouTube channel. Today most of the political parties create websites and use social media tools, because since the Obama campaign it is hard to refuse the most efficient way of circulating information.

Social media platforms can be used efficiently by local politicians as well. Local campaigns usually have smaller budgets and staffs than large campaigns, so they can easily manage a successful low budget campaign using well-developed social media strategies.

It is agreed that social media has an important impact on the political apathy associated with the younger generations. The Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that many young adults do not actively search for political information but rather encounter such information while going online for other purposes (Smith 2011). In this way, social media provides the opportunity to reach younger candidates and encourage them to participate and become partners in political discussions.

However, social media is a relatively new way for politicians to communicate, so problems and challenges have arisen as well. One of the problems that Twitter can cause is related to its speed. A March 28, 2011 USA TODAY article argues that "*it now only takes 140 characters to damage a political campaign*" (Kucinich, 2011). A January New York Times article discusses the problems political bloggers can present for candidates using social media tools (Jeremy, 2011). For example if a rumor is spread, it may be reprinted in papers and discussed on cable television as if it were a fact. So this immediate nature of social media sites can make them harmful and destructive.

Regarding grassroots socio-political organizations, social media has an enormous impact. One of the recent examples is the revolution that waved throughout the Middle East. Social media sites, mainly Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, were used to show to the world what was happening. In addition, people used these sites to increase government transparency and to build an international network equipped with information.

Concerning the future usage of social media, new trends and methods are already emerging. Future political campaigns seem to be affected by the increased use of social media platforms on smartphones and other mobile tablets. A new method thought to be effective in the future is to target specific groups and small online niches with messages personalized to their particular interests instead of sending out general messages to everyone. In the March 2011 article in *Campaigns and Elections* Greyes said that sending out impersonal, general messages via traditional political communications like mailings, phone calls, newspaper editorials, television ads and emails is waste of time and money (Smith, 2011).

The social media usage in political campaigns in the Balkan countries shows a merely different sight. According to a very limited number of research, while many national parties, organizations, politicians and other public persons use Internet sites as an obligatory supplement to their promotional campaign, Bosnia and Herzegovina still oscillates between "tradition" and the Internet (Voćkić–Avdagić, 2003). Most of the politicians do not have presence on social media sites and

generally use the one-way style of communication without understanding the logic and the democratic character of these new ways of communication (*ibidem*).

In conclusion it can be said that no matter how politicians use social media in their campaigns, social media technologies will continue to be an important part of the campaign process. Social media tools represent a very cost-effective and immediately accessible forum and appear to create a new community of equal people.

The business applications of social media are widespread as marketing and public relations tools. The Center for Marketing Research (Barnes, 2011) indicates that 91% of companies incorporated at least one social media service or tool in 2009. In 2007, 43 percent of the companies did not use social media, which dropped to 9 percent in 2009. Social media users in business areas agree that the overall marketing costs dropped when they implemented the social media marketing.

According to statistical studies, in the United States, four services dominate the use of social media networks and tools: Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn. The Facebook users are likely to be married (40%) with the second-highest average income ($61,000) and an average of 121 connections. Twitter users are entrepreneurial, they use the service to promote their businesses. MySpace users are more likely to be single (60%), student (23%) interested in having fun, specifically in the areas of entertaining friends, humor and comedy, and video games. The LinkedIn users are likely male (its ratio of male to female users is 57% to 43%) who tend to like news, employment information, sports, and politics (Anderson, Reaves and Makovic, 2010).

The research also shows that the social networkers' feelings about online brands in general are more positive than the researchers thought they would be. Some 52% of social networkers had friended or become a fan of at least one brand (Anderson *et al.,* 2010).

Regarding the business application of social media, there are generally four functions that social networks are used for: sales, marketing, public relations and internal communications. As the Social Media Marketing Industry Report (2011) shows, the marketing side takes a lot of time. The majority of marketers (58%) are using social media for 6 hours or more each week, and more than a third (34%) invest 11 or more hours weekly. The YouTube and video marketing is in increase. The top social media tools used in the four functions mentioned above are the Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and blogs.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina a very good example of social media usage in business is the Islamic Arts Magazine founded by Kenan Surkovic and Elvira Bojadzic in Sarajevo. The aim of the international e-magazine is to promote the traditional and contemporary Islamic Art and artists from the Islamic world. Via social media they reached 20,000 people so far.

Limited use of Social Media in the Balkans

The Balkan countries have largely been outside of the intensive information society building process of European profile. However, the critical importance of information and communication technologies for improving competitiveness, creativity and innovation was acknowledged by the European Commission. Underdevelopment of the past, existential problems of the present and the uncertainty of the future created a mix of unfavorable circumstances for new ICTs' adoption. This is why internet penetration in Balkan countries is low compared with those published as average of Europe (Kostov, 2006).

The statistical data show that Balkan and other European countries are digitally deeply divided (Kostov 2006). It is alarming that according to Internet World Statistics, in 2008 31.2% of the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina had access to the Internet, which places the country on the 48th grade (out of 53) in the Internet Usage in Europe ranking. But the Internet penetration level in Bosnia is one of the highest in the Balkan region. The growth for the decade made up almost 20.500%. Despite this fact in many Balkan countries there is low internet literacy in terms of both internet access and level of sophistication among internet users.

Division regarding the internet usage in the Balkan countries exists between urban-rural regions and in a lower degree between genders. In statistical data, it does not appear that there is a huge gender gap in Internet usage, with a light exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, most likely due to cultural specificities. However, it appears that urban-rural divisions concerning Internet usage are sharp. Particularly in Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina it is disappointing that 99% of the Internet users live in urban areas (Kostov, 2006).

The Internet users in Bosnia and Herzegovina are mainly the young, 27 year old people with a 1:2 women/men ratio. The percentage of women using the Internet is between 10% and 30% (rarely over 30%), the average percentage being 14% (Voćkić–Avdagić, 2003).

In *The Social Media and Future of Leadership* conference Šejn Husejnefendić and Mirza Mehmedović from the University of Tuzla presented the social media and marketing applications in Southeastern Bosnia region. They used a sample of 100 Internet users and found that the most popular social media is Facebook (94%) and YouTube (86%). Although to a lower degree, but the respondents use Google Buzz (13%), Tagged (12%), MySpace (9%) and Twitter (5%). Half of the respondents use social media daily, 32 percent almost every day and only 10 percent uses it twice a week. Social media users are mainly students and 18–25 years old youths.
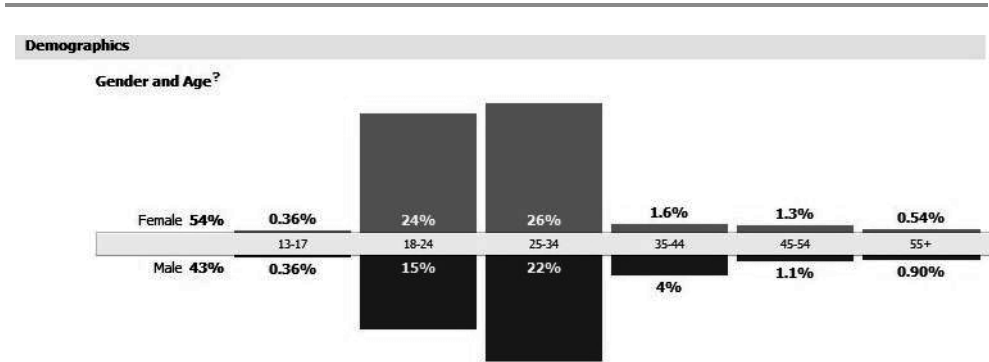
Graph 1. The characteristics of online media users
(Source: Šejn and Mehmedović, 2011)

Vedada Baraković from the University of Tuzla presented the new forms of media activism, the manifestations of e-revolutions (Tunis, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Croatia). According to the GfK data, 52% of the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina uses at least one social media site. Graph 2. below reveals that the profile of the social media user in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a 15-24 year old female with university degree, living in urban area.

Mahmutović and Jamakosmanović (2011) from the University of Tuzla argue that social media has changed the traditional view of healthcare, helping to remove barriers between doctors and patients. However, social media usage in healthcare systems and communication is not sufficiently developed, and it is related to three factors: (1) deep misunderstanding of social media by healthcare management; (2) underdeveloped communication infrastructure in healthcare institutions; (3) passive patients who are used to the old paternalistic doctor-centric model. The authors argue that healthcare organizations and professionals still use the traditional, vertical communication model which is the main barrier for wider application of social media technologies.
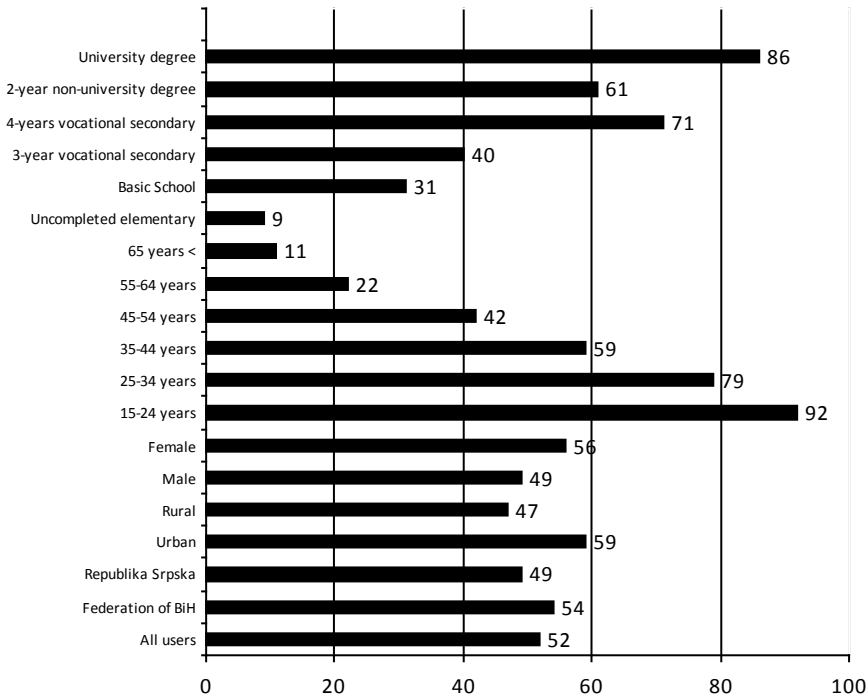
Graph 2. Social media usage in Bosnia-Herzegovina
(Source: Baraković, 2011)

The ten rights and principles of Internet governance compiled by the Internet Rights and Principles Dynamic Coalition (IRP) were presented by Tucaković (2011) from the Riyasat of the Islamic Community. These are:
1. *Universality and Equality* (all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights, which must be respected, protected and fulfilled in the online environment)
2. *Rights and Social Justice* (the Internet is a space for the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights and the advancement of social justice; everyone has the duty to respect the human rights of all others in the online environment)
3. *Accessibility* (everyone has an equal right to access and use a secure and open Internet)
4. *Expression and Association* (everyone has the right to seek, receive, and impart information freely on the Internet; everyone also has the right to associate freely through and on the Internet)

5. *Privacy and Data Protection* (everyone has the right to privacy online)
6. *Life, Liberty and Security* (the rights to life, liberty, and security must be respected, protected and fulfilled)
7. *Diversity* (cultural and linguistic diversity on the Internet must be promoted)
8. *Network Equality* (everyone shall have universal and open access to the Internet's content, free from discriminatory prioritization, filtering or traffic control on commercial, political or other grounds)
9. *Standards and Regulation* (document and data formats shall be based on open standards that ensure complete interoperability, inclusion and equal opportunity for all)
10. *Governance* (human rights and social justice must form the legal and normative foundations upon which the Internet operates and is governed)

Call for action

Over the last few years the internet has had a profound effect on the private and professional lives all over the world. Social media and networking is changing the way we communicate and interact like never before. It also offers an increasing number and range of opportunities in political, business and academic sectors.

The importance of social media has to be recognized by the leaders of the Balkan countries as well. In order to prosper and keep up in the rapidly changing information society, to build a viable, respected and competitive Balkan community, policy makers, academic, business and political leaders must join together to take action.

To preserve and strengthen the great values of social media, our educational institutions, business enterprises and public institutions should take the following actions:

1. To greatly increase internet access and promote the use, particularly professional use of social media.
2. Educational and business leaders at all levels need to embrace effective use of social media in order to compete effectively in the globalizing knowledge society.
3. The Balkans region needs positive affirmative action initiatives to increase appreciation of diverse cultures, minority views, historic traditions and new ideas.
4. Strengthening of media and democracy requires strong and well developed public media sector free from bureaucratization and government involvement.

5. The social media should remain free, open access and democratic, not dominated by media tycoons or dictatorial governments.

The scientific research, studies, presentations and articles indicate that social media is changing the world. The function of social media platforms diversify and the social media technologies penetrate into academic, business and non-profit sectors. An increasing number of studies emphasize the economic, social and political impacts of social media technologies. It is also evident that the professional usage of social media is profoundly different among Balkan countries and the USA or Western Europe. For this reason Balkan countries need to make special efforts to promote, adapt and exploit the benefits of social media in academic and business sectors as well.

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Websites as Teaching Tools at the Department of Media Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad: Case Study

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Abstract. The Internet, an independent medium and the basic journalistic tool used in everyday practice is also recognized as a priority in the specialized courses taught at the Department of Media Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. Today, journalism and elementary communication cannot be imagined without the Internet. Due to this fact, the teaching process in this scientific area of knowledge is directed towards the highest degree of theoretical and practical coordination between future journalists and current trends and processes in the cyberspace. For that purpose, three sites have been created. They are used both as teaching tools and public media present at the media scene. These are: the e-papers used in the course Internet journalism, web address for the area of Reporting on natural and caused catastrophes, and the website for the course Media for children, which is especially functional and thorough since teachers, students and children from primary schools, whom the site is intended for, have been involved in all the processes since the initial idea and very beginning. The pages include current affairs, the field of education, communication, entertainment and children's artistic works as well as the tradition and scientific work on media for children, which is a century and a half long in this geographical area. The Department has also opened a web portal, which is multifunctional: it serves as a medium for open media communication and announcements, internal notice board and a source of the necessary information on the work of the Department as well as a server for the other three sites.

Keywords: Internet, media, teaching, websites, journalists, students, children, communication

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present ways in which the Internet as a medium and an essential tool in modern journalism is used in teaching at the Department of Media Studies Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. The paper presents a concrete example of the specific application of new technology, and the scientific method is applied to case studies. It includes an overview of all the details related to the inception and development of ideas on the need to run this procedure and its justification in the context of time and technology, with a detailed review and analysis of all activities involved in the project. The introductory section presents the circumstances in the modern world, as well as in journalism, that initiated a new way of thinking in the organization of instruction in this Department. The following is a concrete analysis, divided into three major sections, each of which deals with specific examples of Internet sites designed for teaching in certain fields of science, and public media for the purpose of this Department.

The age we live in, the 21st century, has brought about significant changes in the global concept of communication. Soon, these innovations have appeared and been used both in general and media context. After five long centuries of the so called Gutenberg Galaxy, the whole humanity has made a long way of advancement contributed by fast development of new technologies in the spheres of human work and life in general.

The following computer science age has caused the development of computer culture so that the computer has nowadays become generally used technology, which is taken for granted in the greater part of humanity, while its poorer and less developed part is following this trend slowly but determinedly. General computerization is especially noticeable and unavoidable in the domain of information exchange, communication and mass media, where the use of new technologies is the standard almost completely established long time ago. Since the acceptance of new media is conditioned by technological maturity, cultural needs, as well as the capacities of society (Tapavički and Duronjić, 2008), their implementation implies the development in that society and its willingness to be included into global trends and become a part of them.

Today's media

The development of the high technology has also reorganized the media world so that fundamental changes have affected journalism as well. In the 21st century, journalists analyze and follow particularly complicated human communities with far more complicated social relations than there were in the past. However, there are tools including modern technology available to journalists, which are the products of the general scientific progress (Krejg, 2005). In spite of this fact,

journalists' task and basic aim has remained the same: conveying the news as accurately and fast as possible.

The global Internet web has significantly changed journalists' job so that it is, technically and technologically speaking, easier. Due to this fact, their job was faced with new challenges concerning ethics and its codices. Thus, a very efficient means of both personal and professional communication is available to a networked journalist. This means that it provides a journalist with almost instantaneous transfer of information to the target, no matter whether the message is intended for an individual or group. On the other hand, the Internet is a rich source of information of all categories. However, this does not mean that they are all perfectly precise and accurate so that they should be carefully accessed.

Except for being a basic professional tool for a journalist, the Internet is also the market for presenting their own or collective product. Journalism is quickly moving to the Internet that is becoming a dominant source of information for the vast majority of people in relation to the classical media, which are not dying off. They are finding various ways for prolonging their life through their cooperation with the new media.

Internet sites mainly include the combination of the written language and photograph as the basic elements for the transfer of information with adequate audio and video recordings that serve, especially in journalism, as a complement or extension of the primarily conveyed news. This kind of multimedia is in accordance with Bill Gates' prediction presented at the World Economy Forum in Davos (Switzerland) in 2007, which claims that, in the following couple of years, the Internet and television will become one. We are witnesses of this everyday merging that is currently taking place simultaneously in front of our eyes.

However, the main innovation in journalism is a consequence of one of the key features of the Internet web – interactivity. The presentation of a journalistic text on the Internet mainly subsumes leaving additional space for the receiver of the information, website visitors and readers to contribute to the general reception of the text in the form of a comment, additional information, recommendation, link to a similar topic or any other multimedia content. In that way, journalists are losing their previous monopoly regarding the collection and presentation of information since the process becomes an open circle in which everyone has a right to participate if they want to and find the way to make a personal contribution.

In that sense, a special role is played by blogs as a kind of individuals' diary entries, which are becoming increasingly important for creating a complete picture of a particular phenomenon due to the publicly expressed opinion or comment on a subject and the offer of the primary information itself. Therefore, editors of informative websites recognize their large role, while the trend of opening separate web addresses is also emphasized. The addresses are available only to bloggers and visitors' communities normally formed around them.

Media Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy

The Department of Media Studies was founded at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad in 2004 as the youngest academic and teaching sector for media literacy and training of future generation of educated journalists for the work in media and similar areas, such as communication and public relations as well as media science. Taking into account both the theoretical and practical teaching at this Department from the very beginning, the Internet is recognized as the basic technological tool and necessity in the modern approach to journalism as well as the teaching process of the transfer of knowledge itself.

The theoretical and practical adjustment to the current trends and processes in cyber space is a priority in all areas of study, especially those related to direct learning about journalism. This task does not seem to be too difficult since present generations of students already belong to the so called internet generation born and grown up in the computer science age with computers and the Internet as the basic tools for a large number of activities in modern life especially in relation to communication and the process of collecting, analyzing and presenting information, which is the basis of journalism.

However, there are certain limits regarding primary technological qualification for life in the age of computers' domination. These limits in Serbia originate from the sphere of the adequate and developed infrastructure and variable economic situation. Outside larger urban areas, in smaller towns with a higher percentage of older people, the number of homes with a computer and Internet access is far lower. A case in point is the village of Kruščić, the municipality of Kula in the northern part of the country, which, in 2010, got an open wireless internet access, but the number of homes with a computer is considerably low, i.e. less than 10%.

Being confronted with all positive or negative conditions given above, the Department of Media Studies has created a few websites related to various scientific areas or spheres of journalistic profession. In addition to being actively used as an everyday teaching tool, these sites exist and serve as open public media present at the large media scene in the country as well as outside it.
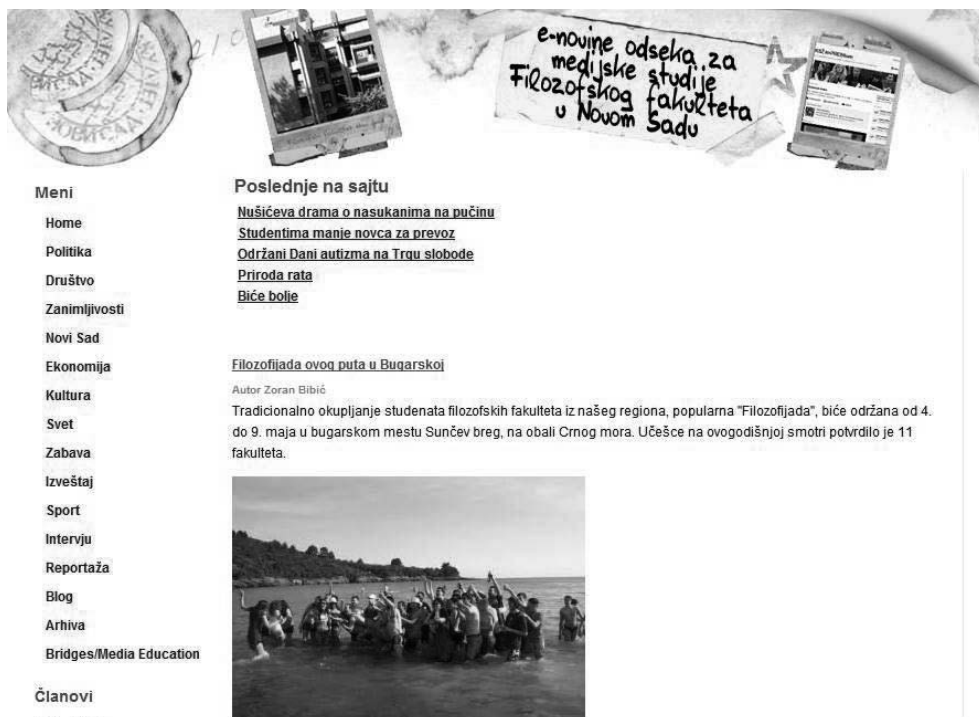
E-papers

The first website created to be used in the teaching process was the E-papers of the Department of Media Studies at the web address www.novine.medijske-studije.org. The website was built within the subject Internet journalism. In classes and workshops within this subject and after the theoretical introduction provided in lectures, there is a preparation and practical training on the Internet in the field of journalists' work for students through the simulation of a modern and organized

editorial office, whose activities are based on the appliance of modern technologies and that follows the newest trends in journalism in the world. Taking into account the fact that the given web address is publicly available, students are given an opportunity to introduce themselves to a broader media sphere without limits through their work in journalism. The site is, thus, completely dedicated to training in the form of a journalism workshop and an open and active editorial office of an internet medium.

The website has been set up by using the operation system Joomla, software that is very simple to use. That is why it is so popular in the world of computer science where it is often used for the creation of websites for various purposes. The experience of the Department of Media Studies has proved that this operating system is simple and easy for creating, learning, working and public presentation. Besides a professor and teaching assistant, talented students were involved in the creation of the website and they still have an important role as website administrators, while experienced teachers are editors of the website.

Editing policy has been defined so that it meets the needs of the target audience consisting primarily of students directly involved in the process of collecting and presenting the information. The website covers current issues in students' lives in Novi Sad including both the local level and global trends, which are necessary in the work of every journalist. The sections are divided on the basis of genres and topics including the news from politics, economy, society, culture, sport, entertainment, interesting facts and local area issues presented in the form of articles, reports, stories and interviews classified into separate genre sections. The information aspect of the website has been completed by creating a page for bloggers that is necessary for a modern editorial office paying special attention to civic journalism.

The students involved in the work of the editorial office access the website by opening a user account with personal name and password. In that way, they become active participants in the creation of the content at this web address. Through their work supervised by a teaching assistant, an editor, students gain knowledge and experience related to the work in a highly active editorial office as well as the use of certain genres and reporting techniques, conveying of news through various ways of editing an informative website. Being in accordance with the need for internet media, special attention is paid to the visual identity including the text support in the form of adequate photographs and video material, which have to be presented in accordance to the principles of united visualization and uniformity, as it is the case with the text itself. Set up in this way, the e-papers were the only real medium of the Department during the first several years of its existence and work.

Graph 1. E-papers of the Department of Media Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad

Media for children

At the Department of Media Studies, one of the studied subjects is Media for children, a unique course including all academic and educational institutions dealing with journalism and media analysis. The main reason for this is a 150-year long tradition of publishing various media contents intended for the target audience in Vojvodina, especially in the urban centers Sombor and Novi Sad. The first written and illustrated magazines for children were published in the mid-19th century, such as A Friend of Serbian Youngsters, Children's Friend, Radovan and Pigeon, while Marigold was created in 1880 in Novi Sad and soon won great popularity; it has been published ever since with a short discontinuation.

The tradition of media for children was successfully continued in the 20th century due to the spread of electronic media, radio and television. Radio and television Vojvodina, a public service, has paid great attention to the content for children for decades so that children have had the opportunity to grow up learning through radio and television programs abounding in documentary and entertaining shows intended for children.

Respecting that tradition and being aware of the need for the youngest members of our society to be involved in the media sphere, which they belong to, the Department decided to create a website within the course Media for children, which would serve as e-papers for children in primary schools. Relying on previous experience gained through the creation of the Department's e-papers, a completely new website was set up at the web address www.5sazvezdicom.medijskestudije.org.

The website was built with the participation of professors, teaching assistants, and students involved in studying Media for children including children aged 8−11, who were marked as the target audience in the preparatory analysis in accordance with the desired degree of their cognitive development. In addition to theoretical and practical knowledge gained through the analysis of world and domestic scene of the media for children conducted within the course, the final results concerning the need for the website were obtained by surveying children in a large number of primary schools in the province. The analysis of the results obtained in the research and survey has provided the picture of the future website with creative, educational and entertaining content including the reduced space for marketing, games and other media products that are aggressively and unethically presented, badly affecting children's growing up during the preadolescent period.

The operating system Joomla in a new edition was again used for setting up the website designed to attract the attention of young visitors in an imaginative and funny way, while the choice of sections had the purpose of a long stay at the given address. In addition to the sections News, Interesting Issues, World of the Famous, and Where to Go to Have Fun dealing with current issues from the lives of children in primary schools and created by students, the website includes the section Your Works in which students can publish their literary or art works. Following the principle of interactivity, there is the section Discussions, supervised by an administrator, in which visitors can comment on previously read texts and raise new topics according to the areas they are interested in.

The section set up first, Dragon's Nook, is dedicated to the memory of the great writer of children poetry and the founder of the magazine Marigold, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, which showed the need of the course to pay attention to other people who dedicated their media work to children so that they are given an adequate section of the website. This is the reason why the section Collections of Works contains interviews with a large number of journalists whose work is related to the media for children especially in the last decades in Vojvodina and other parts

of the country. The interviewers were students using typical questions with the aim of throwing light on the motives and methods for dealing with children's topics in different media contents. The interviewees were the best known people working in the media for children, such as the writer and journalist Raša Popov, poet Pero Zubac and a famous TV presenter Minja Subota.

In the sections Analysis and Scientific Paper, a large number of seminar papers, graduation and other academic papers were published. They were created through theoretical and practical work on the topic of media for children within the course. The content of the website also includes domestic and foreign law regulations on children's rights in general as well as the obligations that journalists owe to their youngest audience. In this way, the website subsumes all fields related to media for children as well as all participants important for this type of media so that this course is completely developed by the use of the website.

Graph 2. E-papers for students in primary schools

The portal

Due to the positive results from the previous experience, the Department has created another website with educational and information content, intended for teaching and its results within the course Reporting on natural and caused catastrophes. At the established address www.krize.medijskestudije.org, students, professors, teaching assistants and teaching associates' works are published. They are related to this specific area of journalism. The website is updated in accordance with the work dynamics within the course and the results achieved in teaching and journalistic work.

The peak of the implementation of websites in teaching and the organization of work at the Department of Media Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad was the creation of the portal that will subsume the whole previous experience and already established websites for teaching and information purposes. This time, the operating system Word-Press was used for setting up the website since it is a more modern platform specialized for web publishing with high standards concerning the design and use. The portal has been set up at the web address www.medijskestudije.org having numerous purposes. Primarily, it is a medium intended for broad media communication and presentation and it is a product that the Department presents to the media scene in Serbia and in general. Simultaneously, the portal acts as an internal medium or notice board with up-to-date information related to subjects and exams as well as the source of the needed information about the Department's work. It is also a server for the other three websites.

Conclusion

Almost all segments of the organization and functioning of today's society in the technologically developed world are faced with the necessary use of computers and the Internet as the dominant space for all forms of the basic personal or general communication. This trend is especially emphasized in the domain of media, while journalism today cannot be imagined without the elementary reliance on the domain of computer science. Thus, teaching in academic institutions that educate new generations of journalists is confronted with the necessary inclusion of new media and technology into all aspects of organization and work.

Positive experience and the example of the Department of Media Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad imply that the implementation of websites in the teaching process is the only possible way to keep up with global trends that are rapidly changing, especially in journalism that requires obligatory presence of all sources of news and current affairs. Today, they are found on the Internet so that for a modern man, especially a journalist or student of journalism, the access to the

Internet and active life with it are the priorities and, as it can be concluded, already established standards.

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Social Media and Marketing Application in South-Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina Region The Practical Use of Social Media by New-portals in South-Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina Region

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Abstract. Social media, as a special type of new media, have made mediamorphosis of traditional media based on Web 1.0. Due to its interactivity and throughput of messages, as well as acceptance of the codes, social media have become an indispensable factor in the communication and marketing strategies. Applicability of social media, especially networks like "Facebook", in the northeastern region of Bosnia and Herzegovina is recognized by many news portals and they have incorporated marketing and advertising functions in their everyday advertising. The research quoted in this paper confirms that the visibility (or rather, number of visits) of news-portals is directly correlated with their presence on social networks and, regarding this, the lack of news-portals advertising on these networks entail the fall of attendance (and there is also an imminent decline in advertising companies on these portals). There are indications that, even when in a short period portals do not actively use the potentials of advertising on social networks, the presence of a message has a prolonged effect − "social media marketing" performs its role even when "communicator" is not activated. The study also showed that most users of social media are students and the population under the age of 35 and that 92% of respondents use social media in the range of at least twice a day. Every second person surveyed uses this form of media every day. Nearly one in five respondents pleaded that they visit news-portals exclusively through links on social networks. The analysis also shows that in economic terms (profit from ads and other marketing services), the portals use "*Facebook statements*" to find advertisers

who are sent to the same target group as the portal. "Facebook" (in this context) conducts a marketing analysis in the real world. Instead of surveys, analysis, testing, statistical calculations etc. "Facebook" visitors are becoming your pattern for marketing analysis (to which you are a source of information) and providing establishing business cooperation with other sites (companies) with similar profiles.

Keywords: social, networks, marketing, Facebook, advertising.

Popularity of the social networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Pandemic of the social media and networks based on Web 2.0 didn't miss the Western Balkans, or the countries in transition, primarily Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, considering the population, can boast that every third inhabitant[1] is registered on the planetary popular Facebook. YouTube, MySpace, Twitter, Hi5 and other social networks (media) also have their supporters, and it is not unusual that one person has more profiles (accounts) on several social media at the same time.

How did the social media become so popular? If we take into consideration the transformation of one political system into another, the war which has substantially destroyed the economy and the post-war state of transition, in which the average citizen wasn't able to provide the basic necessities for life, nor did he/she have the possibility to travel abroad (which was allowed after the visa abolishment at the end of 2010), we can say that the perfect conditions were created for a virtual freedom or virtual public (Osmančević, 2003).

The new freedoms, along with the poor financial situation of most of the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the influence of traditional media and aggression of the Western culture, mostly expanded through the on-line forms and internet, and *in vivo* meeting and getting closer received its realization in the form of social networking.

Pro and counter arguments of social networking (or media, networks) have been explained on several occasions (common passive behavior of social media, possibility of illegal use of data or information disseminated via social media, changing focus of attention and energy from the daily activities to the addiction of users vs. socially improved possibilities, establishing friendly, business and intimate relationships, free advertising etc.).

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[1] As stated on the web-site Socialbakers.com that specializes in tracking only Facebook statistics, in early 2011 Bosnia and Herzegovina has exceeded the number of one million users. Currently the figures are somewhere around 1.031 million with a tendency to increase; on average more than half of the users fall into the category of young people (18-34 years) http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/bosnia-and-herzegovina/last-week#chart-intervals 25th February 2011

The subject of this paper is the use of social media to promote news-portals or content of information disseminated through social media by news-portals. News-portals often owe their popularity to the social networks which can produce, due to their way of business and through just one user, thousands of links to one web page, which was originally set up as a link on a social network.

What are the Social Media?

The social media, in their broader definition, are "the media that enable anyone to communicate with everyone. In other words, the content generated by consumers, distributed through the easy access internet tools" (Sterne, 2010: 20).

However, the definitions that leave a lot of space for subjective, and specifically individual interpretations, can often lead in a wrong direction; that was the case with the book *The Bible of social media* of 1000 interviewed professionals in the field of social media and media in general; 66% of them said that they cannot define what the social media are (Safko, 2010: 11).

In the same book the definition of social media is similar to the already mentioned one: "social media are the media which we use for socialization" (Safko, 2010: 25). Although this answer covers all the possibilities, forms and contents of the social media, it is necessary to point out that, traditional media such as radio, newspapers and television can also be used for socialization, since the basic functions of those media was to inform, educate, entertain and socialize. Anyhow, the nature of traditional media limits to a significant degree the possibilities of socialization of individuals, as compared to the nature and possibilities of social media, such as the networks like Facebook, Twitter or YouTube.

In the book *New rules of marketing and PR* (Scott, 2010: 38) there is also this definition: "Social media are the media which enable the way for people to share their ideas, content (of something), thoughts and relationships on-line. The social media are different from the so called 'mainstream media', by the possibility for anyone to create, comment and add the content on the social media. They have the form of text, sound, video, photo and communities."

Differentia specifica of social media in opposition to all other media forms of communication (without the 'in person' communication) is that users communicate on social networks with the main goal to disseminate information linked to the users themselves: whether it is about personal information (affinities or attitude about something), or there is a need to share a thought, attitude, opinion, moral doubt, favorite song, video or multimedia. Rarely, the users of social networks are focused on profitable activities, and more often on self-promotion (unless the private users create their own web-groups with a goal of promoting their own products, services or anything that they want to offer).

As for every way of communication, it is important to know your target group as well as the answers to Quintilian's questions that he raised 2000 years ago: who are we, what are we doing on the social networks, for how long do we plan to do that, to whom do we plan to focus the communication and what are we hoping for? The audience of the social media is hard to categorize: the age structure is from teenagers to retired, education level ranges also between two extremes: from persons with no formal education (children in elementary school) to intellectuals with master's and doctoral degree. Also, on social networks there are no limitations in regard to the individual's affinity: here once again we see religious workers, professors and academics, doctors, lawyers, politicians, fashion and nutritionist gurus together with construction workers, entrepreneurs and unemployed, drivers, waiters and students to deviant individuals focused on pedophilia, racism, sadism or violence, pyromania, kleptomania or other forms of socially not acceptable behavior.

However, what is common for everybody who visits and uses social media is that they are not immune to the marketing and other types of messages posted by the users. The marketing experts are also aware of that, and they underestimate the fact that the marketing on social media holds 10% of all the money spent online – 2.9 milliards of dollars – (Tracy, 2008: 9) and nobody wants to miss the chance for free advertising and promotion via the social networks.

Correlation of use of the Social Media and visits of the info-portals in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Facebook is the most popular social network/media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while YouTube is still not considered social media.[2] Twitter, MySpace and other social media are mostly on the margins and, for relatively small number of users, don't represent indicative form of social media. In comparison, Facebook is the social media that has the most advertising from informative and news-portals, especially the ones which are just starting the business. Most of the news-portals owe a big part of their popularity exclusively to the social networks as confirmed in the second part of this paper.

According to the information taken from the web-site alexa-ba.com, among 50 web-sites that are most visited, informative portals are prevailing[3] (about half of the 50 that are most visited in Bosnia and Herzegovina are news-portals). Sports

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[2] Although on YouTube every user has the possibility to open their own video-channel, to set contents which were created as creative work or the video-contents that he/she prefers and to comment his/her own and other's video-contents or to mark a specific detail on the video, for most users, YouTube is just a video-channel where they can find what they want to see and by that be passive consumers of the most popular channel for video-hosting (remark Š.H.).

[3] http://www.alexa-ba.com/ 25.2.2011.

and entertainment portals follow, and then the portals focused on business and employment (like pik.ba, posao.ba, market.ba etc.). From the total of 50 most visited web-pages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 50% have their own account on Facebook, and 14 out of 50 analyzed portals use YouTube as link for videos. The third most popular social network among these 50 most visited web-portals is Twitter, followed by Google Buzz and MySpace. The first chart represents the use of social networks via the most visited Bosnian web-portals.
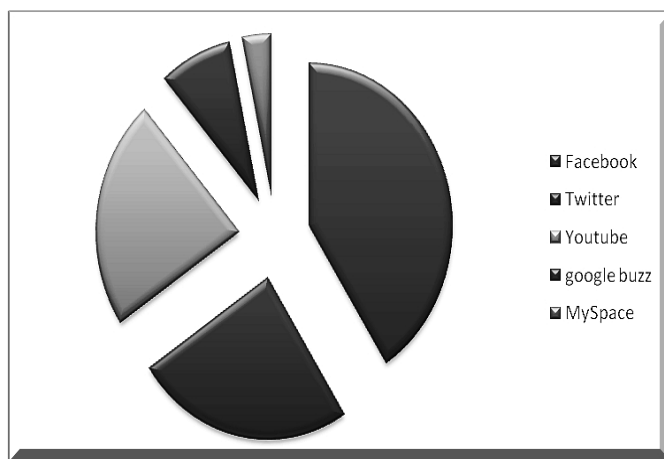
Graph 1. The use of social networks via 50 most visited Bosnian web-portals
(Authors' computation based on www. alexa-ba.com)

Analysis of visits of the portals and use of social networks

During March 2011 (from 14th to 24th March 2011) I have conducted a research with the goal of finding out the correlation between the number of visits on the informative portals during their regular advertising on social networks (especially Facebook) and number of visits when they weren't using the social media to promote content of their portals.

Four news-portals have been randomly chosen based in north-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina: www.tip.ba, www.zivinice.ba, www.infobrcko.com, www.tuzlainfo.ba. All analyzed portals have their own production of news content such as reports, news, columns, service information and agency's news and are registered as news-portals. All analyzed portals use social media for marketing such as:
- Fan-groups through which they disseminate links that lead straight to their portal

- Sending private messages to users of social networks who agree to receive that sort of messages
- Marketing from the users of social media (users who send links of news-portals to other users for which they think that it would be interesting)

Monitoring visits of web-portals was enabled via Google Analytics as follows: management of portals regularly used social networks for the purpose of marketing throughout 10 days when the average visit rate was monitored. In addition to the above mentioned, there was a test-period lasting for 48 hours when the portals editors shut down the advertising on social media (16th and 17th March) in order to record the extent to which the visit numbers would decline on the monitored portals.

Research results

Web-portal brckoinfo.com[4] is the informative portal of the city of Brcko and it is one of the most visited info-portals in Brcko district. During the monitoring of 10 days (the results from the test-period of 48 hours were not counted) the average daily visit rate of this portal was 5,241 visits (in total 52,415 visits for the whole period)[5] and the visitors have opened in total 127,498 pages during the visit to web-site infobrcko.com.

The number of unique visits made via social media[6] was 18,677 during the 10 days monitoring (33.19% of the total number of visits came via Facebook).

The test-period of 48 hours (16th and 17th March 2011) during which the portal infobrcko.com didn't advertise on the social networks shows the following: the total number of visits during this period was 3,852 (about 1,926 daily) which shows that the visitation in the test-period in relation to the previous period decreased with more than a third (in the test-period with no advertising on the social media, only 36.74% of visits was recorded as compared to the periods when the advertising was regular).

Web-portal zivinice.ba[7] is one of the most visited informative portals in the city of Zivinice.[8] During the period of 10 days (not counting the test-period), 10,105 of unique visits were recorded (1,263 visits daily), and the visitors spent in average 2:21 minutes on the portal. In total 46,914 pages were opened on the portal. The number of unique visitors during the period of 10 days via social networks was 2,365 (18.94% of the total number of visits). The total number of

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[4] For more info, please visit http://www.infobrcko.com/v3/ 28.3.2011.

[5] The average time of duration of visit on the portal infobrcko.com is 2:24 minutes

[6] Primarily the social network Facebook

[7] For more info, please visit http://www.zivinice.ba/ 28.3.2011.

[8] Despite this claim the zivinice.ba is not on the list of the 1000 most visited portals recorded by alexa.ba – remark Š.H.

visits on zivinice.ba is based primarily on research (Google with 41.38%), secondly via direct links (38.06%), and on the third place is Facebook as the social media (12.47%).

During the test-period of 48 hours (without advertising on Facebook) the results were recorded as follows: the total of 2,379 visits (1,189 visits daily) of which almost 9% was via Facebook (209 visits). Total visitation decrease was 5.82%. The primary channels via which the users used to get to the portal zivinice.ba remained: google.ba, direct links and on the third place Facebook with 8.79% of visits.

The web-portal tuzlainfo.ba[9] is one of the few most visited informative portals in the city of Tuzla.[10] During the period of 10 days (not counting the test-period), 9,379 of unique visits were recorded (1,172 visits daily), and in total 12,532 pages were opened on the portal. The visitors spent in average 1:13 minutes on the portal. According to the number of sources which have led the users to the web-portal tuzlainfo on the first place is the browser Google with 46.22%, followed by the social media Facebook with 44.09% (3,038 visits). In other words, almost a half of total visits recorded on the web-portal tuzlainfo.ba came thanks to the social media!

During the test-period, the following results were recorded: a total of 815 visits (407 visits daily) were recorded; almost 60% of users were led to this portal by the web-browser, while Facebook was on the second place and less than 30%. On the third place are the visitors who got to the address by typing in the web-address of this info-portal.

The total number of visits decreased by 65.23% during the test-period (compared to 1,172 unique visits on days when the advertising was recorded, there were 400 visits less than in days when there was advertising on the social networks). Also, significant information is that Facebook, regardless of the lack of advertising from the portal tuzlainfo.ba, kept the second place in number of visitors during the test-period, even though the divergence of almost 16% less number of visitors which came via Facebook during the days without advertising indicates that the lack of activity on social media leads to the significant number of visitors on the original web-site.

The web-portal tip.ba[11] is the most visited informative portal in the city of Tuzla (it holds the 40th place on the list of the most visited Bosnian sites recorded by alexa). During the period of 10 days (not counting the test-period) 40,163 of unique visits were recorded (5,086 visits daily) and the visitors spent in average

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[9] For more info, please visit http://www.tuzlainfo.ba/ 28.3.2011.

[10] At the time of writing the article (Spring 2011) tuzlainfo.ba is on the 689th place on the list of the most visited Bosnian sites recorded by alexa.ba (remark Š.H).

[11] For more info, please visit http://www.tip.ba/ 28.3.2011.

9:31 minutes on the portal. In total, 153,380 pages were opened during the monitoring period.

The social media are responsible for 9,681 visits (1,210 visits daily) on this info-portal, which is in total 24.1% of the total number of visits. In other words, Facebook directed every forth visitor to the web-portal tip.ba.

During the 2 day test-period without the advertising of content and links on the social networks that direct users to the web-portal tip.ba[12] the results were recorded as follows: the total number of visits in that period was 8,729 (4,365 visits daily), which is around 15% less visits daily compared to the days with advertising on Facebook. During the test-period, 1, 635 visits (817 daily) were recorded via Facebook, which decreased by 32.48% in relation to average percentage. In other words, in the days when there was no advertising on Facebook, there were almost a third of the visitors less on the web-portal tip.ba.

The results of the analysis of visitation from all four informative portals are presented in the second chart.
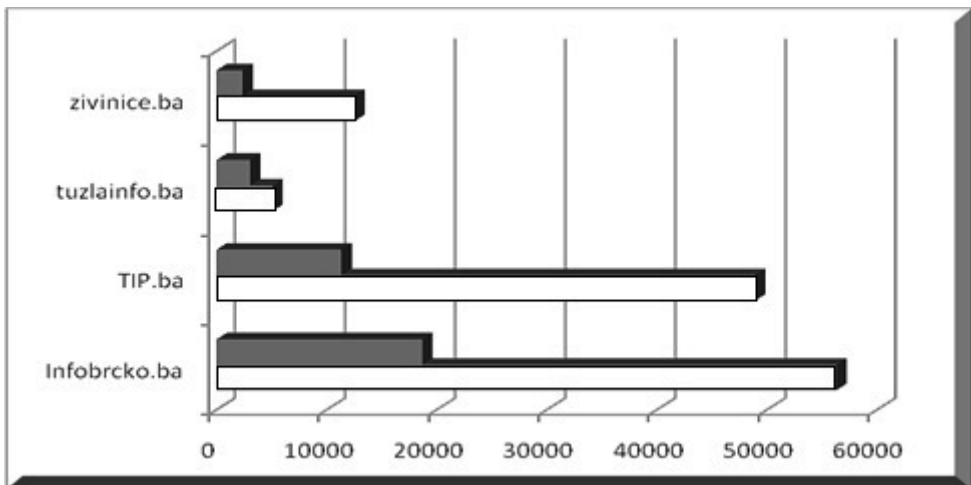

Graph 2. Visits of the four sites
(Longer bars represent the total number of visits on the portals. Grey color represents the number of visits that came via social media) (Authors' computation)

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[12] Due to delayed reaction on the portal tip.ba, we were forced to start the period with no advertising the day after, instead of initially planned 16th and 17th March, the test-period started 17th and lasted through 18th March 2011– remark Š.H.

The difference between the average number of visits in the test-period (without advertising) in relation to days with advertising on social media is presented in the third chart.
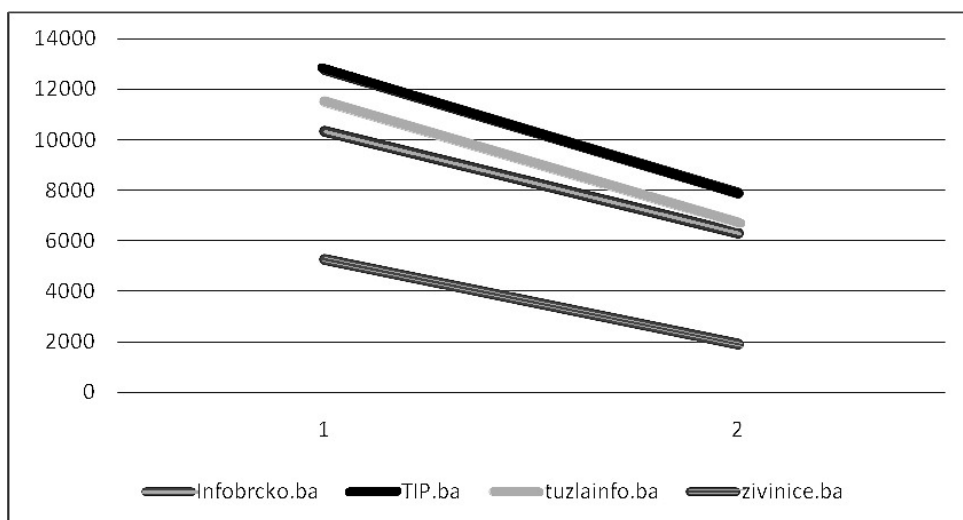
Graph 3. Number of visits of the monitored sites
(Every portal is marked with a shade of grey. All monitored portals have shown a decrease in visits during the 2-days test-period)
(Authors' computation)

As seen from the third chart, the number of visits declined on every monitored portal, but in different percentage (depending on the previous amount of usage of social media in advertising, the regular users independent from social networks, the marketing actions of each portal etc.). The decrease in visits varies from "almost not recordable", barely 6% (web-portal zivinice.ba), to a significant 15% on the web-portal tip.ba, and then to really significant 36.74% on web-portal infobrcko.com and even to 65% on the web-portal tuzlainfo.ba.

An also significant fact is that regardless of the *possible lack of advertising* info-portals on the social media, a number of users still use social media for access to informative and other contents on the portals which have their own accounts on Facebook (whether they are members of groups or they use "old" links on informative portals, via their own web-sites or via web-sites of their friends on the social networks.)

You can say that the social media have the role of advertiser even when we don't use them actively!

## What did the questionnaires show?

The questionnaire answered by 100 anonymous users of internet in north-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina showed the following:

- out of the 100 respondents 67 were women and 33 were men;
- ¾ of users fits the category of younger users (76% of users were between 18 and 25 years old). 23 users also fits the category of relatively young users (age from 26 to 35) and only 1 user was older than 36 years;
- The average level of education is high school degree (81 were students, and 6 users stated to have graduated from high school). Other 12 users had university degree and 1 owned master's degree;
- The most popular social media/networks were Facebook (94%) and YouTube (86%), far behind are Google Buzz (13%), Tagged (12%), MySpace (9%) and Twitter (5%), (see graph 4);
- The popularity of social media is shown by the fact that 50% of users use social media every day, 32% of them use social media almost every day, and just 10% use social media only 2 days a week;
- Informative and news-portals are visited almost every day in 47% of cases and 17% of users visit them every day;
- Users visit most commonly news and info-portals via direct links and via social networks – 61% of users. Other 17% come directly via links posted on social networks, and 17% are members of the info-portal groups created on the social networks. Only 5% of the questioned individuals don't visit news-portals[13] (see graph 5).

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[13] Research was conducted in February and March 2011 via online questionnaire www.surveyconsole.com
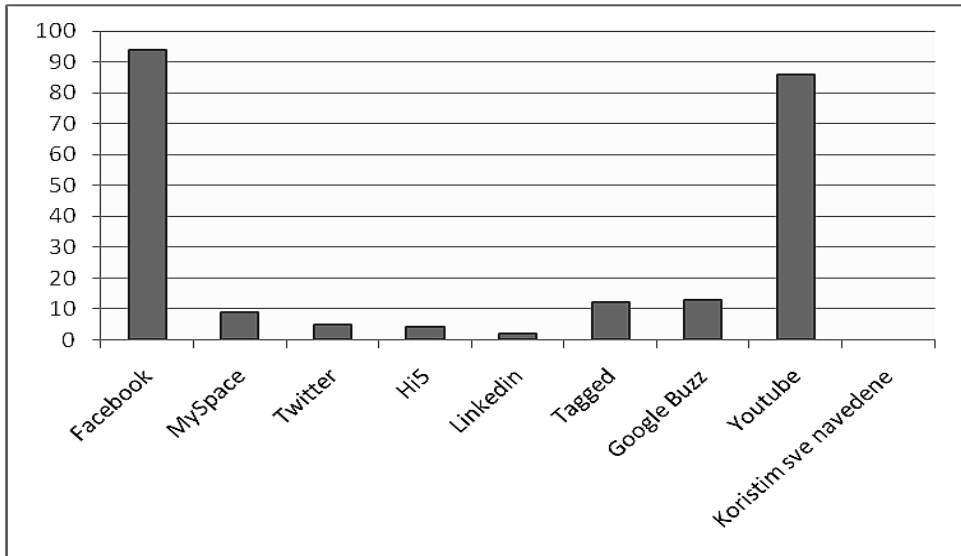
Graph 4. Results of 100 questioned internet-users in North-Eastern Bosnia and
Herzegovina in terms of the popularity of the Social Media
(Authors' computation)
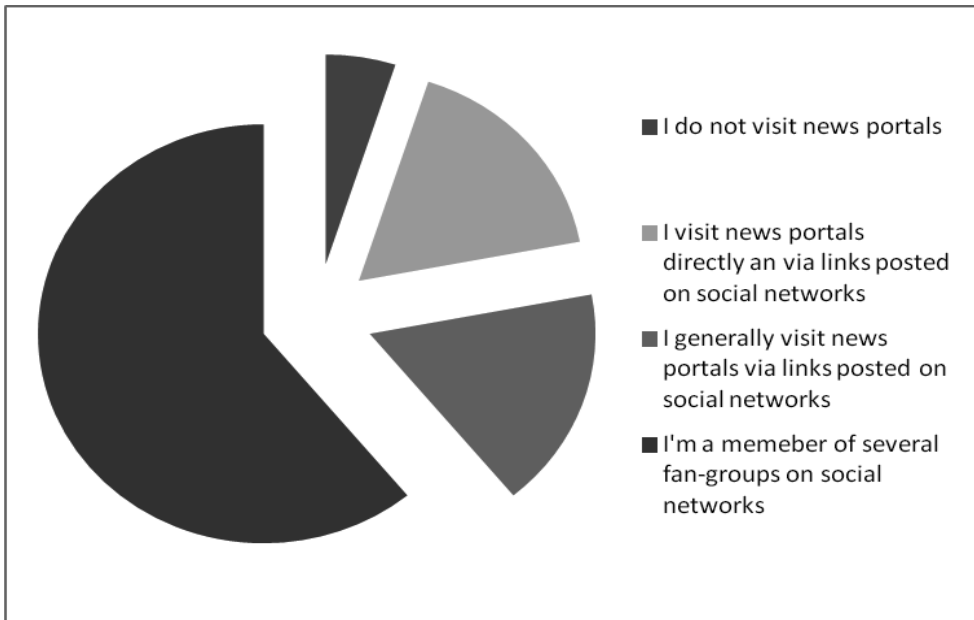
Graph 5. Results of the ways by which the users visit news and info-portals
(Authors' computation)

The economic approach to Social Media

Analytic approach to the possibilities of the new media involves optimization of investment in the use of the social media, analysis of the online market, the new perspectives for development of advertisers, local and regional moderators of information, and informative networks focused on the target audience. Concretization of the audience via new media, in new conditions by sending information through horizontal connections, and the possibility of permanent insight into the reactions of audience to the published information enable local, regional and global online information 'dealers' to make a precise evaluation of audience characteristics, and also a possibility to correct content and profiles if they don't receive the wanted feedback.

Social networks, especially in that segment that brings together users on different bases, enable the monitoring and testing of the market, analysis of existing conditions in the field of informative business, and clear division between the online and offline market in the new terms of economy via internet. The focus of the analysis of management of information via local and regional informative agencies, portals and online editions of traditional media, which at the same time advertise via social networks, is on the optimization of use of the most valuable mechanisms of advertising, in conditions which offer countless possibilities to get to the end-user (buyer).

Internet economy considers that managers bring the final decision in terms of flexible network infrastructure, and the buyers unrestrictedly dispose of a wide range of choices as they never did before. Changed game rules demand greater knowledge in management, faster reaction, flexibility and creativity. It is not the one who cuts down the costs of business who makes greater profit, but it is the one who reduces most and fastest these expenses and adapts best to the demands of buyers (users). Internet and digital media open new possibilities for making profit and for employment (Cerovic, 2010).

By analyzing these forms of the economy of communication via new media (social networks, online editions, marketing campaign on internet etc.), the logical steps towards the economic success in the network of the new media is finding the way to the buyer, who, in online world, is overwhelmed by an enormous choice of messages, new products and information, most of which is maximally marketing-organized.

Local and regional moderators of informative content can turn communication via social media into 'materialization' (profit) by gathering their clients into "private" social networks, created along the global interest of audience, and by "publishing" via social network according to their own informative needs using media as their own tools for informative services.

Local information and global channels

Directing the local informative interests via social network is (based on the example of local media in the region of the city of Tuzla) realized by gathering their own audience in integral target groups, which are later used for insight into the work of media, and by this enhancing advertisement via social networks. Social networks are the ground for organizing their own communication with the audience, identifying the most acceptable content, and the content that initiates the most interaction with the audience, and influencing communication between the members of the audience.
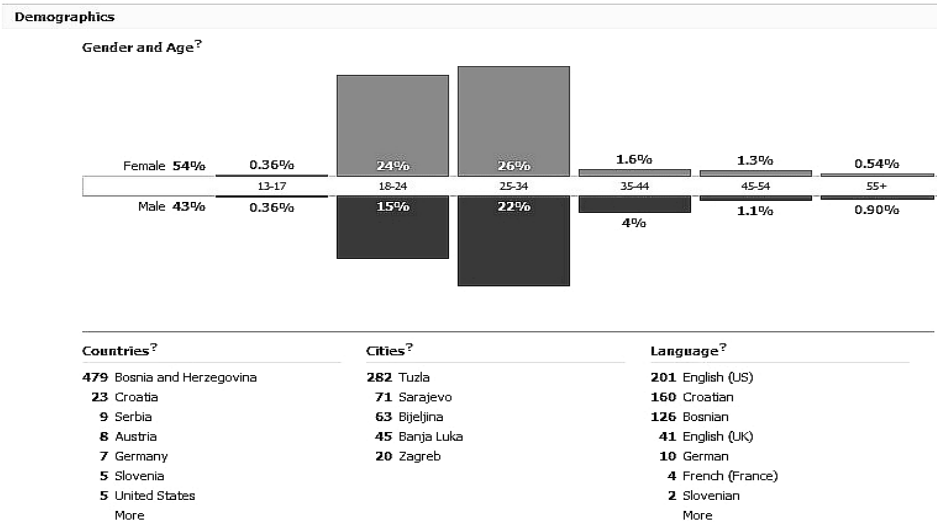
Informative content, placed on any online platform (portal, web edition of daily newspapers, television or radio program), and promoted via social networks, open the space for testing the reactions of audience which is involved in the interested network, and at the same time use concrete media (informative services) and social media. New media enable testing one's reputation through the interaction with the different users of some given information over a short period of time. The analytics of social media bring several results by interpretation of the campaign's success through the channels of social networks. Firstly, it is important to make a decision about the way of communication, dynamics of sending the promotional messages, and then analyzing the achieved effects.

What is gained by monitoring the social networks?

After deciding the key words, numerous means may be used:
- The basic function is the supervision of impressions about the analyzed brand. How often is it mentioned? What is the attitude about some actions and the brand in general? What are the attitudes in relation to competition? Etc.
- It is possible to evaluate the attitudes on the wanted concepts, which, seen globally, after one week or a month can be actually used in collected reports.
- From the generated posts, it is possible to conclude different ideas, suggestions and unexpected opinions that can be very significant for selection of the future business moves.
- The one thing that makes the greatest difference from collected media announcements is the possibility of the reaction. The posts are collected really quickly (in about 5 minutes), and it is possible to react in real time and communicate with people who directly make your target audience. A good community manager with this possibility can make a lot of good for your brand, and of course, a bad community manager

can make significant damage. This possibility brings press clipping to a level 2.0 (Salopek, 2011).

Demographics

Gender and Age?

		13-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Female **54%**		0.36%	24%	26%	1.6%	1.3%	0.54%
Male **43%**		0.36%	15%	22%	4%	1.1%	0.90%

Countries?

479 Bosnia and Herzegovina
23 Croatia
9 Serbia
8 Austria
7 Germany
5 Slovenia
5 United States
More

Cities?

282 Tuzla
71 Sarajevo
63 Bijeljina
45 Banja Luka
20 Zagreb

Language?

201 English (US)
160 Croatian
126 Bosnian
41 English (UK)
10 German
4 French (France)
2 Slovenian
More

Graph 6. The example of monitoring the characteristics of audience of the online media (Authors' computation based on ehomagazin.com)

Monitoring enables recording the advertisers' reputation, continuous measuring of the public's reactions to sent messages and correcting communication to fit the needs of the advertiser. Local informative portals (original or online editions of traditional media) use social media for gathering the audience in groups through which they place, every day, promotional messages of the activities of web pages. An important element of this management via communication is the audience involving into the interested network. That way, the messages aren't organized into the classic campaign (guerrilla-campaigns, constant source of information); it's rather the mutual upgrade between the advertisers, network-moderators and users of the social media, through the mutual complementarities of information and reaction-measurement.

Communication with the social network users involved in groups for information exchange enables the organizer (administrator, advertiser, source) to use the data base with good monitoring of this communication for economic cooperation with other organizations, especially if these primarily use traditional

channels of mass communication (television, radio, newspapers), this way offering space for advertising to other companies.

The attraction of social media

The key factor for marketing use of the new media (social media) lies in their prominent presence, or in the enormous number of users connected via social networks on any territorial level. Users love this way of communication, it's familiar to them and it is always located within the frame of communication needs that fits them. The users share with each other every message which is received this way. That offers unlimited possibilities for marketing communications via social media.

Social media is the place where clients spend a lot of their time. The truth is that a lot of people use web-browsers to find out something new about the product. A lot of people will agree with this, but there are a lot of those who don't do that. As a company, you have to stand out from the mass and draw those individuals that don't search actively and to get them to know your product.

Online PR

With the assistance of good online PR you can make the buzz of what your company works on. The goal is that people start to talk about you and to lead them to share your information with their friends. The content which users share can reach your potential users.

SEO (*Search Engine Optimization*)

The browsers love the content that comes from the social networks (for example blog articles, commentaries, statuses). The browsers decide on how the web-site will be ranked according to the results of the search in relation to measuring the credibility. The more links that lead to your site, the more credibility you have got and the presence on the social networks can lead to an increase of the links that lead to your site (Miroslavljević, 2010).
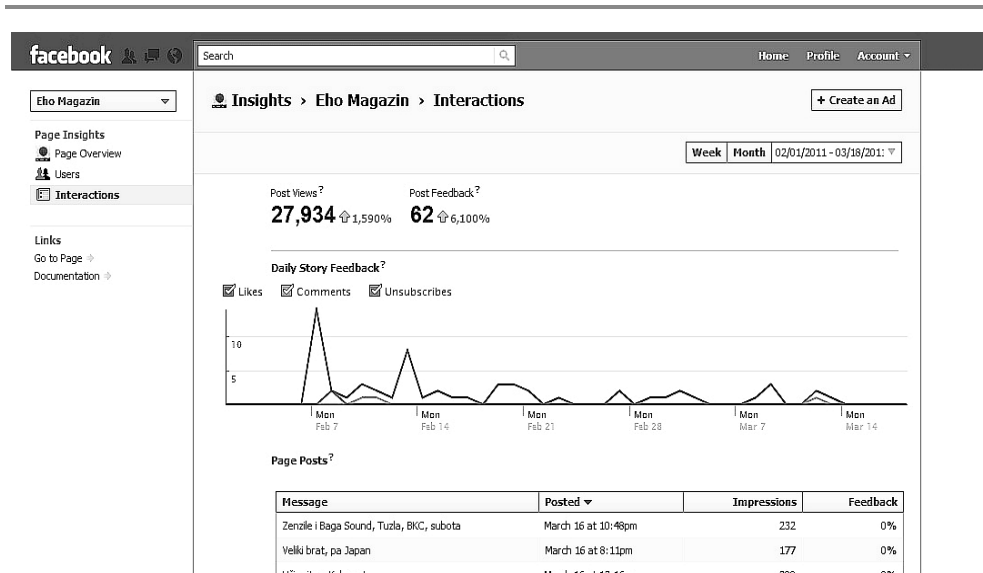
Graph 8. Statistical overview of post views and post feedback on
analyzed web-portal

Conclusions

Taking into consideration the dynamics of social media development, and the tools of communication via social media, this marketing approach to the audience (users of any services) becomes an inevitable model of the approach to the marketing project (sale).

New media development history – from networking, horizontal cross-linking, equality on the network, to the new technical requirements for communication – shows that this type of communication becomes a real mechanism of promotion, sale and profit, of any product and especially information.

The speed, accessibility, multiplicity of the communication channels, and the attraction of this communication to companies on any level enables the current insight into their own potential targeted audience, and reactions of the same audience to received messages. At the same time, these parameters can be regulators for future communication with the users, and also for measuring the reputation of the advertisers, which is input for development of cooperation with other business partners. Economic use of promotion via social media is reflected primarily in choosing the way for communication, the faster approach towards users and clear evaluation of the advertiser's reputation.

The main thesis of the corporative communication is the image of the organization, so according to that, it is clear that the social media represent the future of building the image of the company in the eyes of the consumers (users of social media).

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Facebook Revolutions:
The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract. The dramatic events in North Africa at the beginning of 2011 attracted the attention of the scholars and laymen alike and produced discussions on social media and their roles in Facebook, Twitter, or generally e-revolutions, as the protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and some other countries were called. These revolutions led to anti-government protests in Macedonia and Croatia, while an attempt of organizing similar protests was noticed in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. The failed attempt of organizing anti-government protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrated the (im)possibility of encouraging citizens' activism through social media due to complex structures of the general public in the one hand, and limited scope of the cyberactivism through the social media on the other hand. Ethnic and political division in B&H proved to be a key factor in constituting public opinion via social networks, while virtual activism reflected the latent character of the general public. Regardless of the failure, the attempt of organizing anti-government protests via social media introduced a new phase of cyberactivism in B&H, and showed that activism depends not only on social media users, but also on a number of other social factors, which transgress from the offline world into online communities.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, social media, protests, ethnic public, online activism, social changes

Introduction

The role of the social media in the protests against absolutist and anti-democratic regimes in the Arab world in 2011 has been indisputably significant. Social media have certainly been a vital tool for communication among the protestors and their communication with the others.[1] Perhaps even more important is the fact that the social media have been an important communication channel with the traditional mass media, which accessed up-to-date information on protests via social networks and disseminated it to mass audience through their own channels. However, scholars and common people are of different opinion with regard to the role of the social internet networks in encouraging social activism in the field and their role in encouraging social changes. The Arab countries' case showed a high level of harmonization between the online and offline social activism during the anti-government protests, when, despite the repressive measures imposed by the authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and some other countries, opposition found ways to communicate and coordinate protests. Successful protestors used Facebook as their primary means to inform the public of their course of action and to communicate among themselves (Wright, 2011). The Libyan government occasionally denied public access to the Internet during the protests, as did the Egyptian government. However, they did not succeed in preventing protest activities, and despite the imposed restrictions, the social media significantly contributed to toppling dictatorships in the aforementioned countries (Satti and Mohamed-Nour, 2005). In the countries of Former Yugoslavia cyber protests first emerged in Macedonia and Croatia in 2010, while an attempt of organizing cyber protests was made in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. The Croatian case proved that social networks can, to a certain extent, attract protesters from the offline world, although no major social changes have resulted from this case, whereas the BH case showed that online activism couldn't achieve as much as organizing protests.

At the beginning of 2010 two Facebook groups were created: *Partija rada BiH / BH Labor Party* and *Svi na ulice / To the Streets,* with an aim, as it was stated on these groups' pages, to organize anti-government protests. *BH Labor Party* called for protests in Sarajevo on February 28th, 2011 via their FB page, but the attempt ended as a complete failure. Not even the organizer showed up for the protest. Two days later the other FB group, *To the Streets*, called for new protests and gathering, also in Sarajevo. With the exception of a few media representatives, once again, no one showed up. On the following days one of the groups was closed, marking the end of the first e-revolution in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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[1] Among the first e-revolutions were the anti-government protests in Moldova in 2009, named the Twitter revolution after the social network was used as a tool of reporting on protests.

Although this poor attempt of organizing protests failed in drawing the attention of the media or public, it is nevertheless interesting for the analysis of the phenomenon of the e-revolution and e-public opinion in B&H context. What was the role of the internet social networks in this attempt? Why was this model more successful in some countries but not in Bosnia and Herzegovina? How did the public perceive the possibility of organizing anti-government protests via social networks?

Theoretical background

Although scholars' opinion on investigating the influence of the internet networks on shaping public opinion and transforming it into action differ, it is clear that the power of these networks reflects mostly in the possibilities of establishing communication among different nods and avoiding official (institutional) channels, even at the wider public level, which was rather inconceivable in the traditional mass communication model. Regardless of the type of the group organizing the protests, it is of essential importance to inform the public of the aims of the protest in order to gain their support. Until recently, this could only be done via traditional mass media. However, the problem with the mass media is that the traditional media take inconsistent interest in social movements of such a character. They either give them primary interest or completely ignore them, or cease coverage shortly after the initial reporting of the events (Bennett, 2003b). Therefore, the groups organizing protests are never certain whether the public will be informed of their objectives and activities. The emergence of the Web 2.0 applications, which enabled social network creation and functioning, has profoundly changed communication patterns, and consequently, the character of activism of the formal and informal groups gathered around the common goal.

Scholars who have been researching into the features of online activism through social networks and its impact on the society claim that these networks represent a powerful tool of communication in mobilizing protests and demonstrations that can lead to social changes (Della Porta and Mosca, 2005; Langman, 2005; Wasserman, 2007). The Egyptian Facebook activists hence 'took up and extended the political platform that the Kifaya[2] movement had introduced into Egyptian political life, the same exact platform that has brought millions of Egyptians into the street these days' (Hirschkind, 2010). Anti-government protests in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya developed into full-scale revolutions, while some other countries failed to achieve such result. Certain scholars argue that the main reason for the absence of such a result is the fact that online activism is built around weak ties, which characterize low-risk activism, contrary to high-risk activism

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[2] Egyptian revolutionary movement (translated as 'Enough')

characterized by strong ties, typical of traditional revolutionary movements (McAdam,1986). Weak ties, typical of the social media, connect people who do not know each other in real life and only communicate occasionally; in that respect, an additional problem is the creation of fake profiles and features, which cannot be a basis for establishing strong ties. Ties of such nature limit the social media domain; thus, the social media have been recently linked to a so-called Dragonfly Effect. Andy Smith and Jennifer Aaker, the authors of the book *The Dragonfly Effect: Quick, Effective, and Powerful Ways To Use Social Media to Drive Social Change,* identify the advantages of the social media in pursuing specific goals. The authors refer to the case of a Silicon Valley entrepreneur Sameer Bhatia, diagnosed with leukemia, who needed a bone marrow transplant but couldn't find a match among his friends or family. In the attempt to save his friend's life, Bhatia's business partner sent an e-mail to all of his friends urging them to help Bhatia, who then forwarder the mail to their friends and posted similar content on their friends' Facebook pages and YouTube. Ultimately, 25,000 possible donors registered, one of whom a perfect match for Bhatia. According to the authors, short-term social campaigns like this one can produce extraordinary effects, but cannot cause social changes. Although the Western powers have approved of the role of the social media in overthrowing authoritarian regimes, at the same time, they insisted on filing lawsuits against the WikiLeaks (Morozov, 2011). Therefore, it is still difficult to discuss the precise effect of the social media. Furthermore, there are some other factors limiting the emergence of the social changes encouraged by the online activism. Theoretical discussions (Bennett, 2003a; McAdam, 2001; Mozorov, 2011), identify some other reasons which limit social changes spurred by online activism: non-hierarchical organizational structure, weak ties among the network members and the absence of a recognizable leader. Regardless of the conflicting roles of the social media in social movements, this is a rather interesting subject-matter yet to be investigated by a number of scholars. Social media as "communication tools may not lead to revolution immediately, but they provide a new rhetorical space where a new generation of leaders can think and speak freely. In the long run, this ability to create a new public sphere, parallel to the one controlled by the state, will empower a new generation of social actors, though perhaps not for many years"[3] (Zukerman, 2011: 2).

Methodology and analysis

Our research was built on the assumption that social media members in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot transform their cyberactivism into offline activism, nor can they constitute the dominant public opinion in terms of initiating anti-

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[3] http://ethanzuckerman.com/blog/index.php?s=psiphon (accessed on June 11, 2011.)

government protests. The research involved collecting data on B&H internet social media users, their profiles and habits. Then followed a quantitative analysis of the two sites initiated for the purposes of mobilizing anti-government protests, and a qualitative analysis of the comments posted by the respective pages' members and visitors. Furthermore, specially designed Lickert scale questionnaires were used on the random sample of 100 Facebook users to investigate their attitudes to this issue.

The unemployed dental technician Ivan Pernar is considered to be the organizer of the so-called Facebook protests in Croatia. Shortly after creating the group *Započnimo revoluciju u Hrvatskoj / Let's Start a Revolution in Croatia*, Prenar managed to gather more than 30,000 votes and, more importantly, mobilize the protesters to gather in the streets of Zagreb. The anti-government protests soon turned against HTV (Croatian Radio-Television / Croatian Public Broadcaster) and the leading publishing house in Croatia EPH (Europress Holding), which, according to the organizers of the protests, incorrectly reported the number of protestors. At the same time, war veteran associations took the streets of Zagreb; however, the veterans kept their distance from the Facebook protests, linking them to the government. The government, on the other hand, held the opposition accountable for the protests, while the opposition denied any connection with the protests, which generally caused widespread confusion. The failure of e-protestors to coordinate their activities and join forces with certain non-governmental organizations was reflected in poorly presented demands and the inability of keeping the initial support from the citizens. Other Croatian cities encountered a somewhat weaker effect of the Facebook revolution, Zagreb protests soon ended and Ivan Pernar formed a political party. These protests inspired B&H cyber activists to do the same thing by forming the groups *To the Streets* and *B&H Labor Party*. On the day of the protests Facebook group *To the Streets* counted more than 25,000 members, while the other group had far less members and an insignificant number of posts and comments, which were not included in the analysis. During the research period (a week prior to the first announced offline protests) the page had 168 posts with 1,680 likes and over 8,000 comments. The comments were divided into negative, positive and neutral. The comments related to subjects' attitudes towards the anti-government protests, so that positive comments reflected the opinion that it was possible to organize the protests, the negative claimed it was impossible to do so, while the neutral comments referred to some other issues that the visitors discussed.

There were 23% positive comments, 31% neutral comments, while the negative comments accounted for 64% of all comments. It is interesting to note that a significant portion of negative comments (21%) related to ethnic and national

issues.[4] Furthermore, a number of visitors expressed a rather negative opinion of the group's founder and administrator. 46% of the respondents completed the questionnaires, but only 35% of them were valid. Most of the respondents agreed with the claim that it was possible to mobilize mass anti-government protests (85%) but not via social media (27%), and claimed that online activism could not be simply transformed into offline action. The role of the leader (organizer of the protests) was regarded highly and most of the respondents claimed it was important who the leader of prospective protests would be (81%). Ethnicity of the leader and protestors was also stressed out as very important (58%).

Discussion

Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two entities and one district: the Republika Srpska, the Federation of B&H and Brčko District. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is administratively divided into 10 cantons and mostly populated by Bosniaks and Croats, while the majority of Republika Srpska and Brčko District population consists of Serbs. The estimated population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is approximately 3.8 million (48.3% of which Bosniaks, 34% Serbs, 25.4% Croats, and 2.3% of other ethnicities).

The country is among the poorest in the region with underdeveloped economy, declining industry and a high unemployment rate. The average net wage is less than 400 Euro, the balance of trade is negative, since import is double the value of export, the unemployment rate is 24,1% , while GDP barely exceeds 3,000 Euro per capita. (B&H Agency for Statistics, 2011). It is estimated that more than 20% of employees work without a permit, which in addition to high Corruption

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[4] Some of the comments on the site *To the Streets*: "My good friend, Bosniak, asked me if I celebrated the Bosnian Independence Day? He knows I am not a nationalist, that I never resort to nationalism, but he also knows I can think for myself and that I have my own opinion! I was offended that he ... asked me something like that! I told him – what's there to celebrate, maybe what came after, the fratricide – it was March 1st, 1992 !!!!; Turks, is there any b*** among you available for a slow dance? .... We attacked you motherf*****, we f***** your Turkish mothers and your uncles' mothers as well"; "Mad, Vahid is written with a capital V, you could have written in Cyrillic letters I can read Cyrillic letters as well, your people attacked me in the war but I have survived and even after the war I survive, just so you know ALLAH IS THE GREATEST" ...."Vahid, you belong to a lower class, you are the traitor to SERBIAN PEOPLE, of course I'll write your name with lower-case letter v, got that .... another thing you fled from the war, but you won't escape from us the next time !!!!!!!!" Eldin I see you watch SERBIAN FILMS, such as We're not Angels 3, hahahahaha, just take the icon lamp and convert to Orthodoxy, I promise that I will not slaughter you, boooaahahaha"" "Motherf****** Serb.. . Your mother is a f****** stinking whore. ... You are Serbs b******. … I wish there was another war so I could f*** you up. ... you attacked the unarmed people, women and children and you think you are f****** heroes. … If I saw you I'd slaughtered your mother with my own teeth you motherfuc****... provocative piece of sh***"

Perception Index,[5] represents an obvious economic and social issue. However, political division and ethnic polarization of the population in B&H is still perceived as one of the key issues and obstacles to progress and democratic processes. Although the current B&H structure of government was established by Dayton Agreement in 1995, almost 20 years later the constitutive peoples have not yet accepted it as the optimal solution to their expectations. The political scene of B&H perceives the Agreement as the means of coercion of the division of the country into entities, hence restating the conflict, genocide and ethnic cleansing. Serbian public, on the other hand, perceives RS as its legal and territorial entity since 1992, which was not "formed by Dayton Agreement, but was merely verified by it; therefore, the existence of RS cannot be brought into question. The Croatian political scene argues that Dayton Agreement opened a Croatian national issue, structuring the society at the expense of the Croatian people. They try to resolve their dissatisfaction by demanding formation of the third entity" (Mujagić, 2010: 57). Political situation was further radicalized in 2011, after the general election held in October 2010, when it took more than 6 months to constitute entity government, while the state government has not been constituted almost one year after the election. This brief overview implies that B&H is a favorable ground for organizing anti-government protests similar to those organized in a number of European and non-European countries recently. There have been occasional instances of protests led by several organizations or social categories, which would end protest shortly after the government or organization management would meet their demands. However, no significant anti-government protests caused by unfavorable conditions in the country took place. Not even after the attempt of mobilizing such protests via internet social media. Internet social media are very popular in B&H. The most popular social network among internet users is Facebook,[6] with over one million members (a quarter of the population), which places B&H on the 72nd place in the world. The majority of the members are aged 18-24, more than 340,000, followed by the group of users aged 25-34 (Socialbakers, 2011). Other social networks are not as popular and merely 5% of the B&H population uses Twitter, while only 1% of the Internet users in B&H use MySpace. According to GfK BH, approximately 1/3 of Facebook users in B&H are not members of any groups, but 12% of them have joined over 50 different

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[5] Corruption Perceptions Index 2008: 3.2 (92nd out of 180 countries) Transparency International report http://www.transparency.org/publications/gcr/gcr_2009#6.4 (accessed on June 20, 2011).
[6] Facebook already has over 800,000 users, half of which logs in on a daily basis. Average user has 130 friends on the site and is connected to 80 community pages, groups and events. More than 2 billion posts are liked or commented and over 250 milllion photos are uploaded daily. Facebook is a genuine global network available in over 70 languages, and almost 500 mobile operators provide services to more than 350 million users who access Facebook via a mobile device every day (Facebook Statistics 2011). http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics (accessed September 18, 2011).

groups. As a matter of fact, 155 of the users formed a group. Of all the services that Facebook has to offer, B&H users mostly use FB chat services, 53% use chat at least once a day, followed by e-mailing used by 43% of users on a daily basis, commenting on friends' posts (23%) and playing online games (19%). Other activities such as posting photos, taking tests, data search or browsing advertisements are less practiced. (GfK BiH, 2011).

Behavioral patterns of Facebook members were reflected in the manners of online communication among the members of the groups created to mobilize and coordinate anti-government protests. Despite the fact that the protest groups gathered more than 25,000 members in matters of days, their internal communication was absent and their activism reduced to occasional *likes* and comments, which often escalated to heated arguments spurred by ethnic intolerance. Online activism in B&H has not even succeeded in cultivating a leader, such as Wael Ghonim, a Google regional marketing director, a key person in organizing protests in Egypt, Dschalal Al-Kwafi, a Libyan blogger who called for protests, Mohammed Bouazizi, a street vendor who set himself on fire in protest against the government's repressive measures, thus inciting revolution in Tunisia, or Tal-Al Mallouhi, a blogger from Syria accused of spying for a foreign country, sentenced to 20 years of prison. These people are internationally recognized as leaders or initiators of the e-revolutions. In the B&H case, the creator and administrator of one of the pages remained virtually unknown for the general public. The creator of the FB group To the Streets was mentioned only in the page visitors' comments, mostly negative ones, which accuse him of various misdeeds ranging from having dozens of fake profiles or groups favorable for economic and political marketing to being a fraud from Switzerland, a shady character in need of spotlight and so on. These comments[7] reflected the B&H public perception of

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[7] Some of the comments: "Against Safet Kurtovic Salatana," "to the creator of this page:, let me tell you something, we were on the hills fighting from '92 to '95 and we have had enough of this crap, why don't you come here and be here, on the streets, it is easy to bullshit from Switzerland you don't give a shit," "People let this go, can't you see that this guy is screwing with us from Switzerland. Calm your passions and let this jerk get a good psychiatrist and start with the treatment ... He invited us to the streets, you go to the streets MF, you don't care that the poor would suffer again, why don't you come to Bosnia and do the same thing, we'd kick the crap out of you "STUPID JERK... There is no government, or party in the world for which I would take arms again\ I WAS A FOOL I HAD DONE IT THE FIRST TIME\ None of the B&H parties work for the people, they fill their own pocket with ministerial salaries, they fight to get as much as they can while on duty and when you catch them in the act they say \ THE PEOPLE VOTED FOR ME \ the people did vote for you, but you should work honestly and not steal," "This man is a fraud named Safet Kurtovic, he has been creating fake FB profiles and groups under false names for years. Alić said that he was a victim of the fraud by Safet Kurtović. According to the available information from the Facebook profiles that bear his name, Safet Kurtović lives in Switzerland, and was born in Novi Pazar. Sources claim that the purpose of his activities in Facebook groups that have an enormous number of members, mostly naive people, who support the declaration of the specified goals for positive change, is a matter of trade.

leadership as inherently deceptive, manipulating and frustrating, which is in accordance with the public opinion polls on political leaders in B&H.[8] The public opinion on issues of importance to our research was in line with the results of the research into the features of the political scene in B&H, which is, according to some scholars (Nuhanović, 2004; Mujagić et al., 2010), built upon the ethnic axes, unable to recognize the common grounds beyond the national, or rather nationalistic scope, and hence latent and responsive only when one's vital national interests are endangered (Nuhanović, 2004). This was also reflected in the comments posted both by the members and visitors of the FB protest groups and other users of this social network, who stated this was an important issue, even in the domain of the cyber activism. A rather insignificant number of posts, as opposed to numerous likes and comments posted by the visitors, demonstrate there was no hierarchical structure within the group, nor was there any coordination among the members. The very fact that only reporters showed up for the protests indicate that cyberactivism failed to initiate offline demonstrations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The FB group *To the Streets* continued with its online activities and now has over 35,000 members. No further calls for the protests or anti-government demonstration have been made by the group.

Conclusions

Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently in one of the most critical political and economic crises since the end of the 1992-1995 war. The state government has not been constituted even one year after the general election of October 2010, economic crisis is more severe than ever, the unemployment rate is on the rise and the geranial safety is rather worrying. However, no strong protests[9] which would lead to significant social changes have been organized. The attempt to mobilize B&H citizens to protest and initiate the change in the country failed only three days after its inception and thus demonstrated that the possibilities offered by web 2.0 platforms do not account for much unless supported by well-coordinate activities in the offline realm. B&H cyber protestors have not succeeded in transforming their

Large Facebook groups are suitable for every type of marketing, from commercial to political, and a good business plan and personal advantage often hides behind the alleged calls for a change".
[8] In the Global Corruption Barometer Report for 2008 BH political parties and their leaders were evaluated as the most corrupted among the political parties and leaders of South East Europe (http://www.google.ba/#hl=hr&q=report.globalintegrity.org+2008+bosna+politi%C4%8Dke&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&oq=&fp=e6f8b95ae44abb&biw=1280&bih=576, (accessed on April 24th, 2011).
[9] With the exception of war veteran protests in 2010, or students' protests in February 2010, which managed to gather over 3,000 protestors. However, these were not anti-government protests; the main reason for initiating the protests was the protestors' dissatisfaction with high public transport fares!

online activism into offline action and gather the protestors in the streets. Their cyberactivism was reduced to posting links, likes and comments, thus rendering it to one-click activism. Not even in the virtual world have the members and visitors of the group managed to constitute a dominant opinion or achieve political consensus on the issue, solution or aims of the protests, let alone initiate social changes, hence reflecting and retaining the ethnic and national divisions of the offline public even in the online realm. The low-risk activism in Bosnia, typical of social networks, did not evolve into a high-risk activism which characterizes revolutionary social movements, but it did mark a new era of the political activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Transforming the internet-supported activism to internet-based activism (Van Aelst, 2004) will be the next phase of cyberactivism in B&H when the offline realm reaches a consensus on social changes and public grows from ethnic-oriented to civic-oriented.

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Further resources

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Facebook in the Multicultural Society

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Abstract. With little exaggeration, the 21st century could be called – the network era. The use of social networks has begun to dominate human lives. Parallel with this domination, there is continuous debate on the upsetting effects of the social networks. That is why Facebook will be the central analysis of this subject related to the psychology of the social networks and differences in a multicultural society such as ours. *The Case* was the Republic of Macedonia and the *Critical event* was: the incident at Skopje's Kale Fortress where the rival fan groups 'Komiti' from one (ethnic Macedonian) side and 'Sverceri' and citizens of the Fortress's vicinity from the other (ethnic Albanian) side clashed and the police could not prevent the close contact between the supporters and opponents of the construction of the Church-Museum building. The analysis shows that the real war with words was on Facebook. New sites dedicated to the Museum-Church at Kale Fortress were being opened with offensive language, vulgarities, threats and calls for revenge, for a 'final fight', photos from the 2001 war conflict in Macedonia and photo montage. The analysis also showed that the good side of the humans 'loses the battle', at least when we speak of issues connected to the differences in such a multicultural society like ours. This paper discusses the reasons for misbehavior in cyberspace.

Keywords: Social network, Hate speech in Facebook, Multicultural society, Misbehavior in cyberspace

Introduction

New Social Information – Communication Structure

With little exaggeration, the 21st century could be called – the network era. New media such as social networks are becoming the backbone of society and one can easily expect this infrastructure to have major influence on the social and personal life of humans. In this sense, the term "information highway" is quite appropriate. The design of these basic infrastructures is of key importance regarding the opportunities and risks that may occur in the process of online networking. The potential consequences of choosing a certain communication infrastructure and embedding it in someone's social and personal life might be less visible, but even so, not less serious.

Continuing this line of argument, not only the ecology of nature is taken into account, since the information and communication transfer will partially substitute the transport of people and goods – but also the 'social ecology' as well. In the 1980's, when the new media were introduced, certain people started talking about 'pollution' of the human social environment by those new media that were entering everyone's private life. According to them, the new media reduced, diminished and even destroyed the quality of face-to-face communication and formalized relations at the work place (Kubicek, 1988 – quoted by van Dijk, 2006). It was assumed that these changes would result in a decrease in privacy and total control "from above". In the 1990's these views were replaced with some utopian views on the new media that they will significantly improve the quality of life and in particular, the quality of communication. Debates on this subject still continue and opinions regarding the social ecology, 'new economy' and the new era of prosperity, freedom and online democracy are still very much alive (van Dijk, 1991).

The use of the Internet social networks exploded in popularity during the last several years, as well as the means, mainly in the hands of the younger population, to present some information about them and to communicate with others. One of the most popular sites is Facebook, which was initially created as a students' forum, and today is used by people of all ages throughout the world. Its popularity at the beginning was supported with the perception of the students and other youngsters that it was something 'private', a forum with limited access to those who were enrolled in a college or university (Russell, 2011). Thus, the site users felt quite free to post personal information about themselves and their social lives, looking at this as a means of attracting and developing relationships with their peers.

However, very soon after its creation, the appearance and the function of Facebook were changed. Questions were being asked related to the use and appropriateness of the information on the site from other persons that were not students, and how this usage would bring to making decisions that would have

negative influence on the students' population. For example, a large number of colleges and universities suspended students that had sent racially-threatening or sexually inappropriate information on their Facebook profiles (Mendelson and Zizi Papacharissi, 2011).

Since then, there is continuous debate on the upsetting effects of the social networks. That is why Facebook will be the central analysis of this subject related to the psychology of the social networks and differences in a multicultural society such as ours.

> *Case:* Republic of Macedonia
> *Inciting event:* The Government decides to build a Church-Museum on Skopje's Kale Fortress, where mainly ethnic Albanians live and work. The native population holds protests for a few days until the construction is stopped.
> *Critical event:* February 13th 2011 is marked by an incident at Skopje's Kale Fortress where two groups of fans clashed. The "Komitis" (Macedonian fans) clashed with "Sverceri" (Albanian fans) and people living in the vicinity of the Fortress, while the police were unable to prevent the immediate contact of the supporters and opponents to the Church-Museum construction.

The severity of the event and the density of communication were sufficient incentives to presuppose a research question(s): *What was happening in the virtual space of Facebook in terms of quality of reporting differences in society* and *why* it was happening. Specifically, the objectives of the research were focused on the analysis of the content written by participants on the pages of Facebook designed for the Kale Fortress incident. What kinds of information were mutually exchanged between those who were 'for' (mainly members of Macedonian ethnicity) and those who were 'against' (mainly members of Albanian ethnicity) the construction of the Museum-Church Kale? It was expected to reveal the way of communication among the members of both ethnic groups in virtual space such as Facebook, which is nothing but an extension of the inner psychological world of the individuals.

As methodology, content analysis was applied to this research which no doubt allowed for qualitative data to be examined in a quantitative way.

The main reasons for the application of this method lay in the advantages of content analysis: its ability to objectively and reliably describe one or a group of messages and its application on advanced statistical analyses, as well as providing statistical and logical bases for understanding how messages were created. The main flaw of content analysis was that it required recording actual messages for analysis, so overcoming this by analysis of multiple levels and segments of the content written on Facebook – was a real methodological challenge.

Theoretical grounds

The Cyberspace as Psychological Space

The term 'cyberspace' is so frequently used that it can already seem too mundane and commercialized. Nevertheless, the experience created by the computers and networks in many ways can be seen as 'psychological space'. When users turn on their computers, start-up their programs, write emails or sign in their online services, they often feel, consciously or subconsciously, like entering in a 'place' or 'space' which is full of a wide range of meanings and uses. Many users that explore the World Wide Web will describe their experience as a 'journey' or 'going somewhere'. The special, spatial metaphors such as 'worlds', 'domains' or 'rooms' are commonly used in articulating the online activities (Suler, 2004a).

Furthermore, on a deeper psychological level, the users often describe their computers as an extension to their mind and personality, or as a place that represents their tastes, viewpoints and interests. In psychoanalytical terms, the computers and cyberspace can become one type of 'transitional space' that is an extension of the intra psychological world of the individual. It can be experienced as a transition zone between the individual and the others which partially belongs to them and partially to the others. As they read their emails on their screens, the group discussions or 'chat' messages written by their 'Internet friends', some people feel like their mind is 'connecting' or 'interweaving' with those of others (Suler 2002).

When one experiences cyberspace as an extension to their mind – as a transitional space between themselves and the others – the door becomes wide open to all kinds of fantasies and transfer reactions that are projected in this space. Ideally, people use this as an opportunity to better understand themselves, as a way to explore their own identity. In less ideal conditions, people use this psychological space for ventilation or better said they simply express, and "toy" with their fantasies and frustrations, as well as fears and desires which are propellants to those fantasies.

Identification/management of identity in cyberspace

One interesting thing about the Internet is the possibility to introduce oneself in different ways. Everyone has the opportunity to be themselves, to slightly change their style, or to experiment with their identity and change their age, biography, personality, physical looks, gender... The user name they choose and the details they share are important from the aspect how individuals distribute and manage their identity in cyberspace. Identity is a very complex aspect of the human nature.

John Suler (2002) lists several interrelated factors which are useful in the navigation of the labyrinth called cyberspace.

Level of dissociation and integration. The identity of a person is an embodied diversity. Everyone possesses many "sectors" in their personality and has various roles throughout their life – a child, parent, student, worker, neighbor, and friend. Cyberspace offers false opportunities to any of these specific aspects of oneself. Some people even speak of the possibility for the individual to reconstruct themselves online. We do not need to present ourselves entirely: how we see, how we talk, how we move, our history, thoughts, feelings and personality – we do not have to put everything in a big 'package'. In different environments we can separate and present our characteristics in 'packages' of different sizes and contents. Thanks to the thousands of existing online groups, every individual dedicated to a certain professional, specialized, or personal subject can express, accentuate one side of their personality, while other characteristics can be completely omitted or neglected in cyberspace.

The wish to stay anonymous is derived from the need to eliminate those critical functions of one's own identity that the individual does not want to show to a certain environment or group. The wish to watch without being seen points to the need of a person to separate their entire personal identity from their perception of those around them: wants to watch without being watched.

Positive and negative valence. Personally, one individual can feel shame, guilt, fear, anxiety, and hate regarding some aspects of their identity, or acceptance and respect regarding other aspects of their existence. It is said that those who act in cyberspace, and in some way hurt or violate the rights of others, or hurt themselves, are usually discharging some negatively 'electrified' aspects of their psyche. This simply means that when individuals hurt, despise or offend someone else, they actually show that they have problems with some parts of their own personality. But this, purely cathartic act usually does not lead anywhere. The insecure and passively aggressive individuals most often stay in the endless river of online arguments. Others can use the Internet as an opportunity to manifest their positive characteristics or develop new ones in the process of "self-actualization".

Used media. It is known that people express their identity through the clothes they wear, their body language, careers and hobbies they prefer. These things can be seen as a medium for communicating to the environment. Similar to this, people in cyberspace choose certain communication channels to express themselves. There are many opportunities and combinations of these, and each choice brings to accentuation of specific attributes of the identity. People who rely only on written communication prefer the semantics of the language and perhaps the linear, rationally-analytical dimension in them, which is manifested through the written discourse. They can be 'verbalizers' described in the cognitive psychological literature, in contrast to the 'visualizers' that enjoy in the more symbolic,

picturesque and holistic judgments that are expressed through the creation of video clips, videos, pictures, avatars, and web graphics. (Papacharissi, 2002)

The online transfer among people. The psychoanalytical concept of "transfer" is very important to understand the online relations. Because the experience with another person is often limited to the written text (a quite blurred situation), there is tendency on behalf of the individual, to try to interpret the behavior of others in cyberspace, to project their various desires, fantasies, fears, and viewpoints towards the 'dubious figure' on the other side. In the "interweaving" of one mind with another, as some users describe the experience related to cyberspace, this transfer process can be recognized. Actually some users describe this interweaving of the mind with the computer itself. The transfer with the computer or the other users can be in a very subtle and complex way. There is one generally familiar saying by one very passionate cyber-person: 'wherever I go on the Internet, I actually find myself' (Suler, 2004b).

The subconscious motivation related to the transfer will also affect this 'filtration process' that determines the choice made by the user while establishing online relations. Users might be surprised when they realize that their close friends they meet online, are the same types of people as them. This unconscious 'home' device can be very sensitive. Even when they communicate only through written text, individuals focus on relations and characteristics of other people that are some kind of hidden desire within them.

Online de-inhibiting effect. It is well known that people tell and do things in cyberspace that they normally would not do in the real world. Here they can relax, feel free, feel less inhibited, and express themselves more openly. Researchers call this the "de-inhibiting effect". Nevertheless, this is a double-edged sword. Sometimes people share very personal things about themselves in cyberspace. They reveal their hidden emotions, fears, and desires or they perform some uncommon acts of kindness and goodness. This is usually called benign de-inhibition (Turkle, 1994). On the other hand, de-inhibition is not always that benign, thus profound language and fierce criticism, anger, hate and even threats are often used. Sometimes, in extreme examples, people start to explore the dark underground world of the Internet, visit pornographic and violent sites that they would otherwise never visit in the real world. This de-inhibition is called toxic and usually has one, simple, blind cathartic influence, as a means of releasing the unpleasant needs and desires with no personal growth (development) or growth of the others.

Internet regression. What is regression? Communicating on the Internet, people are in regress (going backwards), manifesting it with free expressions regarding sex and aggression that they would never do in face-to-face communication. The expressing of exaggerated goodness, understanding and tolerance is also considered as a sign of regression.

Acquired Data

The focus of this research was the social network Facebook. Starting from 15.02.2011, after the critical event happened on the 13th of February, 23 different pages were created on Facebook, in different ways connected to the Kale Fortress event.[1] These pages can be viewed by those who have their own Facebook profile by simply typing the words *Church of Fortress* in the search area. The research period lasted till the 1st of May, when the number of pages from 23 dropped to only four 'live' functioning pages. 'Live' and functioning were considered the pages with posts.[2] Considering the large amount of posts on all active pages, the one with the highest number of 'likes' (a Facebook jargon about the number of persons that declared that they like the page) was chosen for research. Regarding that the page with the highest number of likes was the one that promoted peace, love, collaboration and tolerance – which meant a 'positive page' – and since it was the only one of its kind, it was necessary to examine the posts on the page that was second in terms of the number of 'likes'. It was also important that it (the 'positive' one) was the first one in terms of the number of 'likes' in comparison to the other negative and still active pages. For clarification: out of the 23 pages which were created on Facebook related to the events that happened at Kale Fortress on the 13th of February, 22 were negative and only one was positive. The positive one had far less posts on its wall in comparison to the negative pages. That is why analysis was conducted on the one and only positive page and the most visited negative page, in order to make comparison of the posts between them, having in mind that the positive page which promoted peace, love, tolerance, and coexistence was unique, and the only one among the 'mob' of pages that promoted nationalism, separation, intolerance, hate and aggression of the worst kind.

The negative page was personified as the Bad character, or simply the Bad One and the positive page was personified as the Good character or simply the Good One.

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[1] (http://www.facebook.com/search.php?q=Crkva%20Fortress&init=quick&tas=0.34439117554163& search_first_focus=1302004773715&type=pages. last visit on June 22, 2011)

[2] 'Live' page is actually a page with several posts on their walls monthly. The biggest numbers of pages were created in the period from 15th to 17th of February; there are several records from this period and after that nothing is written on them. It doesn't mean that some of those inactive pages won't function in the future and won't have higher traffic of posting.

Content analysis was conducted on two levels. *The first level* of analysis concerned the analysis of the image, the photograph and the name that represents an individual that posts on the page. *The second level* of analysis involved analysis of 'posts' in terms of whether they contain text, image, video and / or a link. At this level of analysis the valence of the text was determined in categories: positive, negative and neutral (The categories were determined by the content of the text and key words). The categories of positive and negative posts were not predetermined but defined after all posts were read. Besides determining the valence of text, the content of clips was also analyzed. The presentation of results follows.

The 'Face' of the Bad One and the Good One were analyzed from a number of angles:

1. A picture, photo and name with which individuals that posted on the page represented themselves. How are the Bad One and the Good One represented?

The BAD One

The Church at the Fortress[3]

Starting from the critical event and until the 1st of May there were 357 "posts" on the "Bad" One (negative page). The analysis of all 357 "posts" showed that they were written by 145 different subjects. It is interesting to notice that 1/5 of the subjects wrote only once, and 1/10 wrote more than 5 times on the wall. The majority of those 145 subjects declared themselves as males (the profile is presented with a name and a surname in a male form) − 78% or 114 subjects; 10% or 14 subjects declared themselves as females (the profile is presented with a name and a surname in a female form); 7% are group subjects (names such as Komiti[4] West, Macedonian Brotherhood, United Macedonian Forces− Prilep), a nd gender or group is unclear with only 3% of the 145 different subjects.

The information regarding the usage of nationality and national symbols in the names of those who wrote the posts is also interesting. Namely, 8% of the subjects that posted on the wall of the Bad One were profiles in which the

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[3] (http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Crkva-NA-KALE/203345869678866- last visit on June 12, 2011)
[4] "Komiti" are fans of the Macedonian football club "Vardar"

nationality is clear, thus we can read: Alexander the Macedonian, Macedonian to the Bone, Macedonian Patriot, Proud Macedonian...

When our focus of analysis was the picture or the photo with which the persons that wrote the posts were representing themselves, we can notice that 60 out of 145 subjects represented themselves with a photo on which there is a boy (man) or a girl (woman). We did not examine whether it was a fake or real, personal photo. 21 out of 145 subjects used pictures such as national or religious symbols (the Albanian flag, the Eagle, the Macedonian flag / the actual and the Vergina Sun, the Christian Cross, pictures of national heroes); 8 subjects used military symbols (most common were soldiers of KLA, airplanes), and the remaining 54 subjects used group photos (photos with 2, 3 or more persons), actors of famous TV soap operas...). The two subjects that are missing in this group out of the 145 are those that represented themselves with unclear pictures or photos.

 The GOOD One

 Peace and love instead of a church and mosque on the Fortress[5]

There were 111 posts on the wall of the Good One starting from the critical event to the 1st of May. The analysis showed that 87 different subjects posted on the wall, out of which only 8 appeared more than once. The creator of the profile named Peace and Love instead of a church or mosque at Kale Fortress, wrote 17 posts him- or herself.

Similar to the Bad One, the majority of those 87 subjects that posted on the wall of the Good One presented themselves as males (their profile is presented with a name and a surname in a male form) − 66% or 51 subjects, and 34% or 25 subjects presented themselves as females (their profile is presented with a name and a surname in a female form). One of the subjects is the creator of the page who presented him- or herself as Peace and Love instead of a Church or Mosque at Kale Fortress and one who presented him- or herself with the sentence: "Imagine no religion!!! Think….just think".

When we focus on the picture or photo of the analysis, we can conclude that 53 out of 87 subjects presented themselves with a photo on which there is a boy

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[5] (http://www.facebook.com/#!/search/results.php?q=crkva%20na%20Kale&init=quick&tas= 0.6645142424412307- last visit on June 05, 2011.)

(man) or a girl (woman), assuming that those are their personal photos. One is the recognizable sign of the creator of the page, and the rest of the subjects used different symbols for their presentation such as: the peace symbol made of children's hands, flowers, a book, and a science mark, the Turkish flag, the SDSM flag... and the rest of the subjects used group photos (photos of 2, 3 or more persons, commonly a girl and a boy, or a grown up and a child next to them).

Type of 'posts' and their content

What do the Bad One and the Good One talk and show?
The Bad One

From 357 posts recorded during the research period, 41% of the posts were without any written text, or only had pictures, videos or a link to a video clip. What was interesting here, was that the other 59% or 210 posts that contained some type of written text. These written texts were analyzed from different angles, starting from their general valence. Their majority, exceeding more than 80% (a total 169 texts) were evaluated as generally negative, almost 14% were evaluated as being neutral and only a modest 6% were evaluated as written texts with positive direction. The neutral texts usually focused on building a Church on the foundations of..., and the positive ones were texts celebrating Easter. The investigation of the negative ones focused on whether there were any vulgarities – and if so, then how many − in the posts. What type of hate speech is present and to what degree, whether calls for war, clashes, nationalism, and murder are noticeable and whether there is self-glorification or highlighting personal strength and power evident in the written text.

The data in the table illustrates the analysis of the negative texts having in mind these four components.

Table 1. Percentage of texts from the whole number of negative texts in relation to the type of negative posts

Vulgarities	Hate speech	Calls for war, fight	Self Glorification
51%	71%	47%	18%
86	120	79	18
Profound language, insults, mockery of physical appearance	Derogatory words that undermine, mock or ridicule a person or a group for their certain characteristics (race, sex, ethnicity, nationality, religion)	Words that call for conflict, war, clashes, murders, separations, dissemination of nationalistic feelings	Words for glorification of personal greatness, strength, power and superiority

It is noticeable from the data that most of the negative texts contain hate speech. Macedonians are "Kauri[6]", "Traitors", "Kauri's tribe", "Artificial nation", "Bulgarians", "Wicked creatures".... From the other side, Albanians are "Shiptars[7]", "Traitors", "Wicked Shiptars Tribe", "Turkified bastards", "Foes of Macedonia", "Dickheads", "Shiptars - Arnauts", "Albanians - kachaks[8]", "Shiptars cattle", "Incest nation", "Godless", "Shipoi, Dogs".

The presence of vulgarities is approximately the same (by percentage) as calls for war, clashes, nationalism, separation, and murders. Vulgarities are very extreme and we will not analyze them since their description is far below the level of this text. We will only mention that they are combinations of profound language, insults, mockery of the physical appearance and threats in which the sexual act is present in a most vulgar and monstrous way (see the link to Facebook page).

Calls for war, separation, murders, nationalism was present in at least half of the posts. We will mention only the most common words and sentences used in this context: "Die Bulgarians"; "Death for the rotten faithless"; "Death for the Kauris"; "Go to Albania"; "Big Albania!"; "Big Macedonia!"; "Dead Shiptar – Good Shiptar!"; "We will annihilate you all"; "Macedonia is Bulgaria"; "Go away from Kale Fortress or I'll f..k you all"; "Clean Macedonia"; "Let's slaughter Shiptars"; "Shiptars in Pcinja (river)"; "Mass grave for Shiptars"; "Gas Chamber for Macedonians"; "We'll slaughter, we'll burn mosques"; "Long live Ahmeti, he'll annihilate you all"; "Death for all Macedonians"; "You all will come to an end – we'll murder you all like we did in Brodec"; "Go away from here – this will be Great Albania"; "Destroy the filthy Albanians"; "Macedonian brothers, let's fight for the motherland....."; "Macedonia belongs only to the Macedonians".

Self-glorification of personal strength, power and ability is present in a smaller percentage than the general negative texts and is about calls that: "God is with us", "Macedonia is Eternal", "We are the strongest – you Macedonians cannot do anything to us"," Long live all Christians".

The Good One

39 out of 111 posts recorded in the research period had no text, and the other 72 had written text. The most interesting ones here were the ones that contained text. The text was analyzed from the viewpoint of the key words that were carrying the main message of the post. Thus, the most common were:

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[6] Kauri is a Turkish word for Orthodox. The word used by Albanians when they want to offend Macedonians

[7]"Shiptars" a pejorative name used by the Macedonians for Albanians. Otherwise the word derives from the Albanian word for Albanian, only the Albanians themselves pronounce it differently

[8] A Kachakis an originally Turkish term for *rebel* or *bandit*

- posts in which the text was dominated by the key word PEACE (sayings such as: what is peace; message for peace; "Peace"; "Peace at home – peace in the world"; "Only peace and respect"; "There's no good war nor bad peace"; "Let's be champions of peace and love"; "Peace and love – forget the church and mosque"; "There's no way to peace – peace is the way!"; "Make love not war".)
- the second type of posts were the ones which praised the initiatives for creating such a page, praising everyone that supported the page and welcoming the idea to write something smart on Facebook.
- posts addressed to all regarding a better future ("Stop the violence"; "Let's build the future, not the past"; "Give us science, education"; "You don't have to build religious objects – let's build discotheques and cafeterias at Kale Fortress"; "We have too many religious temples – we don't need more")

Visualizations regarding the Bad One

From the total number of posts on the wall of the Bad One, 52% were without any picture, photo or video clip – there was only text, while 46% had video clips. Photos were rare (only 4), as well as links – a total of 3.

Video clips, which were numerous, were analyzed in detail. According to their content, they were divided in several groups:

Videos with military content were most numerous:
- Soldiers of KLA[9] (2001); Soldiers of KLA singing military songs; Military operations of KLA; Demonstration of the weapons used by KLA; Celebration of the victory of KLA; Celebration of the day of liberation of Kosovo; Short movie for the army of KLA in Kosovo; Kosovo War 1999- KLA destroys a church; KLA- Black Tigers; Albanian Special Forces. There were 23 video clips with this type of content.
- Macedonian Wolves killing Albanian terrorists, videos from Brodec, Tetovo 2001 – Macedonian soldiers killing 2 Albanian terrorists, Macedonian sniper, March of the Macedonian army. There were 8 videos like these.

Music, videos:
- A song regarding the events at Kale Fortress (7) – hip hop song: "Go away from Kale Fortress if you don't want me to f...k you all"; hip hop song: "F…k Serbia";

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[9] Kosovo Liberation Army

- Songs for the Wolves - Macedonian sons (3); song for the Tigers; song for the Macedonian traitors: F…K Greece; Macedonia forever; song for the Macedonian special forces; rap song for the Macedonian soldiers;
- Original ethnic Macedonian song: Macedonian Girl (Македонски девојче), If I Die or Get Killed (Ако умрам ил загинам), Macedonian Nation (Земјо македонска); The first hymn of the Republic of Macedonia from 1923 – Rise, Dawn of the Freedom (Изгреј зора на слободата), the present hymn of Macedonia
- Albanian folk music.

Calling on history and bringing out historical facts regarding recent or ancient history:

- The real origin of the Albanians; Who are Albanians (Alexander the Great was Albanian by origin); Albanians – the oldest nation on Earth; the history of the Albanian keche[10];
- Historical facts that Macedonians are Slavs and not Ancient Macedonians and

Football matches and video clips of football games:

- Komiti supporting FC Vardar during a game; celebration of the 20-year anniversary of Komiti; Komiti going to a game – street fights; A football stand in Serbia with a transparent that reads: "Kill the Shiptars"; cheering of the fans during a Vardar – Skendija game; a video clip titled: "Komiti beat Shiptars";
- Empty stadium with no Komiti (only Albanian supporters);

Natural beauties of Macedonia:

picture of the ruined mosque in the city of Prilep (3); pictures of Seselj in the Hague (2); Video clips of rituals where people are accepting Islam; the Macedonian flag with the Vergina Sun....

 The GOOD One

15 out of 111 posts on the wall of the Good One had pictures, and 34 had videos.

Pictures appearing on the wall of the Good One were: symbols of peace; peace – not war; children from the entire world embracing Earth; open hands from everyone; sun, flowers, rainbow; Christians are protecting Muslims praying in Cairo; "peace and love"; "faith, love and peace"; "peace and love";

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[10] Albanian traditional hat

Only 5 of the video clips attached to the profile of the Good One were not songs and were related to various sayings regarding love, the life of Mother Theresa, different pictures showing love and unity. The most often promoted songs on the Good One's wall were the songs of Michael Jackson: We Are the World, the song of John Lennon: Imagine; furthermore there were songs such as: Peace from Depeche Mode, We Are the Champions from Queen, Be My Brother, Be My Friend from Non Stop, Love Is All from Yanni, All You Need Is Love from The Beatles, Let the Sun Shine In from the movie Hair, Heal the World from Michael Jackson, the songs For All the Children and Skopje Joyful You Will Be − from the Festival "Golden Nightingale", Let's Save the World from Karolina, Toshe and other Macedonian singers...

Discussion

The image, photography and the name that represent those who left posts on Facebook pages give us an insight into the way participants in cyberspace manage their own identity, or more specifically in this case, according to Suler (2002), speak about the level of dissociation and integration of the identity of individuals.

Since our research analyzed the identities (pictures and names of those who were posting) both at the Bad and the Good One's pages, we can say with a high degree of certainty that those who prefer the Bad One are individuals that want to stay anonymous to a higher degree and/or to accentuate only one aspect of their personality (more often they used blurred names, pictures, pictures of actors, group names...thus, showing dissociative behavior), while the individuals active on the Good One's page, were feeling freer to show their personality, from the viewpoint of managing their own identity. In psychological terms they show integrative characteristics. The two groups were different in terms of the types of symbols which they used: the activists on behalf of the Bad One often used national or religious symbols, while the activists on behalf of the Good One used symbols like flowers, books, children hands…

According to Suler (2002), one of the phenomena in the context of determining identity in cyberspace was the emergence of positive and negative valence. Positive refers to those who use cyberspace as an opportunity to demonstrate their positive features, and was typical of individuals who posted on the Good One. Negative valence refers to those who offend and hurt others in the same space. This is seen as a cathartic act where the insecure and passive-aggressive individuals often remain trapped in the endless river of online arguments. The existence of this negative valence was undoubtedly demonstrated by the huge percentage of negative posts, hate speeches, calls for war, murder... as well as the endless controversies, deceptions, and insults recorded in the Bad One.

The occurrence of positive and negative valence proves the existence of the online disinhibiting effect: that people will speak and do things in cyberspace which they would normally not have done in the real world; and the existence of online regression, which meant the return of some lower, less mature, less critical forms of functioning and behavior online. The regression and toxic disinhibiting which contribute to the release of unpleasant needs and desires are probably responsible for the vast amount of profanity, insults, and threats ... posted on the wall of the Bad One. Benign disinhibiting, however, which usually manifests itself through the expression of unusual acts of kindness and generosity, understanding and tolerance, are clearly seen in the Good One. It is impossible and unnatural for an individual to have such understanding, support and tolerance of a complete stranger, is it not?!?!!

Besides managing their identity online, another important aspect was expressing their identity through a medium that can communicate with the environment. In cyberspace people choose a specific communication channel with which to express their selves, and that is why they have many options... The data showed a greater usage of video clips on the Bad Profile and a greater usage of written text on the Good Profile. That would mean a greater presence of "visualizers" on the Bad Profile and a greater presence of 'verbalizers' on the Good One, and the conclusion that maybe the rational-analytic dimension is on the side of those active on the second Profile. However, deeper observations will require profound analysis.

The contents of the video clips, however, illustrate the projected needs, frustrations, and desires which bore witness to the militaristic impulses of the individuals who posted on the Bad Profile, and the peaceful needs of those who posted on the Good Profile. Unfortunately, the ones that dominate are the former.

This analysis started with one main research question of what was happening in the virtual space of Facebook in terms of the quality of reporting the differences. Specifically, the objectives of the research were focused on analysis of the content written by participants on the pages of Facebook designed for the Kale Fortress incident, an event that touched the two largest ethnic groups in Macedonia, and at one point, threatened to disrupt peace and stability in the country.

What happened in the virtual space of Facebook following the clash between the Macedonians and Albanians was a verbal and unscrupulous battle, a battle in which the participants were far from shy in using vulgarities, threats, and profound language… There were calls for war, clashes, nationalism, ethnic cleansing. Hate speech spread like a bushfire.

The majority of the people that actively participated in virtual space regarding the construction of the Church-Museum participated in the creation of the image of the Bad One related to the story of the Church. It is these people that tried to hide their identity online, and, thanks to the endless and open virtual space, without

major difficulties, they managed to express a myriad of insults, profanities, anger, violence.... Online democracy brought the disinhibiting effect and regression, and the hidden needs, desires, and frustrations simply exploded out in the air.

There were also those who participated in building the Good One in the story. They showed a greater incentive for integration, and they did not enter into the endless river of justifications and arguments, and they manifested kindness and generosity. They called for mutual tolerance and understanding but they were heavily outnumbered, losing 22:1.

If it is true that while searching the Internet we almost always actually find ourselves, then none of the participants were there by accident. The "accidents" are related to their common interests, hidden desires, and motives to manifest such behavior online.

The battle may have been in virtual space, but everything that was said was real. Cyberspace is nothing else but an extension of the intra psychological world of the individuals. Hence, anger, hatred, insults, expletives, urges for violence, and murder may not have been said in real life and on the streets, but they do exist somewhere in the psychological space and they transcended from computers in their homes in the form of a horrifying message. Computers are merely an extension of the human mind and personality, a space which reflected the views and interests of those who entered it.

The Republic of Macedonia is a multicultural society, which, unfortunately, in its history, both recent and distant, has witnessed ethnic disagreements, conflicts, and military clashes. Many experts have warned that ethnic co-existence is quite fragile, and that there is a real chance for a new conflict, far worse than the one 10 years ago. On the other hand, others assure that interethnic relations are stable and that we will not have similar incidents in the future. However, if we believe that social networks offer online democracy in the true sense of the word, and that virtual space is something where everyone can freely enter and express their thoughts and feelings, then it is just a matter of time before intolerance and aggression towards other ethnic groups online will also spill out on the streets.

Conclusions

Current estimates show that 23 million people communicate via the Internet, and this number is rapidly increasing by 12% monthly. This increase is not planned or controlled by anyone. We stand in front of one of the most extraordinary and exciting technological achievements, one of mankind's highest eminences on the crossover towards the third millennium. However, modern day Homo sapiens are known to return to their primitive, childish behavior. This applies to the differences as well. Why?

Internet communication has its pluses and minuses, good and bad sides. The pluses account for generosity, openness, tolerance and the support that they can offer to each other, even if it is between complete strangers in cyberspace. The good page in the analysis manifested itself through the face of the Good One. The minuses account for the manifested aggression, sexual assaults (attempts and threats regarding it), as well as increased vulnerability, hence, the face of the Bad One on Facebook is already recognizable. Actually, these are two sides of the same coin. The lack of inhibition, actually relates to the nonexistence of regulations and related bans and limitations. But at the same time, this is the main reason for misbehavior in cyberspace. The nonexistence of limitations makes the satisfaction of the human needs possible (communication needs are some of the many needs). However, they are different. Also, "anonymity" while managing the identity in virtual space implies the possibility of manipulation and distortion. The completely blurred space of the virtual world is an open opportunity for all hidden and suppressed needs, wishes, and desires. The undefined communication channels open the opportunity for projection, thus we can easily view others as aggressive, rude, arrogant or bad, instead of ourselves. The chances for the Bad One to appear are even greater because it is exactly the Bad One that is banned in official public space. Just because it is strongly suppressed by the institutions at all levels does not prevent its "explosion" on the Internet. The analysis showed that it has experienced an expansion on the social networks, since out of the 23 pages created regarding the Kale Fortress incident, 22 were a representation of the Bad One. The Good One stood alone and was less active. The only positive thing was that it was more praised in comparison to the Bad One, thus it had almost double the fans, at least formally. However, the main dynamics remained and will probably continue happening to the Bad One. The good profile "is losing the battle", at least when we speak about issues regarding the differences in such a multicultural society as ours! And when the Good is losing the battle in multicultural societies, threats to peace and stability to one's society are the harsh reality.

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Between 'Dear Diary' and Changing the World:
Assessing Motivations and Impact of Bloggers in Bulgaria

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Abstract. This study provides for the first time an overview of Bulgaria's blogs as a new yet already established feature of media landscape in this Eastern European nation two decades after the fall of the communist regime. In addition to examining the existing literature, the study uses in-depth interviews with bloggers to highlight pertinent characteristics of Bulgarian blogosphere. Bloggers' motivation and perceived impact are scrutinized, and examples are added to illustrate recently featured topics from their blogs. Contrary to expectations, Bulgarian blogs do not seem to have developed as a mere extension of online discussions but rather as an independent platform with new participants who defend fiercely their right to free speech. Since blogs have become an intrinsic part of the media landscape in this South-East European country, future directions of research are suggested.

Keywords: blogosphere, media in South-East Europe, freedom of speech

Introduction

In July 2007, the police in Sofia, Bulgaria's capital, detained briefly a young computer programmer named Michel Bozduganov (Capital, 2008). His blog (www.optimiced.com*),* which normally sticks to 'nerdy' topics such as software tips or quirks in the latest Photoshop, had published this time an open call from ecological activists for a series of demonstrations. The protests were targeting

possible changes in the protected statute of Strandzha National Park, which would have allowed for the construction of new tourist resorts. Dissenters, mostly young people, decried authorities for the failure to halt such an encroachment on Bulgaria's nature (Aneva and Dachkova, 2007).

It turned out that the planned demonstrations had not secured a proper advance clearance from the Sofia Municipality, as required by the law. Instead, ecologically minded youth intended to put pressure on authorities through flash-mob gatherings promoted through participating blogs[1]. While at the police station, Bozduganov was asked to sign a document promising he would not popularize what the police termed "illegal citizen protests" through his web site (Capital, 2008, paragraph 2).

This episode received abundant media attention. Apart from the inexplicable detention of just one blogger among all those who had posted similar announcements about forthcoming protests, it underscored two nascent trends. One was the growing prominence of blogs as a means of news communication in Bulgaria – in this case, the protest was not foreshadowed by any mainstream, traditional media. The other was the ambivalence that authorities in this newly admitted EU member must have felt about the power of online media to incite crowds, among other things.

Certainly blogs in Bulgaria are more than just a 'fad', even though not too long ago they were labeled as such by a high-circulation daily (Trud, 2009), likely with some degree of jealousy in a shrinking news media market[2]. By late 2011, few can deny that blogs have become a noticeable feature of the Bulgarian news media landscape, providing information that fills the gaps traditional media cannot or do not want to fill.

Internet use in Bulgaria has increased five-fold between 2000 and 2009, reported the most recent representative study (AMI Communications, 2010). Even though still only about 10 to 15 percent of the households have broadband Internet connection, virtually every office has online access (Capital, 2010). Furthermore, researchers (e.g., AMI Communications, 2010) have observed that about two-thirds of Bulgarians aged 20-39 spend significant time online (defined as 4 or more hours a day).

Part of this audience's attention certainly goes toward news blogs as an alternative means of receiving information, and, more importantly opinion (Spassov, 2009). Tobloglog.com, the only truly comprehensive site that monitors active blogs written in the Bulgarian language, lists some 3,240 active blogs as of

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[1] Since Facebook was in its infancy at the time, this otherwise powerful means of organizing protests did not play any role in these events.

[2] TNS-Gallup (2010) estimates that print media revenue (that is, 'traditional' newspapers and magazines) has decreased some 55% from January 2008 to January 2010; circulations have dropped accordingly by at least 25-30% in the same period.

June 2010. The software employed by this site omits any possible Bulgaria-related blogs published in other languages, which leads to undercount of the overall blog activity of Bulgarians worldwide (Elenko Elenkov, personal communication, June 29, 2010). A review by the author and an associate determined that at least 361 (or a bit over 11%) of those contain at least some news and commentary on the news (broadly defined as material that is related to current political, social, economic, cultural developments in Bulgaria and abroad) and have been updated at least once a week between June 2009 and June 2010. Only these blogs were studied because they encroach into terrains traditionally held by mainstream media such as news reporting and news commentary. Other types of blogs – for instance, those devoted to music, poetry, arts, personal hobbies, and the likes – were not of interest to this particular research project.

The primary motivation of this study was to compile for the first time an overview of Bulgaria's news blogging landscape, since academic research in this area is lacking. In addition, news bloggers' motivations were to be probed through a series of in-depth interviews with active news bloggers in the country. This was considered especially important, because without understanding the reasons behind their activities and perceptions of their impact, the contemporary media landscape in Bulgaria could not be presented truthfully. Finally, media researchers contributed comments and interpretation in an attempt to make the overview as comprehensive as possible.

Methodology and research questions

Online media in Bulgaria have only recently attracted the researchers' attention and this country's blogosphere has not been studied in any depth. Therefore, this project had little available scholarly literature from which to draw insights. The bulk of the analyses of blogging in Bulgaria so far has been conducted by journalists in the 'traditional' media and thus lacks in methodological rigor, even though such analyses may be helpful as a starting point. Therefore, this project contributed to the field by aggregating the available information on Bulgarian news blogging and supplementing it with semi-structured qualitative interviews.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in June 2010. Altogether, 14 active bloggers agreed to be interviewed in person. They were selected by contacting known administrators and authors of the 25 most visited Bulgarian news blogs using Topbloglog.com rankings as of June 20, 2010. These qualitative interviews ranged between 25 and 45 minutes each. Only two of the study participants were female; however, this disparity seems to reflect the overall predominance of males among Bulgaria's news bloggers – in 50 top news blogs (or top 8.2% by number of visits), only six were authored or administered by females, including two co-

authored with males; in two cases the gender could not be verified. This disparity in itself may be a subject of future research, since the author does not have a ready explanation for it. In 'traditional' Bulgarian journalism, the situation is reversed: Karadjov (2007) found out that between 61% and 72% of full-time reporters and editors in mainstream print and broadcast media were female as of 2006.

The small sample size made most other demographics (i.e., age) meaningless for interpretation, although relevant information was collected. Therefore, it falls to future studies to quantify any commonalities and differences among Bulgarian news bloggers. It will suffice to say here that of the 14 participants, seven had some background in information technologies, and four were formerly or presently professional journalists.

During the analysis of transcripts, themes recurring throughout the interviews were extracted and interpreted by the researcher. This approach, which is a simplified version of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method, relies on researcher's interpretation of the overall meaning rather than on selecting particular words or phrases. The analyst looked for similarities among categories and their properties, and grouped them accordingly (as suggested by Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lindlof, 1995). This required going back and forth between different parts of the transcript until all relevant variations of meaning were extracted and exhausted.

As a divergence from the standard constant comparative method, this simplified approach did not use strict coding schemata and did not develop theoretical expectations, which was due primarily to the limited amount of data available for work. It also did not deal with deeper levels of language (e.g., as advised by Severin and Tankard, 2001) – again, because of the small data set.

Additionally, two media scholars and two journalists covering online media were interviewed to help clarify and explicate findings. All but two of the participants in this study agreed to have their names revealed in the subsequent report. Therefore, most specific references and direct quotes from interview participants, whenever used, are cited and dated as *personal communication*.

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

Research question 1: What is the motivation of Bulgaria's news bloggers (that is, what prompted them to start and continue blogging on current events)?

Research question 2: What is the perceived impact of Bulgaria's news bloggers, especially with respect to enhancing the freedom of speech?

The questions about bloggers' motivation and their relative influence in the society were considered important in establishing a baseline for future scholarly exploration, akin to similar studies of media professionals in which this author has been involved (Hanitzsch et al, 2010; Karadjov and Kim, 2000).

Online discussions – (not) the birth of news blogging?

As the author was starting this research project, the expectation gleaned from preliminary reviews of literature and interviews was that online discussions, which came to prominence in Bulgarian media by the late 1990s, served as the 'breeding grounds' for present-day news bloggers. Indeed, the sites of daily newspapers such as Sega (www.segabg.com), Dnevnik (www.dnevnik.bg) and Standart (www.standart.bg), the online-only Dir.bg and Mediapool.com, and the weekly Capital (www.capital.bg) provided numerous participants with an outlet they did not have before. This is still the case, of course, and discussion forums are a power into themselves in Bulgaria's public space (Open Society, 2009).

Yet it turned out that it is more likely that such discussions (that is, expressing opinions on already published news stories) and blogs (by definition, posted original news or opinion related to actual events) have developed more or less independently of each other. None of the Bulgarian bloggers interviewed for this study claimed any substantial forum experience or cited the need to break away from the set discussion topics as a motivation to start blogging on current events. While evidence exists of some promotional crossover between news blogs and discussions, for instance, a practice derided as "link farming" by some bloggers (Elenkov, personal communication, June 29, 2010; Lazarov, personal communication, June 22, 2010), the two online communities share distinct features. They also likely consist of different people and should be regarded as independent, just as Facebook's estimated 1.5-million current users in Bulgaria did not necessarily emerge from the ranks of bloggers and forum participants (Capital, 2010).

New material gathered in the course of this project led to a re-assessment of expectations stemming from previous research findings. A recent study of online forums in Bulgaria by this author concluded that many of the participants actually wished to write under their own names, that is, shed their anonymity (Karadjov, 2009). This desire, however, existed only in principle, as will be explained below, and did not seem to affect substantially the evolution of blogging in Bulgaria.

It was not surprising in itself, though. As much as 30% of comments posted under articles on the forum for the daily Sega (www.segabg.com) during 2005-2008 were not related to the original topic at all; 36% were replies or clarifications to others' comments; and only 25% could be judged as contributing to or enhancing the newspaper's article (Karadjov, 2009). Such a high rate of 'deviance' betrayed interest in self-expression going beyond mere comments on someone else's published material.

In the mini-universe of Sega's forum, 19 discussion participants logged more than 15,000 postings between 1998 and 2008, and overall 36 had more than 10,000 (Karadjov, 2009). For instance, Чичо Фичо, or 'Uncle Ficho', the nickname for

Valentin Hadzhiysky, a Bulgarian living in New York, has some 18,000 postings on a wide variety of topics in the Sega forum, some of them running to 800-1,000 words apiece. One might think that such a remarkable activity would be grounds for considering a more substantial career as a news blogger. Yet when questioned, 'Uncle Ficho' repeatedly expressed lack of interest in such a cross-over and so have most other prominent forum participants interviewed in 2008-2009 (Karadjov, 2009). To repeat the point, surprisingly little evidence has been found that the lively online discussion scene in Bulgaria's mainstream publications motivated some of its participants to become news bloggers.

The explanation may be as follows. Anonymity, which initially helped these online discussions to flourish, in fact quickly became the undoing of Bulgarian forums when it allowed also for displays of rudeness and even outright vulgarity. Personal attacks and off-color remarks contributed to the lack of desire among even the most prolific participants to "come out" with their names, no matter how much they wanted to do so in principle. Slavi Kasherov, who had been one of the regulars in the Sega discussion forum with some 4,000 posts under the nick Йори (which is Bulgarian for Winnie the Pooh's friend Eeyore), explained this phenomenon:

> From the very beginning, most active participants in discussions were people who had just 'discovered' the internet and were eager to express themselves. Sooner or later, though, they got into personal conflicts, some of which involved salty language. Sooner or later, too, they wanted to meet each other, and these meetings inevitably led to disappointments (Kasherov, personal communication, June 22, 2010).

In his words, familiarity with someone – and presumably, knowledge of this person's fallibilities – tended to lessen the respect for this person's opinions as well. Writer Boyko Lambovsky apparently concurred with such a pessimistic conclusion in his review of the first *Sega* forum participants' meeting (Lambovsky, 2005). As Kasherov pointed out (personal communication, June 22, 2010), many forum participants have in fact stopped contributing to the discussions because of the disappointment with the vitriolic reactions they encountered – but 'they continue reading'. He added that Bulgaria's online forums have been in a steady decline, which opinion is shared by some (such as blogger Eneya Vorodetsky, personal communication, July 1, 2010), but opposed by others, particularly by most researchers (e.g., Open Society, 2009).

At any rate, transitioning from online discussions of news stories to news blogging did not seem to be the most plausible route of development for Bulgaria's blogosphere. A recurring pattern in all interviews indicated that bloggers had started publishing without much prior experience in online discussions (at least in

their own words). Thus, the initial expectation that 'seasoned hands' from online forums have become bloggers sometime between 2001 (when first blogs in Bulgaria emerged) and 2007 (when blogs became a recurring topic in the media) received no confirmation whatsoever.

The conclusions along these lines from the in-depth interviews are somewhat corroborated by the existing literature. In an extensive early review of Bulgaria's blogging, for instance, editors of the respected weekly Capital posited that most bloggers are 'fresh faces', that is, people who picked up this activity because of their need for self-expression, or interest in current affairs, society, technology, and so on, or professional journalists, who had found yet another outlet independent of the tumultuous world of Bulgarian media (Capital, 2008).

Of course, while forum participants likely number in the tens or even hundreds of thousands (Open Society, 2009), the blogging community in Bulgaria is considerably more limited, with maybe only a couple of thousand active members (Capital, 2010). Of those, even fewer (361, to be exact) post materials that cover news and current events.

Bloggers' motivation

Bulgarian bloggers, just as their peers elsewhere, can be broadly classified into two types: they are either motivated to maintain an online log of their activities and thoughts (a personal cyber diary of sorts, the very definition of 'web log'), or have the desire to influence others by weighing in on issues of some impact in politics, society, culture or economics.

The former category seems to be migrating increasingly onto social media platforms such as Facebook. As of June 2010, the latter occupied 17 out of top 25 spots among the most widely read Bulgarian blogs, as ranked by Topbloglog.com (to remind the reader, this is despite the fact that overall only 361 of the 3,240 recorded blogs in Bulgaria, or 8%, can be classified as news blogs). It seems that during the past few years in Bulgaria Facebook has taken the steam out of the majority of blogs based solely on private, 'dear diary' type of material. Almost all interviewed bloggers said something to this effect. Only Melissa from www.positivnoto.info maintained that 'little things still matter and are worth sharing' (Personal communication, June 29, 2010). Her contributions, however, also tend to be more broadly targeted than she seems to claim, since they also address news events, but in a 'positive' manner.

On the other hand, 'ego and exhibitionism' seem to be still among the prime motivators for Bulgarian bloggers' activity (as formulated by blogger Eneya Vorodetsky, personal communication, July 1, 2010). This is probably the case everywhere, too. Each of the interviewed bloggers unfailingly pointed out they were driven by the need to "say something" to the society at large. In the words of

Elenko Elenkov (Personal communication, June 29, 2010), "I had interesting observations and pictures and wanted to share them."

This common theme was exemplified well by the blogger and former full-time journalist Ivo Indzhev (Personal communication, June 30, 2010). He started writing online by necessity after losing his broadcast job in 2006. "I was prompted initially by my daughter, who works for the online version of the German newspaper Bild Zeitung," Indzhev said. "It did not feel right just to go around asking to get published, so starting a blog gave me a natural opportunity for unlimited expression" (Personal communication, June 30, 2010).

No participant in this study admitted starting a blog for financial gain, which seems plausible given the common difficulty in turning a profit by publishing online. Not that bloggers in Bulgaria would be averse to making money – Google Adworks seems to be widely employed on most web sites, but apparently brings only marginal income. One of the interviewed bloggers (Elenkov) had just started using advanced advertising software, and another had been soliciting donations on his site (Indzhev). Nobody seemed to believe, though, that their online entrepreneurship may become one day a strong enough source of revenue to offset a regular salaried job.

Some bloggers might be considered even altruistic in their effort to advance the common good, albeit still with a touch of personal satisfaction in the motivation mix. For instance, in June 2010 blogger Boyan Yurukov created www.lipsva.com, a site for the missing people in Bulgaria, which employs an interactive Google map. This became the first such site in Bulgaria, fulfilling a task that normally is carried out by the law enforcement and non-profit organizations. Yurukov, who writes mostly about technology, actually resides in Germany. He said that opening such a web site was his way "simultaneously to help and practice technical skills" (Setian, 2010, para. 8).

Apparently, blogs have also caught up among still-employed professional journalists, too. In an Arbitrage Research & Consultancy study, 13.9% of full-time reporters and editors in Bulgaria said they were publishing their own blog, and 9.6% reported contributing to a blog maintained by their media outlet. The rest regularly read blogs, and only 13.5% said they have absolutely no use for such a platform (AMI Communications, 2010).

Such data are a bit suspect, though, because the number of journalists in Bulgaria has been estimated at about 5,000 (Karadjov, 2009; Nikoltchev, 1998), which would mean that if the AMI survey is spot on, virtually all of the 361 news blogs must be maintained by journalists. This is not true on its face value. As already mentioned, among the 14 participants interviewed for this study, four were professional journalists, and nothing indicates that this proportion is much higher in general.

It seems likely, though, that having a news blog is considered professionally desirable, maybe even fashionable, which leads to over-estimation in such self-reported surveys. At least this has been the impression the interviews left during the course of this study. All these facts suggest that media professionals regard blogs – at least normatively – as a part of their craft and therefore have become if not early adopters but certainly steady devotees of this platform.

Bloggers' perceived impact

A high-brow, now defunct television called Re:TV used to make a weekly review of most important blogs in 2009. Ivan Bedrov, an active blogger himself, invited "blogosphere colleagues" every Friday to discuss current events, similarly to the panels with journalists from major media, which are still a mainstay of Bulgaria's broadcast talk shows. This was, in effect, an attempt to bring bloggers into the mainstream and "legitimize" them to the public (Bedrov, personal communication, June 29, 2010). The experiment was terminated with the closure of Re:TV in late 2009.

A recent analysis published in the popular daily *Trud* concluded that the most influential blog 'is a non-existent animal' (Trud, 2009, paragraph 2), because blogs are 'not too consequential' in the first place. This skeptical article was prompted by the subtitle 'The most influential blog for analyses and politics' on the web site of journalist Ivan Barekov (www.barekov.com). Another web publication, Naked words (http://golidumi.com/), which in a bit over a year underwent the transformation from an outlet for erotic poetry to a full-blown celebrity gossip site, also sports the motto 'Blog #1 in Bulgaria' on its home page.

Earlier*,* high-circulation daily newspaper 24 Hours had come up with a list of 10 "most active" bloggers as a measure of their relative influence (Setian, 2008). Such rankings drew some skeptical responses, even from blog authors included on the list such as Todor Hristov, who noted in his blog Alabala.org on December 30, 2008, that the "frequency of postings by itself is neither a sign of authority, nor a good way to evaluate quality" (paragraph 3). The lasting impression left from reviewing such materials and analyzing interview transcripts was that a) impact (or influence) is routinely conflated with self-promotion in Bulgaria's blogosphere, and, b) the societal effects of bloggers' efforts are presently not known with any degree of certitude.

Of all the various aspects of media effects, political communication often generates the most interest and expectations because of the high stakes of electoral campaign outcomes. In 2007, daily Dnevnik analyzed for the first time the potential of blogs in Bulgarian politics by reviewing their fledgling presence in local elections. Even though by then only a few political leaders have embraced

this new platform, prominent blogger Yulian Popov was quoted as giving a prescription for success:

> Only those who do not misuse the blogosphere as a pulpit for sermonizing are successful. The voters sympathize with people they feel they know and can identify with. They want great ideas, not deep analysis. You have to surprise them every day (Dnevnik, 2007, para. 1).

Unfortunately, no further academic (or even journalistic) research exists on the effectiveness of blogs in the realm of Bulgarian political communication. Younger, Western-educated political leaders – such as Georgi Kadiev, a 44-year-old candidate for the 2011 mayoral elections in the capital of Sofia, or Simeon Dyankov, the 40-year-old finance minister – maintain blogs as of this writing (respectively, www.kadiev.bg and www.simeondjankov.com). They, however, seem to prefer Facebook as a more useful platform for political mobilization (Kadiev, personal communication, June 28, 2010). The widely popular Prime Minister Boyko Borissov does not maintain a blog (albeit, a "fake" Twitter account exists in his name). Instead, he relies on a Facebook group with some 58,000 members as of June 2010.

Marketing and public relations consultants, on the other hand, have consistently probed various aspects of blogging in Bulgaria with an eye on their potential commercial promise. Arbitradge Research, for instance, found out that most bloggers might be inclined to seek information from public relations agencies – similarly to 'traditional' journalists – and thus not necessarily insist on a maverick status by researching everything themselves. A whopping 87% of surveyed bloggers expressed desire to receive such 'canned' information, and 61% said they already had it on a regular basis (AMI Communications, 2010). The study does not specify the background of the responding bloggers, although, presumably, they were among those writing on issues of some social and political impact and not merely sharing their 'Dear Diary'-type ruminations. This likely susceptibility of Bulgarian bloggers to persuasive influences might be utilized in the future by political consultants, marketing gurus and public relations specialists alike.

A study by Popova, Dermengieva and Tochev (2008) set out to explore whether professional journalists' blogs are a departure from the traditional media in terms of topics and language, or they are a continuation of these media on a new platform. These scholars from Sofia University researched "official" media blogs and personal blogs of reporters working in these media. They also analyzed blogs maintained by people who were not employed by any Bulgarian media outlets, but whose regularity in online presence made them 'non-professional' or 'citizen' journalists (Popova, Dermengieva & Tochev, 2008).

The authors acknowledged that when they compared 15 blogs offered by reporters from the weekly Capital with the print articles published on the same topics*,* the results stood out as somewhat surprising. Overall, these researchers found out that the interpretation (framing) was very similar in blogs and "traditional" publication, even though blogs were ostensibly not subjected to the same editorial control. Indeed, the headlines of the blogs were more colorful, playful and prone to wordplay – but that was all the essential difference. Popova, Dermengieva and Tochev (2008) concluded that blogs maintained by Capital's professional journalists are mirroring the weekly's print edition, which is also published online. Blogs offered a few interactive "extras," but did not provide an alternative take on issues and events. This author does not share the surprise of Popova, Dermengieva and Tochev (2008), because it is more likely than not for the same people writing on the same issues to stay consistent in their views regardless of the platform – if only for the lack of time to be original twice!

The aforementioned researchers also conducted a case study of two former professional journalists – Kalin Manolov (http://kalin-manolov.blog.co.uk) and Julian Popov (http://julianpopov.com) – who publish their own blogs without a direct affiliation with any media outlet. Popova, Dermengieva and Tochev (2008) concluded that these blogs captured authors' individuality based on residence-specific differences (Manolov lives in Bulgaria, while Popov resides permanently in the United Kingdom). Manolov exhibited a highly partisan frame of mind fighting with much passion for his right-wing persuasions, while Popov could afford addressing "broader, more philosophical topics" as someone more or less detached from the daily life in Bulgaria (Popova, Dermengieva & Tochev, 2008: 7). The researchers conceded that it is difficult to gauge the impact of such online opinionating.

Another case study from this scattered, albeit interesting research article, illustrated the case of 'non-journalist' bloggers stepping in and filling an information void left by mainstream media. During the holiday period of December 29, 2006 – January 2, 2007, when Bulgaria was celebrating its long-awaited accession to the European Union and few regular newspapers came out, several blogs provided full coverage of the execution of Saddam Hussein (Popova, Dermengieva and Tochev, 2008). Particularly, news bloggers Angel Grancharov, Grigor Gachev and Tervel Nyagolov wrote interpretative articles and started often heated discussions related to this event. Not until after the holidays did mainstream media catch up with the topic, and by then the interest of the audience was waning. Thus, citizen journalists emerged as a natural bridge between mainstream media and the general public, concluded Popova, Dermengieva and Tochev (2008).

Some bloggers may think of themselves as 'agent-provocateurs', as evidenced by the case of a highly unpopular former Bulgarian government, which was subjected to a so-called 'Googlebomb' in January 2009. It is not clear who

originated the idea, but blogger Ognyan Mladenov, who usually writes about search engine optimization, gave advice on January 25, 2009, on how to embed the code that would send all Google searches of the word "провал" (failure) to the site of the then Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev (www.government.bg). This act was highly symbolic and received abundant media coverage (Beekman, 2009). Virtually all interviewed bloggers mentioned this episode as an example of their determination to rouse the authorities' feathers, when necessary. The only exception was – once more – Melissa from www.positivnoto.info, who said she would do no harm or inconvenience to anyone, because that contradicts to the idea of her blog, which has an emphasis on 'positive' news.

Again, overall no unity exists as to what is the influence of Bulgarian bloggers, who – to the extent they were interviewed – seemed to express disbelief that their work can currently match the potential of traditional media, particularly television.

Bloggers as free-speech champions

A major recurring theme traced through most interviews was the notion that blogs have made a noticeable contribution to the freedom of the speech in Bulgaria since the demise of the communist regime in 1989−1990 and the subsequent boom in Bulgaria's media (Ognyanova, 1997). In other words, blogs at least in theory have allowed numerous citizen journalists to come out, although not all study participants shared the same optimistic expectations about the consequences of this emerging trend. At least half of the interviewed bloggers lamented the fact that too many among their peers (that is, outside of the "dear diary" category) refuse to deal with "hot-button" political issues and instead concentrate on "vague social criticism" or "useless opinionating" (Lazarov, personal communication, June 22, 2010). Some bloggers (i.e., Elenkov, Vorodetsky) defended their avoidance of politics, but insisted that there are plenty of other ways to promote civil conscience among the populace, while others (Indzhev, Kanev) insisted that politics is all there is worth talking about in the public sphere.

Blogger Assen Genov said that the internet space in Bulgaria is the only "free and alternative zone, where you can find objective information about the political life… and criticize the current government" (Personal communication, June 20, 2010). Hussein (2010) reviewed the case of three journalists who lost their jobs with mainstream media and resorted to publishing online as a means to maintain their standing with the audiences. Two of them, whose names were already mentioned, Ivan Barekov and Ivo Indzhev, left the best-rated private television bTV, while Georgi Koritarov lost his job with Nova TV.

All started blogs; Indzhev, for instance, makes 3-5 posts (articles) a day and receives 5,000-6,000 unique visitors daily (Hussein, 2010; Indzhev, personal

communication, June 30, 2010). Such an activity is admired by other bloggers, who ostensibly crave a higher impact as judged by audience numbers, even though few would admit that ratings drive them (i.e., Bedrov, personal communication, June 24, 2010).

Indzhev's highest response to date – 26,000 visits – came from the publication titled "Ленин се крие, но е тук" (Lenin Is Here, But Hiding) on September 28, 2009, which gives clues to the type of materials (or, rather, headlines) that draw the attention of Bulgarian audiences online (Hussein, 2010; Indzhev, personal communication, June 30, 2010). In fact, the material was not as controversial as one might suspect – it was a tongue-in-cheek 370-word essay about a forgotten portrait of Lenin on the side of some local school in Sofia. Furthermore, Indzhev's blog has been quoted by international media outlets such as The New York Times and Le Monde (Hussein, 2010).

An important insight from Indzhev's relative popularity in the face of decreasing newspaper circulation is that people in Bulgaria care about politics, but need it to be presented in a more interesting and engaging manner (Hussein, 2010; Indzhev, personal communication, June 30, 2010). A nagging question after a non-systematic review of his blog content emerged whether Indzhev succeeds largely because of his highly polarizing opinions on various political issues (similarly to the effect that conservative AM radio talk shows have had in the United States).

On the other hand, many of the interviewees contended that while blogging in Bulgaria may provide unimpeded free speech, it is also a lot less potent than the "traditional" mainstream media. An example in this direction has been the series by Elenko Elenkov on his negative experience with the Bulgarian customs officials (Elenkov, 2010). Not until he got published by the daily Dnevnik his otherwise incisive and spirited writings got any significant public notice. The single newspaper article got some 127,000 unique visitors, close to 1,000 comments and was widely distributed among the Bulgarian Diaspora abroad. Elenkov's blog – featuring similar material – received roughly the same readership, but in the entire six-month period before this story (Personal communication, June 29, 2010).

This led observers such as journalist Alex Lazarov to conclude that blogs will likely remain secondary to traditional media and their web versions in terms of audience reach, although they will continue to provide free-speech alternatives not available before (Personal communication, June 22, 2010). Most of the interviewed bloggers shared such views, and many acknowledged that their influence as agents of free press in Bulgaria is curtailed by factors such as still limited internet penetration or lack of wider familiarity with online environment, especially among the elderly and in rural areas.

All participants agreed, though, that blogs provide their authors with an opportunity to share information in unprecedented ways, and thus help to foster the growth of a civil society in Bulgaria. Any time this ability has been encroached

upon by the government, the reaction has been conspicuous. For instance, the police effort to intimidate the aforementioned blogger Michel Bozduganov has prompted at least one interviewed blogger (Ivan Bedrov, personal communication, June 29, 2010) to commence online publishing. Several others said they were reinforced in their decision to begin blogging after that case and the protests against possible construction in Strandzha National Park received a lot more public attention than they would have probably had (Capital, 2008). In this sense, one blogger's publicized harassment by the authorities ended up stirring the country in ways that were not possible before. This must be taken as an encouraging sign by all proponents of civil society in Bulgaria.

More recently, in June 2010, two other issues seemed to grip the attention of the blogosphere. One of them was the closure by the authorities of a web site, *www.chitanka.info*, accused of letting its users download free books in a violation of copyright laws. The closure was widely ridiculed by all bloggers interviewed for this project, with one of them calling it "patently stupid" (Veni Markovski, personal communication, June 20, 2010). Virtually all top blog sites in the country published some reaction or linked to such.

Another case was even more interesting, because it stemmed not from a real act, but from a perceived intention of the authorities. Essentially, a "cyber-rumor" appeared that Bulgarian lawmakers were plotting to include a text in the new electoral regulations that would impose penalties for libel on online publications – particularly blogs – similar to those existing for traditional media (Petkova, 2010). (A discussion on the related subject whether bloggers are journalists or not is available at www.capital.bg/interaktiv/debati). Pundit and blogger Veni Markovski wrote in his blog http://blog.veni.com/ on June 25, 2010, that to hold the administrator of a blog for libel because of its content is akin to "demanding accountability from a library for a note stashed into one of the shelved books." Again, all interviewed bloggers agreed with the absurdity of a potential libel clause in the electoral law – even though this has not been an option yet put on the table by the lawmakers! It is such apparent sensitivity, though, that suggests how Bulgarian bloggers feel strongly about any potential infringement upon the freedom of speech on the Internet.

Conclusion

Contrary to the expectations, Bulgarian blogosphere did not seem to have developed as an extension of online discussion forums, which became popular in the late 1990s. Rather, news blogs appeared as an independent platform with mostly new actors who wished to play an alternative role to the mainstream news media.

A number of journalists from traditional media have made blogging either an extra activity, or used it to continue working after losing their jobs. Bulgarian

bloggers seem to be devoted to the idea of free speech and believe that their contribution in this respect is substantial. Bloggers started their publishing activity for a variety of reasons, but their motivation could be reliably traced to a mixture of altruism, ego, exhibitionism and desire to influence others. Overall, blogs are perceived as an important new tool for the development of civil society 20 years after Bulgaria shed its communist government, one-party system and planned economy.

Little agreement exists on what is the relative impact of Bulgarian blogs on the audience(s), even though this is perhaps the most interesting and important question that could be asked of any type of media. Study participants differed widely in their opinions as to what constitutes "influence" in the first place. Bulgarian news bloggers seemed to disbelieve that their work may have similar effects to traditional media, particularly television. Available literature is at best ambivalent on the issue as well. We can safely say that the relative weight of blogs in Bulgaria's media mix is difficult to pinpoint.

It is this author's expectation that further 'professionalization' of news blogs in Bulgaria is likely, with more citizen journalists using this online platform to encroach upon the terrain of 'traditional' media. Whether this will change significantly the media landscape in the country remains to be seen.

A series of content analyses of Bulgarian blogs must classify comprehensively the recurring themes and topics with all due methodological rigor. This study presented briefly several common blog subjects gleaned from the literature or interviews with bloggers. Since exhaustive content analysis was beyond the scope of such a pilot research project, a lot more remains to be accomplished in this respect. Furthermore, a study of the actual – not perceived – influence of blogs seems long overdue. Similar research is conducted for various media audiences in the country, primarily for marketing purposes, but also close to elections. The absence of blog-reading audience from such surveys is inexplicable. A national representative sample would provide a better picture as to the reach and role of blogs in Bulgaria's society. This will suggest why bloggers such as the aforementioned Ivo Indzhev have achieved higher popularity than some other, probably equally talented, online authors.

Finally, a comprehensive study of the top 50 or even 100 news bloggers in Bulgaria would be a worthy research idea – and the sooner, the better. Such a project should look at their attitudes, beliefs, practices, backgrounds and related issues. Current data already exists on professional routines, problems and demographics of journalists as part of a growing research trend toward international comparative studies (e.g., Hanitzsch et al., 2010). Adding bloggers to this milieu will help us understand better the media diet that contemporary audiences in Bulgaria (and perhaps in Eastern Europe, too) consume.

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Corporate Communication in Social Media in Latvia

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Abstract. Such social media as blogs and micro-blogs, social networks, content communities, forums and wiki are becoming increasingly popular among users in Latvia. It also motivates companies to communicate in this environment. Brands create their profiles in social networks, write blogs and communicate in forums, as well as publish videos. However, crucial issue here is whether companies use social media in their communication pursuant to the specifics of this environment. Upon conducting a survey of 420 Latvian companies and in-depth interviews with social media experts, I was also able to clarify some trends in the communication of Latvian companies, which have target audiences in the social media. These research findings are significant as they show that social media enter a small country, where the communication area is comparatively new. The difficulties are enhanced by the lack of experience among communication specialists in relation to social media, as well as the inability to change their communication strategy from "creating message" to forming a dialogue, which leads to a "trial-and-error" method, when not all possibilities are employed.

Keywords: social media, corporate communication, Latvia

Introduction

European Communication Monitor, which has been created by surveying 2,209 communication experts in 43 countries, indicates that in 2011 in 39.6% respondent companies had guidelines for communication in social media in place

(and 31.8% planned to do it as early as in 2011), 33.3% used instruments for the communication among interested parties in social media (25.9% planned to start it in 2011), whereas 21.3% had introduced training courses about communication in social media (25.7% planned to do it in 2011). As regards the question about the key instruments for addressing interested parties, in 2007 only 11.5% of respondents mentioned social media compared to 40.5% in 2011. These data indicate that the role of social media in the corporate communication in Europe is growing steadily.

The task of this study is, through setting Latvia as an example, to disclose the trends and patterns characteristic of a small country with a short history in the field of communication.

Definitions of Social Media

Bernie Hogan and Anabel Quan-Haase (2010) call social media a moving target as they constantly change similarly to human habits related to their use. The authors point out that it complicates a number of research directions. For instance, in their opinion it is not possible to provide a definite answer to the question what the long-term development of social media will be like, or it is not possible to define the only and ideal way of self-representation in social media. The task of defining social media may also prove to be challenging.

Komito and Bates (2009) define social media as Internet applications, which ensure an enhanced interaction among Internet users through the user-generated content. Such content may differ and includes photos, videos and textual comments.

Palmer and Koening-Lewis (2009) characterises social media as online applications, platforms and media targeted at making the interaction, cooperation and content exchange easier. The significance of social media is associated with the possibility of interaction between the user and community, and such interaction is characterised by nonsynchronism, directness and low costs. Patti Anklam (2009) defines social media as a set of software tools and Internet applications, which ensure development of human relations and are personalised by identifying individuals by name.

As a synonym to social media, Tim O'Reilly's (2005) *Web 2.0* concept is mentioned: it combines Internet technologies*,* which envisage the user's participation in content creation and updating. For example, it includes blogs, or the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia. Such resources are also called 'user generated content' resources. For the first time, the concept *Web 2.0* was used in 2004–2005 in order to describe a new generation of Internet services. The discovery of new programming approaches also meant new opportunities, which programmers started to use to be able to offer innovative options. Internet users became

increasingly involved in Internet sites they used – in addition to visiting statistical sites, they could also take an active part in creating the website content.

In the context of social media, there is a significant concept s*ocial networking sites/ social networking platforms,* which are defined as Internet sites that facilitate social interaction through profiled user accounts (Keenan and Shiri, 2009). Social networking platforms (Draugiem.lv in Latvia or Facebook globally) enhance user opportunities to establish connections with two primary characteristics: 1) the ability to organise and demonstrate human interconnections; 2) publishing of content and activity updates (Anklam, 2009). Furthermore, social networking sites are considered to be the major operational environment in *WEB 2.0* communication (Anklam, 2010).

Evidently, the definitions by various authors describe the same resources under such concepts as social media, *WEB 2.0* and social networks. As a synonym, the concept 'new media' is also used. In this article, social media is used in a broader sense of this word, which includes *WEB 2.0* resources as user-generated content, as well as social networks, which organise user connections and simplify communication. Within the framework of this article, social media means Internet resources, which are based on user-generated content and enable organising user interaction and communication. This article will focus on such social media as blogs, social networks (e.g., Draugiem.lv, Facebook), micro blogs (Twitter), wikis (*Wikipedia*), forums and content-based communities (YouTube, Flickr).

Research and definition of corporate communication

There is an assumption that corporate communication is more art than science. Its origins stem from ancient Greece and Rome - from rhetoric. Corporate communication is considered to be an interdisciplinary academic field, which includes such sciences as anthropology, communication, language and linguistics, sociology, psychology, management and marketing. In the academic environment this concept is predominantly associated with public relations (Goodman, 1994).

In the course of time approaches to the functions and roles of corporate communication have changed, which manifests itself in different theoreticians' works. Thus, in 1974 Drucker was among the first authors, who pointed out that communication is not a means, but rather a mode of business management therefore communication should not be viewed as a supportive process, but an element of process organization. As a rule, research of marketing communication is practice-driven. In 1995, Buttle analysed 101 marketing communication texts and concluded that more than 70 texts did not quote any theoretical sources, but offered statements in line with Schramm or Shannon's and Weaver's ideas. In turn, Cheney and Christensen maintain that corporate communication has grown out of a predominantly practical context and, at a later stage, has developed a theoretical

machinery to support analysis and legitimization of professional practice. Furthermore, Christensen and Torp believe that corporate communication should focus on developing the involvement in the co-creation of communicated meanings achieving a common understanding and responsibility through communication (Hübner, 2007).

Dolphin (2000/1999) argues that corporate communication has originated from public relations. The aim of public relations is to create, develop and multiply the relations between organisations and their communities. The relations are characterised as a set of expectations shared by all parties with respect to mutual behaviour (Kim and Rader, 2010).

As a result of summarizing the most popular public relations theories of the last two decades, Botan and Taylor conclude that this period has been dominated by James Grunig's *Symmetry/Excellence Theory*, and the latest trend in public relations is a transition from functionalism to a co-creational perspective, when society is believed to be a co-creator, and the significance of establishing long-term relations with the audiences is recognised (Hazleton and Botan, 2006).

In order to understand the nuances of the concept of corporate communication, let us look into the approaches of various authors.

Argenti and Forman define *corporate communication* as a company's voice and image, which the company develops on the world stage consisting of various audiences. This field includes such components as corporate reputation, corporate advertising and advocacy, communication with employees, relations with investors, relations with the government, media relations and crisis communication. The authors call corporate communication a 'function'. In turn, *corporate communications* are defined by Argenti and Forman as communication products: memos, letters, reports, websites, speeches, press releases (Argenti, Forman, 2002).

Paul Argenti writes that corporate communication has become a new and important governmental function thanks to the development of the Internet, an increased speed of information availability, a growing public scepticism with regard to the company's ambitions and an 'attractive packaging' of information, as well as the overall company structure has become more complex. Argenti believes that, in this changing business environment, it is imperative that companies pursue a 'strategic' communication.

The author states that in companies the concept 'corporate communication' is used to describe four different aspects of communication: 1) a function, e.g., marketing, 2) a communication channel, 3) a communication process, 4) an attitude or set of beliefs. Argenti writes that all these aspects keep changing as a result of development of modern technologies. Communication becomes more dynamic, thus companies are forced to react and establish a dialogue with society (Argenti, 2006, 358.). This is the stage where social media may be useful.

Argenti emphasises that, thanks to the development of social media, the possibilities of social communication are widening. However, he points out that due to this the control over corporate communication shifts from the company management to the relevant stakeholders. In this context the author mentions that because of social media corporate communication undergoes changes, which are related not as much with instruments, as with strategies. Social media encourage the shift from the *push* to *pull* strategy, as well as help to turn the stakeholders into *company evangelists* – people who accumulate around themselves people and promote a product, service or idea among them (Argenti and Barnes, 2009).

Cees van Reil (2003) defines corporate communication as the orchestration of all instruments of the organisation's identity (communication, symbols, participants' behaviour) to build and improve the reputation of the organisation from the perspective of those groups, on whom its activity depends. According to Van Reil, the concept 'corporate communication' involves a coordinated approach to developing the organisation's communication. It should be such that communication specialists can use it for rationalising their communication activities within a centralised, coordinated framework (Van Reil and Fombrun, 2007).

As opposed to Argenti, who believes that the focus of corporate communication is the strategic planning process, Van Reil's approach to corporate communication, defined in 1992, is based on three communication platforms: 1) *management communication* – communication implemented by the management and also called the main form of the organisation's communication by the author. In this case management includes all people, who have an impact on both the internal and external stakeholders; 2) *marketing communication* – advertising, direct mail, sponsorship etc; 3) *organizational communication* - public relations, investor relations, job market communication, corporate advertising, environmental communication, internal communication (Van Reil, 1995/1992).

The author also refers to the *Mirror Function*, which requires following the development and predicting the impact on the audience. Although Van Reil's works do not contain references to social media, it is the *Mirror Function*, which becomes a significant component of corporate communication in the environment of social media as monitoring of the audience's statements and comments is an important source of planning corporate communication (Van Reil and Fombrun, 2007).

Manfred Bruhn emphasises that the majority of corporate communication theories advocate an integrated approach to various communication activities. However, he criticises the lack of focus regarding the structure of corporate communication. In 2003, Bruhn defined the integrated corporate communication as a process of organisation and planning targeted at the establishment of a single set of various sources of internal and external communication provided by the organisation. According to the author, it is the only way of ensuring a consistent appearance of the company in society (Hübner, 2007).

Bruhn does not characterise the inclusion of social media in corporate communication as a revolution of communication process emphasising that the company's strategy and profit principle are the basic principles, which still determine corporate communication in the age of social media (Dietrich, 2010).

In 2004, Cornelissen proposed his approach to corporate communication on the basis of the *functional management theory*. He defines corporate communication as a management function, which provides means for coordinating all elements of communication to build and improve a favourable reputation from the perspective of those interested groups, which the organisation depends on. The author's definition contains a new concept – 'stakeholders'. Cornelissen explains that it shows a drive towards a more definite view, when an organisation formulates several groups, which it depends on. The application of the stakeholders' concept in the context of corporate communication means that the interdependence among the company and certain groups is recognised, thus emphasising the importance of the stakeholders' support (Hübner, 2007).

Cornelissen also describes the processes of corporate communication imperative to the context of social media. Thus, if an organisation does not provide its opinion, individual stakeholder groups can quickly achieve domination in a certain communication environment creating a united front against a certain expression of the organisation's activity. Thanks to social media, this process becomes even simpler and with a potential to expand on a global scale.

The stakeholders' theory is criticised for its inability to comply with the dynamics of social relations and for the fact that it lacks important theory building elements, such as a context and causal relations, which would explain the process of creating interest and an audience. It is also pointed out that the stakeholders' theory exaggerates the role of the organisation and oversimplifies the chaotic and complex operation of the corporate environment (Karagianni and Cornelissen, 2006).

Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law's (Latour, 2005) Actor-network theory helps to minimise the shortcomings of the stakeholders' theory and tends to explain complicated networks in complicated circumstances and offers a fresh approach to studying the corporate environment. This theory recognises both the stakeholders' and non-human impact on the organisation's success emphasising that mutual relations, no matter human or non-human, are more important than actors' identity or status. According to the Actor-network theory each activity depends on various factors, such as environment, rules, other people, technologies, etc. The authors of the theory believe that people are not the only ones with the ability to act, but everything has its special role and activity – from cars to all and everyone, which/who can change something in the company.

Within this approach it is the network, not the individual, which is a unit. Furthermore, the emphasis is on the necessity of constant negotiations through the translation process recognising that the inanimate actors are equally important

elements of the corporate environment. It means that the focus is on identifying a problem and not defining an individual person or group as a stakeholder. Luoma-aho and Paloviita point out that due to these reasons the Actor-network theory is particularly valuable for the development of the stakeholders' theory as it does not try to predict consequences, but enables a multi-perspective overview of the network, as well as emphasises the significance of interpretation (Luoma-aho and Paloviita, 2010).

Social media from the perspective of the Actor-network theory allows us to analyse how media platforms (non-human) can build, facilitate and reinforce users' (living beings') communicative power, which is an important factor in the context of corporate communication.

James Grunig uses public relations as a basic concept, which he defines as communication management between an organisation and its publics. In Grunig's view public relations/communication management is a wider concept than communication techniques of particular public relations programmes, e.g., media relations or publicity. The author emphasises that public relations and communication management include planning, implementation and evaluation of the organisation's communication process. These processes refer to external and internal publics - groups, which can influence the organisation's ability to achieve their goals. At the same time the author points out that public relations/ communication management is more than communication as it also includes strategic decision-making (Grunig, 1992).

Excellence Theory in Public Relations formulated by Grunig states that public relations facilitate the organisation's efficiency by helping harmonising the organisation's goals with the strategic audiences' expectations. As part of this approach public relations are built as a high-quality, long-term process, where the public relations manager is a decision-maker in the company.

On the basis of the development of public relations paradigms, in 1980s Grunig defined four ideally typical public relations models: 1) *press agentry/ publicity model* – characterised by a one-way communication and a propagandic style of communication; 2) *two-way asymmetrical model* – studies are used to find out how to convince publics to act in the way the organisation would like them to; 3) *public-information model* – characterised by a one-way communication, when predominantly positive information about the organisation is disseminated; 4) *two-way symmetrical model* – surveys and a dialogue are used to achieve a change in attitudes and behaviour both in the organisation and among its publics (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002).

Grunig believes that social media do not change the public relations theory, but rather facilitate application of the previously formulated principles. In turn, in early 2009 David Phillips proposed his version on how, in the social media age, it is possible to interpret the four typical public relations models defined by Grunig in

1984, where *press agentry/publicity* model is called *propaganda*, *two-way asymmetrical* is called *one-way asymmetrical* without justifying these changes either theoretically or empirically and without changing the names of *public-information* and *two-way symmetrical* models (Phillips, 2009).

As a response to Phillips' interpretation, Grunig (2009) emphasises that all public relations models have their own respective social media. Thus, static websites can be used within the framework of the propaganda model, whereas the update-able websites can be used within the framework of the public-information model; blogs without the possibility to leave comments can be used within the framework of the one-way asymmetrical model, whereas open, corporate social media, such as Twitter can be characteristic of the two-way symmetrical model.

The use of Social Media in Latvia

Latvia is a country in Northern Europe with the population of about 2 million inhabitants, 61% of which use the Internet on a regular basis (at least once a week). Social networks, which are among the most visited resources of the Internet, experienced rapid growth in popularity over the last few years.

According to the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, about 60% of Latvia's population are Latvian and 27% Russian by nationality. This divides society into two communities: Russians and Latvians. Participants of these communities choose different media, including social media. For example, social network Draugiem.lv is more popular among Latvians, but social network One.lv/Odnoklassniki.ru is a popular resource for the Russians living in Latvia.

Two language communities are divided also in media space. Henrik Örnebring (2011) emphasizes the ethnic polarisation of the Latvian media landscape: Latvian-language media vs. Russian-language media. There is little overlap between these two in terms of media consumption. This trend is actual for the social media also.

The most popular online social network in Latvia is Draugiem.lv – it is used by 89% of all Internet users, or by more than one million people. The average user of Draugiem.lv visits this network 3.5 times per day. The majority of Draugiem.lv users are aged between 20-24 (14%), 15-19 (12.5%) and 25-29 (11%). On average, one user spent 31:50 minutes per day in this social network. Facebook.com is becoming more popular, but it is still not dominating with 270 00 registered users from Latvia. Twitter.com in Latvia is rather positioned as a communication tool for young adapters, highly advanced Internet and IT users and communication specialists. Slightly more than 40,000 users from Latvia are registered here. The electronic encyclopedia Wikipedia has about 34 thousand articles written in Latvian, which are viewed almost 6 thousand times every hour.

Research methodology and design

The paper employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method includes surveying and the qualitative method – structured and semi-structured interviews. In order to establish the trends of corporate communication in social media in Latvia, the author conducted a qualitative study based on data interpretation. The qualitative method enables the author to obtain a realistic picture of the subject, which cannot be obtained with statistical analysis. This method is characterised by flexible options for obtaining, analysing and interpreting information. However, the qualitative method may not be safe as respondents choose what to tell themselves. In order to reduce this risk, at the very first stage of the study the author defined research questions and respondents were asked additional questions during the interviews. Several semi-structured interviews were held with two audiences: experts in corporate communication in Latvia and people who are active users of social media and/or take an active part in creating their content (write or read blogs on a regular basis, are active participants of social networks etc.). During the interviews the specific nature characteristic of communication in social media was established; the unwritten rules, which govern this environment, were described; it was fond out for what purpose various social media are used, as well as what kind of challenges and difficulties interlocutors face.

The advantages of semi-structured interviews stem from the fact that before the interview the researcher has to formulate his aims; he can also respond to all types of situations during the interview with additional questions; similarly to informal conversations, such interviews enable the interviewer to obtain very informal answers. The disadvantages of semi-structured interviews are related to the fact that interviewing may be more time-consuming than in the case of structured interviews and one respondent's answers will not always be comparable to other respondents' answers, which demands from the researcher the use of more complicated methods of analysis and interpretation (Bertand and Hughes, 2005). In order to reduce the impact of the selected methods, the qualitative data were processed using Glaser and Strauss' Grounded theory method, which has a potential of providing a true insight into the process (Daymon and Holloway, 2002).

In order to find out the communication habits of the companies operating in Latvia, company survey was conducted. Prior to extensive surveying, pilot surveying was conducted to establish the weaknesses and introduce the required improvements and corrections.

In this Paper the focus is on companies' communication with external audiences - the existing and potential customers.

The research consists of several stages. Initially, to outline the main trends, which are related to social media and observed in social communication in Latvia, and to obtain data, which are required for surveying, 13 active social media users and

social media experts and company representatives were interviewed. In the corporate environment, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the company representatives, who are responsible for or take decisions about communication in social media. In the environment of social media users, active male and female users (who communicate in social media at least once a day) of various age with different income levels and opinions were interviewed. All respondents were guaranteed anonymity thus ensuring their openness and opinion variety.

A significant trait of the defended theory is that it stems from data interaction during the data collection period. Data analysis was started immediately after the first interview. Semi-structured interviews provide rich material for analysis. The selected method of data processing enabled the author to use only the information that is related to the research question. After each new interview a memo was created: it contained the main conclusions obtained during the interview (Charmaz, 2004), and the new data was correlated with the previous information.

After each interview data were processed, which also included coding, categorization and interpretation. Three steps of coding were used: 1) *open coding*, which includes data fragmentation by selecting information related to the research question; 2) *axial coding* – data compilation in a new way creating basic categories; 3) s*elective coding* – selection of basic categories and cross-referencing with other categories. Respondents were selected using *theoretical sampling*, which means looking for respondents with opinions that differ from the previous interviews (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). The first round of interviews was accomplished, when respondents' answers did not contain any new information. The summary of the information obtained during the first round helped to establish the latest trends related to corporate communication in social media characteristic of Latvia. Besides, the interviewees of the first round defined 11 typical tasks, which companies face in their communication in social media. These tasks were used in the company.

In order to find out company communication habits in social media, company representatives were surveyed. The data obtained from Latvia's information technology company *Lursoft* indicates that 167,383 subjects were registered in the Company and Commercial Register in 2010. Further calculations showed that with the permissible statistical error of 5% the representative company audience selection is 383. The survey audience consisted of 420 companies, out of which 53% had been established more than 10 years ago, 24% - five to ten years ago, 21% - one to five years ago and 2% - less than one year ago. The size of the surveyed companies differed: 47% were companies with 1-9 employees, 27% - 10-49 employees, 21% - 50-249 employees, 5% - more than 250 employees.

In order to provide a comprehensive picture, the representatives of various industries were involved: car sales and transport (10%), construction and real estate (7%), energy (2%), financial services (15%), information technologies (11%),

science and education (5%), medicine, pharmacology and health (5%), media, PR, printing and publishing, advertising (19%), oil products and fuel (1%), food (5%), telecommunications (3%), trade (11%), other (6%).

To provide representative data, which reflect the actual situation, it was important to survey company representatives, who take decisions about communication processes in their company. It was also emphasised at the beginning of the questionnaire. As a result, 52% of respondents were public relations managers or experts, 18% - marketing managers or experts, 13% - directors or managers and 18% - other staff members (mostly heads of various departments).

Corporate communication in Social Media in Latvia

The interviews and surveys demonstrated that social media attract the attention of Latvia's companies due to a number of reasons: 1) this environment is attracting ever growing audiences, and companies try to be there, where their audiences are; 2) communication in this environment is cheap or comparatively free, however, experts predict that with the enrichment of social media environment with corporate messages new and investment-demanding technological solutions and will be necessary to attract the audience's attention; 3) companies' presence in these media does not always depend on their own efforts – audiences talk about them in this environment even if they do not engage in pro-active communication, this it is important for the companies to perform at least social environment monitoring.

Among the surveyed companies 56% communicate in social media. The majority of them have been doing it for less than a year therefore there are no long-standing traditions yet and not enough time has passed for them to be able to draw conclusions about the long-term effects of communication in social media. This could explain why the majority of these companies are satisfied with their communication in social media.

Most frequently companies evaluate their communication success in social media by the communication quality and feedback from other users. Less common is evaluation by the size of the audience reached, which could be explained by the fact that for the present Latvia's social media are not able to ensure big audiences yet.

Despite the fact that social media are in the centre of attention and discussion of Latvia's communication experts, one cannot say that their use has increased. Thus, 8 out of 10 companies, which communicate in social media, do not create podcasts, 7 out of 10 do not write corporate blogs and have never created Wikipedia entries, 6 out of 10 do not use photo sharing sites and the corporate account at Facebook or draugiem.lv, whereas 5 out of 10 never communicate in other users' blogs.

Most often entrepreneurs set a goal of informing users/consumers through social media about the latest events in their field and their product or service. A considerable number of respondents aim at selling their product or services, but approximately half of companies, who communicate in social media, try to provide answers to users' questions and address professional journalists.

Less frequently companies turn to social media to find out users' opinion about themselves or their competitors or to steer the discussion in the desired direction. Even less frequently companies are ready to build a dialogue with users about topics, which are not related to their business, and communicate with their employees in social media, and almost never set a goal of spreading negative information about their competitors.

The style of communication in social media is less formal – shorter, more emotional, reflecting opinions of certain people. In order to provide a positive and natural reflection of a brand, product or service in social media through employees' communication, two important aspects have to be ensured: 1) a coordinated internal communication in the company thanks to which employees are satisfied with and loyal to their workplace; 2) guidelines that clearly indicate which company information may be disclosed and which not. Besides, corporate profiles are expected to offer various benefits and special opportunities to social media users. Thus, 44% of corporate Twitter account followers and 37% of Facebook and MySpace corporate account followers point it out as the main reason of following these accounts (MacManus, 2009).

There are two conditional areas in social media: 'personalised' and 'anonymous'. In the personalised area the user is recognizable – he creates his account with a photo, usually provides a short description about himself, possibly publishes personal photos. The opinion expressed here is directly associated with his personality. This category includes such resources as social networks, blogs. The anonymous area includes resources, where users are unrecognisable, for instance, Wikipedia, comments under blog entries or articles, forums. In the anonymous environment authors feels less responsible for their statements therefore here comments may be extremely negative or very positive because they have been created by representatives of interested companies or organisations or competitors. Falsified comments on companies' behalf in order to improve their image and advertise their products or to tarnish competitors' reputation is a common phenomenon in Latvia today. However, thanks to the personalised social media Internet cannot be considered an anonymous environment anymore. Furthermore, users have a higher trust in opinions published in the personalised area as here authors take responsibility about their comments and statements. For instance, the audience perceives the content published in such a highly personalised social media as blog as the actual reflection of the author's opinion. The following example was provided during the interviews: the author publishes fictional stories,

which readers consider to be the reflection of his life. It implies that audiences expect a certain type of content from a blog like from an 'online diary' – the reflection of real events and opinions. When we watch a movie, we have no doubt it is fiction, but when we read a blog, we believe it to be true revelations. Thus, companies, which would like to communicate in social media, should create the sense of openness by communicating through their official profile or their employees' profiles, not anonymous users' profiles. The fact that companies need a legal channel of addressing their users in social media is becoming increasingly clear and facilitates the establishment of adequate opportunities.

There is an interesting trend related to the selection of social media for achieving various tasks. Here as well there is distribution into the personalised and anonymous area. For such tasks as building relations and enhancing sales – informing consumers about the product or service; informing users about the latest events in the field; finding out users' opinion about the company, its product or services; informing media about the product or services; boosting sales of a product or service; building a dialogue with users about topics interesting to them and not directly related to the company's activities; answering users' questions – the most common choice is a micro blog (e.g. Twitter), which belongs to the personalised area as communication is conducted through clearly identifiable accounts. Similarly, for communication with employees a highly personalised social media – a corporate blog – will be selected. However, if the task is related to competitors or involves a certain risk for the company's image, the choice will be in favour of such channels, which allow anonymous expression of opinions, or the company name may not appear at all as information is disclosed in another user's name: in order to find out users' opinions about a competitor's company, product or service and steer other users' discussions in the desired direction, the most common choice will be an Internet forum, whereas negative information about a competitor is usually spread through other users' blogs.

The respondents also discuss the issue of the battle between the conventional and social media. On the one hand, information spread in social media is fast and efficient, and people can receive it when they want it, and not when a newspaper is released or a news programme broadcast. However, social media experts themselves admit that for the time being conventional media ensure a wider audience than social media. At the same time, in social media authors are not expected to provide an impartial reflection of the situation, which is a golden rule for professional journalists. It cannot be denied that social media take away part of the audience time from conventional media, but it is too early to maintain that the audiences have been taken away altogether. Thus in corporate communication both conventional and social media are equally interesting and topical. In this context it is important to discuss the unique possibilities social media offer to their users.

They are the feedback, a visible spread of information and the possibility to follow its flow.

The perception of information in social media is fragmentary. The user chooses when to use these media, and thanks to the content collectors he can personally select the desirable information. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that there is a constant flow of information in social media consisting of short texts, photos and videos and a deep comprehension of each message is not envisaged. It shows that the audience's habits of perceiving information are changing. This has also been proven by various studies. For instance, the Outsell Inc survey conducted in the United States of America revealed that 44% of Google News users only scan the news headings without clicking on them properly and thus do not reach the particular media websites (Outsell, 2010).

The schematic map of these aspects (see Table 1) leads to a conclusion that the role of the conventional media (press, television, radio) in corporate communication is still considerable therefore it is recommended to include social media in the overall communication strategy using both the conventional and social media in achieving the company's goals.

Table 1. The specific nature of corporate communication in the conventional and social media (author's typology)

Conventional media	vs.	Social media
Reaching a wider audience		Fast and timely dissemination of information for the target audience
Maintaining the topicality of information		Fast ageing of the message
Low/limited interactivity, feedback		High interactivity, feedback
The existence of control mechanisms		The lack of control mechanisms
Habits/rituals of use - determined by media		Ritual determined by the user
Claim to impartiality		Subjective reflection of information
Formal language, institutionalism		Less formal, personal addressing

Corporate communication in the environment of Latvia's social media is characterised by image monitoring and relationship building instead of the selling function because Latvia's media mainly address small audiences.

Due to insufficient experience Latvia's communication experts do not have ready-to-use solutions for efficient corporate communication in social media, and companies are forced to use the method of error and trial. There is also a positive trend – for now the social media environment is not crowded with corporate participants, which provides a playing field for corporate communication. In addition, it has to be kept in mind that social media serve as an extension and not a

substitution of users' social life. Thus, in social media company communication should be built around a joint, integrated communication and business management strategy.

Respondents specified the following most common mistakes made by companies in their communication with social media: ignoring of problems, misleading of audiences, punishing of employees for communication in social media, 'friendship' by force, dissemination of over-commercialised messages. Similarly, anonymous comments targeted at influencing users' opinions are also considered a mistake. Experts' experience shows that they do not work and do not bring the desired benefits.

The companies that do not communicate in social media (44% of respondents) in the majority of cases explain it by the lack of human resources, which proves the statement expressed in the interviews – communication in social media require a considerable investment of time from company representatives, and not every company can include such responsibilities in their employees' job description.

Discussion

This paper analysed the company's communication in social media targeted at their external audiences - the existing and potential customers.

This research is significant as up to now there have not been a lot of studies about the use of social media in corporate communication in Latvia. The research findings could be of interest to researchers and practitioners from other small-sized Post-Soviet States, where the field of communication is comparatively new.

The trends demonstrate that in Latvia the social media environment is still at the stage of attracting their user, which means both the opportunity for companies to reach bigger audiences and an increase in competition among corporate messages in future. At present, social media is a rather free niche for corporate communication, which companies are starting to take an advantage of. This process is slowed down by the lack of educated and experience specialists. In the long run, the need for such specialists will increase. For communication specialists it means that they have to change their communication 'philosophy' – shift from a targeted campaign-based transfer of a message to a constant informal conversation.

Social media in Latvia uphold the function of image monitoring and relationship building, not only with clients, but also with professional journalists, because in Latvia these media mainly address narrow groups. Furthermore, relationship building with audiences takes place simultaneously with the trend of using social media for an anonymous dissemination of information about own or the competitor's company. It is predicted that in the long run more and more companies will communicate in the personalised area, but the anonymous area will not disappear.

There is an interesting trend, which is related to a phenomenon, which I would call 'citizen PR' – in social media the functions of communication professionals are also performed by non-specialist employees, whose opinions about the processes in the company could be more interesting for the audience than a text prepared by a public relations professional. It creates the need of including social media in the company's communication strategy and to boost internal communication enhancing employees' loyalty, which will motivate them to communicate positive messages about the company in social media.

Latvia's companies should include a greater variety of social media in their communication tool kit, as well as harmonise the communication in these media with the communication in the conventional media so that different communication channels support each other instead of competing with each other. It is also imperative to develop the best practice standards for corporate communication in social media to ensure the shift from 'trial and error' principle to a systematised communication process.

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Cultural and Geographic Proximity in SNS.
A Comparison between Estonian, Russian-Estonian and German SNS Users

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Abstract. Social networking sites (SNS) are an emerging social phenomenon across Europe. As in many other European countries, the US-owned network Facebook has taken the lead over domestic and local SNS amongst German and Estonian SNS users. Members of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia, however, prefer SNS that originate in Russia. Based on a new model of proximity in SNS as well as on the theory of network effects, this paper aims at contributing to an understanding of the role that cultural and geographic proximity play in the choice and usage of SNS as well as of the attraction of SNS that cross cultural and geographic boundaries. Focus group interviews with German, Estonian and Russian-Estonian SNS users suggested many similarities across these groups in terms of the comparative importance of various areas of cultural and geographic proximity in SNS that the proposed model of proximity introduces. Furthermore, they suggested the attraction of SNS that have an international membership. Despite these similarities across groups, the Russian-Estonian group exhibited many differences compared to the other two groups as the Russian-speaking interviewees expressed the greatest need for cultural proximity but the lowest need for geographic proximity in SNS. The article discusses the results of the focus group interviews especially in terms of the suggested diaspora-like attitudes and behavior of the interviewed Russian-Estonians and the implied separation between the ethnic Estonians and Russian-Estonians in SNS. Understanding this inter-ethnic connectivity in SNS is more important than ever in the light of the increasing role that social media play in people's lives.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, Cultural Proximity, Estonia, Russian-Estonians

Introduction

Social networking sites (SNS) are an emerging social phenomenon across Europe. According to a study conducted by Comscore (2011), SNS were used by 84.4 % of the Internet users in Europe in 2010. In many European countries, US-owned social network Facebook has taken the lead over domestic and local networks in terms of numbers of members. By the end of 2010, Facebook reached more Internet users in 15 European markets than any other SNS (Comscore, 2011). Also in the former Soviet-Union country Estonia, Facebook has been very successful as the statistics show (e.g. Turu-uuringute AS 2011). This, however, does not account for the Russian-language minority in Estonia who are mainly post-war immigrants, accounting for 27% of the total population (ES 2011). A survey conducted by the author in 2010 revealed that the three most successful SNS amongst the ethnic Estonians were Facebook, Orkut and Rate, whereas the three most successful SNS amongst the Russian-speaking population in Estonia were Odnoklassniki, VKontakte, and Livejournal, which all originate in Russia.[1] This suggests a need for cultural proximity in their choice of SNS.

Although SNS as digital networks have the potential capacity to connect people across various cultures and geographies, they are only the means for such a 'global network society' (Castells, 2009) or 'global connectivity' (Tomlinson, 1999), and they "enact the trends described in the social structure" (Castells, 2009: 24). In fact, studies have shown that the probability of friendships and communication via SNS decreases with decreasing physical and relational distance to SNS members (e.g. Liben-Nowell, Novak, Kumar, Raghavan and Tomkins, 2005; Tillema, Dijst and Schwanen, 2010). As such, people are most likely to connect with people from their own geographic and cultural environment, somewhat negating the theory of a global connectivity through SNS.

The aim of this article is to provide a better understanding of how different cultures express a need for cultural and geographic proximity in their choice and usage of SNS. For this, the paper puts forward a new model of proximity in SNS, which introduces various areas of cultural and geographic proximity in SNS.

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[1] The online survey was conducted in fall 2010 among Estonian (N = 461), Russian-Estonian (N = 299) and German (N = 704) SNS users. The samples of participants were representative for the Internet population in Germany and Estonia in terms of age, gender and place of living according to data from the MA 2009 Online II conducted by the *Informationsdienstes der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Media-Analyse e.V. ag.ma.* in the case of Germany and the population survey *Mina, Meedia, Maailm* in the case of Estonia, which was conducted by the Institute of Journalism and Communication at the University of Tartu, Estonia, in fall 2008. Asked in which SNS they had a profile, the three most popular SNS amongst the Estonians were Facebook (42%), Orkut (25%) and Rate (13%). Amongst the Russian-language respondents it was Odnoklassniki (59%), VKontakte (33%), and Livejournal 9%.

In order to understand cultural and geographic proximity in SNS, this paper also looks at the attraction of SNS, whose existing membership crosses cultural and geographic boundaries. Whereas some SNS only target users in specific countries, others, such as Facebook, for instance, have an international membership base. Similarly, the SNS Odnoklassniki is very popular amongst Russian-language SNS users in post-Soviet states.[2] Due to geographical and/or cultural openness, they have the potential to reach a membership base that is larger than any local or domestic SNS could potentially reach. With their size, these SNS attract users through network effects, as a large network is more valuable to any user than a small one. This paper will further elaborate on the idea of network effects of large SNS that cross cultural and/or geographic boundaries.

For both the proposed model of proximity in SNS, as well as the theory of network effects, this paper will introduce an operationalization, which was applied in focus group interviews with Estonian, Russian-speaking Estonian, and German SNS users. The paper will report on the results of these interviews, which aimed at retrieving an initial understanding of the comparative importance of various areas of the suggested model of proximity, as well as elements of the attraction of network effects of SNS that cross cultural and/or geographic boundaries. This developed both an understanding of possible similarities across these different cultures, which may indicate a general attitude towards proximity in SNS by users, as well as a first understanding of differences across the three cultural groups that were part of the study.

User statistics suggest differences between the Estonian SNS users and the Russian-Estonian[3] SNS users in terms of the role that geographic and cultural proximity play in their choice of SNS. With the increasing role that SNS play in people's lives, such different tendencies may become increasingly important in the future and they indicate that Estonia may, in fact, be one country with two societies (Maimone, 2004).

Additionally, German SNS users were included into the study as a reference group. As with Estonian SNS users, but differently from Russian-speaking SNS users in Estonia, German SNS users have increasingly started to set up profiles with Facebook at the cost of domestic SNS, resulting in Facebook becoming the preferred network among these users.[4] This suggests similar tendencies amongst

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[2] This article underlies the idea that language and culture are very closely connected (Whorf, 1964), and that language is the most clearly recognized part of culture (Agar, 1994).

[3] Though not all members of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia have an Estonian citizenship, this paper uses the term Russian-Estonian as a convenient way to distinguish between the ethnic Estonians and the members of the Russian-language minority in Estonia.

[4] The above mentioned survey conducted by the author in fall 2010 proved that the three most popular SNS amongst German SNS users were Facebook, in which 49% of the participants of the survey had a profile, StudiVZ (26%) and Xing (25%). An earlier study by The Nielsen Company in summer

German and Estonian SNS users, of which the latter have undergone a 'return to Europe discourse' and see themselves part of the West. Furthermore, it represents a contrast to the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia, which are seen as part of the East by ethnic Estonians (Aalto, 2003).

Introducing a new model of proximity in SNS

'Proximity' is a term widely used in the context of cross-cultural media trade where the concept of 'cultural proximity', first put forward by Straubhaar (1991), argues that audiences prefer media that has been produced in their own cultural environment over media that has been produced elsewhere.[5] According to the concept of cultural proximity, media content is culturally proximate to the audience when it, for instance, portrays people that look, speak and behave the same as the target audience, depicting similar cultural values and attitudes.

This article puts forward a modification of the concept of cultural proximity to be applied in the context of SNS. It suggests two main adaptations. Firstly, SNS that aim to attract people across cultures and countries differ greatly from media content that travels across cultures and countries inasmuch asthe content in SNS is generated by the users themselves. Hence, a model of proximity in SNS needs to take this into consideration. Secondly, this article suggests considering both cultural and geographic proximity in SNS. Such a differentiation between cultural and geographic proximity becomes clear when one looks at SNS users in Estonia where members of the Russian-language minority may express a need for cultural proximity in their choice of SNS from Russia but express a need for geographic proximity by having many contacts in their networks that live in Estonia.

With these two adaptations, the model of proximity in SNS sees both cultural and geographic proximity in two parts of a SNS: one which it offers to its users, and the other one which users self-create. Part one of a SNS is the 'framework' of a SNS, i.e. what is being offered to its users, and here proximity may be offered. Proximity to a user's cultural or geographic belonging is offered, 1) when the SNS carries a brand image associated with the user's culture or geographic region; 2) when it is owned by a company from the user's culture or geographic region; 3) when the layout design resembles the style of the culture or region; 4) when the usability of the SNS is what people in a culture or geographic region are used to or like, 5) when it offers the user to use the SNS in his or her own language; 6) when its membership base consists of a large number of people from the user's culture or

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2010 (Nielsen 2010) found that the three most popular networks were Facebook, VZNetzwerke (StudiVZ, meinVZ, schülerVZ) and wer-kennt-wen.
[5] Later works (e.g. Olson, 1999; Iwabuchi, 2002; Straubhaar, 2007; Rohn, 2010, 2011) have taken the concept of cultural proximity further in order to do justice to the complexity of the audience demand that also sees a great amount of internationally successful media.

geographic region; and 7) when the advertising that is being shown in the SNS is in the user's language and offers products and services from the user's cultural and economic environment.

Part two of SNS is the 'filling' of such 'framework' by its members, i.e. it is the user-generated content. Whereas a SNS may or may not offer proximity to a user's cultural and geographic belonging through its 'framework', the 'filling' of the framework by the user is where the user him- or herself may express a need for proximity. Here, a user may express a need for proximity 1) when he or she uses the SNS in the language version of his own language, 2) when he or she communicates with his or her contacts in his or her own language, 3) when he or she is connected with people from his or her geographic and cultural environment, and 4) when he or she forwards links to online media content from his or her geographic or cultural environment.

In addition to these two parts of a SNS, in which proximity may be offered to or self-created by users, users may also express a need for proximity through their choice of SNS. A SNS user of the Russian minority in Estonia may, for instance, express a need for cultural proximity in SNS by choosing a SNS from Russia; and a German SNS user who lives in Berlin may, for instance, express a need for geographic proximity in SNS by choosing a SNS from Berlin.

SNS and the attraction of network effects

The theory of network effects stems from economic theory, and it means that the value of a network depends upon the number of its users. The more users a network has, the higher its value is to each user (Rohlfs, 1974). The theory of network effects has been widely applied to the context of the development of network infrastructure (e.g. Katz and Shapiro, 1986; David and Greenstein, 1990; DiMaggio and Cohen, 2005). The classic example of network effects is that of a fax machine. With an increasing number of people who have a fax machine, having a fax machine becomes increasingly valuable to any person.

In contrast to the concept of cultural proximity, the theory of network effects originates from the context of networks and, therefore, needed no modification for the purpose of this study. Due to network effects, the more members a SNS has, the more attractive it is for potential new members.

Any SNS that attracts an international membership base can attract large numbers of users, more than any local or domestic one can. Although, not all members of a SNS may be relevant to a user, according to Reed's Law (Reed, 2001), the utility of a social network scales exponentially with the size of the network, even if the direct number of contacts is very small.

Since the focus of the focus group interviews was on network effects of SNS that attract users across cultures and places, elements of network effects were seen

in 1) a large, international membership base, and 2) international language version offered by the SNS. Latter serves as an indication that a network has the ambition to reach large numbers of international users.

Previous research on proximity and network effects in the context of SNS

The model of proximity in SNS, as it is suggested in this article, is new in its kind and, therefore, has not been applied to research projects. Yet, there are previous studies that have looked at the cross-cultural or international aspects with regard to SNS choice and usage. Studies have, for instance, dealt with cross-cultural differences in the use of and the motivations for using SNS (e.g. Kim, Dongyoung and Sejung, 2011), or the role of SNS in the context of negotiating cultural belonging (e.g. Takashi, 2010). Some studies have even looked at individual areas of the proposed model of proximity in SNS. Many of these have looked at users' contact lists and the use of language in SNS. Liben-Nowell et al. (2005) for instance, showed that only one third of the friendships in SNS are independent of geography. Herring et al. (2007) found that the larger a language community is, the more its members also use their own language in SNS. Other studies have looked into cultural differences in the preferences towards web design elements, though here the results are very contradicting. While Gevorgyan and Manucharova (2009) and Baack and Singh (2007) found that there, indeed, were differences in how people from different cultures perceive the same web design, other studies, such as by Hermans and Shanahan (2002) and Dou, Yoo and Liangyu (2003), found that cultural factors did not impact Internet user's perception of web sites.

What has been missing in terms of research on proximity in SNS is research that has looked at all of the suggested areas of cultural and geographic proximity in a single research project. Such a study also allows for identifying the relative importance of these areas in the choice and usage of SNS.

In terms of research that has looked at network effects of SNS, this is manifold. There has been research that has referred to the power of network effects of large, international SNS (e.g. Ahn, 2009; Kwon, 2011). Cusumano (2011), for instance, argues that because of network effects, a small number of SNS will attract most of the users. However, there has not been research as of now that has put the power of network effects of international SNS in relation to a possible need for cultural and geographic proximity by SNS users.

By looking at both a possible demand for cultural and geographic proximity, as well as the power of network effects of SNS that cross cultural and/or geographic borders and by applying these two forces that may influence SNS choice and usage to focus group interviews with users of a post-communist

country, this article aims at understanding the role that cultural and geographic proximity plays in the context of today's international phenomenon of SNS. Applying the idea of cultural and geographic proximity to three very different groups of SNS users in Europe promises to contribute to the understanding of social reality in Europe in terms of SNS usage.

Methodology

The research project, which this paper reports about, included focus group interviews with German and Estonian SNS users as well as with SNS of the Russian-language minority in Estonia that were conducted in April and May 2010. The aim of these interviews was to identify possible attitudes towards the various areas of the proposed model of proximity in SNS and the suggested elements of network effects of SNS that cross cultural and/or geographic boundaries and to gain an understanding of possible differences between the groups, in terms of their need for cultural or geographic proximity in SNS.

The Estonian group consisted of eight participants and the Russian-language group of seven participants. The participants of both groups were recruited through random selection from participants who in a previous study[6] had answered that they had a profile in a SNS. The eight German participants were recruited through announcements in local newspapers in the state of Thuringia.

The groups were nearly balanced in terms of gender, with 10 female and 13 male participants. The age of all 23 participants ranged from 19-39, and their occupations were very diverse, ranging from high school and university students, a marketing consultant to a stay-home mother, suggesting a great diversity of attitudes and behaviour in regard to SNS. All three interviews were conducted in the participants' mother tongues,[7] they were recorded, transcribed and then analyzed by identifying participants' statements regarding the various suggested areas of proximity and elements of network effects.

The interviews were conducted through structured protocol, in which the participants were asked about their choice of SNS and their thoughts about the various suggested areas of proximity in SNS as well as the suggested elements of network effects. Thus, the questions regarding a possible need for proximity included questions why the focus group interview subjects had chosen to use a particular SNS over another and whether their choice was influenced by a need for

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[6] The representative population survey *Mina, Meedia, Maailm* (Me, the Media, the World), which served as a basis for recruitment, was conducted in fall 2008. It is a study on the media usage in Estonia that is conducted every four years by the Institute of Journalism and Communication at the University of Tartu, Estonia.

[7] The author thanks Valeria Jakobson for moderating the Russian-language focus group and Indrek Ibrus for moderating the Estonian-language focus group.

cultural or geographic proximity that the SNS offered in its 'framework', i.e. through its brand image, ownership, layout and usability, language versions, existing membership base, or advertising. In terms of the 'filling' of the 'framework', the interviewees were asked which language versions they used when browsing their chosen SNS, how culturally and geographically diverse their lists of contacts in their SNS were, what language they communicated in with their contacts in their SNS, and how culturally and geographically proximate online media content was which they had referred to their SNS contacts by posting links to such content in the network. Regarding the possible attraction of the network effects of SNS that cross cultural and geographic boarders, the participants were asked whether they thought that if a SNS offered international language versions and had an international membership base that this would make this SNS more attractive to them.

The groups of interviewees were not representative for SNS users in the three cultural groups, and the small number of focus group participants does not allow for general statements about SNS users in Estonia and Germany. However, it was not the research project's intention to derive to such universal statements. Instead, the aim was to introduce the concepts of proximity and network effects in the context of the international success of SNS and to provide an initial understanding, through the focus group interviews, about the relative importance of the various areas of proximity and elements of network effects; findings that may be applied in future cross-cultural studies on SNS usage.

Although the focus groups included three different cultural groups, and although participants were diverse in terms of socio-demographic criteria, the results of the interviews showed many similarities in terms of the participants' attitudes towards the various areas of proximity and elements of network effects both across and within groups. The differences, however, were greatest between the Russian-language group, on one hand, and the other two groups, on the other hand.

Estonia and Germany as case countries

Estonia and Germany were chosen as case countries because of their differences, which increases the probability that findings in both countries may have universal character. Germany with a population of nearly 82 million and Estonia with 1.3 million people provide for very different environments, which suggested a diversity of attitudes towards proximity and network effects. Whereas German users can choose from a great number of domestic and local SNS, there are only very few SNS of Estonian origin. Yet, statistics show similarities between the Estonian and German SNS users as Facebook has become more popular than any domestic network with users in both cultures. This suggests the power of network effects of a SNS that crosses cultural and geographic boundaries.

Estonia is, furthermore, interesting for a study on cultural differences in the choice and usage of SNS as it allows the study of two different cultures within one country. The large Russian-language community in Estonia allows for a good differentiation between cultural proximity and geographic proximity. In fact, the lack of connectivity between the Russian-language community and the Estonian community has been of great concern in recent years, and the division between Estonians and Russian-Estonians has been studied intensively (e.g. Lauristin, Vihalemm, Rosengren and Weibull, 1997; Lauristin and Heidmets, 2000). The situation between the ethnic Estonians and Russian-Estonians has a complicated historical background. The period of the Soviet control (1944−1991) can be seen as an imperial colonization by the ethnic Estonians and most Russian-Estonians settled in Estonia in the course of coerced immigration by Soviet authorities during this time (Vihalemm and Kalmus, 2009). Studies have shown that many Estonians fear that including Russian-Estonians as full members of the Estonian society may threaten Estonian independence or weaken Estonian culture (Kruusvall, 2000; Hallik, 2000). Russian-Estonians, on the other hand, experience objective and subjective social exclusion and feel that ethnic Estonians have better opportunities for education and employment, and for participating in local and political community life (Vihalemm and Kalmus, 2009). On the other hand, the strong identification with the Russian culture among the Russian-language community is reflected in, for instance, their having their own Russian-language schools and media in Estonia. Furthermore, the majority of Russian Estonians are oriented to Russian media (Vihalemm, 2006). The preference for Russian SNS by the Russian-language SNS users in Estonia suggests that, for the Russian minority in Estonia, cultural proximity in SNS plays a greater role than geographic proximity.

The comparison between the results of the interviews with the Estonian and the Russian-Estonian SNS users promises to provide an insight into a possible relationship between the two main strata in Estonian society as a country of the former Soviet Union. The comparison with the findings of the German focus group interview, on the other hand, promises to provide an insight into how the SNS preferences of the Estonian and Russian-Estonian SNS users may compare to the preferences of SNS users in a central European country. This, again, promises to provide for a further understanding of the two main strata in Estonian society.

Results

Offered proximity in the 'framework' of SNS

Although both the statistics and the focus group interviews have shown that the choice of SNS differs across the three cultural groups, which is most obvious between the Russian-Estonian SNS users on one hand, and the Estonian and

German SNS on the other hand, the focus group interviews suggested that hardly any of the proposed areas of proximity in the 'framework' of the SNS play a role in the users' choice for a SNS.

In all three focus group interviews, the participants agreed that the brand image of the SNS, its layout and usability, or the visible advertising did not play a role in their choice of SNS, and they did not express a preference for SNS that reflected a cultural or geographic proximity in these areas.

In terms of a possible brand image that reflected the users' culture or country, participants in all three groups agreed that they did not think that any SNS carried any brand image. A German interviewee, for instance, said: "This is not like McDonald's and Burger King where one may say: 'I only eat at Burger King.' It is not like that ... It is not a quality or a commodity in itself, which is sold to you… One can stay in touch with a person and write a message. And the meaning and importance of this message is still upon oneself."

Regarding the design and usability of a SNS, the interviewees in the Estonian group agreed with one of the participants who stated that the Estonian SNS Rate was very childish compared to Facebook, which was seen as something negative. The German group suggested that the preference for a design or usability did not even influence the choice. Thus, many in the group stated that they preferred the design of the German SNS StudiVZ over that of Facebook, though they had left this network in favor of Facebook as this was where an increasing number of their friends moved to. One German interviewee stated that she liked US-owned network MySpace best because she could design her own profile, altering the layout to her tastes.

In terms of advertisements that appear in the networks, all three focus group interviews suggested that users do not pay much attention to them and that such advertisements did not represent an area where proximity was wished for. As an Estonian participant said, "I do not notice ads there. This is not what I focus on when I am in a SNS. When you go to a network, then you focus on your people, on the communication with them."

In contrast to brand image, design and usability, as well as advertisements, the focus groups' responses to a possible need for proximity in terms of the company that owned the SNS they used were not that uniform. Though most of the interviewees in all three groups stated that they did not care where the company came from that owned the SNS they used, and that it did not make a SNS more attractive to them if it was owned by a company that originated in their country or from their culture, two participants in the Estonian group stated they would not set up a profile in a Russian SNS as they did not like anything Russian. Though this response may not represent the attitude of the majority of Estonian SNS, it does suggest some sort of resentment towards the Russian culture due to the Russian occupation, which may be reflected in users' choices. However, it was not

suggested within the interviews that SNS users preferred to use SNS that were owned by companies from their own country or culture only.

Whereas brand image, usability and layout, advertising, and ownership of a SNS did not appear to present areas for a demand for proximity in SNS, the interviews suggested that the existing membership base that a SNS offered to its users did. In all three groups, participants agreed that if there were many people from their own culture or place in a SNS that this would make the SNS more attractive to them. After all, they all wanted to connect with people from their own cultural and geographic environment in the SNS.

Another area for which the focus group interviews suggested that proximity was needed was the language version that a SNS offered to its users. In contrast to the existing membership base, however, this appeared to be the case only for the Russian-language participants. The German and Estonian interviewees stated that it did not make a SNS more attractive to them if it offered its service in their native tongues, as one German interviewee said: "As long as the network offers a language I know, it is fine with me, so German or English." All of the Russian-language interviewees, on the other hand, agreed with one of the participants who said: "Of course, we use SNS that are in Russian."

Expressed proximity in the 'filling' of the SNS

Whereas the interviews suggested that users in all three case cultures did not value SNS higher if they offered proximity through their 'framework' – with the exception of the existing membership base – the interviews proposed that the users through the 'filling' of such 'frameworks' do, in fact, express a high degree of cultural and geographic proximity, though the amount to which such proximity was expressed differed across the focus groups as well as for the suggested areas of proximity in the 'filling' of SNS.

In terms of the language versions the interviewees reported to use, for instance, the Russian-language participants expressed the highest proximity to their culture, as they all stated to use their SNS in the Russian language only. Some of the Estonian as well as German interviewees, on the other hand, said that they used their favorite SNS, Facebook, in its English-language version. The reason for this was, as they said, that the Estonian and German versions of Facebook were poorly translated and that they wanted to use the original language of the network in which it was developed. As the Russian-language participants all used networks that originated in Russia, this was not an issue to them.

In terms of the contact lists they maintained in the SNS, many of the Estonian and German interviewees said that they were connected with a lot of people from different countries but that the extent of how international their contact lists were depended on the particular SNS. In fact, they used different SNS for different

degrees of cross-cultural and cross-geographic openness of their contact lists. Many of the Germans said that they used local networks for staying in touch with people from their home town and the German national network SNS for staying in touch with people with whom they studied. With their international friends, they were connected in Facebook. The focus group interviews suggested a similar division of networks by the Estonians where many stated that they used Orkut and Rate for Estonian contacts and Facebook for staying in touch with international contacts, though they did not have local SNS for regional friends due to the small size of the country. Both German and Estonian interviewees argued that the amount of time they spent on Facebook had been increasing at the cost of the amount of time that they spent in other networks, as more and more of their national friends had also joined Facebook. The Russian-language group suggested for a quite different proximity in their lists of contacts. Thus, they did not report about the same division of networks in terms of the proximity of their contacts. They mainly used the Russian networks, in which they reported to have mostly Russian-language contacts, though many of them lived outside of Estonia. The reported connectivity with other Russian Diasporas around the world suggested for a great extent of cultural proximity but a lower extent of geographic proximity in their list of contacts. Indeed, the focus group interviews suggested a very low connectivity between the Estonian and Russian-Estonian population in SNS, for which language barriers were reported to be the main reason.

Unsurprisingly, the more connected participants were from across different cultures, the more they said they used the English language when communicating in their SNS, which was by far more common among the Estonian and German participants than the Russian-language participants. In fact, the only Russian-language focus group participant who reported to also use English when communicating in a SNS said that he sometimes wrote in English to a Russian friend who lived in the USA as a way of learning the language. Another Russian-Estonian interviewee said: "I would like to use other languages. But as Russian is the mother tongue of all the people I communicate with in my networks, I only use Russian." When posting on their own profiles, both Estonians and Germans participants reported that they posted in their mother tongue only if they wanted only people from their country to understand the message. As an Estonian participant stated, "When I want information to go out just for Estonians, then I post in Estonian. Otherwise, I post in English."

Almost all of the participants of the interviews had recommended online media content to their contacts in their SNS through posting links to such content before. When doing this, they almost entirely posted links to media in their own language and from the country they lived in. Such geographic proximity in the forwarded media seemed to be especially obvious with news media that the participants said to have forwarded, and it was even common among the Russian-

speaking participants who reported to often forward news articles by Russian-language, Estonian media in order to inform their contacts outside of the country on current issues in Estonia. None of the Russian-language interviewees said they had ever forwarded Estonian-language media in their SNS, and one participant said: "Estonian-language media is really not part of our lives." In contrast to their Estonian and Russian-language counterparts, many of the German interviewees stated that they sometimes forwarded links to local or regional newspapers, which can be explained with the more prominent role of local and regional newspapers in Germany compared to Estonia, where national newspapers play a more important role. Although the interviewees suggested a great extent of cultural as well as geographic proximity in the practice of forwarding online media content in SNS, one Estonian interviewee said that he did not post links to Estonian media, and especially not to Estonian newspapers, because he did not want to bore his Estonian contacts with content they had already read themselves. Referring to the rather small media landscape in Estonia he said, "Estonia media is in some ways boring to share because we have all read it anyways."

The power of network effects of SNS that attract users across cultures and countries

As statistics show (e.g. Turu-uuringute AS, 2011, Nielsen, 2010), most of the German, Estonian and Russian-Estonian SNS use large SNS that originate outside of their country, such as Facebook from the US and Odnoklassniki from Russia. These SNS attract a membership base across countries and they potentially reach more people than any SNS could that only targets within national boundaries. Thus, the increasing success of Facebook among Germans and Estonians, which has overtaken domestic networks, such as StudiVZ and Rate, and the popularity of Odnoklassniki among Russian-Estonians suggest the power of network effects of SNS with an international membership base.

In fact, in all three focus group interviews, participants reported that if a SNS had people from other countries amongst its users, this would make the SNS more attractive to them. An Estonian participant, for instance, said: "What prevents me from having an account in Rate is its pure Estonian environment." Likewise, many Estonian interviewees reported that they had left US-owned Orkut in favor of Facebook, because within Europe, Orkut was only popular in Estonia. In the German focus group, many reported that the reason why they had left the German SNS StudiVZ in favor of Facebook was because StudiVZ offered its service only in the German language, making it difficult for non-German speakers to join. As one interviewee said, "Sooner or later, you meet someone from another country with whom you want to stay in touch with. Or your friends do. Then you switch to Facebook, because it is international."

The big differences among the three focus group interviews were, however, that Estonian and German SNS users regarded the fact that a SNS offered different language versions, or at least an English language version, as a prerequisite for an international membership base, whereas the interviewees in the Russian-language group found it sufficient if the network offered its service in Russian as their international contacts were most of all, if not exclusively, Russian native speakers across countries.

Conclusions and Discussion

This article was aimed at contributing to an understanding of how different cultures express a need for cultural and geographic proximity in their choice and usage of SNS. For this, the article put forward a new model of proximity in SNS that includes various areas of cultural and geographic proximity in the 'framework' that the SNS offers to its users (brand image, ownership, layout and usability, language versions offered, existing membership base, advertising shown) and in the 'filling' of such 'framework' by the users themselves (choice of language version offered, use of language in communication with other SNS members, contact lists, practice of forwarding media content). Furthermore, the article put the need for cultural and geographic proximity in contrast to the attraction of international SNS that cross cultural and/or geographic boundaries.

The article applied the ideas of cultural and geographic proximity as well as network effects of international SNS to focus group interviews with Estonian, Russian-Estonian and Germans SNS users whose aim was to get a first understanding of the role that proximity and network effects play in the choice and usage of SNS.

The participants of the focus group interviews were small in number and not representative for SNS users in the three cultures. However, they were very diverse in terms of socio-democratic criteria and the fact that the research project included SNS users from three different cultures suggested a great diversity in terms of attitudes towards and behavior in SNS. Yet, the interviews showed many similarities across the three groups.

Thus, the focus groups suggested that cultural and geographic proximity in the offered 'framework' of a SNS is not very important to its users, with the exception of the existing membership base a SNS offers. In contrast, the interviews suggested that users across cultures express cultural and geographic proximity in the 'filling' of the SNS. This was most obvious in terms of the content participants reported to have recommended to their SNS contacts.

The interviews also suggested that a large, international membership base in a SNS makes this network more attractive to potential users compared to local and domestic ones. For this reason, German and Estonian interviewees reported to prefer

Facebook over StudiVZ and Rate, respectively, and the Russian Estonian interviewees used Russian SNS with an international, Russian-speaking membership. An international membership provides for a reassurance that no change of network is required, if a user or his or her friends, whom s/he would want to follow to a new SNS, ever wanted to connect with people from different countries. This reassurance is important as it can be assumed that users are very reluctant to leave years of accumulated connections and content behind.

Findings that SNS users are much more likely to connect with users from their cultural and geographic environment (e.g. Liben-Nowell et al., 2005) are no contradiction to the attraction of SNS that cross cultural and geographic boundaries since it lies in the nature of SNS that they allow users to self-create as much proximity as they wish, no matter how culturally and/or geographically open the networks are.

Despite these similarities of attitudes regarding cultural and geographic proximity and the power of network effects that were expressed both within and across groups, the three focus groups made obvious differences across groups. Whilst the German and Estonian groups showed many similarities, the Russian-Estonian group exhibited many differences to the other two groups, which is in line with recent concerns of a division of the population of Estonia (see also Vihalemm and Kalmus, 2009).

The Russian-Estonian interviewees expressed the greatest need for cultural proximity but the lowest need for geographic proximity in SNS, which was indicated by their choice of Russian-language SNS, that originate from Russia, and their strong connectivity with Russian-speaking SNS users outside of Estonia.

Whereas many German and Estonian interviewees were also happy to use SNS that provided their services in English only, and they even all agreed that if a SNS only offered its service in their mother tongue then this was a disadvantage of this particular SNS, it was much more important to the Russian-speaking interviewees that the SNS they used offered a Russian-language version. Furthermore, most of the interviewees said they used only Russian when communicating with their contacts in SNS. This is in line with previous studies (e.g. Herring, 2007) that suggest that the larger a language community is, the more its members use its own language in SNS. The expressed preference for the Russian language by the Russian-Estonian participants – especially compared to the lack of such strong preference for their mother tongue expressed by the German interviewees who also have a rather large language community – suggests that the Russian culture is very important to the Russian-speaking SNS users in Estonia.

It may be debated whether the Russian-Estonians are a true diaspora, though they exhibit the basic features of a diaspora that most scholars agree upon. Thus, there is also a Russian diaspora in other countries other than Estonia, there is some relationship to a homeland, they are self-aware of their group's identity, and they

have lived outside Russia for at least two generations (Butler, 2001: 192). However, Russian-Estonians have their own media and schools in Estonia. Furthermore, it is possible to organize one's life in Estonia with the knowledge of the Russian language only. Thus, Russian-Estonians are, despite their subjective and objective feeling of social exclusion, in a situation not many diaspora enjoy. No matter if one regards the Russian-language population in Estonia as a diaspora or not, the great need for cultural proximity but lower need for geographic proximity in SNS that the interviewees indicated, suggests diaspora-like attitudes and behavior, which, if further studied may contribute to existing elaborations on cultural identity of the diaspora and communicative networks (e.g. Brinkerhoff, 2009; Hepp, Bozdag and Suna, 2011).

The differences between the Russian-Estonians and ethnic Estonians in terms of SNS choice and usage that the focus group interviews suggested, seem to show a division of post-communist Estonia. This calls for further investigation especially in the light of studies that have shown that younger Russian-Estonians, in fact, do identify themselves more often with the Estonian state and with other Russian-Estonians than with Russia as well as with Russians from Russia (Vihalemm and Masso, 2000; Kirch, Kirch, Rimm and Tuisk, 1997). After all, it is mainly the younger generation that uses SNS. However, the separation in SNS and the increasing identification with Estonia by Russian-Estonians may not represent a contradiction. But with the increasing role that SNS play in people's lives, a separation between ethnic Estonians and Russian-Estonians in their use of SNS may indicate that the division between these two strata of the Estonian society may strengthen and persist in the future and that the challenges for an inter-ethnic integration may grow. This article aims to be an impetus for future research on this topic.

Acknowledgement

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Post-mediality versus Global-mediality.
About Media and Community Media

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Abstract. The concept of the media has been redefined many times, the medial interpretation of postmediality is only a critique of existing media-approaches and actuality. The concept of media is hardly going to disappear, its use has become increasingly popular, and the range of interpretation has become wider, the Media Studies brings together more and more sciences; it is not a limit science, but a cumulative science.

In W. J.T. Mitchell's approach, the media is more than a medium, the media is a relation, there is no pure media, and all media are mixed. Breaking down the idea of the mixed media, we could make parallels/contrasts between the concept of totalmediality and the concept of postmediality. Postmediality sees a way in the passing by overtaking of the concept of media (Manovich) in esthetics, visual theory, art theory, media theory, but perhaps most of all the media concept should be sought as it is, just a different type of media use which has become commonplace in the digital-galaxy. Totalmediality is trying to point out the use of new media, and beyond this to the open media borders, overlappings, while the media is not just carrier material but also form.

The study treats totalmediality as theoretical possibility for overcoming postmediality in Mitchell's interpretation of media and emphasizing the dominance of visuality in the community media.

Keywords: media, postmedia, totalmedia, social media, community media, image, image theory

Introduction

My concept of media is as St. Augustine's (Augustinus, 2000: 25) concept of time: if not asked, I know, if asked, I do not know. The concept of media occupies a prominent place in everyday usage, not only as a technical term, but also as a very convenient collective noun which denominates anything that is in some kind of connection with the electronic media, TV, Video, computer, often specifically used for the electronically transmitted information, a digital message or a digital image. We have long forgotten the basic meaning of media, which simply means mediation, mediating regardless of the how of the mediator and the medium.

The difference between the terms media and medium can cause confusion: referring to media, we think of some technical, mostly mass media phenomenon or electronic media, while we relate the term medium to the intermediary subject,[1] all this with a sense of Wittgensteinian language games, as a result of meaning-fossils ossified in language use.[2]

Media – as bottle

The postmediality sees the concept of media as outdated, useless and obsolete in esthetics, visual theory, art theory, media theory, but perhaps most of all the media concept should be sought as it is, just a different type of media use which has become commonplace in the digital-galaxy. If we consider media as purely information vehicle, it is inevitable to think according to Umberto Eco's (1987) linear model, where the transmitter, receiver and message are the cornerstones of the mediation. This is a very straightforward task-action line, it requires any element of the flowchart for axiomatic reasons only. However, if we take into account any media – and there is no use to limit it to arts in order to see it – the receiver always takes or does not take the message in a hypothetical, aleatory, random and very undeterminable way.

McLuhan (1964) considered media as the extension of the human body and spirit. We can see that the media is always a replacement, a supplement, aid, which is useful and used for reaching a special goal, resulting even in joy, catharsis, but also in manipulation and vulnerability. It seems that it would be more fortunate if we did not differentiate between the receiver and transmitter, but simply refer to users and focus on the how of media usage, instead of the identity of the transmitter

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[1] The term *medium* is usually used to describe a person who has some kind of intermediary role, the general meaning of the word is related to spirituality, angels, spirits, mediators.
[2] In fact, we are talking about the same term: the Latin medium in the singular and the English media in the plural version have gained different meanings in Hungarian.

and the receiver or the infiltrated noise, as we can never talk about a perfect receiver, a perfect transmitter or a perfectly delivered message.

The media is just like a message in a bottle, most of the time one has to take into account the time difference, a book is also information in a bottle, written 120 years ago. At this point it is important to talk about the intermediate processes of mediatisation as well, since the book was published just two years ago, the content has not changed, the media format is the same, as the text remained, but it appeared in an altered medial environment since we are not reading the writer's manuscript, but a processed, different material, a printed book. The intermediate mediatisation, media/medium exchange, cannot be considered a negative phenomenon, as the content of the text remained; the text has not been damaged; only the traveler has been altered.

Certainly, the reader's attitude changes, but this is only a frame problem, like lighting or temperature in the reader's room; let us not pursue the line with the reader's wool socks through his/her biologist diploma, recalling his/her upbringing, education and the multitude of childhood experiences.

Media co-exist, not specifically in the context of multimediality, but as each others' aids, building, forming each other, not merely co-existing but generating, creating, complementing, becoming part of each other. When we see a theatrical performance, we usually meet a complex including the written text as well as the transmission, actualization of a dramatic work. We get into indirect contact with the written text together with the acting, the living, spoken word, the directorial frame, the background. We cannot see the initial medial presence, but it is reflected in several different media: the actor, the theater, objects, the set, costumes, music and human voice.

The media acts as a bottle that stores the message, the lucky users who encounter it, have access to the stored content.

The medial environment of films

The film is like a large cauldron, everything that is seen[3] can somehow be transferred to film, made into a film. Most media have a visual component, so they can obviously be displayed as film in film surroundings: the written text, the spoken word, the painting, the photograph, the happening, the theatrical performance, the performance, video art, and even the film itself may be subject of the film, so we are dealing with an exponential medium. Self-reflexive,[4] theoretical, visual creations, the meta-images like to use this opportunity, this process of exponentiation. When I consider the film as media, I do not think of a

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[3] And similarly, everything that cannot be seen can also be made into a film.
[4] Films by Greenaway, Godard, Fellini

roll of film, the digital vehicle, the binary system, which helps it reach me or the facility of satellite technology which provides the basis of television broadcasting; I consider the film as media primarily because it provides a cinematic spectacle, regardless of whether it has been shot within real circumstances, found-footage film or through computer manipulation of the image, regardless of watching it at the movie theatre, on VCR, TV or computer, the movie-experience as sight and visual appearance remains the same, the material vehicle, which allows the film experience, is only the framework. At this point, the term media should definitely be differentiated from that of the technical vehicle, because a photo is a photo regardless of the fact that it is hanging on the wall, I see it in the newspaper or on the screen of a digital camera. The written text is a written text as a medium, even when I read the book, see it on an electronic board or read it as a subtitle.

In fact, there are two levels of media: media as technical capability, framework (in the case of films: computer, movie screen, movie equipment, video equipment, TV, TV transmitter, palm, advertising space, mobile phone, etc.) and the displaying form of the carried message, that is, the movie, photograph, text and sound.

McLuhan (1994) regarded the message itself as media. Perhaps it is needless to separate the media and the technical vehicle from each other, because if we approach the problem from the side of perception, they are inseparable, as movies, pictures, artwork, text can only be achieved through technical background (be it computers, books or graffiti). The media as a formal condition bears the product created, produced, cultivated by someone, this is both material and formal in nature.

The media/medium as relationship

W. J. T. Mitchell, in his book entitled *What Do Pictures Want*? *The Lives and Loves of Images* (2004) developed a specific model, possibility of media definition. Mitchell explores solely the relationship between image objects and media, and formulates the fundamental thesis, as follows: "Each image object manifests itself merely through a kind of medium – in colour, stone, words or numbers" (p. 167) In this case it is not of primary importance what it is that can be considered an image, but how an image exists. It is clear that an image has to take shape to some extent: it has to become visible, audible, thinkable, and perceivable to the world. At this point I am only dealing with the mediality of the materialized image; I do not discuss the problem of mental image.[5]

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[5] Mitchell - who among other things - analyzes ontological status and manifestations of the image, points out the difference between the concepts of image and picture (a differentiation simplified in English language use by the presence of these two separate terms and he builds his theory on this slight difference between the two terms) and discusses the mental and material image.

Mitchell calls this duality of image-picture as a kind of Platonism, more precisely a perverted Platonism, as the two terms can be traced back to the relationship of idea and realia.

In Mitchell's interpretation media is relation: "The media is always »in between«, a »mediator«, a space, a path or a stone, which connects two different things..." (p. 168). As opposed to Umberto Eco's (1987) linear model (sender/emitter-noise-transmitter-signal-channel-signal-receiver-message-receiver), Mitchell undertakes a concentric media interpretation, which I reproduce here.

Writing, possibility, chaos, excess, environment, place,

Form, arbitrary, random, current, active, inner, system, diversity, defined, price, text, progressive

Undefined, outer, money, material, texture, passive, money, art, meaning, delay, word, postal system, media
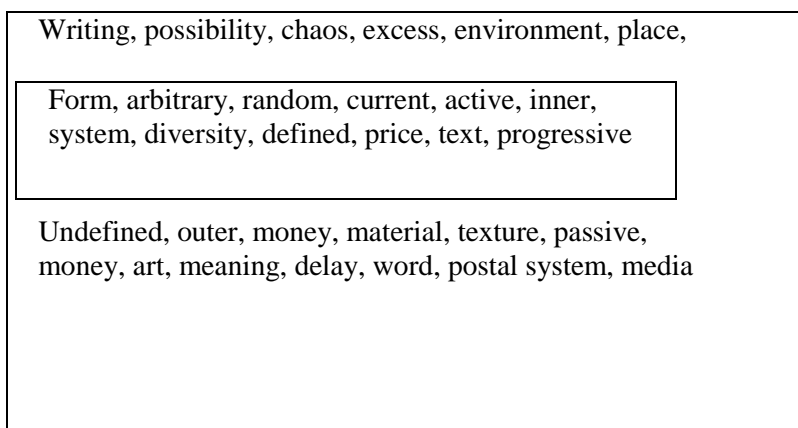
Mitchell's (2008a) Luhman-diagram builds on Luhman's relationship of system-environment and form-media. The receiver is absent from Mitchell's non-linear model, it is not a targeted model, but it determines the relationship between media and form as a set of conditions, a rising possibility.

The form is the inner content, the media is the vehicle, the genre is defined by the form, and mediality is displayed through a variety of projections. It is not about the message anymore, but rather about presence, ready-made product which is not a specific postal package, a product with a forwarding address; it is an independent, open condition, not a personal, non-individual-oriented, but available, accessible.

In Mitchell's context media appears as landscape, locations, as available for everybody. This kind of metaphorical identification is not unusual in Mitchell's creation of concepts, since he considers images to be entities similar to organisms, to living beings. The argumentation is authentic, as the life of pictures (not their setup or structure) corresponds to the scheme based on which living beings are called living beings. More specifically, the images are not living beings, but they behave like them, we relate to them as we do to living beings, their use, their story is the same sequence of events known from wildlife.

Mitchell attaches an interesting question to the problem of mediality in general; he raises attention to the fact that the problem of mediality of media theory should be discussed: what kind of media and tools should theory use and in which media should it manifest itself? In the late 1970s, Gábor Bódy (Peternák, 1996) formulated the question whether film theory should also be a film or not. These are

thought-provoking questions, a self-reflexive media theory problem, which is one of the unexplored areas of the given science.

Mixed media

Mitchell (2008) formulates, defines the concept of media in ten points. 1) Media are modern inventions which have existed since human thinking; 2) Rebellion against new media is as old as Methuselah himself; 3) Media is system and environment at the same time; 4) There is always something outside the media; 5) All media are mixed media; 6) Spirit, understanding, consciousness, thinking are all media; 7) Images are the leading media; 8) Images live in media, as organisms do in habitats; 9) Media do not have well-defined places or available addresses; 10) We turn to the media, and similarly, media turn to us.

I have neither the possibility nor do I intend to analyze in detail the media term formulated in the above ten points within the framework of this paper, nevertheless, I try to focus on two statements: on one hand, I intend to confirm the thesis that every media is mixed media; on the other hand I will try to think further the statement that images are leading media.

Indeed, no media can be considered pure media. The word itself is mixed media; it is both verbal and visual at the same time: we read it, we see it as letters, in written form, we visually identify it, and then we get close to the content, to the uttered word. This is the simplest, most banal example, but in fact each medium carries on or in itself other media or is in very close relationship with others. A press photo, the title of the photo, the environment of the exhibition, the lighting of a theatrical productions, a poem from an audiobook, the space of a performance, the structure of a film, all of these assume co-existing media.

If we narrow down the concept of mixed media, we get to the art theory problem of repetition. It often occurs that various media migrate, immigrate to other media, not necessarily as parasites, but establishing possible coexisting life forms. Think of the picture poem, the collage, the simple illustration, the typeface, or even the oldest form, the calligram.

In the case of travelling media let us concentrate solely on image/visual media and examine how they co-exist and transplant.

It is not unusual that photos, paintings or other images are displayed in a film, a photo may picture a painting or the photo itself can be the frame, the latter is often used to illustrate press products or studies, visual theory, film essays, technical books. Let us narrow the phenomenon of image transplantation further down and concentrate on films. The film is suitable to include, to record, to show within moving image frames any other media of visual (and not only) length. The picture-within-the-picture (whether or not we are talking about two frames or the pictures melt into each other, in the latter case the guest image, the immigrant-

image acts as a moving picture, it has no privileged place in the actual sight, it is added to the other frames, this is called linear editing. If the frame is displayed in the frame, we are dealing with double editing: one linear and one vertical, that is deep editing) it always breaks the usual film sequence, even if it is an extraneous film clip that is included, though in this case we are talking about similar media.

The picture-within-the-picture always rearranges the focal point of the host image; more precisely, it expropriates it, as in this case we pay attention to the picture-within-the-picture, especially if it is highlighted in a specific frame. The included picture and thus the sequence will be privileged as compared to the details of the rest of the images and sequences. At the same time, the internal content is reorganized, it emerges, and it regresses in order to give place to the newcomer. (It is a kind of blessed state, pregnancy/expectancy, the duality of giving up and enriching manifests itself in every recipient film image.) Of course, the incoming picture is also in regression, it adapts and fits into the film image as a foreign element; it gradually overtakes the properties of the film image without completely losing its medial nature and real content. In the case of exponential images we are actually talking about a double transformation: both images, both media are modified and a particular media complex[6] is formed.

If we see a photo on the film sequence, we can perceive it only in the rhythm and movement of the film image, here the photo loses it properties in order to become a still image and to allow us to set its perceptual contact time, it loses its unique character as well, since it contextualizes, it appears in the environment of the film. The photo is only indicatively what it used to be, it is no longer its real self, but a migration product, which has evolved into a moving image, its time has been redefined by the new topos of which it became a part of.

In Kurosawa's film entitled *Dreams* (1990) we encounter a media composition of special effects: in a dream scene we see Van Gogh's paintings full screen size, in moving image quality. We identify the image, especially as these are famous paintings, but despite its display as moving image, it cannot lose its textural nature, the painting reclassifies as moving image is remediated several times, it takes a new medial shape, as in a few seconds later, the film sequence does not show the record of a still image, but rather the Van Gogh picture behaving as background for a moving film character, that is, the landscape fixed into painting is revitalized: the painter walks through the landscape, the painting. The director makes use of, and confirms the great possibility of global mediality. Derek Jarman uses a similar camouflaged media change in his movie entitled *Caravaggio* (1986) in which the viewer can hardly distinguish between film images made of paintings

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[6] Some examples of films illustrate the characteristics of coexisting, intertwining media: Zoltán Huszárik: *Szindbád* (*1971*), Very Chytilova: *Sedmikrasky* (1966), Woody Allen: *Play it again* (1972)*, Sam*, Jean-Luc Godard: *Á bout de Souffle* (1959), and so on.

and tableau vivant, as the structure and content of the living images is exactly the same as the structure of Caravaggio's paintings.

The concept of multimedia is very frequently used in cases when multiple media are juxtaposed. However, we should see that this concept assumes a serial connection, the parallel of media-existence. Most of the time, or rather without exception, media in contact with each other are not independent of each other, they do not pass each other without coming into contact.

Therefore, I find it more appropriate to use the terms total media or global mediality. In my interpretation, global mediality is the phenomenon when two or more media come into contact with each other and in this relationship they begin to develop each other and themselves, they adapt, they reorganize, they create a special mixed, complex media form. And, as according to Mitchell, there are no clear, but only mixed media, then global mediality would be the life form of mixed media, because they merge, they melt into each other thus creating the medium, or rather media, because there are only media communities.

Images as organisms – media as habitats

It can be added to the definition of media that media is not clearly – as Mitchell (2008) points out – of material nature, but of dual nature, like the light, it has a wave and particle nature at the same time, the particle nature refers to the material nature, the waves or the mental nature show the ways of manifestation, this can be called genre, more specifically or by way of illustration: the material aspect of a given media may be represented by a computer, a DVD player, a DVD and the genre that is visualized through the computer and the other tools, would be the film itself, which is concept, directing, theatrical work, colour, shape, etc., all together, but no longer as material presence, but seen as an entity modified, transformed into film.

Media – in Mitchell's approach – are not only material by nature, but they include technology and tradition simultaneously. The media is more than message and more than materialism, more than the image and its vehicle. According to Mitchell every image needs a place to live, to exist and this is ensured by the media Reference.

It is not a good idea if we pay attention only to the material nature of the media, as media is only a possibility that makes it possible for a message to be sent, the media is potentiality for the appearance of the message, because without it, it is simply an unattainable idea, thought, feeling, concept, which exists inside us and for ourselves, the existence-for-the-other framework is provided by the media.

McLuhan's (1967) famous thesis is: The content of a media is always another media. There are no clear media (Mitchell, 2008) and it increasingly becomes clear that media co-exist. The images are regarded as organisms/living beings – as

understood by Mitchell, not based on their structure, but based on their usage, life events (they are born, used, thrown away, privileged, banned and then they disappear, they die, they are destroyed).

How do images resemble organisms? Are they born? Do they die? Can they be killed?

Anyway, images have their own lives, in the sense in which they take part in everyday life, their users' lives, their private, intimate lives are shaped by usage, while they can migrate from one culture to another or become victims of iconoclasm, they can be destroyed, their usage, presence may be prohibited.

Therefore, wherever images are, they need living space. Mitchell (2008) believes that the media are capable of providing space for the images. Similarly to living beings, the images can migrate from one media world to another, as a verbal picture can experience rebirth through a painting or a photograph, a medium can move into another one. In Mitchell's view the media is ecosystem, a living world, a living space.

The design of media as message vehicle and the image as a form with message content, is increasingly called into question, since they hardly behave as visual media, as a clearly outlined vehicle that can exist anywhere, to anyone, at anytime with the same content, they are just present.

The images – as Mitchell (2008) put it – do not want anything, they do not say anything, they just are. The message is content attached to the images, it is not their own, it is not an internal component.

Media, multimedia, intermedia, hypermedia, trans-media, post-media, global media (total-media)

If we consider as our starting point Mitchell's (2005) media interpretation, according to which there are no clear, only mixed media, it is completely clear that such concepts as multimedia, intermedia, hypermedia actually refer to the same content of media in general, namely that media co-exist, we never experience them in singularity.

Before unfolding the problem of multimediality, intermediality, further investigation should be focused on two similar concepts. On the one hand, I would like to concentrate on the concept of intramedia, which is primarily used to describe phenomena within a given media, in many cases having a self-reflexive nature. Another level of intramediality is rarely mentioned, namely, that media can overslide and in these cases we are not only talking about intermediality, but also about intramediality.[7] In many cases, transmediality is used to describe the

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[7] Taking into account their etymological background, intermediality is media existing next to each other, quite specifically, images and texts co-existing in a magazine, but if there is a picture taken of

phenomena of media change, as the novel adapted into film or the composition entitled "Pictures of an Exhibition".[8] The term transmediality, just like the term intramediality, is suitable to denominate the processes of media migration. Today's most discussed issue among media analysts is the problem of post-mediality raised by Lev Manovich.

A photo is still a photo even if it appears in a film, only the perception changes; it acts like a moving image, but does not become one. Media forms have the potential to migrate into other media forms, the film could be read as a comic book as well, the audiobook is a very good example for this kind of media migration phenomenon. Media transplant, transport, transposition, moreover, translate, the message becomes, of course, substantially changed, or moreover it may lose its original centre of gravity. Pictorial/visual repetition, image quotes, reproductions, collages are very good examples of media migration and coexistence.

When Manovich (2001) refers to new media, he assumes a media mutation, more precisely, he does not consider media as media in its traditional sense. But what is traditional media? Based on Mitchell's response, we can state that there are no old and new media, only media, which exist in their diversity and abundance and must comply with only one criterion: to be mediators. Thus we can question Manovich's statement that the new media are no longer regarded as media: "The new forms (assemblage, happening, installation, performance, action art, conceptual art, process art, intermedia, time-based works) are no longer media in the traditional sense, the constant addition of new technological forms to the old typology resulted in a new mutation of the concept"

The various forms of media are significantly different in terms of appearance and the mode of mediation, but each serves the same purpose, to convey something, they act as storage and means of delivery or displays. The usage and the internal regularities of the media do not alter the belonging of media to its general category. Manovich proves this with an interesting example: the possibility of digitalization – or more precisely the fact that mould/imprint of any media can be displayed on a web page, that is, I may encounter photos, photos made of photos, photos made of paintings or films made of photos – may lead to the disappearance of differences between media.

At this point, I turn back to the questions discussed in the first part of this paper, namely the definition of the media concept and the diversity of media. Let us start from the simple thesis that there is a great variety of media, these more or less co-exist, as demonstrated previously. The co-existence implies that certain media migrate into a different medium, thus ceasing to be the functions of given

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the text of the magazine, that is intramediality, as one media has incorporated another one, we are talking about being inside a medium.

[8] Mussorgsky's piano cycle entitled "Pictures of an Exhibition," composed based on Viktor Hartmann's posthumous exhibition.

material designs, that is to say, a photo is no longer present due to the photo paper, but mostly in a digital environment, but apart from this the photo can be recognized and considered to be a photo.

According to Manovich (2001) "On the material level, the shift to digital representation and the common modification/editing tools which can be applied to most media (copy, paste, morph, interpolate, filter, composite, etc.) and which substitute traditional distinct artistic tools erased the differences between photography and painting (in the realm of still image) and between film and animation (in the realm of a moving image)".

Manovich's unilateral argumentation implies that he approaches today's culture, media usage in an extreme way, from the user's perspective and it is also not clear whether the software should have more legitimacy or the concept of media should be changed for the concept of software. The concept of software is strongly linked to computer data storage and processing, and this can hardly be said about culture medial environment in general, because if we approach the problem of media from the user's perspective, it can be immediately seen that there hardly exists any general rule which would define or regulate usage, even if the vehicle is nothing more than a website, where ready-made schemes are waiting for the user, however, the visitor may want to make use of several possible variations of combinatorics and his/her liberty is not limited by the ready-made instructions either.

According to Manovich (2001) "The traditional concept of a media emphasizes the physical properties of a particular material and its representational capacities (i.e., the relationship between the sign and the referent.) As traditional aesthetics in general, this concept encourages us to think about the author's intentions, the content and the form of an artwork – rather than the user. In contrast with this, if we perceive culture, media, and unique cultural products as software, it will help us ensure focus on operations (called commands in programs) offered to the user. The focus is, therefore, shifted to the user's abilities and behaviour."

It is also important to discuss that the problem of aesthetics, that is, the investigation of beauty in its traditional sense, has been reclassified and intertwined with a number of other sciences, but it cannot be ruled out completely, moreover, without it the other sciences would also be more narrow-minded. The replacement of media by software would lock out none other but the user of its alleged scheme, system, since the software is based on automatisms. The media is actually a created condition, which will fill its role when it comes into contact with its user, if it comes into contact again with the human dimension. The media was always used at least twice, once when uploaded with content, and when turning towards the media and its content out of curiosity.

Therefore – as Manovich (2001) notes "instead of the term media, we could use the term software when discussing past media, i.e. what kind of informational operations does a certain media place at the user's disposal".

Global Media (Total-Media) versus Post-Media

According to the principle of postmediality we live in an age where the media as a concept is not suitable to describe different cultural processes and what we have called media has now changed to such an extent, that we need to change the way of thinking about it and related concept use.

However, it seems that media and software indicate completely different contents, not only in the meaning of the concept, but in the public mind and in targeted literature as well. Excluding the concept of media would be such a loss as depriving ourselves of the concepts introduced by Greek philosophers, because they were not born in the digital era and thus are not admissible in an environment where there are many new phenomena and physical conditions around us. The differences between media do not disappear, even if they come across each other in a collective basin, such as a digital photo or a community site or an advertising space on the Internet.

Painting, photography had not ceased with the emergence of television, nor did the printed press with the emergence of electronic media and audiobooks. It is natural, that the appearance of every new element involves some kind of lethargic, ominous fear that predicts the disappearance of an existing one and it is concerned about the exchange of places. In these cases, a complex process begins, media do not actually change places, they do not exclude side-by-side existence or the possibility of existence within each other, and it is certainly not a primary consequence that the new media destroy the existing, old ones, but what rather happens is that the older media become part of the new media, as these usually have a more comprehensive, overall character.

The age of media is not over, on the contrary: the growing, multiplying media result in a colourful and complex media system, where the relations between different media become more varied, newer, unprecedented configurations are created and the co-existence of special shapes and forms appear. The concept of postmediality proves to be a decadent and destructive term, because it questions the legitimacy of the media in an era when the newest media coexist with older one.

In the light of the latest media phenomena, when social, community media seem to be one of the leading phenomena, the most appropriate term is global media, because media are more and more intertwined, crucibles appear in which the imprints of previous media are present as references. In the case of global media the materiality of media is transformed, it appears as part of another medium, but as form, as having vehicle quality and a specific option of expression, it preserves all of its characteristics (in most cases due to its imagery). It is important to note here that any media that have a substance-material dimension as well, (and all media have a material dimension as well), that is to say, they have a

visual dimension as well, they can be treated as images, the process of summarizing can be realized specifically as a result of and through imagery.

To give a concrete example: the text, the visual imprint of the spoken word on a web page appears as an image, which due to its internal structure becomes readable, but we can also consider the pages of a book as a visual manifestation, because first we have to see it all, in order to be able to read later on.

Social media, consumer media – interactivity, directed communication

Social media is also consumer media. The interpretation of the concept that the development of social media, that is, consumer media is formed by and thus is in the hand of the user, is very polarized, extreme and unsubstantiated, because in every case of interactive media there is someone on the other side, who starts the game, the process, the interaction, there is someone who steps in, who sets up the rules of the game, who allows and denies when necessary, but within this framework there is a fairly large open area, which is open for the user within certain limits. (I deal with user freedom in the next section giving detailed analysis of specific examples.)

It can be clearly stated that besides the fact that social media are interactive by nature, they are also directed. In most cases, this kind of management passes unnoticed. Interactivity can be regarded as a particular form of manipulation, which allows for the outside participant of the interaction not to even suspect being victim of manipulation, since s/he is convinced that s/he can exit the interactive game at any time and interfere with the course and evolution of the game, moreover s/he is convinced that s/he her/himself is an integral and creative part of the rules according to which s/he is playing. It is important to note here that the creators of social and consumer media ensure that the complete freedom of the user and his/her right to interfere is emphasized as a fundamental rule, or as they often put it: the consumer site was created exclusively for the consumer and s/he is allowed to transform it in any way s/he wants it. There is no need to prove that polarization is obvious, since the bi-directionality of the game gives the first rule, there is a creator of consumer media and there is a user. First of all, consumer media, just like the set of questions at an interview, offer a grid, but in this case it is not about a simple text, speech, thoughts, but a complex media set which, as summarizing media, has access to most media and sums them up, a process that can be done easily with the help of the Internet, as we are dealing with global media, where, even if tangentially, all media can be squeezed in, if not otherwise, as visual imprints. (For example, the imprint of a theatrical performance, the imprint of the daily press, the imprint of our favourite magazine, the visual projection of a sculpture exhibition and so on). Many of the websites are still

passive, this means that most of them are only data vehicles, they mainly contain image and text material, some include audio material.

The vast majority of websites are descriptive by nature, but there is a tendency toward interactivity, forums, Internet groupings, virtual communities.

Blog, Facebook, Chat – Virtual contact search – virtual relationships, virtual communities

In the following I shall focus on the use of the Internet, as the use and formation of global media. Depending on the limitations of personal freedom, Internet activity and usage can be divided into three groups. The first category includes the websites, where the individual is given the greatest possible freedom; the maximum area is allocated to personal manifestation, self-expression, and creativity. These are individual websites or blogs edited by the user (in this case it should be taken into account that there is a form, a framework set by the blog service, but there is often a possibility for the blogger or webpage creator to start with a relatively clean sheet). It is especially important that the individual shows something of him/herself and as a result of this showcase phenomenon, if there is interest, s/he develops relationships with the help of creations, thoughts and images. It is common that a blog remains only an attempt of becoming a blog because the external readers are former acquaintances, neglected or broken friendships, relationships.

Another very powerful virtual group creator or re-creator is the category of websites which serve the purpose of searching for acquaintances, this category is what McLuhan (1968) called a virtual village (see global village). The Facebook is one of the most prominent examples of this category, it is the largest in terms of the number of users, some analysts even call this community, social media, it has been also referred to as the world's third largest country, as in 2010 it reached half a billion users. In the case of Facebook, the user's freedom is more limited than in the case of blogs or websites, but the number of contacts it creates is far greater. Facebook has created a large virtual community, which can be developed based on a previous set of relations, communities, as the authenticity of the friend status plays a substantial role, except for fan clubs within Facebook. When filling in one's profile, there is limited editorial freedom, it is rather a grid that can be filled, edited, modified according to trends. (Facebook and similar friend-based pages can also be used for creating masks, using an alias or a different name, host images and texts[9] in order to create a custom page. All friend-based sites carry within

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[9] I use the term *host image* based on Péter Esterházy's term *host text* (vendégszöveg), which refers to a text taken over from a different author without referring to the origin of the text or the author.

themselves the dramaturgy of hiding, where next to playfulness there is minimal responsibility regarding information, texts, and images made public.)

Virtual communities are formed using Facebook, each individual decides on his/her own whether to become a member with the possibility of ending this membership at any time. In any case, virtual communities differ substantially from the traditional communities where mobility and feasibility are minimized, while responsibility and participation are maximized. Facebook requires only partial participation, access and communication is granted in and out, passive observer status is also available with a minimum vulnerability to expose some information, but in this case, immunity is almost at maximum, because there is no control surface on Facebook to check the validity of data given, for instance, thus a fictitious person can log on as well.

Hidden subject – a virtual carnival

Many people suspect that behind these community sites, virtual villages there is strong political background, monitoring information, which has led several people to reject, leave the system, and move from the village.

This village[10] governed by these special rules resembles Béla Hamvas's (1985) Carnival, where everybody can select the costume and the role, communication is interrupted, often unilateral, but not impossible, there are no constantly communicating communities, they comment on the comments randomly, therefore short texts, dialogues are created that remind the reader of Örkény's style. The subject is actually hidden in the sense that the user fully controls his/her reactions, situations and appearance. The costume is the information set that the user shares with the community, and this is only part of the real, even if the published information, text, images are regarded as documents, because the process of selection results in a distortion, which directs, regulates self-presentation, this being reinforced by the possibility that their truth and reality value is not checked, therefore, within the limited freedom – I am thinking of the fact that structural forms, sizes, quantities, the origin and selection of information are entirely left to the user. Hence the costume character of profile making: there is a possibility to wear a costume and change it whenever necessary. Most people do not make use of this option to its fullest, they are quite honest, but there is a kind of hiding in honesty as well, because you show the best and the most beautiful part of yourself (*most* is, by the way, what some people chose to use, though small in

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[10] The choice of the term village is more relevant because its proximity is obvious, any member can be reached at any time, you can knock at anybody's door at any time, that is to say, you can check his/her profile – in this case it has to be taken into account that there is minimal security, that you can lock your door from strangers, that there is data that cannot be shared.

number: the most mysterious, the most terrifying, the most disgusting and so on). It is definitely a self-publicity which can be positive or negative.

These virtual villages have special, fragile and highly variable structures, their functioning is determined most of all by pseudo-intimacy and quasi-honesty and their communication is also very specific. The social/community forum, such as Facebook, can hardly put all of its members into motion on a communicative level at the same time, therefore smaller chat platforms are formed, which can function with up to 25-30 participants at a time, but on average there are 5-10 comments. The group of the readers, viewers is much larger, those who do not comment, just observe. These atom-like mini forums create in many cases, compact mini-communities, as it can be observed that responses, posts, comments are given by more or less the same members.

It can hardly be called a dialogue; it is more like a set, a pile of comments that start upon aphorismatic observations, questions which then generate ironical posts, comments without having an exact line of communication.

Mysterious dating

In the development of relationships, romantic relationships, mystery, hiding, secretly finding each other has always had a significant role. The secret lover, the secret love of Romeo and Juliet, is by no means chosen only as a result of the prohibition of the Capulets and Montagues, this path is chosen out of their free will. The modern forms of dating include dating ads. With the emergence of the press, this possibility has also emerged and we still encounter this type of ads.

Searching for a partner on the Internet can be done through a multitude of online dating sites, chat portals. User freedom is the most limited, as the user is not allowed to interfere with the operating system, development, user quality of the chat; s/he is allowed only to communicate, to participate in group discussions. Let us call these community portals flirt-theatres. In the coining of this term *flirt* is being stressed, as these sites are only partly used for serious intentions, the principle of playing without responsibility (with real life character, not Lara Croft...) is applied, – a game that may lead to addiction. It is an opportunity to interact without assuming responsibility, without assuming the risk of being yourself and without consequences. Being a player of this game on a daily basis requires serious effort for some of the players/users to exit the game.

The concept of theatre is important because the chat is best suited to dress up in a wide variety of characters, to hide behind the strangest products of your fantasy while remaining real in hiding and encountering countless forms of hidden characters in costumes.

This kind of community forum communication is such a significant part of the 21st century existence that it has become part of literature, arts, film and several

other media as well. Daniel Glattauer's novel entitled *Good Against North Wind* (*Gut gegen Nordwind*) and its sequel (*Alle Sieben Wellen*) are interesting examples, which relate the development of a relationship on the Internet, based on reviving chat-situations, making use of this late-modern form of hiding maintained by two lonely people (Tillmann, 1996).   It is an interesting phenomenon in connection with Glattauer's novel, that just like at the time of Balzac's novels, the reading public interfered with the evolution of the novel, demanded some sort of happy ending, more specifically it provoked a second novel for the protagonists to meet as a completion of the first novel. It is perhaps important to note that everyone who is a player of the flirt-theatre game secretly hopes, even if subconsciously, for encountering *the one*, though rationally is aware of the fact that s/he has minimum chances for this to happen, as statistics reveal the fact that out of all users only 2-3 percent find long-term partners and develop relationships.

The point in theatre is that anybody can become an actor, anybody can play his/her imaginary role without having to step on a stage, without having to be him/herself in front of a multitude of viewers, without having to fight a gladiator's fight or appearing in the arena. In this mysterious game s/he can experience an exponential form of freedom, nonetheless few people think of themselves in the role of the spectator that also has to be present, and how much s/he is exposed to others' plays. While s/he does not want to show his/her real face, his/her character, others act the same way, therefore they can hardly find honest relationships. However, in a psychological respect, these forums are quite capable of proving maximum sincerity, as strangers, without responsibility, without consequences, can share any problems, which result in the flirt-theatre having therapeutic nature as well, as users discuss their problems, and even though they do not reach a clear solution, this will help in processing the events, the pain, problems and facilitate the search for possible solutions.

Media jams. Images as leading media on the Web

The most powerful feature of social media is that a variety of media meet, therefore it can be considered a multimedial, intermedial phenomenon, but it is often called hypermedia as well. The concept of multimediality seems most appropriate in the case of social media, as the majority of web pages compress multiple media, and at the same time we encounter intermediality on almost every Internet site, as one media covers the other. Hypermediality (the equivalent of hypertext) could actually be a common denominator of multimediality and intermediality, but neither of them can be considered the common denominator of websites, they can be used as characteristics, as features. Media jam is clearly noticeable on all Internet sites, as picture, audio, text and all of their subcategories

are displayed – almost without exception – and they melt into each other, they intertwine.

The complexity of media jams puts the user in a difficult situation, because every time s/he encounters an Internet platform, s/he has to set up a hierarchy: on which component should s/he focus first and in what order is to be set up between the sub-elements.

Needless to prove, it is everyday experience that images gain priority. At first, unwittingly, we concentrate on the visual components of an Internet site or social media, and only then begin a rational, controlled, conscious user attitude, in order to start selecting from the options (i.e., reading the text on the page or listening to the audio material that is available on the page).

The dominance of images is obvious. But from where and how do images obtain superiority over other media? According to Mitchell (2008a), images are leading media. This is axiomatic meaning, without looking for the answer to why.

We could assume, in the case of a complex, global medial product that we turn to images because we understand them better, we can read and comprehend them at first sight. The question remains regarding the origin of image dominance; because we can hardly state that we can read or comprehend images; however their attraction that influences our recipient attitude is inescapable. Gottfried Boehm (2001) used the term *the power of images* in order to outline the visual strength, energy through which images fascinate us, attract us, and exercise their power on us.

One of the controversial and open questions of image theory is how images are able to affect, to influence, how the visual field of attraction develops and how it affects us. It is not our intention here to discuss this problem in detail or to find answers to this; we rather analyze the role of the dominance of images, in social, community media. If you open a website, you first take a look at the images. On Facebook we might not even read where they live, what they do, we go for the family album in order to peek into their lives, an Internet imprint of their world and only after doing so do we take some time to focus on the reading.

If we accept image dominance as an axiom, it also becomes clear why is it that in the case of Facebook for instance, images are so important: users confirm their existence on the community forum first and foremost through pictures, moreover, most communication attempts start out as comments attached to images, pictures, these eventually grow into texts on the border of monologues and dialogues in the form of mostly short sentences, phrases or in the best case extended sentences or very short flow of thoughts.

Imagery has a significant role in editing websites, as the dominant media is the first to come into contact with the user. Website editors, bloggers or Facebook profile editors suspect, feel, know how important the used images are, therefore they select them carefully, while letting a specific form of manipulation work in the background. This kind of manipulation is not necessarily negative, but is rather

present in the sense of forming, shaping, transformation and its didactic strength lies in the fact that a photo, an image, a video material can create trends on the long run whether in the good sense of the word or having negative connotations. The lack of imagery in the case of the chat is quite strange, more specifically, in the case of the chat we meet a primary level of text, which is later completed with other media, including visual content as well. But let us discuss chat as text-oriented phenomenon, where hiding is of main importance, where image dominance is deliberately eschewed, as if put between brackets and put aside for later, only as a reserve option. This is also interesting, because it is a unique phenomenon of virtual community sites, images do no dominate – simply by being absent – but imagination is far more powerful, since it is only the presence of words, conversations that make up an internal image of the partner. In this case games, playing, imagination and the wide sphere of possibilities comes to the front, as the concreteness of the image would deprive – though virtually and on the level of imagination – the users of the best of the possible partners. Although user freedom in editing the webpage and self-portrayal is minimal in the case of chat forums, the freedom offered by *maybe* and *perhaps* in the sphere of thought and verbal expression is greater.

Message – without recipient, a message to everybody, a message to nobody (Online touch)

In the case of the chat, the most common form of communication is bi-directional. In the case of all other media, including websites, news, sites, there is a clear feature: there is no specified recipient, and there is an undetermined, probable, possible, anticipated user group who is expected to attend, without having a precisely defined or quantified target audience. In the case of social, community sites, the recipient is always self-appointed, random, casual user. Sending a message in this form assumes the existence of an entirely new communication system, which does not follow Umberto Eco's semiotic scheme and does not use the simple sender-message-receiver scheme, since we are dealing with a much more complex message, often without a receiver, these are Internet messages in a bottle. When these messages are created, there is no need to put the blame on the lack of marketing or the lack of users, it is rather availability and content that exclude certain users, moreover, the subject may be excluding or delimiting. We do not deal with the form of Internet messages in bottles or with the case of personalized advertising when the message is directed to specific recipients, what we deal with, instead, are those contents as messages, information that are accessible to anyone. These messages can actually speak to none and to everyone, there is no personal connection between emitter and receiver, in fact there is no connection between sender and receiver, and this is why we cannot talk about

sender or receiver at all. In fact, we encounter this phenomenon on advertising pages (self-publicity), on informational sites, on entertainment pages (games) or on community pages.

If we take into account Mitchell's Luhmann diagram, which does not posit media in a linear system but as a circular model, we get a new interpretation of the concepts of message and receiver and emitter,[11] they can even be left out of the system.

Mitchell does not use the concept of emitter and receiver, he builds the concentric system on the relationship of form and media (medium – if the transmitter is a person) and media is present as an opportunity for the manifestation of form, without assuming targeted use, it is at hand, available to anyone. Of course, most of the media have a targeted audience, but this audience is fictitious, it is present on the level of planning, preparation, as an idealized, ideal option, it helps in editing, in production and creation, but does not generate, create the audience itself, this is formed in a rather aleatory way, under the influence of a number of unforeseen factors. The media is actually that sphere of possibility sector, which, from the user's perspective, is unlimited, available to everyone. Community media usually have one condition: the user should sign up as member of the system, thus getting him/her involved and gaining access to his/her basic data, and thus personalized communication in the form of emails or advertising can begin.[12]

Let us keep in mind the existing, wandering message that finds its target somewhere, somehow, at someone. The message without a recipient has a very interesting form, it is mostly used by travel agencies, the postcard without a recipient, which appears in your mailbox. At first, the you (the unnamed recipient) are glad that someone has been thinking about you, but you soon realize that it is an advertisement, the text is created in a very personalized manner, but it is actually the advertisement of a travel agency formulated nicely and in an attractive manner, but it is not especially for you, it is for everybody and nobody.

The message that most social networking sites carry are intended for both the personal and impersonal user, but not just for him/her. The message somehow manages to reach its destination without address and recipient, it comes to me in such a way that I choose it by a simple gesture, I make the Internet connection available, I give power supply to my computer, I open the Internet site and as a self-serving

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[11] This is not about the invalidity of Eco's model, but the existence of another possible model which is more and more perceivable in the case of newly emerging media forms. Eco's model is still functional in the case of emails, personal communication or traditional postal correspondence.

[12] The strategy of advertising pop-up windows on the Internet is quite interesting: it works in a personalized way. Who has not experienced seeing in one or another corner of your mail account the advertisement of the online store or site where yesterday you bought something or wanted to buy something, but nonetheless spent some time on that site, you opened it, you showed interest and the next day you meet again.

postman I let the online touch get to me, which I get by letting the mechanism operate that can touch anybody in the less physical sense of the word. This can be understood as one form of vulnerability, or as a form of social expression of automatisms or it can be viewed as a particular form of personal freedom.

The question still remains open: why do we need social networking sites and what kind of deep human needs made them emerge? Are we really so lonely in Heidegger's sense of alienation or are we just making use of the possibilities given by technology?

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"*Say lovely things about me so that I know I am like that*!"
The Role of Positive Photo Comments Posted on Social Networking Websites in the Development of the Self-Image

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Abstract. The usage of Social Networking Websites has become very popular in the last few years. 'Talk to me!', 'Tell your opinion about me!', 'What do you think about me?', 'Comment', 'Like'… these are the most frequent messages of the virtual profile owners. The present study investigates the effects of the positive photo comments on the self-image. We (Kopacz, Sass, Timár and Varga, 2009) compiled a questionnaire examining the self-image and sent it electronically to more than 1,000 Hungarian people from Romania (average age: 22.15) who owned a profile on the Hi5 Social Networking Website (www.hi5.com). Eventually we could process the data from 41 people. Our first hypothesis was that positive comments have a positive effect on people's body image perception, it proved to be false. The second hypothesis – women are more affected than men by the positive comments – proved to be valid. At last we compared men's and women's self-image, but we didn't find significant differences.

Keywords: self-image, self-esteem, social networking websites, Internet, positive photo comment

Introduction and review of the literature

The internet has become such a frequently used tool in the 21st century that it seems to be indispensable in our everyday life: besides looking up information, reading the news, downloading movies and music, listening to the radio, shopping and playing online, etc., it is a highly relevant medium of social interaction,

offering possibilities also for those who do not feel competent in carrying out these sorts of tasks. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) has given many people coping with social anxiety the green light to create social relationships (Rice and Markey, 2009).

Researches demonstrate that adolescents, who use instant messaging in maintaining relationships with their peers, think that it helps them deepen their friendships (Gross, Juvonen, and Gable, 2002 – quoted by Rice and Markey, 2009). Green et al. (2005) found that women who got into touch with foreign men by using CMC techniques reported greater happiness and higher spirits as compared to those who met foreign men face to face (Green et al., 2005 – quoted by Rice and Markey, 2009).

Certain gender-based differences have been discovered regarding internet usage: Jackson, Ervin, Gardner and Schmidt (2001) found that women tend to use the internet rather for e-mailing while men resort to it more often in order to look up information (Jackson, Ervin, Gardner and Schmidt, 2001 – quoted by Colley and Matlby, 2008). As postulated by Wasserman and Richmond-Abbott (2005), though women make use of e-mail services more often than men do, men spend significantly more time in chat rooms than women (Wasserman and Richmond-Abbott, 2005 – quoted by Colley and Maltby, 2008). In the background of women's e-mail preferences and men's chat preferences, there lies a difference between the aims of the two communication types: while e-mail services rather help us keep up personal relationships with family and friends, chat rooms are the scenes of displaying the social power differences dominated by anonymity (Colley and Maltby, 2008).

Recent researches suggest that the spreading of personal websites and social networks has led to an alteration regarding people's opinion of one another. According to Weisbuch et al., people tend to judge other people that appear in the virtual world as if they would see them in the flesh; in face-to-face situations, people have a liking for the socially expressive people, which accounts for the expressiveness of the different websites as a basis for judging one another (Weibusch, Ivcevic and Ambady, 2008).

The number of personal websites has reached such a limit that one can barely find a single adolescent or teenager without having at least one personal website, such as Facebook, MySpace, Hi5, Friendster (Lenhart and Madden, 2007 – quoted by Weibusch, Ivcevic, and Ambady 2008). The growth in the number of personal website users is in direct proportion to the different age-groups; according to this statement, a research project targeting the American youth showed that while 41% of the 12-13 year-old adolescents own such web areas, this ratio amounts to 67% in the case of the 14-17 year-olds (Lenhart and Madden, 2007 – quoted by Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009).

Surveys assessing the time spent on different social websites suggest that logging into these websites is one of the daily routine activities of the American students. According to a 2007 research done by Lenhart and Madden, around 50% of the 12-17 year-olds log into their websites on a daily basis: 22% of them do so more than once a day, 26% once a day, 17% 3-5 days per week, 15% 2-3 days per week, and only 20% accesses these sites once a week or less (Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009). Since people dedicate so much time to their personal websites, these have become part of their everyday life and affect them continuously.

The aim of social networking websites is to help create and maintain social interaction in a virtual environment. Since our online personality provides only information fragments, it can be significantly different from our real personality. On such a website, besides the textual description, there are different categories one can fit in, as well as, pictures, backgrounds, and templates that you are free to choose from so that you as the creator may show a unified self-image. These websites make us possible to experiment with online introductions, share information about our lives with people we consider important, and receive feedbacks from those who have already bumped into our websites. Our virtual appearance is much easier to control than our real world appearance: we can decide what and how exactly we want to communicate, what characteristics we would like to lay stress on, and we can also boost our most attractive looks with the help of digital photography. In real world situations, the most powerful magnet of interpersonal attraction is physical charm, which is probably a determining factor in the world of internet as well (Wallace, 2006).

Certain researches found that social networking websites are used for maintaining the already existing friendships rather than making new friends (Ellison, 2007 – quoted by Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009). However, some other researches concluded that half of the teenagers make use of these pages so that they can make new friends (Lenhart and Madden, 2007 – quoted by Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009) while half of the high school students use these websites in order to let others know about them (Wiley and Sisson, 2006 – quoted by Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009). According to Buhrmeister's and Prager's (1995) self-communication model, peer group feedbacks affect people's self-esteem. For instance, a research carried out on a Dutch social networking website with subjects between 10 and 19 years old found that the participants' self-esteem was closely related to the comments received on their profiles and that self-esteem was usually connected to their well-being (Buhrmeister and Prager, 1995 – quoted by Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009). It is no surprise that positive feedback was found in a tight connection with positive self-esteem while negative feedback was associated with negative self-esteem (Valkenburg, Peter and Schouten, 2006 – quoted by Pempek, Yermolayeva

and Calvert, 2009). These researches let us conclude that adolescents use these websites to assess their peers' and other people's opinion about them. Our research carried out in Romania (Kopacz, Sass, Timár and Varga, 2009) raised the question whether the situation was the same with grown-ups: we wanted to find out to what extent their self-esteem and body image perception is affected by the comments as a significant feedback coming from others.. Setting out from this hypothesis, our research examined the impact that positive feedbacks received from others have on the people's body image perception. According to this, the positive feedbacks received from others (praise, appreciation) should exert a positive influence on individuals' self-esteem, more specifically, in respect of the physical component.

Body image represents a unique part of the global self-image since through the body, appearance, looks, characteristics, and abilities, it basically determines the relationship between the individual and the external reality (Fox, 1998 – quoted by Maïano, Ninio and Bilard, 2004). Outward appearance is the expression of status and sexuality; moreover, it is the utmost mediatory means of social communication. As several researches suggested, the judgement of body image leads to the development of global self-image with the adolescents (Fox, 2000; Whitehead and Corbin, 1997 – quoted by Maïano, Ninio and Bilard, 2004). During adolescence, body image takes a continually increasing negative trajectory, which is most applicable in the case of the girls (Wigfield et al., 1999 – quoted by Maïano, Ninio and Bilard, 2004). Marsh (1989, 1998) found in his researches that adolescents' global perception regarding their physical competence shows a significant decrease between 12 and 16 years of age (Marsh, 1989, 1998 – quoted by Maïano, Ninio and Bilard, 2004). Taking the aforementioned findings as a starting point, we assumed that adult women's body image perception would be affected to a greater degree by the positive photo comments than in the case of male individuals.

Data and methods

Our research subjects were young people between 18 and 32 years of age of Hungarian nationality from Hungary and Romania (the average age was 22.15 years). The participants' profiles were chosen randomly from the Hi5 social networking website. During the pre-test, we sent out our questionnaires to approximately 3,000 people, out of which 125 responded. As for the post-test, we received responses from 41 individuals: 19 female and 22 male respondents.

The questionnaire used in the pre-test contained 15 items, which were meant to assess body image perception. These items were designed based on the characteristics (the attractiveness of face, eyes, teeth, hair, build, etc.) obtained throughout the pre-test. Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 –

'strongly disagree'; 2 – 'disagree'; 3 –'neither agree nor disagree'; 4 – 'agree'; 5 – 'strongly agree').

We used the same questionnaire during the post-test, inverting the items and inserting new items related to internal characteristics in order to avoid having them resend the questionnaires used in the pre-test. The values of the items inserted subsequently were obviously left out of consideration.

The experimental group was made up of 66 participants. These research subjects received 48 positive photo comments from 12 profiles within a three-week period while the members of the control group were not posted any comments at all. The positive comments were all connected with the items in the questionnaire such as the eyes, mouth, build (body weight, height, and body shape), teeth, feet, nails, hair, smile, face, and clothing.

After the three-week intervention period, we resent the questionnaires to the 125 participants. Before the deadline (seven days counted from the sending out of the questionnaires), we received 41 answers for the post-test questionnaires. The respondents' data as well as the data contained in these questionnaires were both processed.

Results and Discussion

According to our first hypothesis, positive comments have a positive effect on the people's body image perception. This hypothesis was examined with the application of an independent sample T-test: no significant outcome was observed ($p = 0.491$), which means that the positive comments did not alter the subjects' body image perception.

Our second hypothesis – women are more affected than men by the positive comments – was examined with the help of a paired sample T-test. The hypothesis proved to be valid as positive comments ($p = 0.007$) had a significant effect on women while men were not significantly influenced by them ($p = 0.554$).

During the pre-test, we compared the discrepancies in men's and women's self-image perception in order to find out whether men or women have a more positive self-image perception in general. Despite that men reached apparently higher scores in the questionnaire on the average – that is, they apparently have a more positive body image perception (average scores in the experimental group: women = 3.94, men = 4.08; average scores in the control group: women = 3.70, men = 3.94) –, we obtained no significant differences ($p = 0,711$, $p = 0,874$). As a conclusion, there is generally no significant difference between men's and women's body image perception. Therefore, our third hypothesis proved to be false.

The aim of our study was to investigate the influence of the positive photo comments given on social network sites. Our results are relevant since they show

us that we have to endeavour to make the most of the positive effects of these frequently used means, such as the findings of Valkenburg and Peter (2007): the online strengthening of an offline-developed friendship; or the findings of Ando and Sakamoto (2008): an increase in the number of online friends reduces social anxiety and the feeling of loneliness with those individuals who reported a low self-esteem regarding their physical attractiveness. Establishing online contacts with people of the same sex had a positive effect on social anxiety symptoms while relationships maintained with people of the opposite sex reduced the feeling of loneliness experienced within the boundaries of a friendship but they increased the feeling of loneliness experienced in family relationships at the same time.

Even though our first hypothesis was found to be false, we could prove that in women's life the positive feedbacks regarding their physical appearance can really increase their self-esteem, so every little compliment matters! We can encourage people to say lovely things about the significant others to make them feel comfortable about themselves. We found that people who share many photos on social network sites have obtained a relatively high score on the self-esteem scale. This can be explained with the phenomena that those who share many photos are in general more contented with their physical appearance than those who do not share photos.

We are aware of the fact that our study has several shortcomings, it represents only a start for deeper analysis of the topic in our region. A larger sample could be more representative, the same as increasing the number of positive comments and the length of the commenting period would provide us more certain data. A forthcoming study could examine other aspects of the personality, like the connection of personality dimensions with the richness of the virtual profile (E.g.: which type of information – music, quotes, photos, videos – is tend to be shared by people with different personalities – introverted, extroverted – or how they react to different type of comments). It would also be interesting to examine the potential cultural differences regarding the subject (E.g.: are there differences in perceiving positive comments from people with various nationalities?).

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The *Faces* of Messenger
Emoticons in the Virtual Communication

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Abstract. The present study examines the virtual communication-related habits on Yahoo Messenger, focusing especially on the role of the potentially emotion expressing icons in the online speech. The basis of the research consists of structured interviews that are completed by spontaneous instant messaging conversations of which three are presented in the paper. The interview subjects/discussion partners are individuals in their twenties, most of them are graduates. Apart from rating the emoticons into categories, the study – inter alia – seeks answers to the following questions: what kind of general and individual meanings are associated with the emoticons by the users of the Messenger, how do smileys complete written communication, furthermore what does their presence indicate regarding the relationship between discussion partners.

Keywords: Yahoo Messenger, communication habits, virtual communication, emotions, smileys

Introduction and review of the literature

The present paper studies the symbol set of an instant messaging program, namely that of the Yahoo Messenger. My goal is on the one hand to examine the role of certain emoticons in the virtual communication by ranking them into some sort of category system; on the other hand I intend to define the meanings of the more frequently used icons, also pointing to the reasons of their popularity among the users of the program.

Besides these questions I will pay attention to the use of the program, to the options that the users have at their disposal during the instant messaging process, also presenting the most generally applied options. Finally, I will focus on the issue of language use in the virtual communication, including also the question of spelling errors.

While using the Yahoo Messenger, there are several features for the potential users who wish to communicate by instant messaging. Users can share their thoughts with messaging partners not just in writing; momentary impressions, feelings can be transmitted also visually, with the aid of images and icons.

In addition to the aforementioned, there is the possibility of transmitting almost anything to the other party, meaning that the exchange of the different file types (images, music, text documents) is assured. Another positive feature is that messages sent to someone while offline will be received; when the addressee signs in again, he/she will get all those messages that were sent to him/her after the last log out.

Observing so many features, one can ask: how can we exactly define Yahoo Messenger? We can state that it is not just a simple instant messaging program, it implies much more. I can best define it as follows: it is a quick communication means, with almost no boundaries, in the sense that the audiovisual and multimedia aspects are so emphasized, that writing, image, music, sound and video features may be simultaneously used.

We read in the book of Zoltán Bódi (2004) that through the internet the oral, visual and written communication channels are interlocked and consecutively multimedia or hypermedia appears. Kristóf Nyíri (1994) writes that nowadays the effects of the audiovisual communication have become more accentuated.

Referring to the video feature, if two users of the program have a web camera, they can benefit of the possibility of mutually visualizing each other. At such occasions sound, image and writing are all present at the same time, providing the user with a much more complex experience.

One could write pages about the unlimited possibilities that the program implies, but setting this aside, I shall examine more of the preconditions of applying the aforementioned features and the method of becoming a Yahoo Messenger user. To become a user, one primarily has to have the following: internet connection, the program set up to one's computer, and last, but not least a Yahoo email address. Compared to simpler instant messaging programs, Yahoo Messenger seems to be a better option also due to fact that in this case it is the user who decides with whom he/she wants to talk and with whom not. The user compiles his/her own partner list, from where at the given moment he/she later chooses the instant messaging partners, avoiding thus the possibility of any undesired contact. During communication image visualizing is also possible, as almost every user uploads an image about him-/herself, so that the other chatting

partner can see not just the written thoughts, but also the other chatting partner's photograph; all this makes the conversation more personal.

In this study I shall rely not only on my own experience regarding the program, but I shall also present the views of my acquaintances – users themselves – regarding Yahoo Messenger. During instant messaging conversations I held 10 interviews, but due to their length I shall not present these. My questionnaire contains 28 questions and it tries to illustrate the most important problems of communication through the messenger. I mainly rely on the emoticons themselves that can be visualized in the program, and on the knowledge about these. A part of the interview questions refer to their usage. I rendered these symbols in the Appendix; presenting them in a table, with their appropriate English and Hungarian meanings, also specifying the character combination by which these icons can be visualized.

I shall refer to the aforementioned in more detail. For the moment I consider important to note just that these symbols are at every occurrence animated pictures; these are the further developed versions of the traditional emoticons, thus they seem to be more popular among users. In this study I cannot present the motion picture versions of the icons, but I will display all their static pictures that I saved by screenshooting the motion pictures.

I also annexed for comparison the symbols of another instant messaging program, that of the Windows Live Messenger, mostly known as MSN. Compared to those of Yahoo Messenger, these icons are not so favoured, due to the fact that the MSN symbols are only static pictures.

Within the text of this study I included several shorter and more interactive chat fragments that I had on Messenger. By them I would like to present the practical use of the aforementioned symbols, focusing also on the linguistic issues that communication via messenger implies.

Emoticons in the virtual communication

The first emoticon, 'the smiley', was created by Harvey Ball in 1963, after which the symbol was trade-marked in London in 1968, and it became more and more popular. It was used to decorate t-shirts, cups, buttons, stickers and other objects. These objects became very popular in the United States. At the beginning of the 1990s the icon became the symbol of acid house music culture. The icon was often displayed also on ecstasy pills (Bódi and Veszelszki, 2006).

The symbols that I studied are iconic signs, and their common feature consists of a set of similarities. Most of the signs mainly represent human facial expression in motion; the icons are meant to express some kind of human feeling, but they may refer also to some kind of action or gesture.

The smiling code is such a general sign, that it may be interpreted apart from language or culture. It is meant to express some kind of general human facial

expression, thus its interpretation may be unambiguous for everybody (Bódi, 2004). Differently put, emoticons are graphic representations of facial expressions that many e-mail users embed in their messages, these symbols are widely known and commonly recognized within computer-mediated communication (D'Addario and Walther, 2001).

These symbols got several denominations in the daily and virtual vocabulary. They are called smiling faces or smileys, emoticons, mood signs. Overtaking the emoticon expression, there was an initiative to introduce the use of another Hungarian denomination – "*érzjel*" (meaning "emotion sign") –, but it failed. Ágnes Veszelszki, the acknowledged researcher of the emoticons in the Hungarian consulting literature, published the following other denominations of the signs in question: smiling code, emoticon, simper, smiley, little face, mood sign, figure face, emotion sign, little image (Bódi and Veszelszki, 2006).

Géza Balázs mentions smileys as the visual tools of the SMS; the smileys – in his definition – are mood defining signs, fulfilling abbreviation and encrypting functions. In Zoltán Bódi's book about the virtual vocabulary, in its glossary one may read the following about the emoticons: these are signs that spread in the virtual interaction, that complement the emotionality in mobile SMS communication, the para- and extralinguistic elements; the range of the signs consists of a limited number of basic versions and an infinite number of individual versions. In the language use one can also find mood signs, smiling codes and other versions of these icons (Bódi, 2004).

The smiling symbol expression has not really become widespread among users, but Zoltán Bódi, in his book about the virtual communication, uses for these iconic signs the aforementioned denomination. In his opinion, the elements of the symbol imitate the defining signs of the human face with the aid of the existing characters on the keyboard, so these signs are iconic symbols (Bódi, 2004).

Emoticons can provide support to written communication, in much the same way that visual or body language can enhance verbal communication (Cochenour and Rezabek, 1998). In the opinion of David Crystal, written virtual interaction efforts are made regarding the completion of the deficiencies of prosody and paralinguistics with visual elements. Crystal writes: "Written language has always been ambiguous, in its omission of facial expression, and in its inability to express all the international and other prosodic features of speech" (Crystal, 2001: 38).

The emoticons may confer to the written text symbolically definable contextual reporting functions as the emotional extra denotation, irony, euphemism or confirmation. (Bódi and Veszelszki, 2006). Bódi defines the smiling symbol as a symbol which has no precisely definable meaning, only the intention itself transmitted by the icon can be exactly told. The author mentions Sperbert's and Wilson's names, who say that these kinds of symbols do not enter into the category of codes, they are not part of the code model, they can be described just by the

interferential model (Bódi, 2004). This means that the meaning of the smiling sign may be defined only from the context of the conversation.

Susan Herring also emphasises that one can draw conclusions on the transmitting function of the emoticons only from the given context (Herring, 1996). Gyula Laczházi also studies the emoticons. He writes that the emoticons nowadays have already become a regular part of communication among the young; stating that emoticons are graphic signs which can express emotion, and that these are character combinations that can be displayed with the aid of computer or mobile phone keyboard (Laczházi, *sine anno*).

Nikoletta Ágnes Érsok (2004), while examining the linguistic characteristics of the SMS, she classifies the letter- and the punctuation mark multiplication to the category of the graphostylistic means.

Referring to Bódi's expression, the smiling symbols have become widespread over the internet also to compensate the facial mimics and gestures, without which the message can often be misinterpreted.

In my opinion the smiling symbol denomination itself does not cover it all, but only a certain set of the symbols, which is the circle of those icons that have positive meaning. This is also true for the English term *smiley*, which is derived from the word smile; it is not so appropriate to define a symbol system which mostly expresses negative feelings with such a denomination. The most correct definition may be mood sign, because this one may refer to icons expressing both positive and negative feelings.

Laczházi explains the appearance of emoticons by the increase in significance of the emotions in the postmodern era. In his study titled *The emoticons and the emotion expressing techniques of the early modern age* he writes that the accentuation of the emotions in the postmodern era is connected above all to the decline of the instrumental mind and to recognizing the limits of rationality. (Laczházi, *sine anno*) The emoticons represent the finite group of emotion expressing universal signs and at the same time they are non-linear expressing means, as the text containing such signs becomes two-dimensional (*ibidem*).

Image and text are simultaneously present during communication, this makes the process more entertaining, the conversation becomes more colourful, and besides these, in certain cases such parallelism decreases tension between parties.

Merlin Donald thinks that, compared to verbal communication, visual thinking represents the basic level of human information processing (Donald, 1993).

During communication with these signs a certain on-line bodytalk takes place, and this may occur because we dispose of a diversified range of emotion expressing means.

One may ask: does this emotion expressing way also represent a certain static and universalized state, behind which true emotions are in fact lost?

In my opinion, the occurrence of the aforementioned issue also depends on the extent to which parties communicating with each other are honest, on how honestly they choose the emoticons with which they express their actual state of mind. It is natural that some emotions cannot be expressed by one or two emoticons, and I think that their purpose is not even that; there are several other features of the messenger for the better expression of our emotions; I refer here to those live conversations when one can use microphone or web camera.

I observed among messenger users that maintaining relationships among parties is not limited just to the virtual communication, as this is continuously completed with periodical personal encounters.

In my opinion, these chats on the internet complete our personal encounters and referring hereby to symbols, I think that these make our virtual conversations more expressive, bringing them closer to the atmosphere of live chats by the illustration of gestures and mimics.

Zoltán Bódi writes that the majority of the social networking users have personal encounters as well, bringing up here as examples the emailing partners and also the groups of chat rooms (Bódi, 2004).

As of the fear of isolation that may occur because using the internet, Kristóf Nyíri observes that in the majority of the cases this does not happen in reality, because, as he mentions, emailing is not a limiting factor to the traditional forms of communication. (Krajcsi, Kovács and Pléh, 2001).

A certain development of the smiling symbols can be observed. This development is a graphic one, since if I mention the smiling face, its initial form consisted of the alignment of a round bracket and a colon; later on the form was further developed to a face-like display, which was a static picture; finally this was followed by the coloured face visualization, a display that also entered into the static picture category.

All the aforementioned phases were further developed and the motion version of the coloured face visualization appeared. The most recent initiatives show that this version itself can be further improved, for nowadays the loud smileys have already been invented. While chatting on the messenger, we can send motion pictures with audibles to our instant messaging partner. Later on I shall detail the reasons of their moderate popularity among the users, despite the attractive graphic design of the signs.

The emoticons have increasingly become more complex and affect more and more senses; the latest animoticons and audibles consist not only of an image, but they also emit sound, they make the content of the text unique by the application of audio phonetic means. (Bódi and Veszelszki, 2006) The emoticons used in email, forums and during chatting do not consist only of the colon–hyphen–bracket character combination, but an image file is also included into the unique, complex code of these signs (*ibidem*).

In the Hungarian speech area László Bódi and Ágnes Veszelszki published, claiming to cover all details, the first study regarding the emotion expressing functions of the emoticons in virtual communication. The authors define in their book two main categories of the emoticons: the static and the dynamic ones (Veszelszki, 2005).

Before turning to the evaluation of the interviews, I consider it important to summarize through some paragraphs the significance of communication through images.

Communication through images

During instant messaging the users apply icons more or less frequently; this is somehow the result of the users' insistence on images. We can often express more with images than just in writing. When both writing and image are simultaneously used, communication seems to be more successful.

Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1984) mentions that images and words need mutual assistance because verbal and non-verbal messages are compensatorily interconnected and help maintaining the correct interpretation of the messages.

Kristóf Nyíri (2011b) writes that words accompanied by images or even only images are more appropriate means to express our thoughts than just the mere words. The visual element makes the message more concise, more concrete and also more fitting to the receiver's given location, situation. The meaning of the images can be considered one of the simplest meanings, as the images resemble their meaning, but compared to images, this is generally not true for words.

According to Wittgenstein's (1998 – quoted by Nyíri 2001b) philosophy some images have obvious meaning without any learning or interpretation. Concerning this, he mentions the image face, towards which, in some aspects, he has the same attitude than towards the human face. He accentuates that one may react in the same way to the image face as to the expressions of the human face.

Regarding images, Neurath (1936) has an interesting idea: according to him words separate, while images reinforce relationships. *Words divide, pictures connect*.

Kristóf Nyíri (2000) writes that images may represent more than a mere emblem or illustration, as images may have semiotic function, may bear meaning or may transmit actual information.

John M. Kennedy (1974) underlines in his book titled *A psychology of picture perception*, that animated pictures are originally and more obviously information carriers than the static displays. A good example for this may be those interconnections between the motion icons of Yahoo Messenger and the static ones of Windows Messenger that I am hereby studying. Animated images express more, and this is precisely why these are more frequently used. While the static picture

often requires explanation, the animated picture has obvious meaning which needs no specifying.

Mitchell Stephens (1998) underlines the importance of the fact according to which the image nowadays is associated with the motion picture; the opportunities of the rational, visual logics are exploited in the video and animation. A significant characteristic of images is that, compared to writing, images can have a greater impact on human feelings. As Nyíri (2001a) also writes, the image has stronger and closer impact on feelings, creating thus intense communication and mutual identification among individuals.

Henceforth I present the results of my research regarding Yahoo Messenger.

Research results

I completed the questionnaire research in 2006 during my master's studies. I held interviews with ten persons (for data about the informants view table 4 in the Appendix) through the process of the online research (formal interview on Yahoo Messenger). The questioned persons are members of my own circle of friends. In the period of the research I stayed in touch with everybody via Messenger on a daily or weekly basis.

I chose these ten persons, first of all because at the moment of holding the interviews I maintained a more intense online communicational contact with them, secondly because – paying specific attention to the use of emoticons – I was also looking for answers regarding how similar or how different the online communication habits of the mostly recently graduating individuals may be.

Before passing on the questions of the questionnaire and receiving answers for these, I had personal conversations with every informant; these discussions ran like every other spontaneous chat. After inquiring about each other's well-being and momentary activities, at a given point of the conversation I mentioned my research intent. All partners had an open attitude towards the questions after they found out about the research purpose.

I didn't send the already edited questionnaire to the informants, but depending on the communication act I asked my questions one by one. In my opinion this made possible for me to receive answers for every question, respectively, in case I didn't receive a concrete answer to a given question right away, I could ask once again the same question. The spontaneous feature of the conversation allowed the display of such a set of information that was possible only by dialogue. From the interviews one can also see that, just like during a live conversation, there often appear such sentences that don't refer to the asked question, but to the former discussions of the talking partners. In these cases, just like when holding interviews by live talk, the asking party always has to draw back the attention of his chatting

partner to the former question. Regarding age, the data providers are in their twenties: the youngest being 20 years old, the oldest 28 years.

Concerning the gender of the interviewed persons, I spoke with seven men and three women about this form of the virtual communication. Among the data providers seven persons were born in Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc), one in Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare), one in Nyárádszereda (Miercurea Nirajului), finally another is from Miskolc, Hungary. Except two of them, all have university degree. The majority of those informants who studied at the time of the interviews are now working in their field of specialty. In their opinion, the Yahoo Messenger is very popular in their circle. Two of the aforementioned persons know and regularly use the program for two years, the others for 1–3 years.

The questioned persons say that they use the program for human communication and contact maintaining purposes.

It can be observed that all data providers, except one, use not only the Yahoo Messenger for chatting with their acquaintances, but in the majority of the cases the use of such other programs can be assessed as: Windows Live Messenger (5 persons), Skype (3 persons), Google talk (2 persons) or the Hungarian Gyalogló Chat (4 persons). One of the data providers indicates his preference for using 4 instant messaging programs with the fact that he talks with friends from various parts of the world, where options concerning the use of such programs are also varied. According to his opinion the Yahoo Messenger is rather used by his Romanian and American friends, while the German, English, Swiss and Czech friends prefer Windows Live Messenger.

Compared to other simpler instant messaging programs, the 10 data providers indicate their preference for Yahoo Messenger due to its simple use; to the possibility of multimedia share and the increased number of emoticons itself constitutes an advantage.

Nine out of the ten interviewed use Yahoo Messenger on a daily basis, some of them are constantly online, others 1–10 hours/day. Usually those use the program more than 5 hours, who need it not only for entertainment, but also for work.

Most of the users chat with their friends on the messenger, but conversations with distant relatives and acquaintances also occur. The interviewed persons speak rarely with their family members on Yahoo Messenger.

All of them communicate primordially in Hungarian, but everyone, except one, mentions at least one other foreign language or Romanian, in which he/she also communicates. Apart from Hungarian and Romanian, the questioned persons speak with their distant acquaintances in German, English, Italian or French.

The primordially used language is Hungarian, but unfortunately nobody who took part in the interviews writes *in Hungarian*, that is no one of them uses accentuated letters, as it would be correct according to the spelling and grammatical rules of the Hungarian language. Four out of ten persons use

occasionally accentuated letters and only in order to avoid the misunderstanding of words with multiple meaning.

Avoiding the use of accentuated letters has another reason, this being the fact that the dynamic of the instant messaging conversation matches that of a live talk, so people simply don't have time to pay attention to the use of these characters, that need to be applied with a little more attention. The third reason is related to the speed of the virtual world. As events have become more dynamic in the outside world, a similar predisposition for trying to be quicker can be observed also on the internet.

On the instant messaging programs the use of commas, sentence beginning capital letters and sentence ending characters is regularly avoided; all these deficiencies occur to maintain the dynamic of information exchange, to reach the maximum typing celerity and in order to reach the dynamic level of the spoken language as much as possible (Bódi, 2004). The author also mentions that while chatting on the messenger is very quick, it is in writing, but its dynamic equals that of the live speech and regarding the format, it is closer to the live word.

The written virtual language is brought closer to the spoken language by the simultaneity and the instant interactivity of the first one (Ferris, 1997).

In some cases avoiding the use of hyphenated letters and the grammatical rules may be connected also to the material side of the issues, meaning that the person, who is using the services of an internet cafe and uses the messenger or the features of the email there, tries to send as much text to the other party as possible and as quickly as possible.

Bódi (2004) writes that in the last 500 years of the history of the Hungarian written language one could not observe such a dominance of the phenomenon of avoiding the use of accentuated letters as it occurs nowadays in the virtual communication. In his opinion, avoiding the use of accents has become widespread due to the necessity of the technical background.

Part of my interview questions referred to the use of Yahoo Messenger symbols (see the questionnaire in the Appendix). I was curious to know how popular these symbols are among the chatting users, to know the reasons for which they apply them, and last but not least to find out the extent to which the meaning of these symbols is known by the users.

The Yahoo Messenger's symbol feature – the option from where the emoticons can be chosen – lines up 54 smileys. These icons express some kind of emotion or state, or maybe some kind of human action. Eighteen of these express positive emotions, while 27 are appropriate for expressing negative feelings. Other 9 pieces may be seen as neutral from the point of view in discussion; these generally refer to some kind of human action.

The symbols expressing positive feelings or states are the following:

Symbols expressing negative feelings or states are:

Neutral states (actions):

The 54 smileys do not cover the entire emoticon set of the Yahoo Messenger, because using other menu options one can visualize new and much better icons. Picturing a complete image about the smiling symbols is not my goal; I studied only those that are part of the initial symbol set.

Everybody whom I questioned uses symbols. Some of them apply these to compensate verbal communication with images, others apply these because of their living character, but most of them accentuate the fact that with the aid of these symbols they can express their state of mind or their momentary mood. Regarding this, informant named B. Sz. creatively declares: *When I smile, my 'desktop' is also smiling☺*. By his statement B. Sz. confirms the fact that the emoticons are totally appropriate to successfully display the human face related mimicries.

All ten data providers think that the symbols are much more expressive than the written word, so in their opinion these, compared to writing, are a much more appropriate alternative of expressing human emotions. Compared to speech, they think that chatting on messenger is disadvantageous, as in this last case the emphasis of the message can't be expressed during communication; this can be partially compensated by the emoticons, which may indicate the emotional content of the written word.

During the online interviews the informants didn't display emoticons – only when I asked them to show their favourite/less favoured smileys, but they continuously used these according to the context of the conversation; this fact proves that these emotion expressing iconic signs represent a significant part of our internet related communication habits.

The users also have favourite symbols; these are the most used by them. These symbols are chosen from that set of emoticons which can be more easily visualized, with the aid of keyboard character combination.

The most frequently used symbols are:

These mood signs express mostly some kind of positive emotion. Such emotion is for example the smile, the leer, the kiss or the laugh. The mood signs displayed during spontaneous discussions also underline the fact that chatting partners show each other the positive feelings more often, but this can be influenced by the given person's state of mind. While being jollier they use more positive symbols, and when being sadder they avoid the use of signs expressing positive emotions, repeatedly displaying icons which express sadness.

Zoltán Bódi concludes, regarding the function of static emoticons in the virtual communication that in the texts examined by him the most frequently illustrated emotions with emoticons are joviality and sorrow (Bódi and Veszelszki, 2006). Ágnes Veszelszki distinguishes from a thematic aspect the following types of dynamic emoticons: expressing emotions, illustrating general action, alluding to sexuality-eroticism, and expressing aggression or humour. She categorizes separately those animated mood signs which refer to keeping in touch or to ceremonies, furthermore, she detaches those animal and tale figures, that basically guard the smiley style display by their head shaped forms. (Bódi and Veszelszki, 2006)

On the basis of the questionnaire answers, we can conclude that the messenger users know the meaning of these symbols; this is also due to the fact that the meaning of the symbol appears in English at the moment of visualizing, thus the users can deduce from this the Hungarian meaning.

During the interviews I specifically made inquiries about the meaning of one or two mood signs, to see what is the conception of the chatting partner (the list of meanings associated to the emoticons may be found in the Appendix). In the first table of the Appendix I presented the possible meanings of a given symbol in the view of the questioned subjects. Because of the increased number of the symbols I could not ask the subjects about the meaning of each symbol, I rather focused on icons with ambiguous meaning.

There are signs that were not 100% clear to some of the subjects, e.g.: , which means sick, meaning hypnotized or , signifying anxious. The majority of the questioned persons think that the mood signs do not always have a clear meaning, that their real meaning can be deduced only from the context of the conversation.

The informant named G. E. also accentuates that certain mood signs may have totally unique significance, so anybody can use mood sign while not taking into account its standard meaning; this doesn't mean that the respective person misapplies the icon, as the given conversational context may permit the presence of

the icon. An example for this can be the symbol, which generally means sick; G. E. displays this symbol to express not sickness, but when she barracks for somebody before an exam or in other situation, so she wants the other party to succeed.

The smileys, by their animated display, provide a broader explanatory frame for the receiver. During the interviews I asked the subjects to formulate their opinions about several mood signs that I showed on the desktop. In most cases the informants gave spontaneous and concise, usually one-word answers. There are many overlaps among the meanings, the questioned subjects may not use the same expression, but they say synonyms of the given expression. Exceeding the general meanings depends also on the extent of the individual imagination, thus some associate to certain emoticons such unique denotations, which are often humorous.

The users of the signs often take the opportunity to creatively denominate certain symbols. Such examples are the following: – I am so cool I cannot bare it, – smirk, king, – as Tipetupa flirts with Csipike[*], – nerd, – shut the fuck up!

From certain answers one can see that the users of the mood signs compare the given smiley to some fabled fellow, which occurs to a great extent also due to the individual imagination (Smurfette, Tipetupa, Pinocchio).

As its denomination also shows, the mood sign is a more appropriate tool for expressing a certain type of emotion than just the mere written word. One of the interview subjects, K. S. thinks that it is more appropriate to express his impulses with certain symbols than to do the same thing in writing.

Using the symbols implies really varied options, but there are some icons that users rarely use or do not use at all. Such signs are: the clown , the devil , the cowboy , sick , pusher/angry , the looser , the daring , or the liar .

Opinions are divided over display methods through which the users visualize the mood signs: one option is the direct click on the icon, the other is character combination. As I mentioned before, the simpler icons are generally visualized by character combination. Such signs are: . As we can see there are icons expressing both negative and positive feelings among these.

The Yahoo Messenger takes multimedia features onto another level with the inclusion of the so called audibles or loud animated emoticons options. I cannot give examples for these. One only has to know about these that they generally represent coloured animated pictures that need to be chosen from a separate menu, and that they are mainly funny. Compared to emoticons, the audibles are

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[*] Two Hungarian children's tale characters

much more complex, merely because of the fact that in the case of audibles image and sound are simultaneously present. Specialists have created several versions of the audibles, among which also the further developed versions of the emoticons that I studied**.** The main characteristic of these latter ones is that they are much larger and seem to be more effective, in the sense that their appearance is followed by sound.

In spite of the complexity of the audibles, users do not apply them usually, or use the feature only occasionally. During the online interview I showed some of these to my discussion partners. In most of the cases they did not like these motion images. Another reason for which these kind of animated pictures are not preferred is the time that their visualization takes. While the mood signs can be displayed in seconds, the visualization of the audibles takes a little more time, and their use interrupts at times the communication, representing thus an impediment for the users regarding the dynamic of the conversation. Against all the aforementioned factors, everybody accentuates that the use of the audibles – just like the use of emoticons – is justified only when they are placed into the appropriate context.

During chatting loud conversation is also possible. The subjects of the interview use this feature in 50%-50% proportion. If they use the option, they use it when they are talking mostly to their friends.

This form of communication often implies also the use of web camera. The majority of the persons whom I questioned did not seem particularly interested in the web camera or in several cases they did not have such a tool.

While the use of the web camera seemed unpopular, sending files to discussion partners seems to be a regularly used option. All ten subjects use this feature. They generally send each other pictures, music or some other type of document.

Last, but not least, I was curious to know the quality of the communication. Opinions are divided regarding this detail. Some are more interactive when they chat on the messenger than they would be face to face with their discussion partner. For others the communication channels do not count in this sense; in their opinion they behave similarly both during chatting on the messenger and when having a personal encounter.

Based on my own observations, I can state that most times people are more interactive when they have a conversation on messenger than when they meet personally with someone. This tendency can be explained also by the fact that this type of communication situation represents only an indirect contact form between the interacting partners, and in such conditions they talk more easily about their feelings, they are more daring and more open.

We may be convinced regarding the above arguments by the following three discussions that were recorded in parallel with the questionnaire research. The text fragments, except the first one, are discussions with one of the interviewed subjects

(G. O.). These brief dialogues are part of some longer conversations. I chose these parts based on their funny style and because of the presence of the mood signs. The mood signs displayed at the end of the sentences and those that appear by themselves are proof of the fact that discussion partners consider important to express their momentary mood, which is reflected in the cheerful atmosphere and in the tendency to use humour during the discussion. The following text fragments do not always correspond to the live talk, out and away; they reflect the characteristics of the virtual language use.

Text fragments

Text fragment no. 1

> X: how are you?
> X: I hope I'm not interrupting
> Y: no
> Y: I'm relaxing
> Y: I edited a study
> Y: I've just finished it
> X: may I ask what's it about?
> Y: it's about gypsies.
> X: it must be interesting.
> X: are you a sociologist?
> Y: no 🙂
> X: policeman? 🌐
> Y: spy 😀
> X: I had three more guesses: musician, flower vendor, thief 😌
> Y: 🙂
> X: it's just sheer habit.

Text fragment no. 2

> X: there will be a karaoke party this weekend
> Y: really?
> Y: on Saturday?
> X: yes
> X: we're looking forward to a party
> X: it's been a while
> Y: maybe I'll go

Y: if someone will come with me

X: wheeze before, so that I know

Y: why?

X: it's a joke

X: - darling, has the electrician gone yet?

X: - no mum, but he's wheezing!

Y:

X: we chaff each other with this

Text fragment no.3

X: hi

Y: hello

X: how 'r' U?

Y: relax (in Hungarian: *en pihi*)

Y: you?

X: work-relaxing (in Hungarian: *en dolipihi*)

Y:

Y: you are one of the kind

X: I am not a namby-pamby

X: I just have my moment

Y: somehow I could not even picture you like that

X:

X: another came up to my mind

X:

X: he's so depressed he'll soon put an end to his days. (in Hungarian: *olyan depi mindjart öngyi*)

Y: don't put an end to your days, grab instead some cucumber salad (in Hungarian: *ne legy ongyi, kapjal be nemi ubi salit parival es tojival*)

X:

X: this is good

X: you exceed my limits

Y: well, I'm unique too

X:

X: yap

Regarding the first text fragment, we can see that a simple communication situation is taking place. The parties, who just partially know each other, after

asking about the well-being of the other party, continue the conversation by focusing on a specific issue. This text fragment becomes funny just because for one chatting partner it's not exactly clear what the job of his partner is. After spotting the *Gypsy* word, many other Gyspy-related associations come to the respective person's mind.

He consciously plays with these links, he consciously tries to be funny. This is obvious not just from the mood of the conversation, but this is reflected also in the meaning of the mood signs themselves. Based on the information about his partner, who is currently writing a study about gypsies, he tries to guess what his partner's occupation is. The following answers come up: *sociologist, policeman, flower vendor, thief,* and *musician.* We can see, that not only the *guessing* party tries to be funny, but also his chatting partner; this is proven that with the *spy* word he tries to come up with a neat retort to the other guessing party's answer.

The answers aligned by the other party are conscious associations, this being underlined also by the last statement, as the respective party confirms that the associations that he has just mentioned are just mere guesses based on his lack of information. The good mood between the parties is further developed by the certain mood signs that come one after the other. The first smiling sign is followed by the much more expressive icon, and after the punchline the laughing face is also displayed, representing the culmination of the humour in the conversation. After this, after enumerating the associations, the tongue icon also appears, which, as an ending, confirms one more time the use of the tools of the humour.

The second chat fragment begins with drawing the attention on an event. This is also a funny conversation. The *wheeze* word has an allusive role in the text, as one chatting party quotes a joke, in the secondary sense of the word. When typing the word the sign that shows a laughing figure rolling on the floor, , already indicates the side-splitting style that the word implies. The other party, after reading the joke, expresses with a smiling sign that he got the punchline.

In the third text fragment the accent is put on smiling and laughing. The abbreviations are dominant in this chat fragment as well. Almost every abbreviation is followed by a smiling sign. Talking in abbreviations is a conscious act for both parties and it occurs for maintaining the humour. The *how 'r' U?* that appears at the beginning of the dialogue and is in fact the abbreviation of the *how are you?* question encourages the other talking party to answer by also using a sort of abbreviated, slang language.

As an answer, he uses the word *relax*, (in Hungarian: *en pihi*) which indicates relaxation. The other party, further maintaining the mood of the conversation, answers with *work-relax*, which means in fact that he works and rests in turns. This conversation in abbreviations evokes in the other partie the *he's so depressed he'll almost put an end to his days* (in Hungarian: *olyan depi mindjart öngyi*) phrase, which

is used by so many. To come up with a neat retort to this phrase, the other party, in a humourous tone, tries to give the following advice: *don't put an end to your days, grab instead some cucumber salad.* (in Hungarian: *ne legy ongyi, kapjal be nemi ubi salit parival es tojival*) – with almost all words abbreviated in a slangy way.

Seeing the answer, the receiving party lets the other party know with the rolling-laughing sign , that the hint reached its destination. This text fragment is also full of smiling signs. The following three types appear: .

As it is illustrated in the three chat fragments, the symbols depend on the context, even though they have a meaning. Even if they are displayed without any text; during a given conversation one can deduce their meaning or hint only on the basis of the discussion that "*is going on*".

All three conversations are spontaneous, the structure of the sentences indicate informality. The atmosphere between communicating parties is friendly, this makes possible for them to joke with each other. Joking, chaffing may be peculiar also in everyday speech, but in my opinion this feature becomes more accentuated while communicating via instant messaging programs. Given the fact that parties are not present face-to-face, they are even more open for this type of interaction. An important factor concerning such conversations is the fact that discussion parties need to pick up each other's mood, which is possible because they both are in a similar state-of-mind.

Conclusions

In my study I examined the dynamic emoticons of the Yahoo Messenger instant messaging program. Apart from checking the speciality literature, I undertook a research based on online questionnaire, in which I involved ten of my acquaintances. During the interviews I made enquiries about the habits related to virtual communication, paying special attention to those mood signs that often complete the discussions.

Using the instant messaging program as a starting point, I made the database of the animated emoticons, and apart from that I also edited into a smaller database those meanings associated to the symbols that rest on the individual opinions of the questioned persons. My research also confirms the view which states that emoticons are important complementary elements of chatting on the internet. Emoticons are very popular among users, mainly those ones which can be quickly, simply visualized by character combinations. The necessity for emoticons derives from the paralinguistic deficiencies of the written text. As compared to the text, the animated picture symbols are appropriate also for displaying such gestures and emotional manifestations, that otherwise would be hard to express in writing.

From the animated emoticons the most popular are those that express positive emotions. The text fragments, part of the present paper, also underline this fact; in these texts the emoticons are tools of the humour. The smileys always appear as part of the text, they accentuate and enforce the preceding thought units. Their mere use without text is not indicated, their meaning can be deduced from the context of the communication. Due to this fact, next to the standard meaning, some emoticons may also have additional meanings, but this can be concluded only by seeing the connections between image and text.

The frequency of mood signs in the written text may denote something about the person of the communicating party or about the quality of the relationship between chatting parties. Those who are more open for expressing their emotions use more often emoticons also during chatting on the messenger. If we take into account the relationship between communicating parties, one can observe that those who are friends in real life are more willing to use mood signs for completing their sentences than those who are in a formal relation. Primordially the frequency of the positive emotion expressing smileys shows if discussion parties have a more confidential relationship.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

1. For how long have you been using Yahoo Messenger?
2. Do you use instant messaging programs other than the Messenger?
3. In your opinion what Messenger features are more developed compared to those of other instant messaging programs?
4. Who do you talk to on Messenger?
5. How frequently do you use the program?
6. In what language do you communicate on Messenger?
7. Do you use hyphenated letters while you are writing?
8. What is the main reason for which you use the messenger?
9. Do you use smiling symbols when chatting on messenger?
10. Why do you use them?
11. Do you consider that in certain occasions the use of certain symbols is more expressive than writing?
12. Which are the symbols that you most frequently use?
13. Do you know the meaning of each smiling symbol?
14. In your opinion, do these symbols have an obvious meaning?
15. Which is the symbol that you avoid to use?
16. Do you choose the symbols or you rather type the appropriate character combination?
17. Do you use Audibles while chatting?
18. Compared to smiling symbols how do you find these?
19. Which is the Audible that you most frequently use?
20. To what extent do you take into account the object of the conversation when you choose to use Audibles?
21. Do you hold loud conversation on Yahoo Messenger?
22. At such occasions who are you talking to?
23. At the occurrence of loud conversations and chatting do you use web camera?
24. Do you change your behaviour when you turn on the web camera?
25. Have you had video conferences on Messenger?
26. Do you send different files, images to your chatting partners?
27. What do you send them mostly?
28. Is your behaviour more personal during an instant messaging conversation than during a personal encounter or when talking on the phone?

Table 1. The meanings of the mood signs

Mood signs	The meanings of the mood signs
	sick, I am sick of it, being sick or just bad mood, I am sick, it stinks, I cannot breathe
	nerd, plodder machine, geek, you are very clever, I see well
	don't tell anyone, close your mouth, shut the fuck up!, shhht, shut up, secretive
	rolling eyes, they are again boring me with this, I'm so bored, he's surprised
	silly, crazy, crazy kid, drunk, someone out of his mind
	you are angry and you take out your tongue, offended, angry, someone who potters
	appetizing, slobbering, I do not know it, diamond tooth
	I'm sorry, it was unintentional, ashamed, blushing cheeks
	you're lying bro', Pinocchio, liar, lying person, someone who is about to lie
	hahaha, laughing, I cannot stop laughing, very funny
	flirty look, as Tipetupa is flirting with Csipike, wink
	you get on my nerves, you are angry, frown
	don't break my heart, disappointed, he/she does not love
	smirk, king
	little devil, devil, evil
	you are offended, griping while saying no, I do not know, I don't talk
	little saint, angel
	he is marvelled, shaking the head
	nailbiting, the little one is afraid, bites his nails
	mocking, not very well intentioned, you do some ploy, insinuating insult
	Kiss
	I am so cool, I can't bare it
	impatient, cautionary
	Proud

Table 2. The emoticons of Yahoo Messenger

Symbols	The expression of the symbol with character combination	The meaning of the symbol in English	The meaning of the symbol in Hungarian translation
	:)	Smiling	Mosolygós
	:-/	Confused	Zavaros
	:-o	Surprised	Meglepődött
	>:)	Devil	Ördög
	o:)	Angel	Angyal
	:-&	Sick	Beteg
	(:I	Yawn	Ásít
	@-)	Hypnotised	Hipnotizált
	:)]	On the phone	Telefonál
	:(	Sad	Szomorú
	: x	Love struck	Szerelembe esik
	x(	Angry	Mérges
	:((	Crying	Sír
	:-B	Nerd	Ideges
	:-$	Don't tell anyone	Ne mondd másnak
	=P~	Drooling	Ostobaságokat beszél
	:^o	Liar	Hazug
	:-c	Call me	Hívj fel
	;)	Winking	Kacsint
	:">	Blushing	Elpirul
	:>	Smug	Önelégült
	:))	Laughing	Nevető
	=;	Talk to the hand	Ne mondd!
	[-(	Not talking	Nem beszél
	:-?	Thinking	Gondolkodik
	:-w	Waiting	Várakozik
	~x(	At with end	Megáll az eszem
	:D	Big grin	Nagy vigyor
	:P	Tongue	Nyelves
	B-)	Cool	Merész
	:I	Straight face	Őszinte arc

	I-I	Sleepy	Álmos
	:o)	Clown	Bohóc
	#-o	D'oh!	Jaj
	:-<	Sigh	Sóhajt
	:-h	Waving	Integet
	;;)	Batting eyelashes	Csábosan pillogtat
	:-*	Kiss	Csók
	:-s	Worried	Nyugtalan
	/:)	Raised eyebrow	Felhúzott szemöldök
	8-I	Rolling eyes	Szemforgatás
	8-}	Silly	Ostoba
	=D>	Applause	Tapsol
	>:P	Phbbbt!	Kiöltött nyelv
	:-t	Time out	Lejárt az idő
	>:D<	Hug	Átkarol
	=((	Broken heart	Összetört szív
	#:-S	Whew	Hú, túl vagyok ezen is
	=))	Rolling the floor laughing	Fetrengve nevető
	L-)	Loser	Vesztes
	<:-P	Party	Buli
	:-SS	Nailbiting	Körmét rágó
	<):)	Cowboy	Marhapásztor
	8->	Day dreaming	Ábrándozó

Table 3. The emoticons of Windows Live Messenger (msn)

Symbol	The expression of the symbol with character combination	The meaning of the symbol
	:)	smiling face
	:D	face with big smile
	;)	Leering face
	:-o	surprized face
	: P	face showing tongue
	(H)	face smiling in swelter
	:@	angry face

	:S	embarrassed face
	:$	shy face
	:(	sad face
	:'(	crying face
	:I	disappointed face
	(A)	angel head
	8oI	snarling face
	8-I	Crazy face
	+o(	ill face
	:-#	secretive face
	:-*	whispering faces
	(6)	devil head
	^o)	ironic face
	(L)	red heart
	(U)	broken heart
	(M)	messenger
	(@)	cat head
	(&)	dog head
	(Sh)	snail
	(bah)	black sheep
	(S)	sleeping half moon
	(*)	star
	(#)	sun
	(R)	rainbow
	({)	left hug
	(})	right hug
	(K)	red lips
	(F)	red rose
	(W)	faded rose
	(O)	clock

Table 4. The socio-demographical profile of the interviewed

Informants	Gender	Age at the time of research	Year of birth	Place of birth	Actual residency	Highest level of education	Occupation at the time of research	Current occupation	How often do they use Yahoo Messenger?
B.Sz.	man	20	1986	Miskolc, Hungary	Budapest	high school	musician	musician	1 hour/day
B.L.	man	22	1984	Miercurea Nirajului	Carei	university degree	master studies	teacher	1 hour/week
G.E.	woman	23	1983	Miercurea Ciuc	Miercurea Ciuc	master studies	master studies	topographer	a few hours/day
H.T.	man	23	1983	Miercurea Ciuc	Cluj Napoca	university degree	interpreter	help desk team leader	all day
K.S.	woman	23	1983	Miercurea Ciuc	Greece/ Miercurea Ciuc	master studies	data analyst/master studies	animation	all day
K.L.	man	24	1982	Miercurea Ciuc	Miercurea Ciuc	university degree	unemployed	economist	4-5 hours/day
V.P.	woman	24	1982	Satu Mare	Carei	university degree	student	special education teacher	all day
B.E.	man	25	1981	Miercurea Ciuc	Miercurea Ciuc	vocational/specialized school	transporter	sales agent	1-4 hours/day
G.O.	man	27	1979	Miercurea Ciuc	Miercurea Ciuc	high school	radio presenter/student	radio presenter	8-10 hours/day
B.B.	man	28	1978	Miercurea Ciuc	Miercurea Ciuc	master studies	biologist	biologist	3 hours/day

Book Review

Manuela Preotesa and Iulian Comănescu:
Mapping Digital Media: Romania
Open Society Foundations, 2011

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The present review is focusing on key findings related to digital switch-over issues of the Romanian media landscape. The *Mapping Digital Media – Romania* Report, commissioned by the Open Society Foundations' Media Program and written by Manuela Preoteasa and Iulian Comănescu, with contributions from reporters Ioana Avădani and Adrian Vasilache, is part of the broader *Mapping Digital Media Project* covering 60 countries. The most important finding of the report is that in spite of its diversity, content quality of media products remains low in Romania. Another significant result of the analysis is that television has strengthened its supremacy as the main source of entertainment. The audiovisual news market is controlled by five large commercial players and the public service broadcaster. Private actors are dominating the news and the entertainment media market in Romania: Adevărul Holding, the Pro TV-holder Central European Media Enterprises, Realitatea-Cațavencu Group, Ringier and Intact Media Group. Meanwhile, the public service broadcaster is losing audiences, in spite of its leading role in the process of switch-over from analog to digital technologies. Digital switch-over has been delayed in Romania from 1 January 2012 to 17 June 2015.

The review is structured as follows: 1) Overview of the report – presenting briefly its scope and chapters; 2) Key findings of the report – summarizing issues of relevance for media analysts; 3) Conclusions and recommendations of the report

– following authors' ideas, and 4) Reviewer's conclusions – reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the report.

   Overview of the report

   The 92 pages extensive analysis on Romania's media landscape, with a focus on digital media, has been commissioned by the Open Society Foundations' Media Program to lead reporters Manuela Preoteasa and Iulian Comănescu, with contributions from reporters Ioana Avădani and Adrian Vasilache. Issued on 4 December 2010 and published on 1 May 2011 by Open Society Foundations, the report has been edited by Marius Dragomir and Mark Thompson from the Open Society Media Program.

   The Open Society Foundations' *Mapping Digital Media Project* (MDMP) covers 60 countries and it is aimed at assessing "how changes and continuity affect the media in different places, redefining the way they can operate sustainably while staying true to values of pluralism and diversity, transparency and accountability, editorial independence, freedom of expression and information, public service, and high professional standards." (Preoteasa and Comănescu, 2010: 4). The main issues followed by the MDMP are the switch-over from analog to digital broadcasting, growth of new media platforms as sources of news, and convergence of traditional broadcasting with telecommunications. The project examines how these changes impact the media system and its core mission of providing quality news about political, economic and social issues.

   Mapping Digital Media – Romania (MDMR) is structured in seven thematic chapters, followed by conclusions and recommendations. In the introductory section, MDMP description, country context and social indicators are briefly presented, along with an executive summary of the report. Each chapter has content related sub-sections and an assessment at the end.

   Chapter 1 – "Media Consumption: the Digital Factor" examines the role played by digitization on the Romanian news market and presents consumers' preferences when it comes to media platforms. It also provides an analysis of the main news providers in Romania and the dynamic of key media actors.

   Chapter 2 – "Digital Media and Public or State-Administered Broadcasters" focuses on the public service and state institutions and their roles in shaping media landscape and the switch-over from traditional, analog technologies to digital ones. Policies and practices are also highlighted in terms of public service provision.

   Chapter 3 – "Digital Media and Society" takes a closer look at user-generated content and digital activism. The chapter is dedicated to presenting the Romanian mainstream blogosphere and it is the most judgmental part of the report, reflecting mainstream journalists' contempt when it comes to validating alternative sources of news.

Chapter 4 – "Digital Media and Journalism" is dedicated to assessing the impact digitization has had on journalists and newsrooms. A particular attention is paid to investigative journalism, cultural diversity and to the relationship between media and politics.

Chapter 5 – "Digital Media and Technology" focuses on technical issues related to spectrum, digital gatekeeping and telecommunications. It also examines the legal framework of policy-making in Romania pulled by key telecommunication market actors and pushed by European Union (EU) integration requirements.

Chapter 6 – "Digital Business" analyzes ownership, media funding and media business models used in Romania, with a focus on major players at a country level. It does not discuss local content creation or the emergent community based small media businesses.

Chapter 7 – "Policies, Laws, and Regulators" presents key actors responsible for making the media wheel spin, and its regulatory framework. Access and affordability, legal provision on public interest, participatory processes, laws on internet news and governmental interferences in the media market are discussed on a critical tone.

After this thematic overview, key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the MDMR report will be discussed in detail.

Key findings of the report

The most important finding of the MDMR research is that in spite of its diversity, content quality of media products remains low in Romania: "With no tradition of good-quality print media and the non-existence of a newspaper market in rural areas (where almost half of the population lives), many Romanians remain totally indifferent to news. Media literacy remains low" (Preoteasa and Comănescu, 2010: 6).

Another significant result of the analysis is that television has strengthened its supremacy as the main source of entertainment. As an effect of the economic crisis that hit Romania hard in 2008-2009, the number of those watching television has increased, as well as the time spent in consuming infotainment through this channel, significantly above the EU average.

The audiovisual news market is controlled by five large commercial players and the public service broadcaster. Private actors are dominating the news and the entertainment media market in Romania: Adevărul Holding,[1] the Pro TV-holder Central European Media Enterprises,[2] Realitatea-Cațavencu Group,[3] Ringier[4] and

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[1] Controlled by the Romanian billionaire Dinu Patriciu
[2] A U.S. media conglomerate co-owned by billionaire Ronald S. Lauder and Time Warner media giant.
[3] Owned by the controversial Sorin Ovidiu Vîntu's children
[4] Owning tabloid *Libertatea*, women's magazine *Unica*, daily *Evenimentul Zilei* and weekly *Capital*.

Intact Media Group.[5] Meanwhile, the public service broadcaster is losing audiences, in spite of its leading role in the process of switch-over from analog to digital technologies: "this process turns out to provide yet another opportunity for the public service broadcasters to make fresh investments in a non-transparent way" (Preoteasa and Comănescu, 2010: 7).

Digitization of broadcasting did not improve the quality of media content. It was never high, and it is declining – states the report critically: "[w]ith corporations and politicians monopolizing the communications sphere, the public interest is less well served and investigative journalism is becoming an expensive, sometimes inconvenient activity" (Preoteasa and Comănescu, 2010: 7).

With one third of Romania's households connected, internet publishing has grown faster than the advertising industry's capability to keep up. News portals like HotNews.ro and EvZ.ro are monetizing their web traffic and attract advertising revenues and investment from major media owners.

Preoteasa and Comănescu estimate a number of 200 influential Romanian blogs with more than 10,000 visitors a month, but "they rarely cover politics and serious issues"[6] (2010: 7). The internet has had a major influence on journalism though: the emergence of independent news websites and journalistic blogs is the most important gain brought by digitization to the Romanian media landscape.

With the audiovisual space dominated by a few powerful groups, MDMR lead reporters recommend more transparency and a multiple stakeholder approach to the digitization process in Romania: "Digital licensing should be open and transparent, and the public should be informed about what digitization will mean for them. With the public moving online for entertainment, news and information, the internet should remain minimally regulated while self-regulation, with civil society involvement, should be actively encouraged" (Preoteasa and Comănescu, 2010: 8).

Key findings of each thematic chapter will be presented separately, as follows:

Chapter 1 – "Media Consumption: the Digital Factor": Newspaper circulation is low in Romania: just over 1% of the 9.7 million[7] economically active inhabitants of the country buy a good quality periodical. The best selling periodicals are, according to 2009 data, in order of circulation: *Adevărul, Jurnalul Național, România Liberă, Evenimentul Zilei*, and *Gândul*.

Television remains the main source of information for the population, with an average viewing time above three hours a day. In 2009, more than 96 percent of the 7.32 million households had at least one television set and half of those households owned two or even more sets, according to the MDMR report (2010: 14).

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[5] Comprising Antena 1, Antena2, Antena 3 TV channels, majority owned by politician Dan Voiculescu

[6] A tone of contempt to be heard from mainstream, "serious" journalists towards "less serious" ones, such as bloggers – reviewer's note.

[7] From a population of 21.68 million inhabitants, according to the 2002 census – reviewer's note.

Comparatively, only 46% of the households had a computer in the same year, and a third had broadband internet connectivity.[8] "The internet has offered media consumers an immense opportunity for interaction between the public and content producers, and for contributing to published content. Prior to the ascent of the internet, interactivity was restricted mainly to sending letters to the editor or calling radio and television shows. This is one of the main factors behind the rise of the internet. Digital media at the same time has opened the doors to a new form of pressure that readers can put on news producers through their comments or blog posts" – according to Preoteasa and Comănescu (2010: 27).

Chapter 2 – "Digital Media and Public or State-Administered Broadcasters": In Romania, two national broadcasters are publicly funded through the compulsory television and radio fee paid by the population and businesses: National Company for Television and National Company for Radio Communications. Taxpayers also fund a news agency called Agerpress, set up in 1989 – successfully competed by more professionally managed private actors Mediafax (created in 1991) and NewsIn (run since 2006).

According to the report authors (2010: 35), interactivity remains low in the public service broadcasting and there are issues of concern when it comes to transparent and accountable management: "[t]h e existing public service provisions ensure the independence of the public media outlets only formally. The same could be said about their mission to educate and inform people in a balanced manner. This comes from the rigidity characterizing the structures of the public service institutions."

Chapter 3 – "Digital Media and Society": The most popular forms of user generated content, according to the MDMR report, are comments on popular news websites and on independent forums, followed by blogs, "but the quality of debate is low. Andrei Pleşu, a well-known philosopher and founder of Romania's most influential intellectual weekly, *Dilema*, has repeatedly criticized the quality of comments on online articles"[9] (Preoteasa and Comănescu, 2010: 36).

The largest independent news website is HotNews.ro, with 1.3 million unique visitors per month in June 2010. As for the high traffic media-operated websites, the front-runners are Libertatea.ro, the website of the tabloid daily *Libertatea*, with 1.68 million unique visitors, and Realitatea.net, with 1.66 million unique visitors, run by the Realitatea TV news station. However, none of these news websites equal Yahoo!'s traffic of 6.8 million unique visitors. Measured by audience reach in July 2010, the top five websites in Romania were social networking and blogging platforms: Yahoo.com (68.8%), Facebook.com (32.2%), Blogspot.com

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[8] Broadband penetration rate in Romanian households has grown from 30.36% in December 2008 to 36.82% in December 2010 (ANCOM, 2011: 57), still among the lowest in the EU – reviewer's note.

[9] Again, an elitist, intellectualist tone of the discourse – reviewer's note.

(29.3%), Hi5.com (26.1%) and Wordpress.com (22.1%). Measured by millions of unique visitors, the most popular Romanian websites in June 2010 were social networking and video sharing sites, an IT forum and tabloids: Hi5.com (4.14), Trilulilu.ro (2.83), Forum.softpedia.com (2.61), Libertatea.ro (1.68) and Realitatea.net (1.65).

Digital activism is more successful at a personal initiative level and more visible in political campaigns, ignited and sustained by parties.

As for the blogosphere and other Web 2.0 platforms, Preoteasa and Comănescu (2010: 42) consider that they "seldom generate new, original information in Romania. However, a significant number of bloggers have reached a certain audience by contextualizing and criticizing the content of the traditional media. Some of the blogs, maintained by journalists or former journalists, give audiences a quick glimpse into the newsrooms of the mainstream television stations or newspapers."[10]

Chapter 4 – "Digital Media and Journalism": By providing rich and well organized information, digitization has improved journalists' work. However, it had a negative impact on the quality of reporting, according to Preoteasa and Comănescu (2010: 49): "Journalists seldom go for the news: they prefer to have the information coming to them through emails, RSS feeds, press agency software, mobile phones, all-news television stations, and so forth. The selection of relevant information has become more valued than in-depth investigations".

Diversity can benefit from digitization, but the internet also offers a niche for intolerant, racist discourses and for manipulative political propaganda.

However, blogs can function as "natural antibodies of democracy", according to Comănescu (2009: 146) and, along with social networking sites, act as catalysts of digital mobilization.

Chapter 5 – "Digital Media and Technology": Cable operators are the main news carriers in Romania, since the analog terrestrial broadcasting has steadily decreased and the new, digital broadcasting operators are behind the schedule in catching up with the EU 2007 Audiovisual Media Service Directive on digitization. According to the Romanian government's digitization strategy, public debates should be organized in order to clarify tender procedures, guarantees on the functionality of the technical equipments for digital broadcasting, and the cost of building such infrastructure. Public campaigns aimed at informing population on the impact of digitization should also be organized – as digitization strategy prescribes. On a practical level though, little has happened, as Preoteasa and Comănescu noted critically.

Analog switch-off, initially set for 1 January 2012, has been delayed for 17 June 2015 by the Romanian government: the explanation was the difficult socio-

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[10] A tone of contempt, when it comes to new media outlets – reviewer's note.

economic situation of the country and international regulatory framework. According to the final act of the Regional Radio-Communication Conference in Geneva (2006), the final shut-down date for terrestrial analog broadcasting in Europe should be 17 June 2015, not the EU-Directive set 1 January 2012 – Romanian authorities justifying their decision on digitization delay.

Competition over digital spectrum allocation is just beginning, and therefore difficult to assess its level of transparency and multi-stakeholder involvement. It is difficult to assess power relations of operators properly, Preoteasa and Comănescu explain (2010: 55): "[o]ne major problem with the telecoms market is the full confidentiality of the fees paid by cable operators to broadcasters. The lack of transparency over funding in the media industry is seriously detrimental to understanding the degree of market concentration."

Chapter 6 – "Digital Business": Ownership is one of the most critical business issues to be regulated, when it comes to such a lucrative industry as telecommunications and media. Concentration of ownership in broadcasting is measured by the broadcasters' audience shares. The MDMR report highlights that according to the Romanian Audiovisual Law, due to continuing digitization, the dominant position has been redefined: an entity, individual or company is considered dominant in shaping public opinion if its average share of the media market exceeds 30 percent. Since television is the major source of information in Romania, it is important to note that there is no nationwide license for commercial television stations: they operate by accumulating local licenses. As for the commercial radio sector, only Europa FM and Info Pro hold nationwide licenses.

Romanian media business is dominated by the "big five" private actors Adevărul Holding, Central European Media Enterprises, Realitatea-Cațavencu Group, Ringier and Intact Media Group. In addition to these large groups, numerous niche publishers operate successfully on the Romanian media market: Sanoma Romania and Edipresse, a joint venture of Edipresse and Axel Springer, publish several magazines each. German ProSiebenSat.1 runs two television stations, Prima TV and Kiss TV, and two radio stations, Kiss FM and Magic FM. Dan Adamescu, a media entrepreneur, bought the daily newspaper România liberă in August 2010. The French company Lagardere owns the sole private nationwide radio network in Romania, Europa FM. Independent digital players Hotnews.ro, Netbridge and Internet Corp hold significant and expanding shares of the digital media market since 2004.

Chapter 7 – "Policies, Laws, and Regulators": Since digital switch-over has been postponed from 1 January 2012 to 17 June 2015, the framework of policy, law and regulation is difficult to be assessed. Although public debates and raising awareness campaigns on digitization are missing, it is unlikely, according to report authors (2010: 81) that restrictions on civil rights and liberties would be entailed in the regulatory framework. Digital activism is visibly non-political and

policy-related issues seem to be stirred by political parties rather than civil society actors, MDMR report concludes.

Conclusions and recommendations of the report

Positive aspects of the Romanian media digitization process include: a basic regulatory framework has been adopted to guide transition to the terrestrial digital broadcasting; most of the media outlets have launched online editions and several independent news portals appeared; with interactivity increasing in online environments, diversity of opinions and news has increased; media actors are less dependent on hidden state subsidies for advertising.

Negative aspects of the digitization process are: the delay of analog switch-off from 1 January 2012 to 17 June 2015; political interference with the supposedly independent telecommunication regulator, ANCOM[11]'s activity; the lack of clear provisions of transparency when it comes to media funding and ownership; a high level of media concentration.

At the recommendation section, the MDMR report states that they are under public review and consultation and no draft is provided. However, there are several prescriptive conclusions across the report that may be highlighted as recommendations: a more open and transparent regulation process and framework is needed; digitization process should speed up in order to catch up with EU directives; political interference with media and telecommunication regulations should be avoided.

Reviewer's conclusions

Mapping Digital Media: Romania is a dense, well documented and structured analysis of the Romanian media- and telecommunications market on its transition from analog to digital technologies. Authors are accountable experts of the news generation process and its regulatory framework. The insiders' perspective, although a strength, it is sometimes a weakness: reporters can hardly disconnect from their mainstream journalism context and seem to be judgmental in a series of new media issues. Their discourse has a tone of elitist contempt when it comes to user generated content evaluation, and gives little space to generationally shaped, online civic activism strengthening globally since 2009.

Therefore this report should be read together with more neutral approaches to the Romanian media digitization process.

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[11] ANCOM – Agenţia Naţională pentru Administrare şi Reglementare în Comunicaâii (National Agency for Regulating Communications)

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Book Review

Alexandru-Brăduț Ulmanu:
*Cartea fețelor (**The Book of Faces**)*
Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 2011

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We have entered the era of social media. This pronouncement might seem far-fetched for some, though it is common for communication theorists to link new communication technologies and methods to era turnouts. The basic assumption of most related theories is that the methods and habits of communications define our basic social constructions. Alexandru-Brăduț Ulmanu also refers to a revolutionary change in the subtitle of his work: "Facebook". The phrasing: "Facebook revolution in the social medium" points to the fact that the appearance of Facebook and other community websites have radically changed and keep shaping important sections of social life.

Ulmanu's aim was a scientifically acknowledgeable, but primarily entertaining book about the Facebook revolution. In his words, his book is neither an academic work, nor a textbook. (p. 23.). The inspiration for the book was the amazing story unfolding by the appearance of Facebook and other social sites which the writer tries to document and present through examples, persons, happenings. This design shows in the buildup of the book and the presentation of topics. Ulmanu's book is not a dry, theoretical commentary about social media though clarification of concepts and theoretical approach of propositions is also present. It is more important to him to present the appearance and life-shaping effect of social media in its event-like existence. For this reason the answers to controversies and questions held important by him are often presented through

interesting stories, his references frequently use newspaper, TV-show quotations, and examples. Since most of the stories presented are of Romanian quotidian and public life, we get a kind of a sample of how social media affects Romanian society. This style fits best for Ulmanu who is a practicing journalist also teaching journalism at the Bucharest College and is an international trainer in different programs set up for journalists.

The book comprises three parts. The first presents the history, features and mechanisms of social media, the second discusses the questions of effect and relation, while the third part analyses the actual reshaping ability of social media.

The traits of social media can be defined by its differences to mass media. These differences bring Ulmanu to separate the era of mass media and that of social media. Ulmanu adopts A.M. Kaplan's and M Haenlein's definition and discernments regarding social media. According to this the basic difference between the two types of media is that while mass media is actuated by professional journalists who have limited space to post information selected by its newsworthiness, social media has unlimited space filled by the users themselves (user generated content) according to their own interests. The most important fulfillments of social media are collaboration-claiming projects, blogs, content-generating communities, networks of online socializing, virtual worlds and virtual communities.

The book presents in detail how Facebook came to be using the vast number of pertinent writings. By Ulmanu's reconstruction we witness a success-story which started as an altruistic movement. This success story has already been retold in a novel and a movie. The Internet is full of avant-garde initiatives which were still able to effect radical changes. In the author's opinion, the Facebook story is one of these.

The success of Facebook is not due to coincidental initiative. One of the most interesting chapters in Ulmanu's book is the one explaining this success with the concepts of neurobiology. The hypothesis of the social brain explains that in order for the species to survive the brain mobilizes significant amount of energy to recognize others' emotions and likenesses (resemblances). The brain automatically responds to these signs sent by others. The Facebook, which could be regarded as the interactive network of our social connections, relies on this feature of our brain. The most important outcome of the Facebook revolution is that it has changed the nature of the internet which has started to become a network of human connections instead of just a network of computers.

The existence of Facebook makes us rethink some of our basic concepts we use to describe social collaborations. The book analyses the concepts of virtual-real and that of friendship, these being the notions applicable to the Facebook nexus. This nexus does resemble the real-life acquaintance relation-system but it is also different from it. Reading Ulmanu's examples and its explanations, the different

characters of relations is conspicuous, as well as the permeability of the virtual-real, friend and not-friend borders. The existence in the nexus realizes its own inherent laws. The most important among these is that we shape the network, the number and density of relations and our own place within the network. The effect of this is that the network shapes us too, its effect depending on our position within the network. Social networks have emergent features which cannot be deduced from the features of its components. The community actions initiated on Facebook frequently surpass their initial goal which proves the previous statement.

The third part of the book analyses those successful mechanisms that were generated by social media in different areas of social life. Highlighted areas referred to by Ulmanu are economics, politics and journalism. The book naturally also refers to the Egyptian uprising in which Facebook relations had a great organizing part. New communication platforms ease interactions that otherwise would need great organizing and coordinating effort. Even so, motivation and timeliness are two factors that are also needed for the Facebook initiated actions to happen. It is also important that the posted messages to be consequent and honest as well as the recipient parties to be adequately chosen.

One of the most important effects of social media is that it increases the power of the consumer/customer who can exercise a better control over the services offered. One's reactions and opinions quickly travel through the network igniting similar reactions. Different companies quickly realized the possibilities of this and do count on it frequently operating their own social network as well as it is also rewarding for politicians to appear on social media pages.

Ulmanu's book is characterized by a certain kind of technological optimism which is mainly driven by a belief in the user and it emanates the author's commitment to social media. Though some negative effects are highlighted, the final conclusion is quite clear: in the complex nexus of social life social media makes the individual more important. This effect, though still a novelty and blurry, is nonetheless creditable. Ulmanu analyses in depth the questions relating to this transition from mass media to social media. His examples are enlightening and interesting though it does happen that, from time to time, he makes assumptions based on singular, sensational cases. Ultimately the book is what the author intended it to be: a documentary on an interesting phenomenon.

Book Review

Zoltán Rostás: Strada Latina 8. Monografişti şi echipieri gustieni la Fundaţia Culturală Regală „Principele Carol"
Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing House, 2009

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Zoltán Rostás's book, titled *8 Latin Str. Gustian Monographers and Team Members at the Royal Cultural Foundation "Prince Charles"* is a mandatory reading for the social science researcher who wants to adequately understand the phenomenon of the Gustian School of Sociology, and an exciting and vivid one for the reader generally interested in Romanian interwar society.

The Gustian School of Sociology is a fascinating phenomenon, especially when it is approached via the "alternative" instruments of oral history, as Zoltán Rostás shows in his books. Beyond the chronological institutional history, whereby we can follow how a project of monographic research and social reform, inspired by professor Gusti's ideas, takes shape, grows and eventually ends, and beyond the organizational approach of the School, whereby we grasp the group's functioning and its relationships with the state and various other institutions, the oral history perspective provides the essential advantage of perceiving the experience of the phenomenon through the testimony of its own members.

The preoccupation that constituted the basis of this research project that encompassed almost two decades was the following: Do we really know everything about the Sociological Monographic School led by Dimitrie Gusti? Gusti's partial recuperation during a period of relative ideological relaxation of the communist regime, and a series of works on the subject, as well as the "homage" approach of the topic, which actually eradicates all its vivid aspects and places it in

the dull insectarium of mythologies and historical ornament setting, gave the impression that nothing new could be written about the Sociological Monographic School.

However, this impression is nothing but false, as the books of interviews with the School's everyday "heroes", published by Rostás, clearly and undeniably show. These conversations started in 1984 – thus, to some extent, "clandestinely", i.e. not meant for academic publishing – with the survivors of a historical period of great ideological and social changes and challenges. The interviews with the great sociologist H. H. Stahl (Rostás, 2000), with the monographers involved in the first period of field research (Rostás, 2003) or with the Gustian School disciples (Rostás, 2006) brought to light life histories that enrich, nuance and open multiple perspectives on the phenomenon itself, as well as on the interwar Romanian society (both rural and urban), on the academic life of the time, etc.

The volume *8 Latin Street* tackles the period when Gusti's School reached the highest institutionalization degree. If, during the first period, the Gustian sociological monograph was a pioneering endeavor and the stress was especially on sociological research, gradually the emphasis started to be more on "cultural work" or on social "missionarism," in which the voluntary student teams actively intervened in the social life of interwar villages.

More than a "cultural activism" undertaken at random, Gusti's and his collaborators' activities tended to become public service, when the Gustian project turned into a "Social Service" stipulated by law, right before the outbreak of World War II. Briefly, this is the stage when, some of the old members of the Gustian School and new collaborators – now working for the Royal Cultural Foundation "Prince Charles" –, attempted a form of soft social engineering aimed at compensating for the serious social problems confronting Romanian villages. This "experiment", carried out in King's Charles II interwar Romania, was also meant to constitute a means to compete with the Legionary Movement in its quest to attract the youth eager to be valued and involved by the state in the work of "inner edification of Greater Romania."

The volume comprises interviews with key-people who were part of the institutional infrastructure of the Social Service cultural teams, as well as ordinary people, students for whom, at the time, it was mandatory to accomplish this service in one of Professor Dimitrie Gusti's student teams.

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