Acta Universitatis Sapientiae

Communicatio

Volume 6, 2019

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
Scientia Publishing House

Contents

COMMUNICATION THEORIES

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio, **6** (2019) 7–16

DOI: 10.2478/auscom-2019-0001

A Set-Theoretic Approach to Communication

Ionel NARIȚA
West University of Timişoara
Timişoara, Romania
e-mail: ionel.narita@e-uvt.ro

Abstract: During a communication act, the source sends a message to one or more addressees, *T*, using a channel and a code, *D*, so that the message will not be received by certain members of a population, *X*. It follows that a communication act can be represented through the system (T, D, X), where *T*, *D*, and *X* are parts of a population, *T* is not empty, and *T* and *X* are disjoint sets. Using such a model, we can approach some issues of the communication sciences from a set-theoretic perspective. In this study, the main types and effectiveness conditions of the communication acts are investigated.

Keywords: communication models, types of communication, effective communication

1. Set-Theoretic Modelling of Communication

The set theory is used for modelling different phenomena in various domains (Sneed, 1981: 451). We aim to extend this method and to build a model of communication inside of the set theory (Schneider: 2012: 10). Such an enterprise runs through the following steps:

1) The act of communication is defined. (1)
2) Using the definition, the act of communication is analysed through specific terms.
3) The extensional relations among terms resulting from the analysis of communication are displayed.
4) The extensions of terms and the relations among them are represented through the means of the set theory.
5) Specific issues of communication science are approached inside of the set-theoretical model (Schneider, 2012: 42).

We define the act of communication (Narula, 2006: 2) as the act of a sender, *E*, who sends a message, *M*, towards one or more addressees, *T*, (Huang–Wu, 2012: 116), using a communication channel, *C*, and a code or a language, *L*. Also, the sender could have the intention that the message do not reach certain individuals. For this reason, we have to recognize, besides addressees, the category of the excluded people, *X*. For instance, if *E* sends a letter to *T*, it is possible that *E* does not wishes that the letter be received by *X*.

The used channel allows the people from *C* to receive the message, and those who are able to decipher the code, *L*, will understand it. We call the domain, *D*, of an act of communication the intersection between *C* and *L* – namely, the set of people who can receive and understand the message, D = CL.

We have analysed an act of communication (Noth, 2011: 203) through the following terms:

1) Sender (or source), *E*, who is unique, sends message *M*. (2)
2) Addressees (or targets), *T*, to whom the message is destined.
3) Excluded people, *X*, who should not receive the message.
4) Domain, *D*, including the people who can receive the message.

Taking into account the extensions of those terms as parts of a certain population P, we can extensionally define the act of communication inside of the set theory (Sneed, 1981: 459):

An act of communication, *A*, is the system of classes (T, X, D), (3)
wherefore:
1) *T*, *X*, and *D* are parts of population P.
2) *T* is not an empty class.
3) *T* and *X* are disjoint classes.

Class *T* cannot be empty since when *E* intends to communicate he sends the message to somebody; therefore, if there were no addressees, we could not speak about a communication act. The classes of addressees and excluded people are disjoint because it would be contradictory that the same person be and not be the destination of the message during the same act of communication. Using the relations (3), the next theorem can be proved:

For an act of communication, *X* is a strict part of *P*. (4)
$T \cup X \subset P$.
$T \neq \emptyset$.
$TX = \emptyset$.
$X \neq P$.

The acts of communication can be represented calling for the same methods used for representing sets. For instance, we may use the graphical representation where extensions are displayed through closed areas inside of a rectangle, corresponding to population *P*. The ellipses corresponding to the terms used for analysing a communication act are so drawn to emphasize the relations among their extensions:

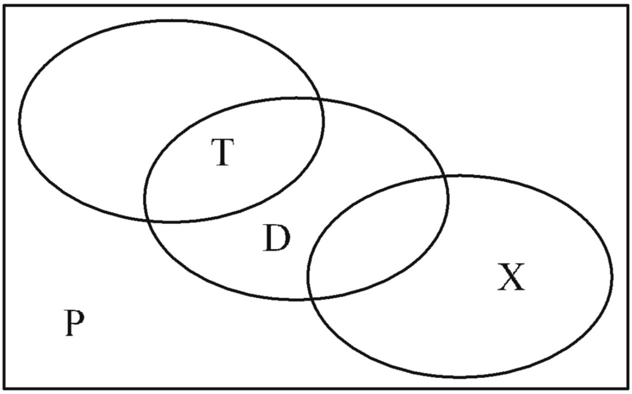


Figure 1. *Act of communication*

Using the algebraic method, the variables or parameters derived from the analysis of a communication act are connected through certain formulas. Generally, if *d*, *t*, and *x* were three some parts of the set *P*, then they would satisfy the relation:

$$dtx \cup dtx^* \cup dt^*x \cup dt^*x^* \cup d^*tx \cup d^*tx^* \cup d^*t^*x \cup d^*t^*x^* = P \quad (5)$$

If we ask the variables from (5) to follow the conditions (3), we obtain a system of relations representing an act of communication:

$$dtx^* \cup dt^*x \cup dt^*x^* \cup d^*tx^* \cup d^*t^*x \cup d^*t^*x^* = P \quad (6)$$
$$dtx^* \cup d^*tx^* \neq \varnothing$$
$$dt^*x \cup d^*t^*x \neq P$$

The relations (6) can be also written in the fallowing fashion:

$$(d \cup d^*)(tx^* \cup t^*x \cup t^*x^*) = P, \text{ where:} \quad (7)$$
$$tx^* \neq \varnothing, \text{ and}$$
$$t^*x \neq P.$$

2. Forms of Communication

We may classify the acts of communication using the criterion of the values that the variables *x* or *t* can take. Let us review some types of communication acts. If *x* is the empty class (it takes the smallest value), then we can speak about open communication acts. In this case, there are no excluded people, and any member of population *P* can be a receiver without the interests of the sender to be affected. The open, or transparent communication acts are described through systems like (t, ∅, d), and the equations (7) are satisfied if P is not void:

$$(d \cup d^*)(t \cup t^*) = P \quad (8)$$
$t \neq \emptyset$ and
$P \neq \emptyset$.

We may graphically represent an open communication act as it follows:

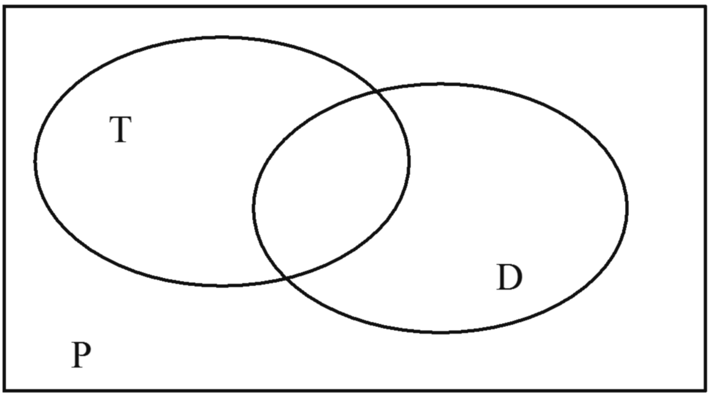


Figure 2. *Transparent act of communication*

If *x* takes the maximum value, x = t*, then we get a closed, or opaque communication act. Any member of population *P* is either a destination or an excluded member. This time, from the sender's perspective, the message should be received only by the addressees (Narula, 2006: 12). The closed communication acts correspond to the system (t, t*, d). The relations (7) take the form:

$$(d \cup d^*)(t \cup t^*) = P, \text{ where:} \quad (9)$$
$t \neq \emptyset$,
$x \neq \emptyset$, and
$x = t^*$.

Their graphic representation is:

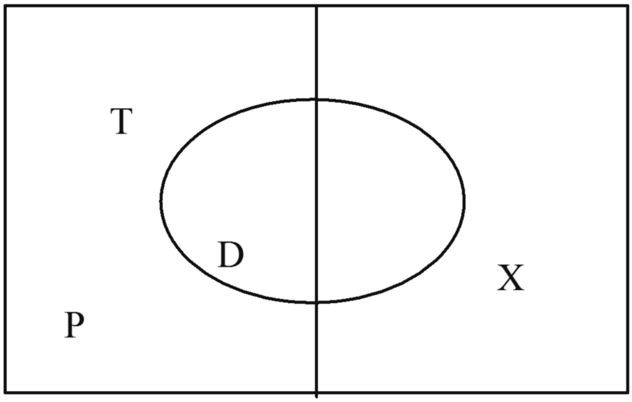


Figure 3. *Opaque act of communication*

In the case of the public, or mass communication, the addressees are not individualized; therefore, at the limit, the target of the communication act can be the entire population, t = P. It follows for that kind of communication that there are no excluded people, x = ∅, and a mass communication act is represented by the system (P, ∅, d) so that:

$$(d \cup d^*)P = P, \text{ where:} \quad (10)$$
$$P \neq \varnothing.$$

We reach the expected result that, for public communication acts, *P* cannot be void. On the other hand, public communication acts are opened, or transparent, since there are no excluded people for them. The graphical representation of these acts of communication is the following:

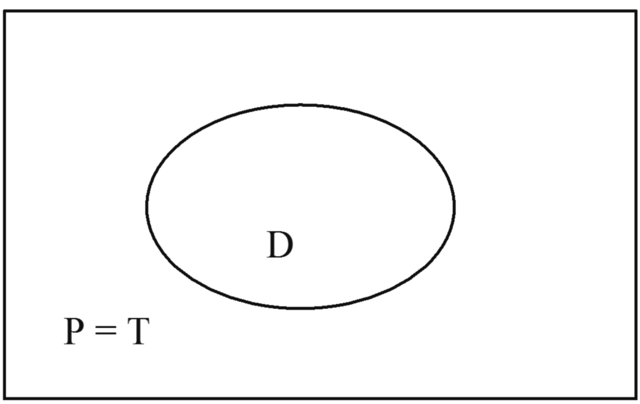


Figure 4. *Mass communication act*

If *t* is the empty class, we cannot speak of communication, as we previously saw. Hence, for $t = \varnothing$, an act of non-communication is performed (Narula, 2006: 7). This time, according to the intention of the sender, the message is destined to no one, and it is not sent. The corresponding system is $(\varnothing, x, \varnothing)$ or, for $x = P$, the system $(\varnothing, P, \varnothing)$ represents an absolute non-communication act, when every member of population P should not receive the message. Graphically, an act of non-communication looks as follows:

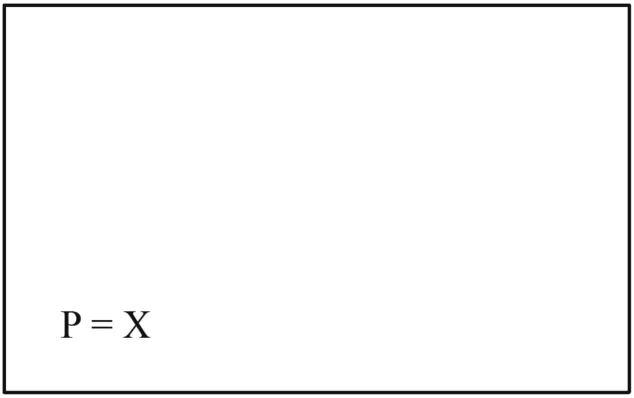


Figure 5. *Non-communication act*

3. Effective Communication

The act of receiving a message throughout a population is independent from the sending of the message; hence, every member of the population could receive the message. However, only the members of domain *D* have the ability to receive message *M*. Indeed, the members of *P* outside of *D* do not comprehend the message, or they do not decipher or understand it. Therefore, if we use variable *r* for the class of the receivers, the composition between the acts of communication and the receiving of a message is represented through the system (t, x, d, r) so that:

$$(dr \cup dr^* \cup d^*r^*)(tx^* \cup t^*x \cup t^*x^*) = P, \text{ and } t \neq \varnothing. \tag{11}$$

The values of the receivers' class run from the empty class, when no one receives the message sent during an act of communication, to *D*, when every member of the domain receives the message. The acts of sending and receiving of a message have the following graphic representation:

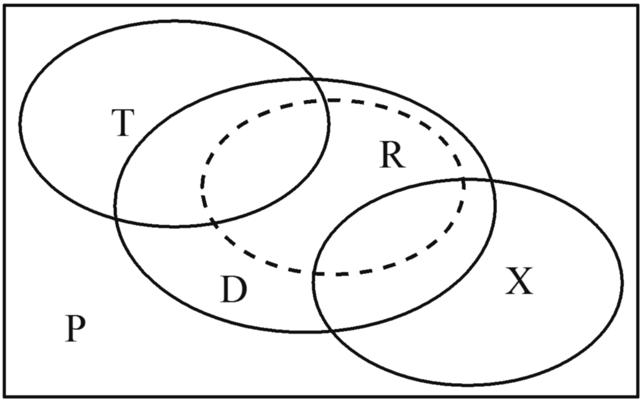


Figure 6. *Sending and receiving messages*

The goal of the sender is that all addressees and no excluded people should receive the sent message. If the goal of the sender is achieved, we say that the communication act is *effective*. Therefore, the conditions of the effectiveness for an act of communication are the following:

C1. $t \subset r$, (12)
C2. $x \subset r^*$.

The sender can accomplish these conditions only using the domain since he cannot control the receivers. Concerning *C1*, he disposes only of a necessary condition, according to the inference: $r \subset d$, $t \subset r/t \subset d$. We notice that since the first premise is a tautology, the second, which is just the condition *C1*, is sufficient to infer the relation expressed by conclusion. In other words, in order that *C1* be satisfied, the domain has to be extended enough to include all addressees. If there were addressees outside of the domain, *C1* would certainly not be accomplished, and the communication act would not be effective. In turn, if the domain includes all addressees, it is possible that *C1* be satisfied, but we cannot be sure about that. The sender has no means to certainly satisfy *C1*; therefore, it has no possibility to perform an effective act of communication with certainty.

On the other hand, *C2* can be satisfied since there is a sufficient condition for *C2* that can be fulfilled by the sender. This time, he may use the inference: $r \subset d$, $x \subset d^*/x \subset r^*$, where the condition *C2* is the conclusion, and the first premise is a tautology; therefore, the second premise is a sufficient condition for *C2*. To satisfy *C2*, it is sufficient that the sender will maintain the class of excluded people outside of the domain. For instance, the sender could use a channel tight enough so that the excluded persons will remain outside of its area, or he could introduce a code so designed that the excluded people cannot decipher it. Therefore, there is no strategy to guarantee for the sender the fulfilment of his communicative ends.

Even if a communication act is not fully effective, it can have different degrees of effectiveness (Cobley–Schultz, 2013: 14). We can define various methods to calculate the effectiveness degree, starting from the system of relations satisfied by an effective act of communication (Tindale, 2013: 163). Taking into account that effectiveness does not depend on *d*, we arrive at the following relations of an effective communication act:

$$rtx^* \cup rt^*x^* \cup r^*t^*x \cup r^*t^*x^* = P \tag{13}$$
$$t \neq \varnothing$$
$$x \neq P.$$

The graphic representation of the effective communication act is the following:

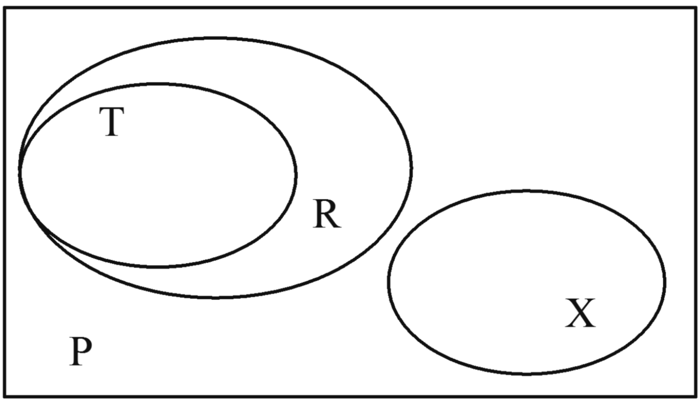


Figure 7. *Effective communication act*

From equation (13), it follows:

$$rtx^* \cup rt^*x^* \cup r^*t^*x \cup r^*t^*x^* = P \tag{14}$$
$$rx^*(t \cup t^*) \cup r^*t^*(x \cup x^*) = P$$
$$rx^* \cup r^*t^* = P.$$

Since the expression on the left is closer to *P*, as the degree of effectiveness is higher, we can evaluate the effectiveness degree using the formula:

$$G = \mathrm{card}(rx^* \cup r^*t^*)/N, \tag{15}$$
where *card* means the cardinal number of a set, and *N* is the number of the members of *P*.

There are many cases when the amount of population *P* remains unknown. Therefore, another formula, where *N* is replaced by the number of addressees and excluded people, is also useful. We notice that for an effective act of communication, remembering that *r* and *x* should be disjoint classes, it takes place:

$$rt \cup r^*x \cup t^*x^* = P \tag{16}$$
$$rt \cup r^*x = P(t \cup x)$$
$$rt \cup r^*x = t \cup x$$

Going further, we can infer the searched formula for the effectiveness degree:

$$G = \mathrm{card}(rt \cup r^*x)/\mathrm{card}(t \cup x) \tag{17}$$

Using these formulas, we can calculate the effectiveness degree for different categories of communication acts. For instance, a public communication act is more effective if the number of receivers is greater:

$$G_{public} = \mathrm{card}(rP \cup r^*\varnothing)/\mathrm{card}(P \cup \varnothing) = R/N, \tag{18}$$
where *R* represents the number of the receivers.

The sender can acquire a greater efficiency, making the domain larger to increase the number of possible receivers. He can use a channel accessible to any member of population *P* and a code adapted to that population. For instance, the effectiveness degree of a television transmission is the same as the rating of that transmission if the population consists of the owners of receiving devices. In this situation, the rating of that emission is just the ratio between the number of receivers and the number of the owners of receiving devices (Wimmer–Dominick 1987: 308).

Using the above formulas, we can also calculate the effectiveness degree of a non-communication act, (∅, P, d):

$$G_{noncom} = \mathrm{card}(r\varnothing \cup r^*P)/\mathrm{card}(\varnothing \cup P) = (N - R)/N. \tag{19}$$

If *E* sends no message, i.e. if *d* is void, then *r* is also void, and the act of non-communication has its highest effectiveness. Instead, although *E* intends to keep the message hidden, but he sends it in some way, there are chances that the message be received, and the effectiveness will be lower.

When all members of *P* receive the message, namely N = R, the effectiveness degree can be calculated using the following formula:

$$G = \mathrm{card}(Px^* \cup \varnothing t^*)/N = (N - \mathrm{card}(x))/N = (R - \mathrm{card}(x))/R. \quad (20)$$

The highest efficiency is reached if there are no excluded people for an open act of communication. Instead, in similar conditions, closed communication acts have the lowest effectiveness degree.

If all elements of P do not receive the message, the effectiveness degree is given by the formula:

$$G = \mathrm{card}(\varnothing x^* \cup Pt^*)/N = (N - \mathrm{card}(t))/N \quad (21)$$

This time, the highest efficiency is reached when t is empty – namely, for the non-communication acts. The public communication acts are not effective in such a case; their effectiveness degree is zero.

References

Cobley, P.–Schulz, P. J. (2013). Introduction. In: Cobley, P.–Schulz, P. J. (eds.), *Theories and Models of Communication*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Huang, H.–Wu, Y. (2012). Communicative Acts: Intentionality, Contextuality and Reciprocity. *Journal of Pragmatics* 44: 116–122.

Narula, U. (2006). *Communication Models*. New Delhi: Atlantic.

Noth, W. (2011). Pragmatics in Modern Philosophy of Language. In: Bublitz, W.–Norrick, N. R.–Schneider, K. P. (eds.), *Foundations of Pragmatics*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Schneider, C. Q.–Wageman, C. (2012). *Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P.

Sneed, J. D. (1981). Schimbările ştiințifice revoluționare: o abordare formală. In: Pârvu, I. (ed.), *Istoria ştiinței şi reconstrucția ei conceptuală*. Bucharest: Ed. Ştiințifică şi Enciclopedică.

Tindale, C. (2013). Models of Communicative Efficiency. In: Cobley, P.–Schulz, P. J. (eds.), *Theories and Models of Communication*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Wimmer, R. D.–Dominick, J. R. (1987). *Mass-Media Research*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publ.

Brand Communication

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio, **6** (2019) 19–40

DOI: 10.2478/auscom-2019-0002

The Possible Ways of Country Brand Communication and Their Classification Based on the POE Model

Árpád PAPP-VÁRY
Budapest Metropolitan University, Hungary
e-mail: apappvary@metropolitan.hu

Máté FARKAS
One on One Communications, Hungary
e-mail: mate.farkas@oneonone.hu

Abstract: The number of marketing communications tools and channels is steadily increasing – in addition, this growth has been accelerated since the emergence of the Internet and social media. On the one hand, there is an increasing dilemma of which tools one should choose from the plentiful options, and, on the other hand, the (material, human, and time) resources devoted to this are limited. This is valid for the marketing communications of "classic" products, services, and countries. This review article attempts to present the variety of available options with the help of the POE (paid, owned, earned) model and describe their advantages and disadvantages. The novelty of the study is that it focuses on a review of country communication campaigns and initiatives. It offers various visual examples for the different components of the POE model, clarifying the paid media, owned media, and earned media options for country brand communication. It mostly uses examples from Hungary, but other countries' good practices are also included. Finally, as a result of the analysis, the article summarizes the possible ways of country brand communication according to the POE model in a summary table, which may also contribute to the work of academics and practitioners in the field.

Keywords: country branding, country image, marketing communications, POE model

Introduction: The Essence of the POE Model

Several platforms are available nowadays for enterprises and organizations to communicate themselves. Moreover, the range of tools is so wide that makes it increasingly difficult to choose from – especially since the emergence of the Internet and social media. In addition, this toolkit is expanding rapidly, and brand new platforms may appear within a couple of years (Fehér, 2016; Rekettye Jr., 2016, 2017; Józsa–Rekettye Jr., 2015). Nevertheless, the (material, human, and time) resources that can be devoted to marketing communications are limited, wherefore the contents of the so-called media mix – that is, the elements that are most favourable regarding cost and benefit – must be considered carefully. First of all, this requires the understanding of how these tools may be grouped and what their advantages are.

The most popular, albeit somewhat outdated, approach of marketing communication channels is the classic *ATL (above the line)* and *BTL (below the line)* classification, which has been supplemented by the *TTL (through the line)* format after a while. These together have been the foundation of the frequently used term *integrated marketing communications*, which can be interpreted as a framework considering all communication tools as a whole.

However, a better and more modern way of classification that may be used is the so-called *POE model* (Corcoran, 2009), which has been mentioned in an increasing number of marketing textbooks in Hungarian (Horváth–Nyirő–Csordás, 2013; Bauer–Horváth, 2013; Rekettye–Törőcsik–Hetesi, 2015; Keszey–Gyulavári, 2016; Kenesei–Cserdi, 2018). The meaning of the three letters of POE is:

– Paid media: Paid platforms are excellent tools for promotion and attracting traffic directly to our owned tools. In a traditional approach, all media platforms that are paid by the company belong here; for example: TV advertisements, radio spots, print advertisements, an Internet display campaign, or any other online advertisement.

– Owned media: All platforms that are in control of the brand owner and belong to the brand. One of the most frequently used examples is a brand's own website, but these also include the social media pages managed by the brand. Classic tools of owned media include the brand's own print magazine or merchandizing.

– Earned (or acquired) media: If owned media pages are the "targets", paid media is accompanied by earned media as the other "vehicle" taking people there. On the one hand, this is online word of mouth, which spreads virally in the form of mentions, shares, recommendations, likes, and comments. On the other hand, this includes press publicity with journalists writing about us.

In the following chapters, we use the POE model to examine and classify communication tools that can be used for country branding. In brief, country branding is actually nothing else than the technical application of branding for countries in order to improve the reputation of the country, thus resulting in greater competitiveness (Papp-Váry, 2019). In addition, this must be carried out in increasing competition, which is fuelled by the increasing number of countries, globalization, and digitalization. The most tangible part of country branding is the stimulation of tourism, but the attraction of investors, the development of export for products originating from the country, and – in general – the development of country reputation also belongs here. Therefore, the application of appropriate marketing communication tools is an important part of the branding process. The summary provided by the article may thus fill a gap, exploring each possibility using the POE model. In addition to companies, the use of this novel approach may also be useful for countries because there are much more limitations in the case of the classic ATL/BTL division, and in many respects it urges us to spend the budget on tools that reach many people but are expensive as well. At the same time, we must also add that this presentation of the POE cannot be comprehensive, but the next couple of pages may indicate the plethora of options to deliver the message. The article uses mostly examples from Hungary, but other countries' good practices are also included.

1. Paid Country Branding Tools

Outdoor Advertising

Paid country branding tools can be divided into two levels: offline and online solutions. One of the most classic advertisement formats from the first group is outdoor advertising: billboards, city lights, and other outdoor or indoor solutions. Hungary is an example for the use of such tools, and not exclusively for tourism purposes: on the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution, in 2006, the central advertising platforms of Times Square in New York City featured two billboards with contemporary images of the 1956 revolution (tank, demonstrating citizens) and a key message: "Our revolution was not a movie". NYC Times Square is one of the most crowded public areas with and extremely high advertising fee, but the creative and awareness-raising appearance attracted international media coverage, and the advertising spending may have resulted in multiple return.

Print Advertising in Newspapers and Magazines

The list of offline tools also includes another classic form of advertising: print advertising. Until the end of the nineties, appearance in foreign newspapers and thematic magazines in the forms of advertising, paid PR articles, or sponsored inserts played an outstanding role in the media mix. Exciting examples include a series of advertisements created by a legendary figure of advertising, David Ogilvy, which contributed to the successful rebranding of Puerto Rico and the rise of tourism, resulting in the restoration of regional economy.

Source: Eszter Hargitai, http://www.flickriver.com/photos/eszter/tags/1956/, retrieved on: 31 July 2018

Illustration 1. *Outdoor advertising works best when it stands out of the crowd – as the billboards at Times Square did on the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution*

Source: http://alumnos.unir.net/carlosalbertopascual/files/2015/05/puerto-rico-ogilvy-ReasonWhy.es_.jpeg, retrieved on: 31 July 2018

Illustration 2. *The campaign created by the legendary David Ogilvy played an important role in the rebranding of Puerto Rico and boosting the number of tourists*

However, that was back in 1958, the prestige of newspapers was outstanding, and they played some kind of an opinion leader role, impacting public opinion to a much greater extent. From today's perspective, the most surprising fact may be that people looked at newspaper advertisements and even read them (Ogilvy, 2001). Today's situation is quite different though: people skip through advertisements placed in newspapers, and PR articles clearly "show" that they are sponsored contents – moreover, why would we read a piece about a country which we have not heard of or have only heard bad news about? According to research reports, these articles are mostly read as a kind of affirmation by people who have already visited the country. In addition, if the financial resources are only sufficient for one placement of this kind, it is not worth spending the money on this. It may still be functional in a series format (as in Ogilvy's case), but it is likely to fail as a stand-alone advertisement.

Television Advertising

Television advertisements have been "buried" for several years as a result of the expansion of online marketing and social media, but they continue to prosper, playing a significant role in the media mix of large enterprises, especially FMCG and pharmaceutical companies. Nevertheless, countries may also use it (and they do use it): the "country image film" often plays a central role in the branding process. The greatest advantage of television advertisements is that they affect multiple sensory organs at the same time. Attention can be grabbed with visuals and sounds, and this attention may be maintained if the content is relevant and entertaining. Moreover, if the advertisement is attractive and aired frequently enough on the appropriate television channel, it may also be mentioned by people, which may increase the awareness of the country and attract tourists, but one should not expect a considerable image change from a television advertisement.

In spite of several advantages of television advertising, calculations are often wrong in practice. On the one hand, the creation of 30–60-second spots are a tough challenge as the promise of a country must be condensed in this amount of time. On the other hand, it is often almost impossible to figure out the country promoted by the advertisement as a result of cliché messages and similar images and scenes. This is because most such spots are created according to the following storyline: smiling family, maybe a young couple, an airplane is landing (look, we have an airport!), chemists in white gowns (look, we have science!), catering establishments (look, you can eat and drink here!), night traffic with flashing lights in a time-lapse sequence (look, we have cars!). These films tend to be so similar that wiser countries put their name or tourism logo in a corner of the screen during the whole length of the spot to distinguish themselves.

Besides the content, it is also important to put special emphasis on media buying – why would countries produce expensive films if they do not reach the appropriate recipients? However, country brand advertisements often fail to appear in a priority time slot, and one can see them on Eurosport in daytime (during work hours) on weekdays, for example. But are the people with appropriate purchasing power at home during these time slots?

In order to measure the effectiveness of television advertisements, it may be helpful to insert a landing web page or hashtag in the advertisement, providing access to more information about the country. This way, countries may measure how many people became interested as a result of the film.

Paid Online Presence

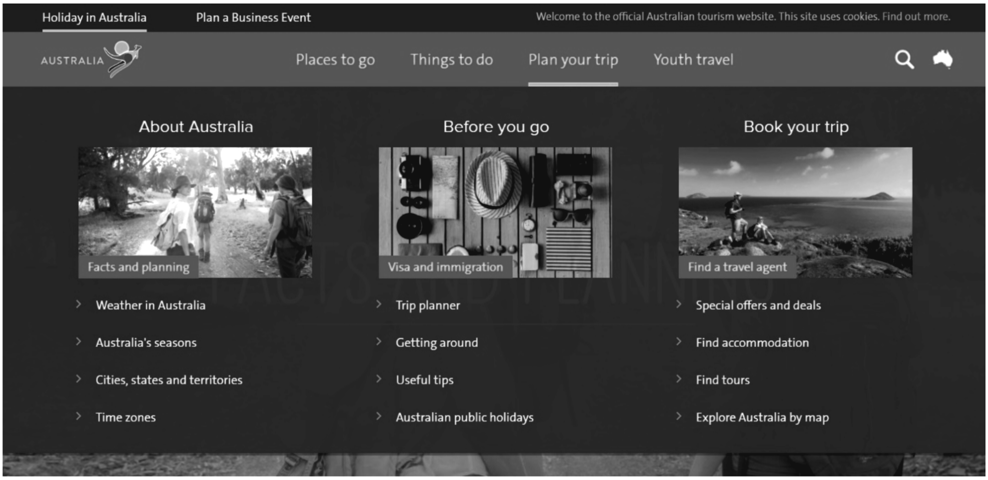
A wide range of online marketing tools is available nowadays. In addition to (or instead of) classic banner advertisements, so-called rich media solutions have become part of the palette. These can also be considered as the successors of magazine advertisements, where the effectiveness of the small display formats embedded in the articles or the large ones placed on the main page primarily depends on the level of attractiveness, mobilization, and activization of the specific creative appearance and the message included as well as the specific medium's coverage of the target group.

The marketing tool developing the coverage of the target group to a high degree of perfection is social media, in particular Facebook and Instagram. Geotargeting is also functioning in the planning of a Facebook campaign – therefore, several countries strive to display their sponsored social media contents and advertisements in the language of the specific target country. These also include so-called pre-roll YouTube advertisements that are paid. We may often see country image films or country advertisements before contents published on the largest video-sharing website with millions or billions of views.

2. Owned Media Platforms for Country Branding

Website

As already mentioned, this kind of owned media primarily means the website (or, more specifically, websites). Not only has Austria's slogan been translated into 22 languages, but their websites are also available in the same number of languages. Several countries differentiate their websites according to specific aims, maintaining separate websites for the promotion of tourism (visit _country name_), investment (invest in _country name_), and domestic tourism. Centrally edited websites play a very important role: they provide a compass for marketing communications, provide assistance for the measurement of campaign results (visitor number, composition, etc.) as a landing page, and serve as the most important online contact point. Therefore, the creation of a good website is a key question: the consistent messages placed there provide motivation for incoming tourism and important information during the stay. Examples include the tourism websites of Finland and Australia: their "plan your trip" function even provides help in planning the trip and various programmes.



Source: https://www.australia.com/en/facts-and-planning.html, retrieved on: 31 July 2018

Illustration 3. *An increasing number of country websites have a "Plan your trip" function, and Australia's website is one of them*

Own Social Media Profiles

Besides websites, the management of own social media profiles is also a key issue (Klausz, 2016). Nowadays, social media channels do not only play an important role in reaching the young generation but are also used by older people on a daily basis. In addition to websites, Facebook pages also fulfil multiple functions: they are information hubs providing the greatest amount of relevant basic information on the country, useful links, and further subpages, but they also include entertaining contents to maintain interest.

We may also mention another interesting aspect: in addition to convincing tourists or investors, social media plays an increasingly significant role in diplomacy. Although the world press is presently abuzz with the tweets of US President Donald Trump, the first highly successful *e-diplomacy programme* was launched during the presidency of Barack Obama. During that period, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton started a comprehensive and extensive initiative called 21st-Century Statecraft, which envisaged and implemented an active and organized social media presence of the administration. This is especially true for the employees of the US Department of State and delegations. In practice, the measure involved the creation of 194 different Twitter accounts and 200 Facebook profiles. At the time, the US Department of State employed 200 professionals who only worked on the management of social media, and it is quite likely that the number has increased ever since (*Századvég*, 2015).

One of the main platforms for the "recycling" of television advertisements is the countries' YouTube pages and similar platforms, including Vimeo. We have already mentioned paid pre-roll advertisements, but a film may also spread by itself (see the section on earned media below). Examples include a Croatian image film with the silver medallist heroes of the 2018 FIFA Football World Cup, other athletes, musicians and actors, resulting in more than 700 thousand views on the "Croatia – Full of Life" YouTube channel.

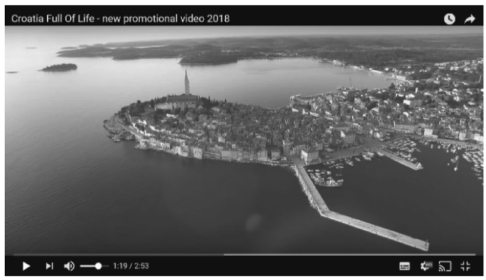

Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
0:45 / 2:53


Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
LUKA MODRIĆ
football player
0:51 / 2:53


Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
1:06 / 2:53

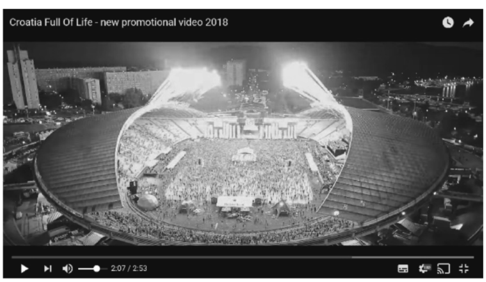

Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
1:08 / 2:53


Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
1:17 / 2:53


Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
1:19 / 2:53


Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
1:49 / 2:53


Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
1:58 / 2:53


Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
2:07 / 2:53


Croatia Full Of Life - new promotional video 2018
2:17 / 2:53

Source: Croatia Full of Life – New promotional video 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XbIR7e9PYM, published: 7 November 2017, retrieved: 31 July 2018

Illustration 4. *Frames from the popular Croatia country image spot, featuring Croatian football players and other celebrities*

This tool, that is, a country's own YouTube channel, is only operating successfully if it features a variety of self-produced contents. The Croatians also succeed in this: in addition to short advertising spots, their channel also includes road movies (longer films, each recorded in a specific tourist site), which inform the target group about the available experiences in several parts.

Own Publications

The intertwining of the online and offline categories is well represented by own publications. *Sectoral publications* of e.g. investment promotion or tourism that have been distributed in a print format in the past (sometimes sent out by mail) can usually be downloaded in .pdf format from the central or sectoral websites of countries. People interested in a country receive shorter or longer brochures that are available not only in multiple languages offline but also in the form of *online direct mail*.

Billboards, City Light Advertisements at the Airport

It is interesting that billboard/city light/outdoor advertising may also be interpreted as an owned media platform, although they do not necessarily belong there in a technical sense. We may often see such materials of variable quality and reason, for example, at airports, by the baggage carousel, or on roads to and from the airport.

Merchandizing Tools, Souvenirs

Pens, notepads, T-shirts, and caps are also representatives of the owned category. However, in a broader sense, souvenirs may also be listed in this category, although it is not easy to affect their quality at a national level. It is possible to impose regulations, but how can you check their implementation? Nevertheless, there are good grassroots initiatives in Hungary in order to improve the quality of souvenirs, e.g. Memories of Hungary (see Papp-Váry–Szatmári 2011).

Events

Events are one of the most complex tools of marketing communications, and they are one of the tools that can achieve the most aims at the same time. In terms of country branding, we must highlight the so-called *mega-events*, whose two "kings" are the Olympics and the Football World Cup, but we may also mention the Formula 1 Grand Prix weekend. It is no coincidence that Hungary decided to build its first significant tennis complex on Margaret Island because a Grand Slam or ATP 1000 tennis tournament attracts both stars and sports media attention for several weeks. In terms of image, the key factor is generating media attention: the return of organization costs is usually shown in marketing value as many foreigners get to know or identify smaller countries through these events. At the same time, one should not expect a development of country image from individual events of this kind – research shows that Brazil's image actually declined after the 2014 Football World Cup and the 2016 Olympics in Rio (Anholt, 2016). What was the reason? Well, it was not the weakness of organizing, but the fact that once international media crews were in the country, they did not only cover the event itself but also the whole city and country, and their coverage also included poverty, poor public safety, prostitution, drug dealers, and gangs.

In this regard, it may be more practical not to put all your eggs in one basket but organize *smaller events* (that are still big enough in their own category) on a yearly basis. It is no coincidence that thanks to Sziget Festival the first spontaneous association of young foreigners linked to Hungary is Sziget. Nevertheless, Hungary's image may be improved in a similar way through organizing professional events and conferences in the country regularly or creating events like Brain Bar. The most important point is creativity, insomuch that there are authors who use the term *creative event management* or *experience organizing* instead of event organizing in this context (Dér, 2013, 2017).

3. Earned Media Platforms

Although events themselves can be considered own media platforms, the media presence generated by them is considered earned media. Such publicity is always more important than information promoted through advertising, that is, paid media, because people are always suspicious of the latter and tend not to believe it.

Public Relations, Press Relations

As a result, the importance of public relations (PR) activities preparing publicity has increased significantly in the past decades. A book on the topic, titled *The Fall of Advertising & The Rise of PR*, had already been published in 2002 (Ries–Ries, 2002). PR professionals know that good content, a good story is one of the strongest motivations. The key figures primarily targeted by PR activity are journalists, representatives of the press, who can produce quality materials in their field credibly to professionally present the country's advantages, attractions, and experience promises. Examples include Finland's *National Media Centre* dedicated to this purpose, which not only monitors and analyses media appearances about Finland regularly or provides a large free photo bank of the country but takes the service of foreign journalists very seriously. For example, they organize so-called *study tours*, that is, press visits together with relevant institutions, which may be several days long. However, the role of the National Media Centre is not repetitive persuasion: they "only" provide appropriate professional circumstances for the journalists, help them organize their trips, link them with the appropriate contact persons, and are available for any kind of help. As a consequence, the materials produced this way will be unique and valuable pieces and will not be teeming with bad advertising panels – and the personal experience or impression of the journalist, TV reporter, or online correspondent is a more important reference point for the receiver than any TV sport or sponsored content.

Buzz, Word of Mouth

Of course, centrally managed campaigns can also be successful, and the number of shares has become one of their most important indicators. Organic spread usually develops if the content can address the target group emotionally, and the consumers recommend or forward it to their contacts. In the online space, this is called *buzz*, and in the offline world its name is *word of mouth*. Ideas have a key role here – examples from the corporate sphere include Red Bull, a brand with regular unique creations. Just think about Felix Baumgartner's stratosphere jump, which was followed live by millions of people on the company's media platforms. Elon Musk's campaign with a Tesla Roadster shot into space was also a similar activity. Countries do not necessarily need to consider global activities of this calibre, but creativity is a vital question for smaller nations. *Innovative activities attracting attention,* such as the "Best Job in the World" launched by Tourism Queensland, can be successful on a tight budget.

Sources: https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/tourism_queensland_best_job_in_the_world, published on: 12 February 2009, retrieved on: 31 July 2018; http://www.adeevee.com/aimages/200910/01/tourism-queensland-great-barrier-reef-the-best-job-in-the-world-media-30893-adeevee.jpg, published on: 1 October 2009, retrieved on: 31 July 2018

Illustration 5. The "Best Job in the World" campaign well demonstrates how a destination can generate word of mouth or online buzz

Installations

Many people would associate word of mouth or buzz with new solutions, but it is also true in the case of classic tools that good advertisements are ones that generate word of mouth or buzz. This can be achieved through simple things such as an *outdoor installation*. The *Budapest* installation created at Heroes' Square in Budapest, for example, serves as a location for many selfies and group pictures – it is no coincidence that many Hungarian cities adopted the idea and installed one with their own names from Miskolc to cities by Lake Balaton. This is also one of the best solutions for a country/city because all people who are contacts or followers of the posting person will know where she/he has been.

Prosumers, Bloggers, Vloggers, Influencers

The compound term "prosumer" created from the words producer and consumer describes expert consumers, that is, those customers who know a lot about the product (in this case, the country) and are happy to take part in its development. Although convincing a prosumer takes up much more energy or attention, it also has a multiplier effect: it can influence dozens of potential customers towards the favourable direction.

Special figures include so-called *travel bloggers*, who are travelling *influencers*, that is, *opinion leaders*. They have channels developed by themselves (usually YouTube, Instagram, or a blog), their job is travelling, and they report their experiences for their community in the form of a video/picture/article. The difference between a journalist and an influencer is that the former works for the editorial office of a specific medium, while the latter is the medium itself, and the platform of communication is his/her own channel. Furthermore, the difference between prosumer and influencer is that the former is a fan of the brand and does not require financial reward for his/her efforts, while the latter hardly ever influences his/her carefully built fanbase for free because this would risk his/her own livelihood. In this regard, the question is if influencers should appear here or in the category of paid media.

Stars, Celebrities

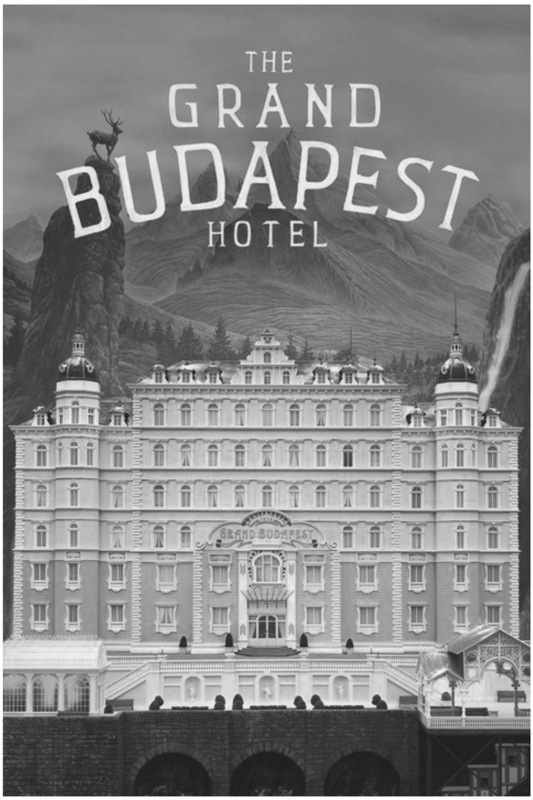
Actors/actresses, sportspeople, models, and musicians have long been used effectively in campaigns, and their popularity is worth building on in country branding. The abovementioned Croatian image film, for example, featured several famous footballers, and all of them shared thoughts about their motherland or roots in the video – not in a pushy or bored way but with pride. The influence of stars is also well demonstrated by Will Smith's visit to Hungary: the star's minivideo uploaded to Instagram with him dancing and having fun to the music of *In My Feelings* on top of the Chain Bridge was viewed by 3.3 million people in only 2 weeks. Moreover, a making-of footage was uploaded on YouTube with the name Budapest mentioned several times, also featuring the Danube with the music of Johan Strauss's *Blue Danube Waltz*. This was viewed by 2.4 million people in two weeks. If we merely look at the numbers, it may be interesting to see a counterexample: the official country image film (more specifically: city image film, as it focuses on Budapest) that had debuted shortly before it was viewed by 35 thousand people on the official *Hello Hungary* YouTube channel. (We must add that the number of viewers was 88 thousand on the *WeLoveBudapest* YouTube channel.) In addition, Will Smith published a more than seven minutes long video on the renovation works of the Opera House in Budapest where he had been given a tour. The next day he continued "thematizing Hungary" by sharing his experiences of the Frida Kahlo exhibition in the National Gallery, and earlier he published a Fathers' Day video with the Chain Bridge in the background (*My Son PUNCHED Me in the Face*), which has been viewed by 5.3 million people on YouTube.

Source: https://welovebudapest.com/en/2018/07/13/video-shows-will-smith-climbing-chain-bridge-on-his-last-day-in-budapest/, published on: 13 July 2018, downloaded on: 31 July 2018

Illustration 6. *Will Smith is dancing on top of the Budapest Chain Bridge with the Parliament in the background*

Presence in Films and Video Spots

In the same context, we must also highlight appearances in cinematographic works (Irimiás, 2012, 2015; Papp-Váry, 2009). Thanks to Korda and Origo film studios, Hungary has been featured in an increasing number of Hollywood productions – although Budapest often plays the role of another city, for example, Berlin (see the movies *Spy Game* or *Atomic Blonde*), Moscow (*Red Heat*, *Die Hard V*, *Red Sparrow*), Beijing (*The Martian*), or Rio de Janeiro (*Evita*). Nevertheless, there are also examples where the title of a movie features Budapest: such is the movie Grand Hotel Budapest, though this movie was not recorded in Budapest but in Berlin. The impact of the movie is still considerable: the authors of this article met a foreign student at Budapest Metropolitan University who applied to the institution because of this movie.



Source: http://www.mrqe.com/movie_reviews/the-grand-budapest-hotel-m100104679, retrieved: 31 July 2018

Illustration 7. *The movie* The Grand Budapest Hotel *was not filmed in Hungary, but it still has an effect on the country brand*

Another activity that may raise attention is if celebrities move to the country for the time of a shooting. Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis, for example, spent months in Budapest with their family in 2017, during which they visited the water sports world championships. Workers of the restaurants they visited made selfies with them, and the local and international press followed their steps – what they were not always happy about.

Besides movies, appearance in video clips may also affect the brand, whether intentional or not. Budapest also provided the background for the song *Fireworks* by Katy Perry, and the extra attention generated by the singer worked out pretty good for the Hungarian capital, especially because they showed very beautiful so-called B-rolls of the city – and the video on YouTube has been viewed more than 1.1 billion times! George Ezra's song titled *Budapest* was viewed by 128 million people in 4 years, although the capital was not featured with images. (An interesting fact: his song called *Barcelona* was "only" seen by 10 million people.)

Engagement Campaigns

In addition to prosumers, influencers, and stars, average consumers also like to get involved in the life of brands. The best campaigns are about engagement: they do not only offer something but also request some effort from the consumer, whether it is the uploading of a picture, publishing a hashtag, solving a puzzle, or an adventure with many stages. This characteristic of human nature has been known since Confucius: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." Similarly, to education, two-directional, active, wide-ranging cooperation is much more successful in marketing communications than one-directional communication.

Forums, Applications

Opinions placed on forums and travel advisory pages or rankings shared via *applications* (e.g. TripAdvisor) play a significant role in decision-making, and – although sometimes their origin is doubtful – they often have a bigger influence on an opinion about a country or pre-vacation decision-making than any travel bureau prospectus. The advance of artificial intelligence has not left the travel market cold: *Hopper* is one of the world's hottest *application* projects today, which can plan and predict the vacation closest to the user at the best price possible. The idea that a machine knows better what kind of vacation/trip a human needs sounds unbelievable at first – it is limited to air tickets, dates, and hotel reservations at the moment –, but the founders could drum up 84 million dollars for the further development of the application and international expansion; therefore, we will probably hear more about it in the future.

Guerrilla Activities, Media Hacks, Viral Films, Consumer-Generated Content

Credibility is not based on centrally selected message systems that are set "as accurately as chemists' balances". *Guerrilla activities, media hacks, and viral films* can be just as important because viral spread is brought about by the consumers, and there is no need to pay large amounts of media-buying fees – in addition, as they are grassroots-type activities (or, more specifically, they often only seem to be that), they are less suspicious. The next level of viral videos is *consumer-generated content*, when the consumer itself is the creator of the content. Here we may think of vacation pictures of beautiful landscapes, but this tool is not at all seasonal. Groups of attractions, cities, or even countries may advertise activities linked to them based on the contents generated by the consumers. Croatia, for example, reached more than 50 million people in its latest campaign of this kind. During the *Epic Week in Croatia* activity, people could plan their dream vacation according to the 218 activities published centrally. Their only task was to create a realizable selection and provide reasons of their choice for each selected activity. The winner with the best arguments was a British woman called Sophia, who could make her dream vacation in Croatia come true. We can see from the example that almost all tools presented above were used in the campaign: the engagement of the consumer, her efforts, and storytelling.

Source: http://hrturizam.hr/kampanja-epic-week-in-croatia-ostvarila-doseg-od-50-milijuna-ljudi/

Illustration 8. Epic Week in Croatia *is a good example of an engagement campaign and customer-generated content solutions*

Results: The Classification of Marketing Communication Tools Supporting Country Branding According to the POE Principle

After our incomplete but comprehensive overview, it is worth creating a table summarizing the variety of communication tools and media a country may use for the building of its brand or the communication of its messages. The table below follows the POE classification described above and places elements accordingly, supplemented with a few other tools that have not been presented. We hope that this classification will help the work of all organizations and professionals involved in country branding, providing them with both theoretical and practical value.

Table 1. *A classification of marketing communication tools and media that can be used in country branding, based on the POE model*

Nature of channel	Paid	Owned	Earned
Traditional	TV advertisement Radio advertisement Outdoor advertisements Movie advertisements Press advertisements PR article / video/radio interview	Brochures, prospectuses, brand magazines Print newsletter Customer service/ customer relationship Flyer Postal DM mail (Mega)event organizing Merchandizing	PR appearances, publicity Study tour Word-of-mouth marketing Recommendation Appearances in films or video clips Sponsorship
Online	Search advertisements Rich media solutions Facebook advertising Google advertising LinkedIn advertising Instagram advertising Twitter advertising E-target and remarketing Mobile advertisements Pre-roll advertisements Geotargeting The creation and advertisement of applications	Website Microsite Electronic newsletter Online brochures and prospectuses Social platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter) Search engine optimization Blog Podcast Newsletter	Online PR appearances Study tour Shares, comments, check-in, online word of mouth (buzz) Consumer-generated content Guerrilla marketing tools Viral videos User reviews Media hack Influencer/star solutions Prosumer solutions

Source: A classification of countries by the authors of the article, based on Bálint Hinora, 2016. Marketingkommunikációs eszközök bemutatása és használatuk I–II. rész (The Presentation and Use of Marketing Communication Tools, Parts I–II), KKV Akadémia (SME Academy) by the Hungarian Marketing Association

The advantages of the table include that each tool can be easily placed in it – which is also important because the number of marketing communication tools (especially in the case of online tools) is increasing daily. The other important advantage of the system is that it highlights the fact that all countries have their own (owned) tools, and they may be the most authentic "news sources" as well. Therefore, the role of paid tools is to divert attention to owned tools. As the article proves, the real value is earned media, including international media coverage of the country and word of mouth in the online space. However, this can only be achieved through more specific, more customized solutions as it is getting harder to reach the threshold.

The difficulty of the model's application is that we may only see centralized country branding in the case of a few countries. Usually, there are separate organizations for the stimulation of tourism, the attraction of investments, or a greater role in diplomacy. This makes sense in many respects; the reason of the problem is mostly that in many cases there is a lack of coordination between these organizations. Therefore, it may be useful for these organizations to think about their marketing communication activities individually in accordance with the POE model. The result is a common platform, a common language that is already available when these organizations coordinate their efforts, significantly improving the country branding process and its successfulness.

References

Anholt, S. (2016). A nagy országmárka svindli [The Great Country Brand Swindle]. *HUG – Hungarian Geopolitics Magazine* 1(1): 132–149, <https://issuu.com/pageo/docs/hug_online_marcius_boritoval_> (accessed on: 1 July 2017).

Bauer, A.–Horváth, D. (eds.). (2013). *Marketingkommunikáció: Stratégia, új média, fogyasztói részvétel* [Marketing Communication: Strategy, New Media, Consumer Participation]. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Corcoran, S. (2009). No Media Should Stand Alone: An Empowered Report. Defining the Roles of Owned, Earned and Paid Media in Online Marketing. *Forrester Report.* <https://www.forrester.com/report/No+Media+Should+Stand+Alone/-/E-> (accessed on: 1 July 2017).

Dér, Cs. D. (2013). *Kreatív eseménymenedzsment* [Creative Event Management]. Budapest: Arts and Business Kft.

(2017). *Élményszervezés és -menedzsment* [Event Planning and Management]. Budapest: Arts and Business Kft.

Fehér, K. (2016). *Digitalizáció és új média – Trendek, stratégiák, illusztrációk* [Digitalization and New Media – Trends, Strategies, and Illustrations]. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Hinora, B. (2016). *Marketingkommunikációs eszközök bemutatása és használatuk* [The Presentation and Use of Marketing Communication Tools]. Budapest: Magyar Marketing Szövetség – KKV Akadémia.

Horváth, D.–Nyirő, N.–Csordás, T. (eds.). (2013). *Médiaismeret: Reklámeszközök és reklámhordozók* [Media Studies: Advertising Tools and Advertising Media]. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Irimiás, A. (2015). *Filmturizmus: A filmek és televíziós sorozatok turisztikai szerepének és hatásainak geográfiai vizsgálata* [Film Tourism: A Geographical Examination of the Role and Effects of Films and Television Series in Tourism]. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Józsa, L.–Rekettye Jr., G. (2015). International Research on the Future of Marketing Communication. In: Hunter, M. (ed.), *Annual International Conference on Enterprise Marketing and Globalization: 4th Enterprise Marketing and Globalization (EMG 2015) Conference*. 15 December 2015, Singapore: Global Science and Technology Forum, 13–18.

Kenesei, Zs.–Cserdi, Zs. H. (2018). *Szolgáltatásmarketing a turizmusban* [Service Marketing in Tourism]. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Keszey, T.–Gyulavári, T. (2016). *Marketingtervezés* [Marketing Planning]. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Klausz, M. (2016). *A közösségi média nagykönyve – Hogyan vidd sikerre céged és önmagad* [Book of Social Media – How to Be Successful with Your Company and Yourself]. Budapest: Athenaeum.

Ogilvy, D. (2001). *Ogilvy a reklámról* [Ogilvy on Advertising]. Budapest: Park.

Papp-Váry, Á. (2009). Országimázs a moziban [Country Image in the Movies]. *Marketing & Media,* 14(9): 13–26.

(2019). *Országmárkázás – Versenyképes identitás és imázs teremtése* [Country Branding – Creating Marketable Identity and Image]. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Papp-Váry, Á.–Szatmári, B. (2011). Újragondolt szuvenírek [Revised Souvenirs]. *Marketing & Média,* 16(4): 16–17.

Rekettye, G.–Törőcsik, M.–Hetesi, E. (2015). *Bevezetés a marketingbe* [An Introduction to Marketing]. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Rekettye Jr., G. (2016). A következő évtized marketingkommunikációja – egy nemzetközi kutatás eredményei [The Marketing Communications of the Upcoming Decade – The Findings of an International Research]. *Vezetéstudomány* 47(3): 12–22.

(2017). The Future Performance of Marketing Communication – A Comparative Study. *International Journal of Business Performance Management (IJBPM)* 18(3): 293–306.

Ries, A.–Ries, L. (2002). *The Fall of Advertising & The Rise of PR.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

Századvég. 2015. *Public diplomacy stratégiák* [Public Diplomacy Strategies]. <https://szazadveg.hu/uploads/media/587ceed607ef2/public-diplomacy-strat.pdf> (accessed on: 20 January 2018).

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio, **6** (2019) 41–59

DOI: 10.2478/auscom-2019-0003

Young Consumers' Fashion Brand Preferences. An Investigation among Students in Romania

Laura NISTOR
Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
Cluj-Napoca, Romania
e-mail: nistorlaura@uni.sapientia.ro

Abstract. The literature contends that youth are particularly fashion- and brand-sensitive, and they mostly prefer fast fashion brands; however, up to now, there has been little empirical data regarding Romanian youth's fashion brand preferences. In order to fill this gap, the article presents the results of an exploratory research based on mixed methodology which was realized among students in Cluj-Napoca, Romania in connection with their fashion brand preferences. The online survey showed that a little more than half of the students do have a preferred fashion brand, and these are indeed mostly fast fashion brands. However, taken relatively, i.e. compared to other cues, the brand of the apparel is less important for the students. The most brand-sensitive individuals are those who are fashion involved, early adopters of trends, and less price-sensitive. The narratives of the focus-group research enriched the insight about students' brand preferences.

Keywords: brand, fast fashion, students, convenience sample

Introduction

The literature (e.g. Parment, 2013) contends that millennials (i.e. generation Y, those born between 1981–1995 – e.g. Howe–Strauss, 2000) and post-millennials (i.e. generation Z, those born between 1996–present) can easily handle various products and huge amounts of product-related information. Youngsters are early adopters of fashion, and new products and brands have an important role in their identity construction and status consumption. Millennials were early socialized into a materialistic and consumer culture; designer brands and the ability to spend money on them was a constitutive element of millennials' *status quo*; the transformation of retail from a utilitarian project into a complex form of entertainment, as well as the multiplication of product and lifestyle choices through digital media and globalization, enabled the development of a different consumer and shopping culture in the case of the millennial and post-millennial generation (Bakewell–Mitchell, 2003).

Pentecost and Andrews (2010) found that digital media favours the early development of fashion-related concerns and enables the development of a pro-consumption attitude among youth. Youngsters are more worried than other generations about how others perceive them and use fashion as a tool for creating particular identities. This is a generation which wants the latest trends instantly, and so it represents a fruitful market for fast fashion products (Yarrow–O'Donnell, 2009).

It would be, however, premature to conclude that young consumers are nothing more than brand enthusiasts. Segran (2016) contends that youngsters are sceptical and sometimes even resistant towards brands and advertising in general and are disposed towards checking brand- and product-related information on social media via word-of-mouth marketing (see also Knittel et al., 2016).

While we have an extensive set of international studies regarding millennials' attitudes and practices in connection with fashion brands, there are only sporadic data regarding East-Central European and, particularly, Romanian youth. Based on these, we can articulate that Romanian youngsters are sensitive towards fashion brands (Sandu et al., 2014). The purpose of my study was to bring some clarifications about young Romanian consumers' fashion brand preferences. My aim was to understand which are the most preferred fashion brands by youngsters and how important is the brand of the clothing relative to other product characteristics. Additionally, I was interested in the ways in which youngsters articulate their relationship with fashion brands, how they emphasize in narratives their brand preferences or brand avoidance.

I relied on a mixed methodology which was based on an online questionnaire and on focus groups. The research was undertaken among the students of Babeş–Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) on the basis of a convenience sample in the period of 2017–2018.

The Role of Fashion Brands

In the context of today's consumer society, brands represent signs, i.e. visual and symbolic messages about the products; brands are no longer used solely to differentiate among various products but to help consumers create specific identities through the usage of branded products (Franzen–Moriarty, 2009). To use Batey's (2008) words, brands and brand images provide specific feelings and messages to the consumers. Then, consumers choose specific products, brands, etc., i.e. specific signs (cf. Baudrillard, 1998) in order to construct, keep, and manage their identities and social positions. Fashion plays a crucial role here since it is "one of the most visible forms of consumption" (Crane, 2000: 1). Clothing helps people to choose specific identities and to place themselves either within specific groups (i.e. affiliation) or, on the contrary, against specific groups (i.e. distinction – Crane, 2000).

Fashion brands that signify specific social status or lifestyle can enable the entry into groups that value such brands. The role of fashion brands is particularly articulated in the case of young consumers. Young people's clothing choice is motivated by various aspects: they seek individuality and prestige as well as functionality, and, given their continuous online presence, they are very much influenced by trends (Fernandez, 2009). For youngsters, acceptance and assimilation into groups is very important, so they seek to wear clothes through which they are accepted by their peers (Fernandez, 2009). It is documented that millennials' and Generation Z members' preoccupation with their appearance results in high brand knowledge and in a receptive public towards innovations, which are accompanied by the need for instant gratification.

In the context of fashion brands, we must mention the growing importance of fast fashion brands. Fast fashion refers to low-cost clothing collections which are based on current high-cost luxury fashion trends (Fletcher, 2008). Fast fashion means a short time gap between production and distribution and provides fashionable, relatively cheap yet not necessarily high-quality clothes (Gabrielli et al., 2013). Fast fashion has a fast response to current trends and encourages disposability (Joy et al., 2012). It is a McFashion (Joy et al., 2012) which provides "trendier, must-have fashions which lure consumers into paying full price now rather than deferring gratification until the year-end sales arrive" (p. 275). The availability of relatively cheap, trendy clothes is very appealing especially to young people. Vice versa, fast fashion marketing targets mostly the youngsters aiming for instant gratification (Barton et al., 2012). Fast fashion products offer immediate gratification and happiness to consumers, and so hedonist lifestyles are one of the motors of fast fashion brand consumption (Miller, 2013). Fast fashion items respond to postmodern consumers' needs in terms of self-expression: such products offer freedom, fun, and pleasure for the consumers and, even if they are of lower quality as far as they can be combined in various creative forms, are suitable for expressing various forms of identity (Gabrielli et al., 2013).

Other authors approach the problem of fashion, fast fashion, and accumulation of clothing items from the perspective of showing off, i.e. materialism. Roberts and Jones (2001 – qtd by Goldsmith et al., 2012) consider that those who have a positive attitude towards material products use fashion items as instruments for showing status; materialistic values lead students to purchase a larger quantity of (branded) clothing because in this way they perceive that they can better signal their social position to others.

Goldsmith et al. (2012: 105) contend that brand engagement means "gratification through the acquisition of specific, branded goods that express some important element of the self", and, while the concept is usually quoted in relation with luxury consumption, in the case of students or less developed economies (i.e. publics with limited incomes), even fast fashion brands can have the function of signalling social status. Rhee and Johnson (2012) also contend that youngsters use apparel brands in order to display and communicate positive messages about themselves, and in this respect the influence of the social groups is decisive: group members usually choose to wear a certain brand because in this way they seek group acceptance; that is the reason – the authors conclude – why those consumers in whose cases self-monitoring is important are more predisposed towards wearing branded products.

Cardoso et al. (2010) found that consumers perceived specific brands as having specific identities, and they consumed those brands which were in accordance with their self-image. Concerning the relative importance of brands, we can quote, among others, the study of Kelemen-Erdős and Kőszegi (2017), which assessed the role of fast fashion brands in Hungarian young people's self-expression. The authors concluded that, indeed, brand has an important role in self-expression, but consumers attach different importance to brands. For self-expression and brand-engaged individuals, brands are the most important criterion of choice, but they are a minority group compared to the largest segment of the sample, i.e. the so-called rational consumers, who base their purchase decisions on other aspects than the brand of the product: for instance, they are more attentive to the price/quality ratio of the products.

Regarding Romanian young consumers, we have only sporadic data in terms of fashion brand consumption. The 2014 survey on Romanian youth (Sandu et al., 2014) showed that having branded clothes is considered by Romanian young people a fashionable activity – hence, two-thirds of the respondents attached importance to branded clothes. In accordance with the need to have branded clothes, the same study showed that shopping for apparel was the most important spending activity for the youth. Spending on apparel corresponded to 175 RON/month (approx. 40 EUR). The survey made among Romanian urbanites by Popa and Pelau (2016) showed also that young Romanian consumers are more sensitive towards branded clothes than older generations.

It seems that Romanian youngsters, similarly to their counterparts worldwide, are open-minded towards fashion and brand; they think that having branded clothes are important for self-esteem. At the same time, the preference for fashionable clothing is always put in balance with the price of the products.

Methodology and Research Questions

My research aims at studying young Romanian consumers' fashion-related practices, attitudes, and discourses. The study is based on mixed methodology and combines the online survey with focus groups. By relying on a mixed-method strategy, I followed the recommendation of Kawamura (2011: 21) in connection with fashion- and dress-related studies. In the author's opinion on studying fashion, inductive strategies through qualitative methods help to "generate a theory during a study", while deductive approaches "provide a lens that shapes what is looked at and the questions asked".

Firstly, I relied on an online survey based on a convenience sample composed of students from Babeş–Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Babeş–Bolyai University is the largest university in Transylvania, Romania. In spite of being non-representative samples, convenience samples are widely used in social research (Gliner et al., 2009) because they provide "some" data, i.e. explorative facts in connection with the researched phenomena (Hill, 1998 – qtd by Sue–Ritter, 2012). On the other hand, college students are common subjects of consumption-related research (Peterson–Merunka, 2014). Convenience sampling takes place frequently via the Internet through the instrument of online questionnaire (Sue–Ritter, 2012). In the case of my sample, social-media-based student groups as well as snowball technique were used in order to spread the questionnaire. It can be suspected that those students who self-selected to respond the survey had already had an interest in the topic thereof (i.e. fashion); so, it can be considered that – as it happens with convenience samples in general – the results overestimate the concern with the researched phenomena (Schonlau et al., 2002).

In connection with the sample size of convenience samples, the literature offers several recommendations (Sue–Ritter, 2012), which I tried to follow: sample sizes to range between 30 and 500; once their range is between 30 and 500, respondents should cover approx. 10% of the researched population. In the case of Babeş–Bolyai University, the number of students attending solely the BA and MA courses in 2016 was 37,702 (*Raportul rectorului* [Rector's Report], 2016), which means that the 10% rule would mean 3,700 responses. Thus, I applied the recommendation of maximum 500 questionnaires. The final response rate – during a one-week period – resulted in 305 valid responses.

The online questionnaire distributed among the students was composed of 26 questions corresponding to the following chapters: 1) socio-demographic background of the respondents; 2) consumption habits in connection with fashion, i.e. frequency and places of buying clothes; 3) fashion-related information; 4) brand preference; 5) importance of trends, fashion adoption, and fashion involvement; 6) questions in connection with the sustainable closet. In this article, only the results regarding students' brand preferences are presented in extenso.

Based on the previously mentioned findings of the international literature, I presupposed that having branded clothes is an important thing for the young respondents, but I also wanted to see the importance they attach to branded clothes relative to other criteria.

Consequently, one item of the questionnaire investigated if the respondents had a favourite fashion brand. I supposed that fast fashion brands will be the most preferred ones. However, it is well-known that fast fashion brands can be separated into various types of brands, some of them being more expensive, others can be considered mid-range, while still others value brands (Ross–Harradine, 2006); therefore, it was interesting to see which types of fast fashion brands are preferred in the case of my sample.

Additionally, the importance of brand was assessed compared to other criteria of clothing choice, e.g. price, print, colour, fabric, and composition. This last item through which the relative importance of brand was investigated is, in fact, an adapted version from Kapferer and Laurent's (1983 – qtd by Beudoin et al., 2003) brand sensitivity measure.

Finally, a question investigated whether trendiness, brands, quality, fitting specific occasions, or being creative are important when selecting clothes to wear.

I was also interested to see if fashion involvement goes hand in hand with brand engagement, i.e. whether consumers for whom fashion is important are more predisposed to having a preference in brands. This relationship would seem rational also from the perspective of spending: fashion-involved consumers tend to spend larger amounts of money on clothes, and this larger amount of spending can be the result of both more frequent shopping and investment in higher-value brands (cf. Goldmsith et al., 2012).

In connection with the importance of brands, I hypothesized that:

– The most popular brands are fast fashion brands.

– Better-informed consumers put greater emphasis on brands.

– Fashion-forward students (early adopters) are more brand-sensitive.

– Consumers who spend larger amounts on clothes are more brand-sensitive.

– Brand preference is an important segmentation criterion and allows the separation of various consumer segments.

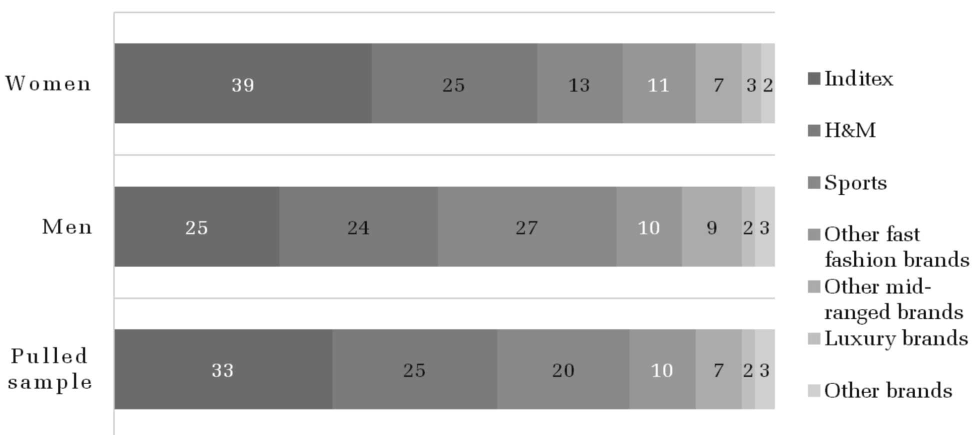
Besides the online survey, I followed a qualitative research strategy as well, which took the form of focus groups and aimed at revealing meanings, understandings, and deeper narratives on the topic of fashion – in this case, in connection with fashion brands. The focus-group methodology is advantageous when we intend to study the interaction among participants concerning debated topics; by reacting to each other's opinions, focus groups can produce new or different insights compared to individual interviews (Grant–Stephen, 2005).

I conducted four focus groups with a total of 30 student participants. The groups were heterogeneous in terms of gender, students' specializations, or year of enrolment. The author of the article was the moderator of the groups. The interview guide consisted of questions touching upon students' narratives in terms of their fashion involvement, fashion consumption, brand preferences, etc. Here, only the results regarding brand-related narratives are presented in detail. The analysis of the focus-group data was interpretative.

Results and Discussions

Students' Brand Preferences

According to the results of frequency, 64% of the sample (66% of the men and 65% of the women) said they had a favourite brand. The list of the favourite brands (*Figure 1*) reveals the unequivocal preference for fast fashion brands: the brands owned by the Inditex company (with a better representation of the costlier Zara and Massimo Dutti but also Bershka and Stradivarius) are the most preferred brands in the sample, especially among women. Next comes H&M. In the case of male students, sports brands such as Nike, Adidas, or Columbia are a bit more preferred than the previously mentioned fast fashion brands. *Prêt*-à-*porter* brands such as Armani Jeans, Versace Jeans, Guess, Tommy Hilfiger, etc. are preferred by 10% of the sample, while the preference for luxury brands remains very sporadic. In this respect, we can subscribe to those considerations of the international literature (e.g. Joung, 2014) which argue that fast fashion brands are the most preferred brands among the youth because such clothes reflect actual trends, and the low price of fast fashion items is affordable for the youth.



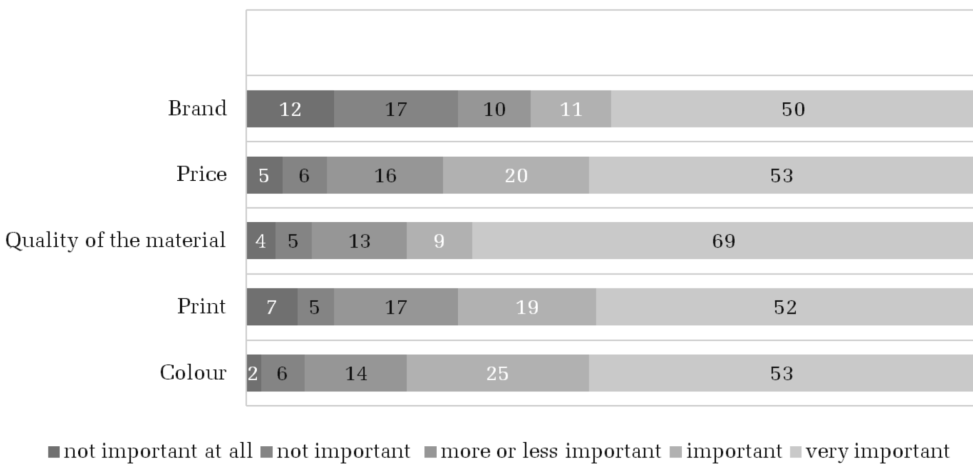
Source: author's graph

Figure 1. *The most preferred fashion brands (%)*

Regarding the economic affordability of fast fashion products, it must be, however, emphasized that in the case of our sample (which, according to the results, spends approx. 46 EUR/month on clothing items), fast fashion products (at least those from the actual collections) might represent a heavy burden. That is why students rely on a compromise: their preferred fast fashion brands are usually bought from outlet/second-hand shops, i.e. from the most preferred sites of shopping (Nistor, 2019).

The importance of brand was assessed also relatively, i.e. compared to other intrinsic (colour, print, quality of the material) and extrinsic (price) attributes of the clothing. For this purpose, the so-called brand-sensitivity item was used (Kapferer–Laurent, 1983 – qtd by Beudoin et al., 2003): respondents were asked on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = not important at all to 5 = very important) to indicate the importance of these five criteria in buying clothes.

The relative importance of brand in choosing clothing items shows that compared to other cues brand is a less important criterion of clothing choice. The colour, print, quality of the clothing, fabric, and the price of the clothing seem to count more when students decide to buy a piece of clothing (*Figure 2*). These findings are in line with previous findings of Kelemen-Erdős and Kőszegi (2017), who in a Hungarian sample showed that in the context of a huge preference for fast fashion brands the role of brands is indeed important for certain consumer segments, but the majority of youngsters base their purchase decisions on other aspects than the brand of the product, and youngsters usually place great emphasis on the price of the products. With other words, as far as students choose standard fast fashion products, they usually judge other aspects of the clothing than their brand.



Source: author's graph

Figure 2. *The relative importance (%) of the five criteria in clothing choice*

The comparison of scale means between men and women shows that there are no differences in terms of the importance of the brand criterion; however, there was revealed a significant difference in terms of the importance of colour, this criterion being significantly more important ($t = -2.172$; $df = 302$; $p < 0.05$) for women (Mean = 4.33; Std. dev. = 0.99) than for men (Mean = 4.07; Std. dev. = 1.02). Another significant difference was revealed in terms of the price criterion, the price of the clothing being significantly more important ($t = -2.053$; $df = 302$; $p < 0.05$) for women (Mean = 4.23; Std. dev. = 1.17) than for men (Mean = 3.95; Std. dev. = 1.12). This last finding has to do, probably, with women's more frequent buying behaviour. The results of the survey showed that female students shop clothes significantly more frequently than male students (i.e. women have a higher involvement in apparel shopping – O'Cass, 2004), so they need to make compromises on the price of the products unless they want to reduce their shopping frequency.

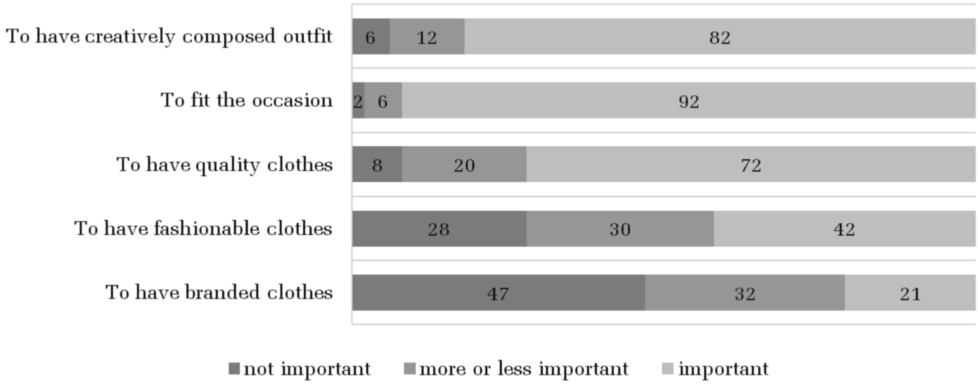
Students were asked to indicate the approx. amount of money they spend on clothes in a month. The results show that students spend nearly 215 RON in a month (approx. 46 EUR) on clothing purchases (Mean: 214.74; Minimum: 10; Maximum: 1,000; Std. dev.: 193.43). There is a positive relationship between the importance of brand and the money spent on clothes ($r = 0.214$; $p < 0.001$), showing that those who spend more money on clothes are more brand-sensitive.

The level of information on fashion was determined by asking respondents to self-rate this item on a 5-point Likert scale. Half of the respondents (51%) consider themselves as well- or very well-informed in terms of fashion. The mean score is 3.47 (Std. dev.: 1.01), and the results of the t-tests ($t = 0.674$; df: 302; $p > 0.05$) show that there is no significant difference between the subjectively rated information level of women (Mean: 3.44, std. dev.: 1.074) and that of men (Mean: 3.52; Std. dev.: 0.917). A significant, positive correlation was shown between the level of information and brand sensitivity ($r = 0.345$; $p < 0.001$) as well. That is, those students who are – subjectively – more involved in fashion are more sensitive about the brand of the products.

Students were asked to indicate which of the following is their most favourite site of shopping: malls, outlet/second-hand shops, online shops, or other shops. The results are the following: outlets/second-hand shops are preferred the most (37%), followed by malls (33%), other offline shops other than malls and outlets (25%), online shops (13%), and do not know (2%). The ANOVA analysis suggests that the mean importance of brand differs significantly among the sites of shopping [F 3,300 = 10.184; $p < 0.001$]. Those who prefer to shop in second-hand shops/outlets are significantly less brand-sensitive (Mean = 3.19; Std. dev. = 1.62) than those who prefer to shop in malls (Mean = 4.19; Std. dev. = 1.39) or in online shops (Mean = 4.14, Std. dev. = 1.18).

What concerns the contribution of five different criteria – including the brand of the product – in the definition of well-dressed, the results are presented in

Figure 3 below. These results show that having branded clothes is less important than the other four criteria in order to be well-dressed.



Source: author's graphs

Figure 3. *The importance of the five criteria (%) in the definition of being well-dressed*

The amount of money spent on clothes positively correlates with each of the five criteria of being well-dressed, including the role of brands ($r = 0.341$; $p < 0.001$). The frequency of shopping correlates significantly only with brand-sensitivity ($r = 0.212$; $p < 0.001$) and fashionability ($r = 0.245$; $p < 0.001$), and the same is the case with the self-rated level of information ($r = 0.253$; $p < 0.001$ in the case of brand and $r = 0.321$; $p < 0.001$ in the case of fashionability).

The results resemble a typical situation for a young population, as it was already assessed in the international literature: brand is not a primary criterion of clothing choice for the youth; however, there might be specific segments (e.g. fashion-involved, economically better-off or, on the contrary, economically less privileged, in whose cases brands can be signs of materialistic worldviews and prestige consumption in the form of a compensation) for whom it represents a crucial criterion either in the form of self-expression or conspicuous consumption (e.g. Goldmsith et al., 2012; Parment, 2013; Kelemen-Erdős–Kőszegi, 2017).

In order to measure fashion adoption in my convenience sample, I borrowed an item from Tigert et al.'s (1976) *Fashion Involvement Index*. More specifically, respondents were asked to say whether they adopt a new trend of fashion before, in the same time, or later than their colleagues/friends. The purpose was that with the help of this item to group respondents in three specific categories: early adopters, late majority, and late adopters (cf. Rogers, 1983). The frequency distribution in the sample was the following: 13% early adopters, 45% early majority, 37% late majority, 5% do not know. In general, brand-sensitivity is a common phenomenon in the case of fashion-forward respondents (i.e. early adopters and early majority) as otherwise suggested by the results synthetized in *Table 1*, which show the relative importance given to brand across three different groups of fashion adopters.

Table 1. *The mean importance of the five criteria of clothing choice and that of the five criteria of well-dressed across the three fashion adoption groups (ANOVA analysis)*

Scale means	Early adopters	Late majority	Late adopters	F
		Criteria of clothing choice		
The role of colour	3.97 (0.96)	4.35 (0.87)	4.06 (1.15)	F (2.287)=3.514; p<0.05
The role of print	3.48 (1.25)	3.86 (1.39)	4.26 (1.06)	F (2.287)=3.414; p<0.05
The role of material quality	4.52 (0.99)	4.16 (1.23)	4.10 (1.18)	F (2.287)= 4.222; p<0.05
The role of price	3.67 (0.97)	4.05 (1.18)	4.19 (1.18)	F (2.287)= 2.890; p<0.05
The role of brands	4.13 (1.28)	3.95 (1.41)	3.56 (1.58)	F (2.287)=3.449; p<0.05.
		Criteria of being well-dressed		
The role of brands	3.95 (1.29)	3.17 (1.27)	3.02 (1.45)	F (2.287)=6.952; p<0.05
The role of fashionability	3.64 (1.58)	3.03 (1.35)	2.96 (1.45)	F (2.287)=3.491; p<0.05
The role of quality	4.29 (0.86)	4.14 (1.03)	4.04 (1.09)	F (2.287)=1.225; p>0.05
The role of fitting the occasion	4.46 (0.72)	4.41 (0.69)	4.42 (0.69)	F (2.287)=0.956; P>0.05
The role of creative outfits	4.48 (0.64)	3.93 (0.93)	3.85 (1.16)	F (2.287)=5.995; p<0.05

Note: Standard deviation in parentheses *Source: author's calculus*

It turns out that early adopters of fashion are significantly less sensitive to colour, print, and price when they choose an item of clothing; however, the quality of the material of which the item of clothing is made and the brand of the item count significantly more for them than for the other fashion adoption groups. On the basis of these results, it is possible to confirm the presupposition according to which early adopters are less price-conscious but at the same time more brand-sensitive than the other fashion adoption groups. This finding is in line with those assessed in the international literature (e.g. Beaudoin et al., 2003; Cardoso et al., 2010).

We can conclude that the students are only more or less brand sensitive. Indeed, 60% of the sample do have a favourite fashion brand, and much of these seem to be fast fashion brands. However, it also happens that brand is a less important criterion of clothing choice than the intrinsic attributes of clothes and their price. The same results are provided in terms of brands when the criteria of being well-dressed are examined. Here, fitting the occasion and having a creatively composed outfit seem to be more important than having branded and fashionable outfits.

However, it was also demonstrated that those students who are more involved in fashion are early adopters of fashion trends, have higher budgets to spend on clothes, prefer to acquire their clothes from malls, and are more brand-sensitive. Brand sensitivity can thus be a segmentation criterion: it can separate between fashion-involved and less price-sensitive students on the one hand and between later adopters, more price-sensitive students on the other hand.

Brand-Related Narratives

The results of the online survey have already shown students' unequivocal preference for fast fashion brands. On the basis of the focus groups' narrative, there can be revealed three major groups/tendencies in connection with brand preference: 1) participants who have an unequivocal preference for a specific brand, 2) participants who have a favourite brand only in the case of a specific type of clothing item, and 3) participants who do not have a favourite brand.

The first case resembles those respondents who were not disappointed by their favourite brand; for them, these brands are the source of pleasure and satisfaction. So, the narratives from this group do not refer to fast fashion as a form of cheap, lower-quality fashion (e.g. Gabrielli et al., 2013; Joung, 2014). On the contrary, students characterize their preferred brands using positive terms such as "stylish", "high-quality", "unique", "cool", "comfortable", "affordable", "young", "specific", "well-cut", etc. These narratives can be considered a form of hedonistic approach on fast fashion brands; these brands provide gratification, fulfilment in terms of fashionability and style and offer opportunities for unique combinations. This stream of the narratives is in line with those previous findings of the literature which contend that fashion- and brand-conscious shoppers practise hedonistic consumption, and they take away fun and pleasure from the consumption of (fast) fashion brands (Park–Sulivan, 2009; Eastman et al., 2012; Bahng et al., 2013; Colucci–Scarpi, 2013).

> I'm in favour of Zara. I think it is really beautiful, they make very beautiful clothes, and I do not agree that they do not have quality. All that I have from Zara are in perfect condition. I just love Zara… It is very different from the rest… They have stylish clothes. It happened that I switched to other brands, but I was not satisfied. Zara is much better than all those other brands… The clothes are not cheap... Or not so cheap, but their quality compensates the prices.

> I am also a fan of Zara, but I like H&M as well. When I have money, I buy from Massimo Dutti as well. These three are my favourites… Each of them

> has a particular style, I do not think that these brands are the same. Zara is stylish, Massimo is high class, H&M is very comfortable for T-shirts, jeans, and things like that.
> I like all of these, these are cool brands… But that's true that you have to select among the products. Now everybody goes to these shops… A few years ago, it was different. When you bought something from Zara, you were very different… I mean, you were over the rest… Now, everyone goes to the mall and buys Zara. It's more difficult now to have a unique outfit.

The question of homogeneity through fast fashion products was also raised during the group discussions, but the respondents considered that they can be unique even if they are wearing the same brands of the same products from a particular brand as other consumers do. The key to being different from the rest is the originality of combinations. In this respect, they refer to the role of individual adoptions, to the so-called bricolage (Barnard, 2002), through which there can be constructed various styles, images, and meanings by using the same dresses.

> I […] think that it is very much up to you. How you wear that dress. What accessories you use, how you combine different elements…
> Through a single new piece I am not going to look the same as others… Moderation is the key…
> You buy something and then combine it with your already existing clothes… It is a way of re-creation, in fact.

Even if the literature considers fast fashion brands as cheap products, the respondents tend to share the view that these brands have quite high prices for students' pockets; so, they employ various strategies in order to acquire their favourite brands. Thus, even if they cannot afford to buy these brands from the high street, malls, or from online shops, the faithful, hedonistic consumers of fast fashion brands make compromises and look for such brands in outlets, second-hand shops or buy them from other cities in the country or from abroad. In such cases, fast fashion brands become important not (only) for their trendiness (after all, the interviewees do not buy the latest trend in such situations) but for their specific style and cut or for their value of signalling a certain status or image.

> I also go to the mall and usually cannot resist buying. But I cannot afford to buy a coat, so I buy cheaper items like tops…
> My strategy is to find my preferred brands in an outlet or in a second-hand shop, but mostly in outlets. When I go to such shops, I typically look at the labels. If something I like it is not my favourite brand, I hardly buy it.

The case of those respondents who stick with a specific brand only in the case of a certain clothing item, most frequently shoes, resembles the type of utilitarian shoppers (Park–Sullivan, 2009; Bahng et al., 2013). These consumers associate certain brands with higher levels of durability, comfort, aesthetics, or status (Cardoso et al., 2010). Thus, in the case of those products which are important for them (i.e. high-involvement products – O'Cass, 2004), students remain faithful to a particular brand, while in terms of other clothing items they are switching between brands or do not give importance to the role of the brand criterion.

> I think that in what regards your everyday clothes, brands are not so important. I do not spend large amounts on my everyday clothes. But for my occasional outfits I spend a lot because I like them to look good and have a higher quality.

> The same is here, but I would say there are several categories for me in which case the brand is important: my shoes, my suits, and my watch. The rest is not so important. But people judge you on the basis of these things.

The third group comprises three specific categories: 1) Respondents who do not have a favourite brand: these interviewees are usually impulse buyers who – once the style or the price of the product is appealing – decide to buy the product regardless of its brand. 2) The other group is made up of those consumers who do not have a favourite brand because they consider that brands are not affordable for them, and thus the low price of a product becomes more important than the brand (cf. price-conscious shoppers – Loureiro–Breazeale, 2016). 3) A third group is made up of those consumers who have a critical attitude towards brands in general either because they were disappointed by their previously preferred brands or because of their critical attitudes towards fast fashion or consumerism. The following excerpt from a focus group gives examples for each of these situations:

> I had favourite brands, but the products then started to become very low quality, so it was not economically sustainable to buy from that brand anymore… I have become more attentive since then, and so I do not necessarily choose the product of a certain brand but the quality of a product, regardless of its brand.
> We all, I think, have bad experiences not only with fast fashion brands but with brands in general. So, I have become more critical. I tried to buy clothes based on documentation. I have read about brands, products, their philosophy, and if they convince me, then I try to buy from such brands.
> I am a more difficult case. I am very critical about my clothes. I read a lot

> about certain brands, and I like to have brands which are more specific. I do not like these brands… All those things that were mentioned previously… I am not that kind of girl… I admit that there are girls who look good in the brands from the mall… I do not like to look the same… Then I am searching… I have several brands which I like or admire; I do not necessarily have clothes from them… But I agree with their philosophy.

As a conclusion for youngsters' brand-related narrative, we can mention that the fact that they can hardly see beyond fast fashion is typical for their generation; however, the finding that the participants do not constitute a monolithic group and there are also interviewees who are critical, resistant, or more attentive in terms of what they buy shows that the attitude towards fashion brands is much more diverse than it would seem at first sight. It is also important to mention that even if the majority are faithful to fast fashion brands, youngsters see these brands or clothing items in the form of a stylistic attempt rather than in the form of a fashion statement. They are looking for these brands not necessarily in order to buy the latest trends but in order to buy an item (even from a previous collection – cf. the buying of certain brands from outlets) from a fashionable brand in order to integrate it among their own clothing items. From this perspective, fast fashion brands appear as a kind of status symbol for economically less better-off students: once a piece of branded clothing is integrated into a commonsensical outfit, youngsters pretend that their outfit becomes much more valuable, nicer, stylish, cool, and distinct. This is a paradoxical situation: interviewees pretend that they can become unique through similar clothes as far as they do not wear these clothes in similar combinations.

Concluding Remarks

The results of my mixed-method study conducted among students in Cluj-Napoca (Romania) with the aim of revealing students' sensitivity regarding fashion brands showed that the majority of the respondents have a favourite brand, and most of these are fast fashion brands. Even if the literature has many arguments in the direction of blaming these brands for their low quality, poor environmental performance, homogeneity, etc. (Joy et al., 2012; Gabrielli et al., 2013), the majority of the respondents see these brands through the lenses of prestige: they think that such brands can bear quality, durability, and, above all, they are perceived as cool brands. Youngsters speak about these brands in appreciative ways and associate them with success, prestige, and social status. These are indicative for students' materialistic views on fashion and brands. It seems that in the context of relative economic scarcity owning a (fast fashion) brand is a signal of prestige (cf. conspicuous consumption), and so it is worth the effort of hunting for such brands at low prices at sales or in second-hand shops. Thus, brands are important building blocks of the image and social status and are signals of success, as the findings of the focus-group research suggest as well (cf. Eastman et al., 2012).

Through the narratives of focus groups, it was possible to reveal the reason for preferring such brands: besides offering a way of affiliation to global lifestyles, fast fashion brands are mostly viewed as qualitative, prestige brands. Students manifest discourses which are against the literature's approach on fast fashion brands as low-quality, environmentally problematic brands (e.g. Joy et al., 2012). This finding can be interpreted also from the viewpoint of limited budgets and materialistic values: for the youngsters, fast fashion brands are the symbols of global, cool lifestyles as seen in social media, and they thus feel urged to buy these brands because in this way they can become adherents of global culture and wearers of cool, prestige brands. Albeit they reject the conspicuous wearing of branded clothes, they recognize that wearing brands can be a signal of a higher social status, of success. Besides such hedonistic attitudes towards fast fashion, the narratives revealed two other segments which reveal more rational attitudes on brands. In one of these, brands count only to a certain degree, usually in the case of some items (mostly shoes); in the other group, which resembles mostly the case of price-conscious shoppers, criteria other than brand are important; these respondents try to guide their shopping based on the criterion of price or on criteria of anti-consumerist attitudes.

The study also revealed that fast fashion brands are mixed and matched in particular outfits and allow the construction of different yet fashionable and accepted outfits through which youngsters can reinterpret themselves and their image (see Gabrielli et al., 2013). The focus groups succeeded in revealing more critical discourses as well: such (a few) participants see fast fashion brands as very homogenous, superficial, and low-quality clothing and are looking for individual brands and styles. Even if such narratives are relatively rare, they are sending out important messages about the seeds of a counter-culture amongst the dominance of fast fashion brands and open an avenue for more diverse ways of image building.

The survey also showed that brands count less than other aspects of clothing when it comes to buying apparel: the colour, print, fabric, and price of the items are much more important than the brand of the products, and these can be quoted as signals for price-conscious shopping. A further nuance in this respect is that the dressier, more fashion-involved respondents place greater importance on brand and less importance on the other criteria, including price as well. This finding is in line with the international literature (e.g. Goldsmith et al., 2012) and illustrates that the group of early adapters are hedonistic consumers who, once meeting a new, appealing trend, acquire its items from their favourite brands no matter the cost.

References

Bahng, Y.–Kincade, D. H.–Yang, J. J. (2013). College Students' Apparel Shopping Orientation and Brand/Product Preferences. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 17(3): 367–384.

Bakewell, C.–Mitchell, V. W. (2003). Generation Y Female Consumer Decision-Making Styles. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* 31(2): 95–106.

Barnard, M. (2002). *Fashion as Communication*. London: Routledge.

Barton, C.–Fromm, J.–Eagan, C.–2012. *The Millennial Consumer: Debunking Stereotypes*. The Boston Consulting Group.

Batey, M. (2008). *Brand Meaning*. New York: Routledge.

Baudrillard, J. (1970/1998). *The Consumer Society. Myths and Structures*. London: Sage.

Beaudoin, P.–Lachance, M. J.–Robitaille, J. (2003). Fashion Innovativeness, Fashion Diffusion and Brand Sensitivity among Adolescents. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 7(1): 23–30.

Cardoso, P. R.–Tsourvakas, G.–Santos, J. (2005). Information Sources and Clothing Brands Consumption in Mediterranean Countries. A Qualitative Study of Attitudes and Behavior of the Greek and Portuguese Young Consumers. <http://www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/cardoso-tsourvakas-santos-information-sources.pdf> (Accessed on: 3 October 2019).

Colucci, M.–Scarpi, D. (2013). Generation Y. Evidences from the Fast-Fashion Market and Implications for Targeting. *Journal of Business Theory and Practice* 1(1): 1–7.

Crane, D. (2000). *Fashion and Its Social Agendas. Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eastman, J. K.–Iyer, R.–Thomas, S. P. (2012). The Impact of Status Consumption on Shopping Styles. An Exploratory Look at the Millennial Generation. *The Marketing Management Journal* 23(1): 57–73.

Fernandez, P. R. (2009). Impact of Branding on Gen Y's Choice of Clothing. *The Journal of the South East Asia Research Centre for Communication and Humanities* 1(1): 79–95.

Fletcher, K. (2008). *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles. Design Journeys*. London: Earthscan.

Franzen, G.–Moriarty, S. (2009). *The Art and Science of Branding*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe.

Gabrielli, V.–Baghi, I.–Codeluppi, V. (2013). Consumption Practices of Fast Fashion Products: A Consumer-Based Approach. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 17(2): 206–224.

Gliner, J. A.–Morgan, G. E.–Leech, N. (2009). *Research Methods in Applied Settings.* New York: Routledge.

Goldsmith, R. E.–Flynn, L. R.–Clark, R. A. (2012). Materialistic, Brand Engaged and Status Consuming Consumers and Clothing Behaviors. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 16(1): 102–119.

Howe, N.–Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials Rising. The Next Great Generation*. New York: Vintage Books.

Joung, H-M. (2014). Fast Fashion Consumers' Post-Purchase Behaviours. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* 42(8): 688–697.

Joy, A.–Sherry, J. F.–Venkatesh, A.–Wang, J.–Chan, R. (2012). Fast Fashion, Sustainability and the Ethical Appeal of Luxury Brands. *Fashion Theory* 16(3): 273–296.

Kawamura, Y. (2011). *Doing Research in Fashion and Dress. An Introduction to Qualitative Methods.* Oxford: Berg.

Kelemen-Erdős, A.–Kőszegi, Zs. (2017). Fast fashion márkák szerepe a fiatalok önkifejezésben. *Vállalkozásfejlesztés a XXI. században.* <http://kgk.uni-obuda.hu/sites/default/files/17_KelemenErdosAniko_KoszegiZsuzsa.pdf> (Accessed on: 3 October 2019).

Knittel, Z.–Beurer, K.–Berndt, A. (2016). Brand Avoidance among Generation Y Consumers. *Qualitative Market Research* 19(1): 27–43.

Loureiro, S. M. C.–Breazeale, M. (2016). Pressing the Buy Button. Generation Y's Online Clothing Shopping Orientation and Its Impact on Purchase. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 34(3): 1–16.

Nistor, L. (2019). The Case of Omni-Channel Consumers. A Qualitative Study Regarding Students' Clothing Consumption Habits. *Postmodern Openings* 10(3): 44–71.

O'Cass, A. (2004). Fashion Clothing Consumption: Antecedents and Consequences of Fashion Clothing Involvement. *European Journal of Marketing* 38(7): 869–882.

Park, H.–Sullivan, P. (2009). Market Segmentation with Respect to University Students' Clothing Benefits Sought. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* 37(2): 182–201.

Parment, A. (2013). Generation Y vs. Baby Boomers. Shopping Behavior, Buyer Involvement and Implications for Retailing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 20(2): 189–199.

Pentecost, R.–Andrews, L. (2010). Fashion Retailing and the Bottom Line. The Effects of Generational Cohorts, Gender, Fashion Fanship, Attitudes and Impulse Buying on Fashion Expenditure. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 17: 43–52.

Peterson, R. A.–Merunka, D. R. (2014). Convenience Samples of College Students and Research Reproducibility. *Journal of Business Research* 67: 1035–1041.

Popa, A.–Pelau, C. (2016). Diferențe în percepția brandurilor de îmbrăcăminte în funcție de generație. *Industria Textilă* 6: 260–264.

Raportul Rectorului, 2016. <http://www.ubbcluj.ro/ro/infoubb/documente_publice/files/raport-rector/Raport_Rector_2016.pdf> (Accessed on: 3 October 2019).

Rhee, J.–Johnson, K. K. P. (2012). Predicting Adolescents' Apparel Brand Preferences. *Journal of Product and Brand Managemen*t 21(4): 255–264.

Rogers, E. M. (1968/1983). *Diffusion of Innovation*. New York: The Free Press.

Ross, J.–Harradine, R. (2010). Value Brands: Cheap or Trendy? An Investigation into Young Consumers and Supermarket Clothing. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 14(3): 350–366.

Sandu, D.–Stoica, C. A.–Umbres, R. (2014). *Tineri în România. Griji, aspirații, atitudini şi stil de viață*. Bucharest: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Schonlau, M.–Fricker, R. D. Jr.–Elliott, M. (2002). *Conducting Research Surveys via E-mail and the Web.* Santa Monica: RAND.

Segran, E. (2016). Your Guide to Generation Z. The Frugal, Brand-Wary, Determined Anti-Millennials. *Fast Company* 09.08.2016.

Sue, V. M.–Ritter, L. A. (2012). *Conducting Online Surveys.* Los Angeles: Sage.

Tigert, D. J.–Ring, L. J.–King, C. (1976). Fashion Involvement and Buying Behavior. A Methodological Study. *Advances in Consumer Research* 3: 46–52.

Yarrow, K.–O'Donnell, J. (2009). *Gen BuY: How Tweens, Teens, and Twenty-Somethings Are Revolutionizing Retail.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio, **6** (2019) 61–82

DOI: 10.2478/auscom-2019-0004

Service Brand Identity Characteristics of Software and IT Companies in Cluj-Napoca

Gyöngyvér Erika TŐKÉS
Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
Cluj-Napoca, Romania
e-mail: gyongyvert@ms.sapientia.ro

Abstract: The development of strong service brand confers market advantage under conditions of strong economic competition (Nádasi, 2016). In creating a strong service brand, the first steps include the elaboration of the service brand identity. The goal of this study consisted in applying the socio-scientific-based brand identity model of Burmann et al. (2017) in the analysis of the service brand identities of three Cluj-Napoca-based software and IT companies. The results of the analysis have shed light on the points of parity of the service brand identities of software and IT companies and highlighted the brand identity elements that enable differentiation (points-of-difference). The common points of the service brand identity of the Cluj-Napoca-based software and IT companies consisted in the emphasis on technical competences as well as customer and relationship orientation. Their differentiation was possible along their values and personality, which represent the symbolic benefits of service brand identity. Their symbolic differentiation also resulted in the differentiation of their offers.

Keywords: service brand, brand identity, socio-scientific brand identity model, software and IT companies in Cluj-Napoca, points of parity and differentiation

Introduction

In the context of strong economic competition, the success of companies depends not only on the quality of their products and services. The uniqueness of their company identity becomes increasingly important, ensuring both the favourable positioning of the company and its clear separation from the competitors while also positively influencing the development of long-term cooperation relationships with the target groups.

The emphasizing of the company's uniqueness and of the originality of its products and services as well as the creation of the differentiation from its competitors falls within the scope of company identity management, one of the strategic areas of which is brand management (Nádasi, 2016: 120).

The brand is a concept that can be connected to the products, services, and the employment of the company or to the company as a whole (Kapferer, 2008: 42). In the process of brand communication, the target audience of the brand encounters the brand representation and forms its own perception of the brand, thus creating the image of the brand. The brand image influences the brand's strength and value, i.e. the brand's influence on purchasing decisions and its financial value (Kapferer, 2008: 43; Chernev, 2017: 162).

The strategic brand analysis and the determination of brand identity are some of the preliminary steps in the process of brand management, which later influence the process of brand planning and implementation (Aaker–Joachimsthaler, 2009: 13). The elaboration of an inspiring brand identity forms the basis for the creation of a strong brand (Aaker–Joachimsthaler, 2009: 292).

The aim of this study is to present the construction of brand identity and to offer an analysis of the service brand identity of companies from the software and IT sector in Cluj-Napoca, based on case studies involving three software and IT companies of this city.

Definition and Structure of Brand Identity

There are two possibilities for the management when creating the brand: the application of the market-oriented outside-in approach and the identity-based inside-out strategy (Urde–Baumgarth–Merrilees, 2011: 4; Burmann et al., 2017: 26). In the first case, the goal of the brand management activities is to influence the brand image so that it may catch up with the needs of the external target groups (especially of the customers and clients). In the second approach, the emphasis is on the internal anchorage of the brand identity (mission, vision, values). The highlighting of the brand identity is associated with the resource-based approach, in which the brand developers rely on the resources and competences of the company, subsequently shaping the brand-related client expectations through offering these to them (Alsem–Kostelijk, 2008: 911).

Many researchers use the concepts of company identity, company reputation, and company brand interchangeably (Balmer–Gray, 2003: 974). It is, however, worth highlighting that, while all companies have their company identity, it is only those companies who consciously create it who have a brand of any kind (Balmer–Gray, 2003: 980). Brand creation is needed especially in competitive market environments. The strong brands all have some characteristics shared by similar brands (points-of-parity, POP) but also some characteristics that make them unique and outstanding (points-of-difference, POD). Company reputation is rather the mirror image of company and brand identity, reflecting the widespread general opinion about the organization. The development of company reputation is significantly impacted by the effectiveness of company identity management, including brand management (Schultz–Hatch–Adams, 2012).

"Brand identity is a set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain" (Aaker–Joachimsthaler, 2009: 43). Brand identity is a multi-dimensional construct, whose elements form a unit (Kapferer, 2008: 187). Brand identity requires clarity in order to ensure that those involved with the brand all interpret the brand's soul in a similar manner (Aaker–Joachimsthaler, 2009: 40; Kapferer, 2008: 189; Esch, 2008: 62). In the case of a strong brand, the elements of brand identity form a coherent unit and are in accordance with the brand promise. The majority of the authors studying brand identity agree that the external brand perception is associated with the characteristics of brand identity (Burmann–Jost-Benz–Riley, 2009: 391).

Several authors have developed conceptual models for the definition of brand identity and their relationship, the most frequently cited among them being Aaker (2002), Kapferer (2008), and Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2009). These authors use the inside-out orientation of brand identity construction, and their models concern the development of product brands. Also worthy of mention among brand identity models is the corporate brand identity prism of Urde (2013) and the brand identity interpretation of Chernatony (2014). The models mentioned here are conceptual in nature and hardly have been empirically tested (Coleman–Chernatony–Christodoulides, 2011: 1064). The validity of said models primarily covers the field of B2C, and so they are less applicable in the B2B area (Coleman–Chernatony–Christodoulides, 2011: 1064).

For the purposes of the present study, the integrated brand identity model of Burmann et al. (2017) deserves special emphasis since it represents the theoretical background for the brand identity analysis of software and IT companies in Cluj-Napoca. The integrated brand identity model of Burmann et al. is based on a social science approach and builds on the tradition and results of personal identity research. Although distancing themselves from the marketing approach, the authors arrive at a brand identity model very similar to the brand identity models based on the marketing perspective. At the same time, the integrated brand identity model of Burmann et al. is of a general nature and can be applied in the empirical research of any brand identity type, regardless of the brand subject.

Socio-Scientific Model of Brand Identity (Burmann et al., 2017)

Burmann et al. (2017) have applied the findings of socio-scientific identity research to determine the construction of brand identity. They compared the brand identity to the human identity and the brand image to the social perception of the individual. Burmann et al. (2017: 42) compare the characteristics of weak and strong human identity, subsequently deriving the most important elements of the brand identity construction from the characteristics, resulting in a strong human identity.

According to Burmann et al. (2017: 43), a person with a strong personal identity has a coherent identity in which partial role identities are integrated into a harmonious unity. Such a person may be characterized by some clearly accentuated characteristic properties, while a person with a weak identity changes their identity according to the different situations, and none of their characteristics is too strong. A person with a strong identity assumes the risks associated with change and is thus able to adapt to the changing circumstances, while a person with a weak identity sticks to the existing status quo. Someone with a strong personal identity is able to use the changing circumstances for their own personal development and is thus open to innovative behaviour and experimentation.

The differences between persons with strong and weak identities also manifest in the interaction of the self-perception ant the social perception. People with a strong personal identity do not fully adapt themselves to external expectations but maintain the essential elements of their identity in spite of the role expectations they are confronted with. This requires developed self-confidence, one's own personal values and vision of the future. A person with a strong identity relates to their past experiences consciously, learns and draws strength from them to implement their plans, while persons with a weak identity do not become aware of their abilities and also do not use their past experiences.

According to Burmann et al. (2017: 43), strong personal identity and strong brand identity are manifested in the same manner. Hence, they included into the construction of brand identity the elements that result in strong brand identity.

On the basis of socio-scientific identity research, Burmann et al. (2017: 44) distinguish six constitutive elements which allow a comprehensive description of brand identity: offer, mission/vision, personality, values, competences, and origin.

The offer of brand identity is related to the advantages offered by the brand. The offers are directed both at the external and internal target group. They may have a financial, functional, or symbolic (emotional, social, self-expressive) character. Brand offers are partially similar to the offers of the competing brands of the industry, but they also have to contain individual components which clearly distinguish them. Brand offers are based on the brand competencies (Burmann at el., 2017: 55).

Table 1. *Characteristics of weak and strong identities in people and brands*

Characteristics of:		Transfer to brand identities
Weak human identity	**Strong human identity**	
Many presumed "specific" identity characteristics	Only a few distinguished identity characteristics	Brand promise and brand offer
Risk aversion, anxious maintenance of the status quo	Role conflicts are used actively to advance one's own identity into new areas (innovative spirit)	Personality
Adoption of values from other (external) identities	Shaping of one's own values	Values
Strong focus on the environment	Development of a clear vision	Mission and vision
Low level of self-confidence	High level of self-confidence	Competences
Lack of consciousness of one's own achievements (capability)	Achievement and accomplishments of the past provide motivation for new projects.	Origin

Source: Burmann et al., 2017: 43 – Table 2.4.

Besides the origin, brand identity is primarily based upon the competences of the brand creator company. The competences associated with brand identity refer to those abilities of the company that support the feasibility and authenticity of the brand offer. Successful companies continuously develop and renew their competences in order to remain authentic in the eyes of their target groups and to be able to adjust to the expectations (Burmann et al., 2017: 49).

"The vision determines the brand's long-term development trend" (Burmann et al., 2017: 48). The mission of the brand identity summarizes the assumed role of the brand for the target groups (Burmann et al., 2017: 52). It is an important incentive and motivation both for the internal staff and the external target groups, stating the reason for the existence of the brand, the general convictions supporting its establishment, and the strategic priorities, all of which separate the brand from its competitors (Burmann et al., 2017: 52).

The brand values involved in the construction of brand identity reflect the fundamental beliefs of the brand managers and employees behind the brand, which influences its attitudes and behaviour towards external and internal target groups. The values are the emotional components of the brand, i.e. the principles deemed by the brand to be worth following.

The personality of the brand identity is connected to the values of the brand identity and belongs likewise to the emotional nature of the brand. It denotes the personality traits that internal and external target groups are supposed to associate with the brand (Burmann et al., 2017: 53). The personality of the brand identity is represented by the company employees through their attitudes, way of thinking, and behaviour (Burmann et al., 2017: 53). The personality of the brand identity is expressed in the verbal and non-verbal communication style of the brand (Schade, 2012 via Burmann et al., 2017: 53). The brand identity personality contributes to the development of the brand's relations since the customers may build a personal relationship with the brand as a person. Brand identity is incomplete without personality traits, which represent the most important differentiating factor between brands in a fiercely competitive market (Burmann et al., 2017: 53).

The origin of the brand forms the basis of the brand identity. Brand origin is closely connected with the history of the brand, without being identical to the latter. The former is related to the special circumstances and individual facets of the brand's development, in which the brand is rooted. There are three important characteristics of brand origins: geographic origin, the company origin, and the industry origin (Burmann et al., 2017: 45).

For global brands, the brand's country of origin is difficult to determine. Hence, it may happen that the cultural character has greater importance for the brand identity than the country of origin. Nevertheless, the brand's success on the global market is significantly influenced by the way in which people think about the brand's country of origin (Bauer–Kolos, 2016).

The company origin encompasses the attribution of brand to a company. The launching conditions of the company, the company's founders, and outstanding management leaders can significantly shape the brand identity (Burmann et al., 2017: 47). The special characteristics, core values, and competences of the brand are related to the source situation in which the brand was elaborated.

The authors emphasize the importance of the consistency between the elements of brand identity, whose lack damages the brand's unity. The unique brand identity ensures the brand's distinctiveness from its competitors and thus manages to capture and maintain the attention of the internal and external target groups while also creating commitment to the brand.

Specific Features of the Services Brand

The functioning of companies that are active in service markets is increasingly determined by a service-dominant logic (SDL) (Vargo et al., 2010; Veress, 2009: 29). The central tenet of SDL is that reciprocal service, defined as the application of competencies for the benefit of another party, is the fundamental basis of economic exchange. According to this mind-set, service companies are customer-oriented and relational, and the main appreciation comes from customer-based problem-solving ability and relationships.

There are five participating elements in the service delivery process:

a) the *back office*, i.e. the background units of the service company (background staff and logistic system);

b) the *front office*, i.e. the contact units of the service company (the front-line contact staff and contextual factors);

c) the *service commodity*, of which there can be simultaneously more than one;

d) the *customers,* who require the service and actively participate in the exchange;

e) *other customers*, who are simultaneously present at the scene of the exchange (Veress, 2009: 43).

The brand creator company takes account of all elements involved in the service process in the development of the service brand. The service brand conveys a promise both to the customers and to the staff of the service company. Its promise is related to the service commodity, which is intangible for the customer. Due to this intangibility of the service commodity, the customers make their decision primarily on the basis of emotional factors when accessing the service, relying on the opinions and evaluation of other customers.

The customers consider two important dimensions when evaluating the service brand, i.e. the technical and functional quality of the service. The technical quality of the service is associated with the "what" of the service encounter (Morrison–Crane, 2007: 414). The technical quality of the service is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the customer to be satisfied. The service company may substantiate the technical quality of the service with different certificates, qualifications, and awards presented to the customers. The functional quality is related to the attitude and behaviour of the service company, i.e. the "how" of the service encounter, which increase the satisfaction of the customers and ensure customer retention and loyalty (Morrison, Crane, 2007: 414).

For service brands, the constant maintenance of the brand experience's quality can create difficulties since the service is, in fact, an interaction or relationship between the customers and the staff of the company. The individual, social, cultural, and professional characteristics of the company employees are widely different, and people's daily condition is also changing, while the quality of the service depends on employee wellness. In the case of services, brand perception results in its totality from the encounter and the relationship between the customer and the staff that represents the brand (Riley–Chernatony, 2000: 146).

If the provision of services is for another company (B2B), the provider will emphasize the professional quality of its service in order to ensure success. However, the assessment of company success has revealed that the technical service quality in itself does not ensure the satisfaction of the customer, but adequate customer relations are also needed. The difference between service brand experiences lies in the emotional relationship developed with the customer (Morrison–Crane, 2007: 416).

For the service brand to be successful, the provider needs to pay attention to the maintenance of the emotional relationship before, during, and after the purchase. In the pre-purchase stage, the positive emotional relationship plays an important role in obtaining the favourable customer decision. During the purchase stage, the maintenance of the positive emotional relationship may be achieved through the involvement of the customer (e.g. the customer may track the progress of the service). In the post-purchase stage, the maintenance of the emotional connection is directed at extending positive emotional attachments with the service brand and the retention of the customer's loyalty (Morrison–Crane, 2007: 418; Riley–Chernatony, 2000: 137).

The academic literature increasingly stresses the relationship orientation of the service brands (Riley–Chernatony, 2000: 139), while the prerequisite for the success of the brand consists in the provision of a quality service (Berry, 2000: 132). The customer builds on their prior knowledge and emotional impression of the service company when choosing the service brand (Morrison–Crane, 2007: 414). In the case of complex and high-value services, the customer expects value-adding relationships to enrich their service experience (Coleman–Chernatony–Christodoulides, 2011: 1065). At the same time, the creation of the favourable brand experience is also largely influenced by the physical environment of the service company, including, among other things, the furnishing of the premises, office equipment, and other selected sensory effects (Morrison–Crane, 2007: 416). The service brand may be conceived of as the sum of functional and symbolic benefits conveyed to the customer through the quality of the service and of the relationship with the service company (Riley–Chernatony, 2000: 147). The satisfaction of the customer is strongly influenced by the coherence between the attitude and behaviour of the service company staff on the one hand and the service brand promise on the other hand (Chernatony–Harris, 2000: 268).

According to Burry (2000: 130), service companies may develop strong service brands through emphasizing their uniqueness, consequently providing high-quality services and creating a positive emotional relationship with the recipients. The creation of a strong service brand requires constant effort from the company so that it can keep its distinct and unique brand identity up-to-date while also constantly searching for new ways of reaching customers and satisfying their demands.

McDonald, Chernatony, and Harris (2001: 346) emphasize the importance of internal brand management through which the brand developers present the mission, values, and competences of the service brand to the staff, thus furthering the development of their brand awareness and brand experience. The company has to support and motivate its employees to behave according to the brand promise, even making the establishment of their contribution conditional upon brand implementation.

The success of the service brand is significantly influenced by staff attitude and behaviour since the quality of the relationships established with the clients plays a key role in the realization of the brand experience stated by the brand promise for the customers (Buil–Catalan–Martinez, 2016: 4; Burry, 2000: 135). According to Kenesei (2016), the customer's attachment is not so much to the service company but to the employee with whom they collaborate. The shortest path to establish trust relationships between the customer and the service brand consists in the convincing behaviour of the staff that identifies with the brand (Morrison–Crane, 2007: 419).

Buil, Catalan, and Martinez (2016: 10) have found that the differentiating service brand identity also encourages the commitment of the staff to the company and its services, subsequently increasing job satisfaction and providing brand performance. The more the employees internalize the concept and values of the service, the more consistently and effectively they are able to perform it (Burry, 2000: 135).

In the case of B2B relationships, the service brand is a representation of the services provided by the company, including the functional and symbolic benefits offered by the brand developers to the customers. The creators of the service brand communicate their ideas to the customers through the name and symbols of the brand, and the customers perceive the brand on the basis of the service quality (functional benefit) and the quality of the emotional relationship with the company (symbolic benefit).

Service Brand Identity Characteristics of Software and IT Companies in Cluj-Napoca – Case Studies Based on the Socio-Scientific Model of Brand Identity

In the following, I will present a comparison between the service brand identity characteristics of the Cluj-Napoca-based software and IT companies, with special emphasis on the parities and differences of brand identity elements. The choice of the cases studied here was based on the intent to compare the Romanian delivery centre of an international company and a Romanian-founded large company as well as a Romanian-founded large company and a Romanian-founded small company. Accordingly, the three Cluj-Napoca-based companies analysed here are: *Endava* as the Romanian delivery centre of an international company, *Arobs Transilvania* as the Romanian-founded large company, and *Sinectic Group* as the Romanian-founded small company.

The table below presents the service brand identity characteristics of the three investigated companies, following the structure of the socio-scientific brand identity model of Burmann et al. (2017). The data presented below reflect the results of the content analysis of the information published on the companies' websites.

Table 2. *Characteristics of service brand identity of Endava, Arobs Transilvania, and Sinectic Group*

Elements of service brand identity	Points of difference – POD/Points of parity – POP	Endava	Arobs Transilvania	Sinectic Group
Origin	**Points of difference – POD**	Country origin: UK Digital large company Headquarters in Cluj-Napoca with other 3 Romanian offices Global company with offices in Western Europe, Central Europe, North America, Latin America	Romanian-founded large company Headquarters in Cluj-Napoca with other 6 Romanian offices Global company with 6 offices in Europe and Asia: Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Moldova	Romanian-founded small company Office in Cluj-Napoca
	Points of parity – POP	Developed business stage with over 20 years of presence on the Romanian market	Developed business stage with over 20 years of presence on the Romanian market	Developed business stage with over 10 years of presence on the Romanian market
Mission	**Points of difference – POD**	Digital transformation	--	--
	Points of parity – POP	Customer orientation High-quality services Relationship orientation Global services	High-quality services Customer orientation Relationship orientation Global services	High-quality services
Values	**Points of difference – POD**	Agility	Innovation Customer orientation	--
	Points of parity – POP	Competitiveness Success Commitment and reliability	Success Commitment and reliability Competitiveness	Customer orientation

Elements of service brand identity	Points of difference – POD/Points of parity – POP	Endava	Arobs Transilvania	Sinectic Group
Personality	**Points of difference – POD**	Compassionate	Agile	--
	Points of parity – POP	Disciplined Passionate Creative Collaborative	Creative Disciplined Passionate Collaborative	Disciplined
Competences	**Points of difference – POD**	--	--	--
	Points of parity – POP	Professional awards, certifications, accolades, distinctions Professional management Successful projects	Successful projects Professional awards, certifications, accolades, distinctions Professional management	--
Offers	**Points of difference – POD**	Digital transformation	Premium prices Unique company culture	Premium prices Digital transformation
	Points of parity – POP	Customer orientation High-quality services Social responsibility	High-quality services Customer orientation Social responsibility	Customer orientation High-quality services

Source: from the content analysis of data collected in 2018 from websites: endava.com, arobs.com, synectics.ro

5.1. Endava

Endava is a global company of British origins with three Romanian offices (Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iaşi). Its Cluj-Napoca office was created in 1997. From the point of view of its operational history, it can be regarded as a developed company. In 2016, the number of staff employed at the Cluj-Napoca office was 1812. Hence, on the basis of the number of employees, it can be regarded as a large company. The Romanian establishments of *Endava* rely on the outsourcing business strategy, fulfilling market orders from abroad while relying on Romanian workforce. Their most important customers come from economic sectors such as finances, insurance, telecommunication, media, technology, and retail trade. The company helps with the digital transformation of the customers from these economic sectors in the domain of production, sales, management, and communication.

The analysis of the website of *Endava* clearly reveals messages aimed at clients, conveying a reliable service brand identity. The existence of the service brand identity is confirmed by the fact that the website content allows for the identification of the elements that are included in the construction of brand identity according to the integrated brand identity model developed by Burmann et al. *Endava*'s slogan is "We deliver digital transformation", i.e. the essence of the company's service brand consists in furthering the digital transformation of the customers.

The origin of *Endava*'s service brand identity is structured around three keywords: "global", "digital", and "large company". Its mission statement emphasizes customer orientation and high professional standards, enriched by the relationship orientation and the service of digitization, realized within the partnerships. The company assumes its global character even in its mission statement. Its main values include competitiveness and successfulness, which can be counted among the basic principles of any service company's strategy. One of the important values of *Endava* consists in its commitment to customers and employees, denoting the importance of relationships. Still another differentiating value is agility, meaning "the capacity to exploit market opportunities quickly and in surprising ways" through innovative IT solutions, covering the area of customer service, cooperation, and operative functioning (Nemeslaki, 2012). The brand identity personality of *Endava*, which can be characterized through traits such as discipline, creativity, passion, cooperation, and compassion, is in accordance with these values. The service offers of *Endava* fit harmoniously into this semantic field, emphasizing customer orientation, contribution to the digital transformation of companies, and the provision of a high level of professional services. The feasibility of the offers is substantiated by the presentation of numerous professional awards achieved by the company for the excellence of its functioning and the professional quality of its services. The successful functioning of the company and its competitiveness are ensured by the highly trained and professional management. The mission statement and the values, the competence elements that are presented, and the personality elements are consistent with each other. The differentiating service brand identity offer of *Endava* refers to its contribution to the digital transformation of the customers, in consonance with which the guarantee for the growth and development of market participants lies in their capacity to catch up with the changes brought about by the so-called digital revolution. Overall, *Endava* has a clear brand identity, characterized by service centredness, customer orientation, market leader ambitions, and a relational approach.

5.2. Arobs Transilvania

Arobs Transilvania is a large Romanian-founded software and IT company created in 1998. According to its operation history, the company is in its developed phase. It is a large company, which had 457 employees in 2016. Its business strategy is characterized by the reliance on in-house workforce. However, from the point of view of its market expansion, it considers itself a global company. Its services are provided on fields such as transport and logistics, the automotive industry, financial services, telecommunication, healthcare, travel, and media.

The landing page of the company website contains its mission statement as a service provider, which reflects a service-dominant view that is different from that of *Endava*. *Arobs Transilvania* emphasizes its European origins and international culture. At the same time, it also emphasizes its status as a global software and IT service provider, offering finished products and on-demand software and IT services developed on the basis of the most recent digital technologies.

The company website contains all the structural elements of the service brand identity. The web subpage of the company contains origin elements of the service brand identity, revealing that it is a Romanian-founded large company dominated by Europeanism in its corporate culture while being geographically global. The emphasis on Europeanism is important also because foreign service customers view Romania as an attractive outsourcing country when compared to China or India, due precisely to its cultural identity. The company's landing page does not contain any slogan that would synthetize the service identity mission.

The mission of *Arobs Transilvania*'s service brand identity is strong and clear. It is characterized, similarly to the case of *Endava*, by high-level professional services, customer orientation, and the establishment of professional partnerships. *Arobs Transilvania* assumes in its mission the task of continuous technological and knowledge renewal. However, the contribution to the customers' digital transformation receives less emphasis. The company highlights its global character already on the landing page of its website, but, unlike in the case of *Endava*, this does not refer to global geographical presence but to a global service offer. The company mission and the offers fit together as the company proposes the following offers, which naturally follow from its assumed role: high-level professional services, customer orientation, and social responsibility. Additionally, the offers include the creation of a unique corporate culture and premium prices, which provide differentiation. Among the values of the service brand, one may identify values similar to those of *Endava*. Their similar service values include successfulness, competitiveness, and commitment. The differentiating value of *Arobs Transilvania* consists in innovation. This company also lists numerous competences in order to substantiate its offers, including its successful projects, competitive management, customers' evaluation of the company, and various awards and recognitions. The company's personality is characterized by traits such as discipline, creativity, passion, cooperativeness, and agility. These traits outline a brand personality similar to that of *Endava*. *Arobs Transilvania* is emphatically agile, which denotes the service centredness by vigilant monitoring of customer demands. In sum, a clearly defined service brand identity is identifiable also in the case of *Arobs Transilvania*. This company's identity is characterized by attributes such as professional competence, commercial success, competitiveness, and responsibility for social development.

5.3. Sinectic Group

Sinectic Group is a Romanian-founded small software and IT company established in 2006. The company has 14 employees. Its business strategy consists in the reliance on in-house workforce. The company considers the international market as its own. It provides software and IT services for foreign and domestic customers. With its operation history of more than a decade, this company is also in the mature phase of its development, but, due its small number of employees, it counts nevertheless as a small company. The company is based in Cluj-Napoca, but, in addition to the domestic customers, it fulfils orders from Belgium, England, and France as well.

This company does not identify on its website the economic sectors of its customers, but it outlines in detail the technological knowledge of the company. The company website does not contain any slogan, and its mission statement is restricted to offering high-level professional services. The offer component of the service brand identity is more complex than the mission statement since it contains elements such as customer orientation, premium prices, and the contribution to the digital transformation of its customers. The main value of the company's service brand identity is its customer orientation, while its one-dimensional personality may be characterized by discipline. The company does not substantiate its offer through successful projects or awards and recognitions but only emphasizes that it collaborates with foreign customers as well. All in all, the service brand identity of the company *Sinectic Group* is on the basic level, and the differentiating characteristics pointing beyond technological endowments cannot be identified.

5.4. The Comparison between the Service Brand Identities of the Analysed Cluj-Napoca-Based Software and IT Companies

The figure below presents the constitutive differences between the brand identities of *Endava*, *Arobs Transilvania*, and *Sinectic Group*. The brand identities of the two large companies have many points of parity, but there are differentiating points as well. The incompleteness of the service brand identity of *Sinectic Group* is striking in comparison.

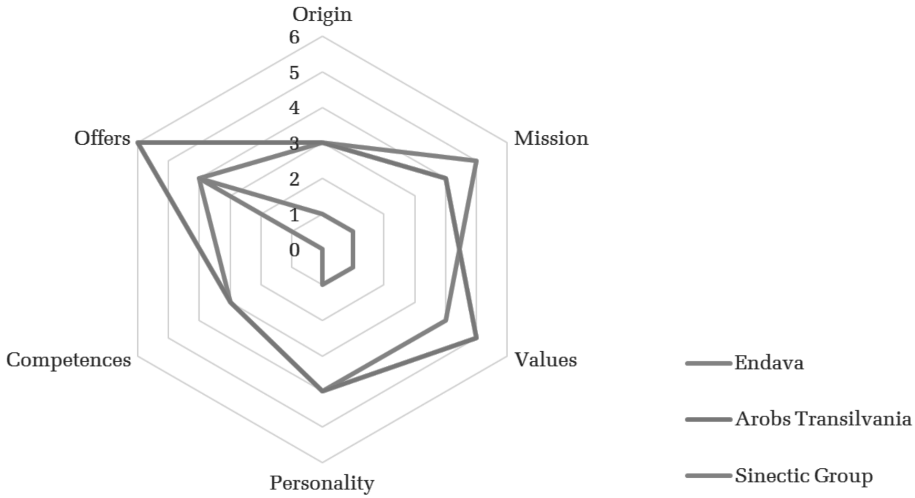


Figure 2. *Comparison of the constitutive elements of service brand identities* of Endava*,* Arobs Transilvania*, and* Sinectic Group

The mission statements of the two large companies – *Endava* and *Arobs Transilvania* – contain common points, characteristic of the general profile of service brands in the Romanian software and IT sector (Tőkés, 2019). The common points of the mission statements include the provision of services of high quality, increased attention to the customer, and orientation towards the global markets. *Endava* differentiates itself in its mission statement, in which the contribution to the implementation of the digital transformation appears as a new mission element. The mission statement of *Sinectic Group* can be considered deficient since it only emphasizes the provision of high-quality services among the mission elements constituting its general profile.

As far as the constitution of the service brand identity is concerned, the common values of the two large companies include successfulness, competitiveness, and commitment as a service provider. The differentiating value of *Endava* consists in its agility, i.e. its intelligent responsiveness to market challenges and to the expectations of the customers, denoting service-centredness. The differentiating value of *Arobs Transilvania* is innovation, i.e. the ongoing attention to technological innovations and their application in the process of searching for customized solutions for the benefit of the customers, which puts the emphasis rather on technical excellence. Finally, the value element of the brand identity in the case of *Sinectic Group* can be considered deficient as it does not present any general or differentiating values on its company website.

The common personality traits of the service brand identities of *Endava* and *Arobs Transilvania* include discipline, passion, creativity, and collaboration. The differentiating personality trait of *Endava* consists in its compassion, used in its relation to its environment. In the case of *Arobs Transilvania*, the differentiating personality trait is its agility used in its relationships with its customers. As for the company *Sinectic Group*, the personality of its brand identity may be regarded as incomplete since it only emphasizes the importance of discipline.

The common competence elements of the service brand identity of the companies *Endava* and *Arobs Transilvania* are the professional awards and recognitions along with the presentation of their successful projects and exceptional leaders. However, neither of the two companies presents any differentiating competence elements. In the case of the enterprise *Sinectic Group*, this component of brand identity is completely absent.

In the case of the companies *Endava* and *Arobs Transilvania*, the service offers unanimously highlight their service-centredness and relationship orientation since both offer high-quality software and IT services, increased and customized attention to their clients, and corporate social responsibility. The differentiating offer of *Endava* relates to the digital alignment of their customers to the implementation of the digital transformation. The differentiating offer of *Arobs Transilvania* is related to the premium prices and to the unique corporate culture. The differentiating offers also highlight the different corporate philosophy of the two large companies examined here: the emphasis on the strong professional identity of *Endava* as a digital company, thinking beyond technology itself and having sophisticated insights about the customers who will adopt and use the technology (Mohr–Sengupta–Slater, 2010: 4); the emphasis on the engineering developments, customer- and relationship-centredness of *Arobs Transilvania*. It is perhaps the brand offers along which the service brand identity of the company *Sinectic Group* comes closest to that of the two large companies. The differentiating offer of the small Romanian company is based on its contribution to the digital transformation and its premium prices, which also denote customer-centredness.

The analysis of the service brand identity of the three companies in Cluj-Napoca and their graphical representation clearly indicate the complexity of *Endava*'s and *Arobs Transilvania*'s brand identity as well as the deficiencies of the brand identity in the case of *Sinectic Group*.

Interpretation of the Software and IT Companies' Service Brand Identity on the Basis of the Cluj-Napoca Company Case Studies

The nature of the service brand identity differs from the identity of the product brands since the market operators who receive the service primarily rely on rational criteria in their decisions, which increases the importance of functional advantages. However, this does not mean that the symbolic advantages offered by the service brand, e.g. the values or personality, do not play any role in the customers' decisions. This is especially true on the market of software and IT services, where the degree of uncertainty is high, change is fast-paced, and the final form of the products and services is constantly evolving (Bauer, 2016). The presented case studies also support the importance of symbolic advantages since a similar value system and personality have emerged in the construction of brand identity for both *Endava* and *Arobs Transilvania*. At the same time, it has also become clear that all three of the investigated companies emphasize their service-centredness and relationship orientation both in their mission statement and offer.

The market of software and IT services is B2B market. These markets exceed the size of consumer markets and also differ from them in their outlook since production and technical culture is dominant here along with customer orientation. The services are delivered to other companies, and the service provider company's positioning is also primarily based on technical properties. The number of customers is relatively low on the B2B market, while the volume and strategic importance of business exchanges are significant. In such circumstances, objective evaluation and the continuous exploitation of commercial advantages are much more important than emotions. At the same time, the paramount importance of business transactions tends to valorize the customized offers for the business parties along with the importance of emotional advantages and relationships in choosing the service brand (Bauer, 2016). This feature of the market has left its mark on the service brand identities of all three software and IT companies in Cluj-Napoca. All three of them have based their service brand primarily on the professional knowledge and technological competence combined in the company. Even in the case of the company called *Sinectic Group*, which may be characterized by a less complex service brand identity, the professional and technical characteristics have successfully been emphasized.

Following the spread of digital technology, B2B markets – including service markets – underwent enormous changes since digital transformation radically modified the production, sales, organizational and communication processes. Digital technology has made it possible for global markets to emerge, and such markets are especially characteristic of the software and IT service areas.

Positioning themselves on the global market formed part of their mission for both Cluj-Napoca software and IT companies possessing strong brand identities. The opening towards foreign markets is articulated even in the case of the company called *Sinectic Group*, possessing a basic brand identity, which is creditable for a company with 14 employees.

The world of high technology is filled with both promises and perils (Mohr–Sengupta–Slater, 2010: 4). The software and IT services market is characterized by a high level of market and technological uncertainty, requiring special strategic and brand management solutions (Bauer, 2016). Software and IT companies sometimes face difficulties in exploring the needs, concerns, and problems of their customers – who are active in non-technological sectors – regarding the application of technological solutions (Mohr–Sengupta–Slater, 2010: 5). As for the customers, they may be afraid of radically innovative solutions because they do not know whether these will truly satisfy their business requirements. Additionally, software development also requires time, while customers' demands are quickly changing (Mohr–Sengupta–Slater, 2010: 13). Customers raise doubts about applicability, i.e. regarding whether the innovative solutions will fulfil the hopes invested in them. Technological uncertainty is also increased by the fact that the provider is not necessarily capable of producing great volumes fast (Bauer, 2016). Finally, the extent to which new developments will be compatible with former technological solutions is also doubtful, as is the provider's service capacity in the case of operational blockages (Mohr–Sengupta–Slater, 2010: 15).

The uncertainty factors bring added value to the efforts directed at creating and maintaining trust, including the substantiation of the brand identity's professional offers with competences and the implementation of relational measures such as the emphasis on long-term professional cooperation and partnerships based on mutual advantages as well as the complete transparency of the entire service process. Along the service process, trust and reliability become important factors, adding to the value of service brand management. Trust building and the substantiation of reliability represented an essential criterion for the Cluj-Napoca-based software and IT companies possessing complex service brand identities. An indispensable element of a complex service brand identity consists in the underpinning of the feasibility of the offers with previous successful projects, professional awards, recognitions, and not least with having a reliable professional team. The competence element of the service brand identity of both *Endava* and *Arobs Transilvania* contains all three indicators, while in the case of the less complex brand identity of the company called *Sinectic Group* the trust-building elements were completely missing.

It is worth emphasizing that the brand management activity is primarily characteristic of the large companies and is less prevalent in the everyday functioning of small and medium-sized enterprises (Spence–Essoussi, 2008: 1038;

Muhonen–Hirvonen–Laukkanen, 2017: 2). This was also the case with the three investigated software and IT companies in Cluj-Napoca. The studies support that if small and medium-sized enterprises pay attention to their brand management activity and build their brand identity, then this positively influences their brand performance (Hirvonen–Laukkanen, 2014: 41). That is why the importance of brand identity building for small and medium-sized enterprises is worth to be especially emphasized as these companies tend to develop the technological value of their services while paying less attention to the segmentation and positioning expectations of the market. This statement applies especially to *Sinectic Group*. The website content of *Sinectic Group* demonstrated the less conscious attitude of small companies towards the area of brand management.

Conclusions

The development of strong service brand confers market advantage under conditions of strong economic competition, which is a priority area of corporate identity management (Nádasi, 2016: 120). In the case of service companies, the goal of brand management is to create a strong service brand, the first steps for which include the elaboration of the service brand identity. The service brand identity contains all the essential brand associations which ensure the alignment to the service market according to the specific service field (points-of-parity, POP). At the same time, brand identity also stresses the differences (points-of-difference, POD) that strengthen the successful positioning of the brand on the service market.

One of the goals of this study was to present the socio-scientific-based brand identity model of Burmann et al. (2017). The survey of the marketing-oriented brand identity models (Aaker, 2002; Aaker–Joachimsthaler, 2009, 2014; Kapferer, 2008) highlighted the fact that brand identity is made up of certain key elements, including the mission statement, values, personality, and the offer. Based on the results of personal identity research, Burmann et al. (2017) complement the aforementioned elements of the constitution of brand identities with two further important components, i.e. origin and competences, since brand identity is able to create long-term benefits if it is endowed with the ability of self-reflection and renewal. The offer of brand identity becomes authentic and attractive only if it is sound and sustainable in the long term.

The other goal of this study consisted in applying the socio-scientific-based brand identity model of Burmann et al. (2017) through the analysis of the service brand identities of three Cluj-Napoca-based software and IT companies. The empirical testing of the aforementioned theoretical model highlights the possibility of applying scientific knowledge, which can be regarded as an innovative result in the area of brand management.

The analysis of the brand identities of the three Cluj-Napoca-based software and IT companies presented in this study, using the brand identity model of Burmann et al. (2017), can be regarded as significant in several respects. The analysis demonstrated the empirical usability of the model, which is suitable both for assessing the identity of the existing service brands and for planning future service brands. The results of the analysis have shed light on the points of parity of the service brand identities of software and IT companies and highlighted the brand identity elements that enable differentiation (points-of-difference). The common points of the service brand identity of the Cluj-Napoca-based software and IT companies consisted in the emphasis on technical competences as well as customer and relationship orientation. Their differentiation was possible along their values and personality that represent the symbolic benefits of service brand identity. Their symbolic differentiation also resulted in the differentiation of their offers.

The practical application of the socio-scientific-based brand identity model of Burmann et al. (2017) represents an important contribution to the extension of the research results in this field of studies. The survey of the academic literature has led to the recognition that there are mostly theoretical models in existence with regard to brand identity. However, their empirical testing is much less prevalent. The methodological use and testing of the theoretical models also contribute to the enrichment of the practical professional knowledge. At the same time, several knowledge elements that are important for the theoretical profession have emerged as well since the case studies of the Romanian software and IT sector may be relevant for the practice of service brand analyses and planning in the Romanian software and IT sector.

The research presented in this study may be developed in several directions, one of them being the quantitative direction. It would be worthy to increase the number of case studies and to proceed thus to the comparative analysis of several service brand identities in order to highlight the main points-of-parity and points-of-difference characteristic of the service brand identities of the Romanian software and IT sector. The qualitative development of the study would consist in the analysis of the full service brand management process by surveying the brand teams' concepts behind the service brand representations.

References

Aaker, D. A. (2002). *Building Strong Brands*. London–Sydney–New York–Toronto: Pocket Books.

Aaker, D. A.–Joachimsthaler, E. (2009). *Brand Leadership*. London–Sydney–New York–Toronto: Pocket Books.

Alsem, K. J.–Kosteijk, E. (2008). Identity Based Marketing: A New Balanced Marketing Paradigm. *European Journal of Marketing* 42(9–10): 907–914.

Balmer, M. T. J.–Gray, R. E. (2003). Corporate Brand: What Are They? What of Them? *European Journal of Marketing* 37(7–8): 972–997.

Bauer, A. (2016). Márkázás a szervezetközi piacokon [Branding on B2B Market]. In: Bauer, A.–Kolos K. (eds.), *Márkamenedzsment [Brand Management]*. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Bauer, A.–Kolos K. (2016). *Márkamenedzsment [Brand Management]*. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Berry, L. L. (2000). Cultivating Service Brand. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 28(1): 128–137.

Buil, I.–Catalan, S.–Martinez, E. (2016). The Importance of Corporate Brand Identity in Business Management. An Application to the UK Banking Sector. *Business Research Quarterly* 19: 3–12.

Burmann, Ch.–Jost-Benz, M.–Riley, N. (2009). Toward an Identity-Based Brand Equity Model. *Journal of Business Research* 62(3): 390–397.

Burmann, Ch.–Riley, N-M.–Halaszovich, T.–Schade, M. (2017). *Identity-Based Brand Management. Fundamentals – Strategy – Implementations – Controlling*. Springer.

Chernatony, L. (2010). *From Brand Vision to Brand Evaluation. The Strategic Process of Growing and Strengthening Brands* Amsterdam–Boston–London: Butterworth-Heinemann.

(2014). *From Brand Vision to Brand Evaluation. The Strategic Process of Growing and Strengthening Brands*. New York: Routledge.

Chernatony, L.–Harris, F. (2000). Developing Corporate Brand through Considering Internal and External Stakeholders. *Corporate Reputation Review* 3(3): 268–274.

Chernev, A. (2017). *Strategic Brand Management*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University.

Coleman, D. A.–de Chernatony, L.–Christodoulides, G. (2011). B2B Service Brand Identity: Scale Development and Validation. *Industrial Marketing Management* 40: 1063–1071.

Esch, F. R. (2008). Brand Identity: The Guiding Star for Successful Brands. In: Schmitt, B. H.–Rogers, D. L. (eds.), *Handbook on Brand and Experience Management*. Cheltenham: PEFC, 58–75.

Kapferer, J. N. (2004, 2008). *The New Strategic Brand Management. Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term*. London: Kogan Page.

McDonald, M. H. B.–de Chernatony, L.–Harris, F. (2001). Corporate Marketing and Service Brands. Moving beyond the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Model. *European Journal of Marketing* 35(3/4): 335–352.

Mohr, J.–Sengupta, S.–Slater, S. (2010). *Marketing of High-Technology Products and Innovations.* New York: Prentice Hall.

Morrison, S.–Crane, F. (2007). Building Service Brand by Creating and Managing an Emotional Brand Experience. *Brand Management* 14(5): 410–421.

Muhonen, T.–Hirvonen, S.–Laukkanen, T. (2017). SME Brand Identity: Its Components and Performance Effects. *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 26(1): 1–44.

Nádasi, K. (2016). Márkakommunikáció [Brand Communication]. In: Horváth, D.–Bauer, A. (eds.), *Marketingkommunikáció. Stratégia, új média, fogyasztói részvétel* [*Brand communication. Strategy, New Media, and Consumer Involvment*]. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Riley, F. D.–Chernatony, L. (2000). The Service Brand as Relationship Builder. *British Journal of Management* 11: 137–150.

Schultz, M.–Hatch, M. J.–Adams, N. (2012). Managing Corporate Reputation through Corporate Branding. In: Pollock, T. G.–Barnett, M. L. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Reputation*. Oxford: OUP, 420–446.

Spence, M.–Essoussi, H. (2010). SME Brand Building and Management: An Exploratory Study. *European Journal of Marketing* 44(7): 1037–1054.

Tőkés, Gy. (2019). *Online Branding* – Online Branding Strategies in the IT Sector. The Service and Employer Brand Identities of the Companies Operating in the Field of Software and IT Services in Cluj-Napoca Based on the Corporate Data Published on Their Websites (PhD thesis). Cluj-Napoca: Babeş–Bolyai University.

Urde, M. (2013). The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix. *Journal of Brand Management* 20(9): 742–761.

Urde, M.–Baumgarth, C.–Merrillees, B. (2011). Brand Orientation and Market Orientation. From Alternatives to Synergy. *Journal of Business Research* 66(1): 13–20.

Veress, Z. (2009). *A szolgáltatásmarketing alapkönyve [Handbook of Service Marketing]*. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio, **6** (2019) 83–104

DOI: 10.2478/auscom-2019-0005

Persuasion Strategies on Instagram in Wine Communication and Branding

Ágnes VESZELSZKI
Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary
e-mail: agnes.veszelszki@uni-corvinus.hu

Abstract. *Objectives*: On social media, or in the world of the so-called like economy, highly targeted advertising has become reality: whereas previously advertisers only suspected the whereabouts of their customers, now they know it exactly based on well-defined parameters. Likes have become a new standard of value. With the increased popularity of Like buttons, influencer marketing and content marketing have also gained in importance. This paper aims to explore the persuasion strategies used by visual content marketing as a tool of visual rhetoric. *Methodology:* After reviewing the relevant literature, the paper presents a case study from the field of wine communication: using the methodology of content analysis and a qualitative approach, it examines the visual and verbal characteristics of 100 Instagram posts of Hungarian wineries. The examination focused on content from a semiotic aspect, complementary verbal elements (captions, hashtags), the assumed intention of content marketing, and the characteristics of visual storytelling. *Findings*: Although wine communication is very much about creating a personal feeling, there was not a single person on 61 of the 100 examined Instagram photos. The potential of branded hashtags is exploited by almost every winery in their communication. The most dominant content types were the informative, aesthetically pleasing, and explicit advertising content. *Suggestions*: To obtain the loyalty of users, companies need a well-considered communication strategy tailored to the target audience. The most relevant social media principles are the following: long-term strategy, careful planning, conscious implementation, thorough information about and respect for the potential target audience, and content which is valuable and interesting for the target group and has real impact on its behaviour. It could also enhance user loyalty if posts had more added value. The methodology of storytelling could be exploited in wine communication for the following types of content: 1. advice and education: providing background knowledge (winemaking, viticulture, design, wine–food pairing) or instructions ("how to" videos e.g. on bottle opening); 2. help to users (information on moderate wine consumption, wine and a healthy lifestyle); 3. entertainment (people behind the bottle, family and historical stories, wine legends, anecdotes). In addition, creating a personal feeling is crucial in wine communication, which is specializing in handling uncertainty: winemakers can act as influencers in their field not only when selling wine but also in social media marketing.

Keywords: visual rhetoric, content marketing, social media, Instagram

Objectives of the Study

Social media has significantly reshaped not only social interactions but also organizational and marketing communication. The so-called *like economy* (Gerlitz–Helmond, 2013; Veszelszki, 2018d) is determined by the social buttons (including Facebook's like and other reaction buttons and Instagram's heart icon). Based on an analysis of wine communication on Instagram (cf. Veszelszki (ed.), 2018), this paper examines the persuasion strategies used by visual content marketing as a tool of visual rhetoric. The paper also discusses verbal–visual relations and the relationship between photos and hashtags.

Basic Concepts

Like Economy and Content Marketing

Web 2.0 is the version of the web that is based on participation and cooperation (Beer, 2009: 985); it differs from Web 1.0 technologically, structurally, and socially: "the former object-oriented approach is replaced by a more individual-oriented network" (Peters, 2009: 15), and it is characterized by the "growth of social networks, bi-directional communication, (...) and significant diversity in content types" (Cormode–Krishnamurthy, 2008). The essence of Web 2.0 is interactivity: these online services are based on community where participants produce and assess all the content (*user-generated content*, *UGC*; Beer, 2009: 986; Jenkins et al., 2006).

Social media, as a key Web 2.0 phenomenon, has also substantially changed organizational and marketing communication. In the early days of Internet marketing, in the age of the "hit economy", information was linked through hits. Every hit and click represented a visitor of a website, and revenue was generated through banners (Van Pappelendam, 2012; Gerlitz–Helmond, 2013). According to Gerlitz and Helmond, the second great era was the "link economy", where the quality and quantity of links were weighed (Gerlitz–Helmond, 2013: 1351). The current third era, the "like economy", is determined by social buttons. Many of them can be found on plenty of websites, but the most famous one is the "Like" button introduced by Facebook in 2009, depicting a hand giving the "thumbs up" associated with the word "like". Its counterpart on Instagram is the "Heart" icon, which is also used to express liking.

In social media, which is based on user participation and collaboration, liking (such as sharing) is a predefined communication act as opposed to making comments where users may express themselves more freely. According to Anne Helmond and Carolin Gerlitz, the authors of *The Like Economy* (2013), "The Like is always a collective. It is more than +1." And why are likes important from an economic and communication perspective? Because they "allow the instant transformation of user engagement into numbers on button counters, which can be traded and multiplied but also function as tracking devices" (Gerlitz–Helmond, 2013). Emotion-based relationships can be manifested in several ways (Arvidsson, 2011), including hitting the Like button. In like economy, "the social is of particular economic value, as user interactions are instantly transformed into comparable forms of data and presented to other users in a way that generates more traffic and engagement" (Gerlitz–Helmond 2013: 1349). In a culture based on recommendations and likes, users' interactions with each other and with contents are recorded in databases.

In a "recommendation culture", not only global large and medium-sized enterprises can make their way but also smaller ones (cf. boyd, 2010). At the start, every new user of Facebook and Instagram (which is also owned by Facebook) enjoys equal opportunities: they have the same default profile settings to customize to their needs. Naturally, however, there are vast differences between the human and financial resources available for a sole trader and a multinational company for editing such profiles. The role of paid ads has significantly increased since Facebook and Instagram started to continuously decrease organic reach to push profile managers towards buying paid and targeted advertising. Compared to the production and marketing costs of outdoor or television ads, advertising on these websites is one of the most cost-effective and efficient ways of reaching the target audience, due targeting and customization.

The competitive advantage of Facebook and Instagram comes from customized ads. The two interconnected social networking websites have a detailed insight into the demographic, computer and mobile usage, information-seeking behaviour, and even buying habits of more than two billion users, which can be used for serving advertisers. Users are providing "endless and virtually unlimited information about their everyday lives" (both intentionally and unintentionally) (Beer, 2009: 997). Highly targeted advertising has become reality: whereas previously advertisers only suspected the whereabouts of their customers (based on events, websites etc.), now they know it exactly based on well-defined parameters (targeted micromarketing; cf. Hendricks–Vestergaard, 2019). This leads us to the topic of Web 3.0 or the semantic web: the world of personalized services and, of course, advertisements. Precise information about the customers also enables remarketing, that is, the repeated addressing of previously engaged customers.

Facebook, Instagram, and social media in general are apparently innovating the toolset of a centuries-old marketing technique: content marketing. The essence of *content marketing* is to "influence a target group's behaviour by sharing useful (valuable and relevant) content with them, made specifically for them, to the benefit of all parties involved" (W1, W2). This can be done with the purpose to provide assistance (answer questions, help making decisions, give advice), to improve users' lives, or to entertain. Content marketing is successful if it manages to make profit and produce measurable, quantifiable results by sharing useful content.

Micro-celebrities, or "Insta-celebs", with many followers on social media also act as opinion leaders (cf. Marwick–boyd 2010; Senft, 2008), which can be quite profitable for them: marketing teams contact online opinion leaders increasingly often requesting them to make subtle hints at or express reference to a product or service in consideration of financial support or certain products (or product samples). This technique is called *influencer marketing*. Influencers have the ability to create a special relationship with their audience, what brands could never achieve through traditional advertising tools. Their reach can be small, limited to a tight-knit community (micro-influencers), or global (celebrities) (Pellicer, 2018). "Intimacy and authenticity, or at least the impression of it, are often the key to success on Instagram" (Simon, 2019). Influencers interact with their followers as if they were good friends: sharing personal moments with their fans and allowing them to "look behind the scenes" – or at least are left in the belief that this is what they get to see. According to Alice Marwick (2015), influencers use "strategic intimacy" to appeal to followers and thus gain more popularity.

Facebook and Instagram provide new opportunities for organic marketing, which, in essence, means that companies share valuable content to improve brand transparency and visibility, and their representatives take part in the (online) dialogue enabling consumers to create a personal commitment towards the brand (company, organization, or person).

Note, however, that the Like button does not give superpowers to marketing. A like or an Instagram heart is not a signed contract or an actual sale. Even if users become active followers of a company's page where they find the content valuable or interesting, this is no guarantee that they will buy any product from the company. Howell (2013) explains that "customer engagement with a brand on social media does not at all mean customer loyalty to the brand: the engagement can have various other purposes". There are certain product groups (e.g. fashion, cosmetics, gastronomy, travelling) with which users identify themselves more easily. In a social media context, a brand can be so attractive that people will do everything to engage with it as it gives them the feeling of style (Turner–Shah, 2010: 21; Howell, 2013). Obviously, consumers will follow products and brands that match their self-image (Kemp et al., 2012: 509). But the number of fans, however high, is no guarantee for business success: quantity does not equal quality. It is better to obtain and retain fewer active (participating, sharing) fans than many followers who later disappear. Some studies question the value of likes: apparently, real participation, such as writing comments, is more important than likes as it signals greater commitment (Crosby, 2017). In addition, the rule of patience should also be borne in mind: social media marketing produces results only in the long run (as the popular advice goes: it is more like a marathon than a sprint; W3).

Visual Communication – Visual Storytelling

One of the most important tools of social media marketing reviewed so far is *visuality*. With technological development, visual communication is becoming part of our everyday lives, and the already vast number of images shared online is continuously increasing (Giulani, 2006: 185); in fact, some already talk about the omnipresence of images (Maar, 2006). Images can be understood without knowledge of the cultural context or the language, and they can depict even complex processes in a simple form (Maar, 2006: 11–14). As opposed to verbal language with its conventionalized symbols permitting only linear decoding, visual language can be decoded quickly and simply. Images are not under the control of the mind; with their suggestive power, they can directly influence our thoughts and feelings (Giulani, 2006: 185).

The simplification of producing, editing, and distributing digital pictures has also changed the role of pictures. In marketing, pictures were traditionally treated as illustrations to texts or as a kind of decoration which represents an ideal world. However, today's fierce fight for consumers' attention requires new types of visual content. The so-called storytelling pictures (including graphics, photos, and videos) build on the visual narrative. This shift of perspective is reflected in the collections of stock photo agencies, which used to prefer standard, neutral and – therefore – widely usable pictures. Today, however, there are *swipe-stopping images* which look realistic and authentic (which explains the growing share of photobloggers' and amateur photographers' works in stock photos). In addition, a "good" picture catches the eye, it is easily remembered, emotionally touching, more than the optical repetition of the text, and reflects something more than what is evident; in other words: it tells a story (cf. Baldoni, 2011; Veszelszki, 2018e).

When designing visual storytelling, you have to keep in mind how pictures create their impact. From the perspective of telling narratives, there are three types of images: impulsive, experience-based, and culture-specific pictures. Impulsive pictures provoke predictable reactions (such as smiling or an urge of caring). The latter forms the basis of photos of charming, likeable cartoon characters, cute small children with a tiny nose and big eyes, which activate the instinct of caring for vulnerable beings and trigger emotional reactions in the viewer. Experience-based pictures also arouse emotions (e.g. childhood photos, wedding photos, or photos of the 9/11 attacks). Emotions play an important role in memory. This was evidenced by Larry Cahill and others (1996) in an experiment where they monitored the brain activity of subjects viewing 12 emotionally neutral and 12 emotionally arousing film clips. Three weeks later the subjects were asked to recall what they saw. The result is not surprising: the more emotional the film clip was, the better the subjects recalled them. In another experiment, Kelsey Libert and Kristin Tynski (2013) showed subjects pictures which had gone viral on the image-sharing website Imgur and asked them about the emotions provoked (the control group was shown "non-viral" pictures that were shared only a few times). It turned out that the images playing on positive emotions (pleasure, excitement, trust) were more successful than those playing on negative emotions (except if they surprised the viewers by going against viewers' expectations). The third category comprises culture-specific images. We can think of the emotional effect of colours or the use of different motives. It is almost impossible to look at these pictures without emotions.

So, how could we define the concept of visual storytelling? It is the telling of stories in a visual format (image, video, infographic, presentation, meme, or other format based on visuality) through the mass media (typically in social media but also in print media) primarily in a way that triggers emotional reactions. It often serves marketing purposes, in which case the visual story is built around a brand and the related offers (cf. Walter–Gioglio, 2015). As opposed to advertisements based on generalities, the speciality – and also difficulty – of storytelling marketing is that it focuses on a single specific example (so, it should be carefully selected) and appeals to emotions instead of reason.

In a broader context, new technology – especially the smartphone – allows us to produce a narrative of our lives: to choose what to remember and what to contribute to our own mythos through recorded and shared content (cf. Renner, 2019). Note, however, that images are not necessarily shared to promote remembering but much more for the sake of sharing experiences (Jurgenson, 2019). This trend is reinforced by "ephemeral" or disappearing content such as Snapchat messages or Instagram Stories images and videos. Both the documentation and the sharing of experiences function of image sharing can be exploited for marketing purposes, and both can be implemented through visual storytelling.

Therefore, this toolset should be looked more closely. An impressive story, whether visual or verbal, uses the following five building blocks (cf. Bergström, 2008; Gallo, 2016): 1. *Hero*: the story must have a character with imperfections who the audience can identify with. 2. *Conflict*: if the outcome corresponds to what is expected, the story is boring and banal (e.g. a diligent student from a decent and supportive background becomes a successful adult); however, if the outcome is achieved through struggles and difficulties, the story becomes exciting (e.g. a poor individual works hard and becomes rich; the hero fights for love; the powerless overcomes the powerful). 3. *Impulsivity*: as mentioned before, the story will have a lasting effect if it can provoke (positive or negative) emotions from the audience. 4. *Potential virality*: the story is simple enough to be remembered but interesting enough to be shared with others. 5. *Meaningful essence*: the core message, the purpose, the intended effect of the story should be clear (e.g. a joke exerts its effect through the punch line, a moral story through the lesson). In particular, narrative images have the following criteria: 1. authenticity; 2. uniqueness (i.e. focus on special moments instead of stereotypical situations); 3. engagement of various senses; 4. use of archetypes (common patterns, roles) such as the warrior, the healer, the seducer, the magician, the protector, etc.; cf. Sammer–Heppel 2015).

Wine Communication

I have chosen wine communication (Veszelszki (ed.), 2018) to illustrate how visual storytelling works. This practical research area covers the entirety of wine culture and wine business: the cultural and literary history of wine as a special product (Balázs, 2018a, b; Magyari, 2018; Pál, 2018), wine and sacrality (Kovács, 2018), the role of wine in Hungarian culture (Szakáli, 2018; Benyák, 2018; Gyanó, 2018), wine production (Szappanos, 2018), wine marketing (Hofmeister-Tóth, 2018; Kovács, 2018; Ipacs, 2018; Orbán, 2018; Balogh, 2018), wine journalism (Németh, 2018), and the communication-related characteristics of wine consumption (Veszelszki, 2018a, 2019 [i.p.]; Lakits et al., 2018). The topic may also include the history of wine philosophy (cf. Allhoff ed., 2008), the communication aspects of wine rating systems, wine talk, or "oinoglossia" (Lehrer, 2009; Veszelszki, 2018b, c), and so on.

As the rating and description of wines are strongly influenced by preferences, wine communication is clearly defined by values (Veszelszki, 2019 [i.p.]). In addition, "in the case of wines, quality can only be assessed after consumption, which makes them high-risk products" (Kovács, 2018: 125; Sherman–Tuten, 2011: 222–223). This is why wine is a good choice for examination from a marketing and visual communication perspective.

Wine Communication on Instagram: Persuasion Strategies

Wine Communication and Storytelling

In any sales activity, it is essential that the seller is never in doubt about the product; they must passionately, without reservations, believe in the product they want to sell. It is a special characteristic of wine marketing, however, that the seller always specializes in uncertainty. This means two things: on the one hand, the actual quality can only be checked when the bottle is opened (revealing any wine fault such as "cork taint"); on the other hand, the vast majority of wine consumers are laypeople, which implies that the wine seller is in a dominant position, while the wine consumer is in a defensive position from an information perspective. This ambiguity can be exploited,[1] but consumer uncertainty can be also reduced, if necessary, by communication techniques (e.g. through relatively constant brand communication, positioning the product range, etc.). The key role of price-perceived quality heuristics is another special feature: in the wine market, a high price is clearly taken as proof of high quality/value. Most wine-conscious customers will not be looking for the cheapest product as wine is usually a prestige product, whether purchased for consumption or as a gift.The creation of a personal feeling is key in wine marketing and wine-related storytelling.[2] First, you have to "sell" the winemaker, who makes the wine authentic, and only then the product. In a conscious wine marketing strategy, therefore, the first story is about the uniqueness or special struggles of the winemaker,[3] and the second story can be adapted to the wine product.[4]

The five main steps of establishing the story of a winery are as follows (cf. Maker, 2015):

1. Identification. During this process, the winery has to consider the origins, history, and ethos ("Why the winery was established? And how? What makes it special?"). This helps to clarify the core brand attributes, which can serve as a starting point for (content) marketing.[5]

1 Unless you are an expert in wine, could you or would you dare to say that a 1,000-dollar bottle of 1982 Château Margaux contains not the original drink but a 90-dollar cheap wine?

2 It is no coincidence that the Hungarian Tourism Agency built the brand concept of Hungarian wine around the motto *Hungarian wine – personal touch* in the spring of 2019 (W4).

3 Remarkable Hungarian examples include the story of György Lőrincz, owner of St. Andrea Winery (cf. Lajos Kovács, 2018), the story of the young generations of multi-generational family wineries, or the joint efforts of successful female winemakers (Szabó (ed.), 2017).

4 For example, how mineral soil influences wine or how a nearly extinct ancient grape variety was saved and revived (e.g. *bakator*; cf. Balázs, 2018a).

5 If, for example, the product is better consumed with food than alone ("food-friendly wine"), content marketing can focus on posting wine and food pairings on social media such as Pinterest (which enables saving recipes).

2. Differentiation. Marketing is all about finding the distinctive features: winemakers have to find out how the brand attributes identified in the previous step differ from that of competing brands and have to focus marketing on such differences.[6]

3. Storytelling. First, winemakers have to think through how the brand relates to the three basic narratives (1. Who are we? 2. What have we learned? Why do we change? 3. How do we see the world differently?). The hero of the story will be the brand (or perhaps the winemaker), who had to overcome many difficulties (conflicts, struggle, loss, success, change) to reach the goal. A good story is always driven by sudden turns and conflicts which are resolved at the end. So, the following questions must be addressed: Who will be the hero of the story? What does he/she want to achieve? What is in the way? How can he/she overcome the conflict/difficulty?

4. Own voice. To make communication with the customers personal and conversation-like, the brand must have its own voice. For this, the winemakers have to impersonate the brand, figure out what and how it should and should never talk about, etc.[7]

5. Continuous updates. Constancy is important, partly because it helps committed fans to find out where, how, and in what form they can buy the wine; but equally important are innovation and renewal in communication. (In order to make successful changes in brand communication without alienating important customers, prior targeted research should be performed.)

Visual Content – Visual Storytelling

Although the Instagram app is also available from desktop computers, it is primarily intended and optimized for mobile devices, which clearly determines the user experience. Visual storytelling, thus, can be achieved in two ways on Instagram. On the one hand, narratives can be created as separate contents (a separate image or video or a series of up to ten elements). On the other hand, the Instagram interface (where visual content is displayed horizontally in threes or can be scrolled vertically) also makes it possible for the user to customize the entire profile into an own story. It is a sign of conscious profile planning if visual content is arranged in a pattern on the page (e.g. square, diagonal, tiles, rows, rainbow pattern, various frames; W3, Image 1). No matter how eye-catching the

6 Maker's example (2015): Stacy's wanted to reposition its crisps brand by replacing its banal motto "naturally light" to something new. It turned out that it takes 14 hours to produce a single crisp, which gave the idea for the new motto: "the hard way, the better way, the Stacy's way", which became a real success.

7 For example: how the brand would say hello, say thank you, would it use the T-form or the V-form (language-specific)?

layout, however, it may be completely useless if the business profile owner fails to observe the basic rules of (wine) marketing.

Source: Instagram

Figure 1. *Conscious arrangement of Instagram profiles*

Image and Text: Caption and Hashtag

On Instagram, visual content can be linked to text in several ways: captions can appear on the image itself (this is typical of stories), as accompanying text, or as hashtag. The latter has become a characteristic text type on Instagram.

Hashtag is a type of label or metadata tag primarily associated with several social networking and micro-blogging websites (Veszelszki, 2016). Searching on a hashtag will list all content with the given hashtag on the social networking website. With this sorting and searching function, however, hashtags not only connect contents, thematic blocs but also users having similar fields of interests, which make them an effective means for social movements.[8] In addition to its basic functions, the hashtag is also used to abbreviate messages and to add some stylistic touch to what is being said.

Hashtags can be classified into three main types (Csire, 2015; Veszelszki, 2016). 1. Like-hunter tags are added to images to boost the number of views (e.g.: #*followme*, #*likeforlike*; #*instadaily*, #*picoftheday*). They do not form an integral part of the image; their only aim is to obtain new likes and followers. 2. Thematizing tags

8 This happened in the case of the various social media challenges such as the #icebucketchallenge or the #metoo campaign.

include wide categories and usually relate to the topic of the photo (persons: #*girls*, #*sommelier*; objects: #*wine*, #*wineglasses*; events: #*wedding*, #*winefestival*), the manner in which the photo was taken (black and white, no filter [#*nofilter*]), the mood of the photo (#*romantic*, #*friendshipgoals*), etc., this way making it easier to find similar content. 3. Contextualizing tags complete posts with the user's emotions, mood, or the circumstance of taking the photo. Such hashtags are much more characterized by uniqueness: they do not want to enhance searchability but to add extra verbal information to the visual content.

As regards its position, the tag can occur anywhere in a text though prototypically it takes place at the end of the text. Using multiple hashtags in the middle of the text makes comprehension quite difficult.

Marketing has also discovered the power of hashtags: they can channel visual content to more users, they can drive campaigns, and they can be used to measure the success of promotions on social media. For marketing purposes, a hashtag must be: unique, suitable for the campaign goals, distinctive, easy to remember but not too general, short but meaningful, and not too abstract (Cohen, 2015). It should be ensured that there is only one way to spell out the hashtag ("if a hashtag can be misunderstood, it will be misunderstood"; Slegg, 2014),[9] and it is also recommended to check whether the tag has been used for other purposes earlier:

Case Study: Hungarian Wineries on Instagram

The exploratory study examined one hundred photos posted on Instagram. The selection criteria were as follows: for the sake of comparability, the snowball sampling method was employed to select 10 Hungarian wineries which had posted at least 10 photos on their Instagram feed and had at least 100 followers. The sample excluded the profiles of restaurants, wine distributors, wine enthusiasts, wine experts, etc. The analysis took into account the number of posted photos, the number of followers, posting frequency, the semiotic characteristics of the photos as well as the captions and hashtags added to the images. The figures reflect the situation on 20 June 2019.

The content analysis aimed to better understand what types of visual content (photos and videos) have become successful in Hungarian Instagram communication.[10] For the purposes of the analysis, success was measured by the number of likes (photos) and views (videos), being aware of the contradiction

9 For example: #*SusanAlbumParty* vs #*SusAnalBumParty*.

10 It is beyond the scope of this study, but, according to my unrecorded observations over nearly three years, international wine communication on Instagram is much more conscious and strategic and much less intuitive than the Instagram usage of Hungarian wine industry stakeholders. The reason is probably the late adoption of Instagram as a marketing tool in Hungary.

that such numbers can be influenced by several factors (e.g. whether the post was paid for, when the post was made, etc.). The posts were analysed from the following aspects: 1. What is the image/video about and who are the characters (persons, wine, grapes etc.)? How strong is the presence of the winemaker? How evidently is the winemaker presented as an influencer? 2. How long are the texts and hashtags added to the photos, and what are they about? 3. Is there any trace of content marketing in the post (intention to help/educate; improve users' lives or environment; entertain)? 4. Does the image have any of the main characteristics of visual or verbal storytelling (eye-catching, easy-to-remember, emotionally touching image that is more than the optical repetition of the text and reflects something more than what is evident)? As the analysis advanced, the previously determined codes were complemented and reviewed. The categories of the content analysis were verified by an assistant encoder.

Table 1. *The quantitative characteristics of the corpus*

	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Followers	4,265.5	198	14,200
Image likes	157.0568	15	1,234
Comment likes	0.931818	0	10

Image Content

The personal feeling is critical in wine sales. For this reason, the analysis examined how often and in what role characters appear in wine marketing photos. Of the 100 Instagram photos in the sample, 61 had no characters, 21 had only one character, 4 had two characters, and 14 had more than two characters (e.g. in a wine festival context). Of the 39 photos that included people, the characters are women on 12, men on 16, and uncertain on 11 pictures. Six winemakers appear on altogether 17 photos. This is a very low number compared to the basic advice in wine marketing that the winemaker should be part of the sales activity. The analysis also looked at the distribution of wine types (wine appears on 44 pictures: white on 18, red on 13, rose on 7, and mixed arrangement on 6 photos) and presentation (in bottle on 35, in glass on 20,[11] and next to food on 10 photos). Most of the photos were taken at an event (e.g. wine festival, wine awards ceremony, restaurant opening – 23 in total), many others in the vineyard (16) or wine house/restaurant (14), and only a few in the wine cellar (2).

11 Sometimes both bottle and glasses appear in the picture.

Captions

Captions are largely in Hungarian (Example 1), less often in a foreign language (Example 2) or in both Hungarian and English (Example 3). Hashtags are often in English even for Hungarian captions (Example 1).

(1) A balatoni nyári életérzés egy palackban, a mi értelmezésünkben. Egy könnyed, frissítően gyümölcsös és roppanós Olaszrizling. A halványsárga színhez barack és tavaszi fehér virágok illata társul, kóstoláskor akácvirág és barack aromák bújnak elő. ☀ „A korábbi évjáratokhoz képest 2018-ban korábban szüreteltük az alapanyagot. Végül három különböző balatoni Olaszrizling házasításából született meg a tétel, ami gyümölcsösségével, és a korai szüretnek köszönhető vibráló savaival minden nyári este tökéletes kiegészítője lehet. Nálam mindig lapul egy a hűtőben!" - meséli Zsófi. » Kóstold meg te is a Laposa BalatonBor 2018-as évjáratát, amit még MÁJUSBAN kedvezményes áron tudsz beszerezni a webshopunkban vagy a Laposa Birtokon! http://www.bazaltbor.hu/hu/bor/laposa_balatonbor #laposabirtok #laposa #tobbmintbor #morethanwine #laposabirtok #badacsony #balaton #wine #winetasting #wineoclock #estatewine #local #supportlocal #drinklocal #winedivine #winelover #vino #laposagasztrobirtok

(2) In rain and sunshine. The best anytimewine. http://sauska.hu/en/wines/furmint-2017 #sauskawines #sauskafurmint #wineofthemoment #tokaj

(3) Nyáron vöröset? Ne félj tőle! /// Having some red in summertime? Don't be afraid of that! ✨✨ #repost @drinkinmoderation and @natashamaryburdett ———————————————— #redwine #red #wine #bor #nyár #summertime #summer #mutimitiszol #drinking #cheers #egészségedre #sexywine #mik #ikozosseg #magyarbor #hungarianwine

As online marketing tips usually deal with it a lot, the analysis also examined text length. The longest caption was English–Hungarian bilingual including links (1,251 characters), while the shortest one comprised only four hashtags (54 characters; see Example 4). The most hashtags (26) were added to an invitation message of 598 characters (Example 5). Photos are posted with 11 hashtags on average, which corresponds to the number recommended for the best reach (cf. Cohen, 2015).

(4) #FRÖCCSLEGÉNYEK #mikloscsabi #svabypeti #szeremleylaci

(5) Kristinus Picnic is reloaded on 18 August. Come and chill with us whilst drinking our award winning wines eating delicious bites and listening to relaxing music. And bring your dog too! Find more details at the link in bio. #vineyardpicnic #picnic #picnictime #daywithfriends #livemusic #outdoorprogram #barbequeparty #letsgettogether #winelovers #letsgooutside #winetime #hungarianwine #doglovers #dogprogram #enjoythenature #grillparty #vineyardvines #vineyardlife #vineyardvibes

#hungarianwinery #hungariancountryside #viticulture #winery #wineestate #visithungary #lakebalaton

The potential of consistency and branded hashtags is exploited by almost every winery (examples 6–7). Most typically, hashtags relate to the topic (e.g.: #wine #tour #tasting #egribikaver #áldás #blessing #egerwine #egerwineregion #coolclimate #volcanic #hungary #winesofhungary #hungarianwine #premiumwine #cuvee #whitewine #whitecuvee #wineoclock #wineofinstagram #freshwine #sauvignonblanc). Less often they relate to a community or only want to garner likes (#mik #ikozosseg #mik_gasztro #mutimitiszol), and the least frequent ones are unique, stylistically sophisticated hashtags that relate to the context (e.g. #kilehetettbírni #summerishere #bacskiskunboldoggatesz #igyáljóbort).

(6) We have launched the new vintage of the Egri Csillag white wine! The 2018 Egri Csillag officially available from now #egricsillag #launch #new #vintage #2018 #standrea #napbor #sunwine #eger #egerwine #egerwineregion #letstasteeger #whitewine #blendedwine #wine #volcanic #march15 #celebration #national #holiday #winemaker #lorinczgyorgy

(7) Szezonkezdet ⚓ Season opening ⚓ #skoda #skodakodiaq #mikloscsabi #welovemór #miklóscsabipincéje #miklóscsabi #mór #welovemór #moriborvidek #szponzoralttartalom #reklam #skoda #skodakodiaq

The (Assumed) Intention of Content Marketing

Conscious content marketing intends to contribute in some way to the well-being of the audience by, for example, providing help in solving a problem (e.g. through education material), improving the lives or environment of the users (e.g. through propagating a healthy lifestyle), or by sheer entertainment. The image–text combinations were also examined from these points of view. The category "educational material" was attributed to posts that provided information on the production or characteristics of wine (11 instances were found; see Example 8). The second category was not represented in the corpus. The third category, entertainment, was assigned to posts that apparently intended to be funny and cheer up users (9 instances were found; see Example 9, with video). The three main categories had to be complemented by four others after the examination of the posts. Most of the posts were informative (35): medals awarded to the winery, beginning of harvest season, debut of a new wine, participation in an event (examples 10–11). In 22 posts, the image–text combinations only emphasized the beauty of the landscape, grapes, or wine (Example 12). In 18 instances, the posts were clearly express or implied advertisements (examples 13–14). In the case of five Instagram posts, the poster's intention was unclear.

(8) Kristinus Euphoria 2016 – Our new blend combines the finest characteristics of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Blaufränkisch aged in barrique and amphora. #cuvee #cuveewine #redwinelover #redwineday #redwinetime #merlot #cabernetsauvignon #blaufränkisch #barrique #barriquewine #amphorawine #qualitywine #hungarianwine #wineblend #winelabel #labeldesign #uniquetaste #uniquewine

(9) #FRÖCCSLEGÉNYEK #mikloscsabi #svabypeti #szeremleylaci

(10) Koch Csaba Balatonfüreden #kochcsaba #kochboraszat #kochwinery #kochbor #kochpincészet #winetasting #borkostolo #balatonfured #halesborunnep #balaton #winemaker #borászok

(11) Nagy örömmel osztjuk meg veletek a hírt, hogy a 2019. évi Országos Borversenyen 900 beküldött minta közül 2016-os Szekszárdi "Faluhely" QV borunkat nagy aranyéremmel, 2016-os Szekszárdi Cabernet Franc "Faluhely", valamint a Gurovica-dűlőből származó Kékfrankos és Merlot Válogatás borunkat aranyéremmel díjazták. Köszönjük! #bodri #bodripinceszet #orszagosborverseny

(12) Nagy-Eged-hegy – Simply amazing #nagyegedhegy #grandcru #vineyard #hill #morning #beautiful #sunrise #amazing #view #spring #eger #egerwine #egerwineregion #standrea #standreawinery #wonderful #nature #hungary #clouds #winedestinations

(13) Kristinus Gastro Bistro offers you a special Whitsun menu on Sunday and Monday. Beef consommé with coriander. Lamb shank stew, rosemary polenta, roasted pepper and browned onion jus. Cottage-cheese mousse, Krisecco espuma and vanilla flavored strawberry sorbet. Price: 6.990 HUF Booking: +36 85 539 014. #whitsun #whitsunday #whitsundaymonday #whitmonday #winedinner #finedining #gastrolovers #gastrolovers #vineyardlife #gastrobistro #gastrolovers #gastronogram #finedining #cheflife #chefstalk #artonaplate #gastropost #gastrolove #gastronomylover #qualityfood #qualitytime #colourfulplate #masterpiece #yummyfood #whitewinelovers

(14) Szezonkezdet ⚓ Season opening ⚓ #skoda #skodakodiaq #mikloscsabi #welovemór #miklóscsabipincéje #miklóscsabi #mór #welovemór #moriborvidek #szponzoralttartalom #reklam #skoda #skodakodiaq

Visual and Verbal Storytelling

The system of criteria used in this study (whether the photo is eye-catching, easy-to-remember, emotionally touching, more than the optical repetition of the text, or reflective of something more than what is evident) could not be expressed in numbers. The authors of the examined contents predominantly failed to exploit the potential in storytelling, but there were some good examples (examples 15–17).

(15) In order to fully immerse the complexity of a Tokaj Aszú, scenery is instrumental. Even more so when it comes to the thick, beautifully slowly and lazily-dripping Aszú Essencia. The Onyx-team serves our wine in a white porcelain spoon, displaying its amber-honey complexity and decadently rich nose, patiently waiting for the moment to meet the duck liver mousse on your palate. Slow food at its best, isn't it? #madeinhungary #onyx #herendporcelain #sauska #sauskatokaj

(16) Elérkezett a pillanat, amiért éveken keresztül dolgoztunk: egy új fejezetet nyitottunk az 1883 óta fennálló Hableány történetében! Találkozzunk Badacsony szívében, szeretettel várunk borászati központunkban! ♀ @ hableany_badacsony ♀

(17) Get insight to @csajszombat #girlsparty at Kristinus Wine Estate. @szabojucus.5hozzavalo and ladies made #fruitydeserts and learned how to do #gastrostyling from @gasztro_pr . Then, they made their own personalized #diy #spicegarden with @bazsalikomoskert and @ pandarteblog . Besides the gastro related programs, #fashionandstyle naturally played an important role. @maccosmetics provided the perfect #makeupand @ artzmodellhungary styled them for the portrait shooting of @pureandpastelphotography ♀ Photos: @stories_by_ nea. #wineestate #eventspace #uniquestyle #gastroaddict #fashionaddict #girlday #girlsjustwannahavefun #summerishere #weekendevent #weekendplans #letsfun #funtogether #diyworkshop #makeupworkshop #gastroworkshop #photoworkshop

Conclusions

To obtain the loyalty of users, companies need a well-considered communication strategy tailored to the target audience. However, a lot more than this is required for selling products. The most relevant social media principles are the following: long-term strategy, careful planning, conscious implementation, thorough information about and respect for the potential target audience, and content which is valuable and interesting for the target group and has real impact on its behaviour. The product is also easier to sell if it is attractive and easy to identify with; but wines evidently meet this requirement if offered for the right target audience.

As for content types, there are indeed informative posts that are useful, beautiful posts that are aesthetically pleasing, and clear instances of explicit advertising among the posts of wineries; however, it could evidently enhance user loyalty if posts had more added value. The methodology of storytelling could be effectively used in wine communication for the following types of content: 1. advice and education: providing background knowledge, a look "behind the scenes" (grape varieties, winemaking, viticulture, culinary, design, wine–food pairing) or instructions (cf. "how to" videos on bottle opening or wine serving); 2. help to users (information on moderate wine consumption, wine and a healthy lifestyle); 3. entertainment (people behind the bottle; family and historical stories; wine legends, anecdotes, etc.). In addition, the importance of the personal feeling cannot be overemphasized in wine communication which is specializing in handling uncertainty: winemakers can act as special influencers in their field not only when selling wine (which is, of course, very important) but also in social media marketing.

In view of the above, there is another potential benefit of effective and conscious wine communication: the likes of active, regular, non-ad-clicking visitors are particularly valuable. Likes have become a new standard of value.

> The remediation of social relations that has accompanied the rise of consumer culture has effectively managed to transform the nature of affect, from something private, or at least located in small interaction systems, to something that acquires an objective existence as a value creating 'substance' in the public domain. Social media have taken this process one step further. (Arvidsson, 2011)

References

Allhoff, F. (ed.). (2008). *Wine & Philosophy. A Symposium on Thinking and Drinking*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Arvidsson, A. (2011). *General Sentiment. How Value and Affect Converge in the Information Economy*. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1815031> (Accessed on: 9 May 2017).

Balázs, G. (2018a). A magyar bor művelődéstörténetéről [On the Cultural History of Wine]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 20–29.

(2018b). A bor frazeológiája [Phraseology of Wine]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 250–257.

Baldoni, J. (2011). Using Stories to Persuade. *Harvard Business Review*, 24 March 2011. <https://hbr.org/2011/03/using-stories-as-a-tool-of-per> (accessed on: 9 May 2017).

Balogh, J. (2018). Bor – online [Wine – Online]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 210–219.

Beer, D. (2009). Power through the Algorithm? Participatory Web Cultures and the Technological Unconscious. *New Media & Society* 11(6): 985–1002.

Benyák, Z. (2018). Borvidékek kommunikációja [Communication of Wine Regions]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 62–77.

Bergstrom, B. (2008). *Essentials of Visual Communication*. Laurence King Publishing.

boyd, d. (2010). Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications. In: Papacharissi, Z. (ed.), *Networked Self. Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*. New York: Routledge, 39–58.

Cahill, L.–Haier, R. J.–Fallon, J.–Alkire, M. T.–Tang, Ch.–Keator, D.–Wu, J.–Mcgaugh, J. L. (1996). Neurobiology Amygdala Activity at Encoding Correlated with Long-Term, Free Recall of Emotional Information. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (PNAS) 93: 8016–8021.

Cohen, D. (2015). *SurePayroll: Infographic: Hashing Out Hashtags*. 23 April 2015 <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/infographic-surepayroll-hashtags/619169> (accessed on: 9 May 2017).

Cormode, G.–Krishnamurthy, B. (2008). Key Differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0. *First Monday* 13(6): 2 June 2008. <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2125/1972> (accessed on: 9 May 2017).

Crosby, L. (2017). How Effective Is Social Media Marketing at Driving Brand Loyalty? *AMA* 4 April 2017 <https://www.ama.org/publications/MarketingNews/Pages/how-measure-social-media-brand-loyalty-driver.aspx> (accessed on: 9 May 2017).

Csire, T. (2015). #selfie. A hashtagek használata az Instagramon [Use of Hashtags on Instagram]. *E-nyelv Magazin* 2015/2 <http://e-nyelvmagazin.hu/2015/05/29/selfie-a-hashtagek-hasznalata-az-instagramon/> (accessed on: 9 August 2019).

Gallo, C. (2016). *The Storyteller's Secret: From TED-Speakers to Business Legends. Why Some Ideas Catch on and Others Don't.* St. Martin's Press.

Gerlitz, C.–Helmond, A. (2013). The Like Economy: Social Buttons and the Data-Intensive Web. *New Media & Society* 15(8): 1348–1365.

Giulani, L. (2006). Macht und Ohnmacht der Bilder: Eine frisch gewaschene Schürze und die gemordeten Mamelucken. In: Maar, Ch.–Burda, H. (eds.), *Iconic Worlds: Neue Bilderwelten und Wissensräume.* Cologne: DuMont, 185–204.

Gyanó, Sz. (2018). Bor és néprajz. Néprajzi jellegzetességek, eltérések és azonosságok a Balaton két partján [Wine and Ethnography. Ethnographic Peculiarities, Differences, and Similarities on the Two Shores of Lake Balaton]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 78–93.

Hendricks, V. F.–Vestergaard, M. (2019). The Attention Economy. In: Hendricks, V. F.–Vestergaard, M. (eds.), *Reality Lost. Markets of Attention, Misinformation and Manipulation.* Springer, 1–17.

Hofmeister-Tóth, Á.–Totth, G. (2018). Marketingkommunikáció a borágazatban [Marketing Communication in Oenology]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 108–123.

Howell, Ch. (2013). *Is Social Media an Effective Way of Creating Brand Loyalty in Fashion?* <https://charlottehowell.wordpress.com/2013/06/24/using-social-media-to-form-a-self-image/> (accessed on: 9 May 2017; not available).

Ipacs, G. (2018). Bor és dizájn. Jó bornak nem kell cégér – ja, de! [Wine and Design. Good Wines Do Not Need a Signboard – They Actually Do!]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 138–161.

Jenkins, H.–Clinton, K.–Purushotma, R.–Robinson, A. J.–Weigel, M. (2006). *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century.* MacArthur Foundation.

Jurgenson, N. (2019). *The Social Photo: On Photography and Social Media.* Verso.

Kemp, E.–Childers, C. Y.–Williams, K. H. (2012). Place Branding: Creating Self-Brand Connections and Brand Advocacy. *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 21(7): 508–515.

Kovács, Lajos. (2018). Bor és szakralitás [Wine and Sacrality]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 30–43.

Kovács, László. (2018). Bormárkanevek [Wine Brand Names]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 124–137.

Lakits, E.–Rácz, D.–Szabadi, D. (2018). Borleírások a gyakorlatban [Wine Descriptions in Practice]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 220–231.

Lehrer, A. (2009). *Wine & Conversation*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Libert, K.–Tynski, K. (2013). Research: The Emotions That Make Marketing Campaigns Go Viral. *Harvard Business Review* 24 October 2013 <https://hbr.org/2013/10/research-the-emotions-that-make-marketing-campaigns-go-viral> (accessed on: 9 August 2019).

Maar, Ch. (2006). Iconic Worlds: Bilderwelten nach dem iconic turn. In: Maar, Ch.–Burda, H. (eds.), *Iconic Worlds: Neue Bilderwelten und Wissensräume.* Cologne: DuMont, 11–14.

Magyari, S. (2018. A bor nyelvi képe [Linguistic Image of Wine]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 242–249.

Maker, M. H. (2015). *Storytelling Is the New Marketing: Five Lessons for Wine Brands Shifting Toward Narrative* <http://www.nomacorc.com/blog/2015/02/storytelling-is-the-new-wine-marketing-five-lessons-wine-brands-shifting-toward-narrative/> (accessed on: 9 August 2019).

Marwick, A. (2015). You May Know Me from YouTube: (Micro-)Celebrity in Social Media. In: Marshall, P. D.–Redmond, S. (eds.), *A Companion to Celebrity*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 353–371.

Marwick, A.–boyd, d. (2010). I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately. Twitter Users, Context Collapse and the Imagined Audience. *New Media and Society* <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1461444810365313?journalCode=nmsa> (accessed on: 9 August 2019).

Németh, Á. (2018). Nyomdafestéket tűrő ital, avagy néhány alapvetés a borszakírás kapcsán [Essentials of Wine Journalism]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 160–171.

Orbán, G. (2018). A Balaton Bor marketingstratégiája [The Marketing Strategy of BalatonBor]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 196–209.

Pál, D. L. (2018). Egy pohár bor, egy pohár irodalom [One Glass of Wine, One Glass of Literature]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 188–192.

Pellicer, S. (2018). Influencer vs Brand Ambassador vs Brand Advocate. *Medium* 16 January 2018 <https://medium.com/@digitaluxe/influencer-vs-brand-ambassador-vs-brand-advocate-7c278d72700d> (accessed on: 9 August 2019).

Peters, I. (2009). *Folksonomies. Indexing and Retrieval in Web 2.0*. Berlin: De Gruyter Saur.

Renner, N. (2019). How Social Media Shapes Our Identity. *The New Yorker* 8 August 2019 [under review] <https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/how-social-media-shapes-our-identity> (accessed on: 9 August 2019).

Sammer, P.–Heppel, U. (2015). *Visual Storytelling. Visuelles Erzählen in PR & Marketing*. n.d.: O'Reilly.

Senft, T. M. (2008). *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks*. New York: Peter Lang.

Sherman, S.–Tuten, T. (2011). Message on a Bottle: The Wine Label's Influence. *International Journal of Wine Business Research* 23(3): 221–234.

Simon, F. (2019). The Politics of Digital Intimacy. *Medium* 10 August 2019 <https://medium.com/viewpoints/the-politics-of-digital-intimacy-2da2f0622088> (accessed on: 22 August 2019).

Slegg, J. (2014). What Marketers Can Learn from These Hashtags Fails. *The SEM Post* 1 August 2014 <http://www.thesempost.com/marketers-can-learn-hashtags-fails/> (accessed on: 22 August 2019).

Szabó, E. (ed.). (2017). *Gyengébb? Nem!* [Weaker? No!]. Budapest: Corvina.

Szakáli, I. L.–Szám, I. (2018). Hungarikum szőlőfajták – borhungarikumok [Hungaricum Vine Varieties – Wine Hungaricums]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 44–61.

Szappanos, P. (2018). Borgazdaság [Wine Economy]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 94–107.

Turner, J.–Shah, R. (2010). *How to Make Money with Social Media: An Insider's Guide on Using New and Emerging Media to Grow Your Business*. London: Pearson Education.

Van Pappelendam, L. (2012). Anne Helmond and Carolin Gerlitz Explain the Like Economy. *Network Cultures* 10 March 2012 <http://networkcultures.org/unlikeus/2012/03/10/anne-helmond-and-carolin-gerlitz-explain-the-like-economy/> (accessed on: 22 August 2019).

Veszelszki, Á. (2016). A hashtag mint új frazeologizmus? [Hashtag as a New Phraseologism?]. In: Bárdosi, V. (ed.), A nyelvi pragmatika kérdései szinkrón és diakrón megközelítésben [Questions of Pragmatics from A Synchronic and Diachronic Point of View]. Budapest: Modern Filológiai Társaság–Tinta, 147–158.

(ed.). (2018). *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég.

(2018a). Boretikett: illik, nem illik? [Wine Etiquette]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 172–187.

(2018b). Fröccsterminológia [Terminology of Spritz]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 232–241.

(2018c). Bormémek [Wine Memes]. In: Veszelszki, Á. (ed.), *Borkommunikáció. Aszútól a zenitig* [Wine Communication. From Aszú to Zenit]. Budapest: Századvég, 258–267.

(2018d). Like Economy. What Is the Economic Value of Likes? *Society and Economy* 40(3): 417–429.

(2018e). Kit és mire motiválnak a motivációs üzenetek? Az online inspirációs tartalmak kommunikációs szerepe [Who and to What Do Motivational Messages Motivate? The Communicative Role of Online Inspirational Messages]. *ME.DOK: Média – Történet – Kommunikáció* 23(4): 1–57.

(2019) [i.p.]. Pálinka- és borivóknak való [For Drinkers of Wine and Pálinka].

Walter, E.–Gioglio, J. (2015). *The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to Use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand.* New York et al.: McGraw Hill.

W1 = <http://tartalommarketing.hu/mi-az-a-tartalommarketing/> (accessed on: 9 May 2017).

W2 = What Is Content Marketing? <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing/> (accessed on: 9 May 2017).

W3 = <https://thepreviewapp.com/7-types-instagram-grid-layouts-planner-tips/> (accessed on: 9 August 2019).

W4 = <https://turizmus.com/szallashely-vendeglatas/magyar-bor-szemelyesen-ime-az-uj-magyar-borarculat-1162540> (accessed on: 9 August 2019).

Digital Literacy and Social Diversity

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio, **6** (2019) 107–119

DOI: 10.2478/auscom-2019-0006

Modern Digital Device Systems Supporting the Instruction of Digital Natives

György MOLNÁR
Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Hungary
e-mail: molnargy@eik.bme.hu

Abstract. While in our accelerated world everything seems to change, basic values are here to stay. I believe one such aspect is education and training. Although our educational system is built on a relatively permanent basis, instructional methodology on the whole has undergone substantial changes despite that all of the educational system has preserved its role in transmitting, presenting, and preserving knowledge. Since in our fast 21st-century world myriads of facts and fake or questionable information is available, students require new knowledge along with new and perhaps different answers. We believe that education, due to its ability to provide scientifically sound answers to the respective challenges, is vital today. Recent paradigm shifts have led to fundamental alterations in the form of information and knowledge acquisition supported by modern, state-of-the-art ICT-based methodological solutions and learning environments. The study focuses on the theoretical and practical aspects of such learning support schemes or solutions.

Keywords: digital learning environments, ICT-based methodology, digital learning solutions, digital natives

Introduction

The actual participants of our educational system face several challenges and changes resulting in radical alterations of the methods of knowledge acquisition and processing. The educational and didactic principles and tasks supporting learning-centred and constructivist teaching take new forms in the current digital environments. The 21st century is the age of experience pedagogy, which – bolstered by international research results and the respective practice – is gradually applied in domestic educational contexts too. Relevant international (Hülber, 2017) and domestic (Bodnár-Sass, 2014) research results substantiate the legitimacy and prove the efficiency, and in some cases the effectiveness, of that method. In today's world permeated with digital culture, educational institutions have to be prepared to provide modern, ICT-supported learning environments (Szűts, 2014; Molnár-Szűts, 2016). Consequently, in order to accommodate the needs and the demands of the upcoming generation, the framework system of the digital school should be developed (Prensky, 2001, 2012). Such aspirations are served and supported by the EU recommendations prepared by the experts of the scientific and knowledge centre of the European Commission, the Joint Research Centre (JRC). As a result of efforts to prepare framework systems for describing the digital competence of European people, the DigCompOrg and the DigCompEdu framework systems were issued in 2017, addressing the needs of educational institutions and instructors respectively (Learning & Skills, 2017). Currently, with an eye to domestic specifications, these solutions are being adapted in Hungary.

Selection of Popular Web 2.0 Applications

Below, I will describe the main functions of a few frequently used and popular web 2.0-based interactive programs and applications that can be successfully integrated into the current teaching and learning processes.

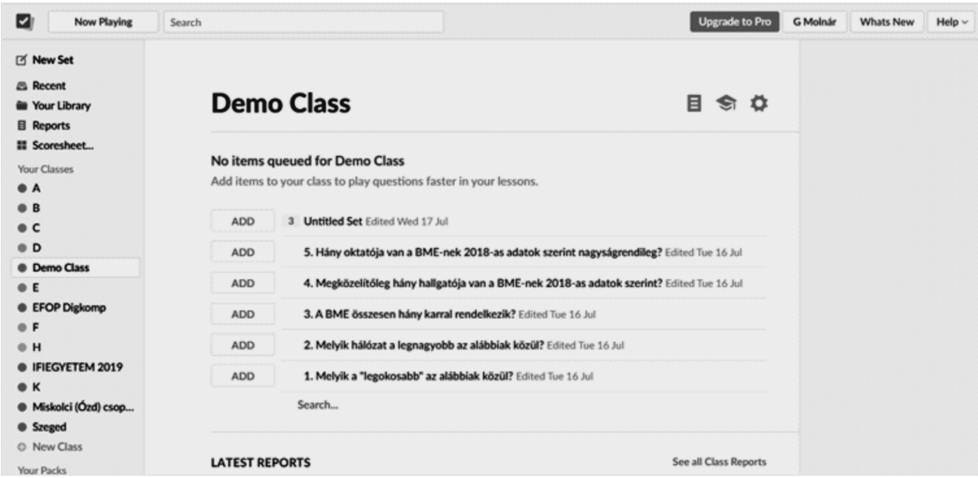
1. Plickers (https://www.plickers.com)

Plickers provides a voting system via a mobile telephone or any smart device, including a camera operated by the teacher.

The use of Plickers greatly simplifies immediate evaluation. Teachers only need a mobile device, and students use a printed white sheet identifiable by a pictogram. When answering the teacher's questions, they raise the sheet and turn it towards him/her. Depending on the given answer, the pictogram can be turned in 4 directions (A, B, C, or D). One disadvantage is that it can only be used in case of multiple choice tests.

The temporary break in connection and the resulting inability to reach the Internet is a frequent problem in schools. The AR-based Plickers offers a solution via turning the classroom into an interactive location without students using their phones or requiring Internet connection.

In order to test the system, it is enough to register at the website, and after establishing one or more classes and potentially entering the names of students the application can be downloaded onto a smart phone. Having printed the answer sheets, the system is ready for testing. It is easy to use as the teacher asks a question with four potential answer options. In response, each student raises their answer card turned to display the letter representing the appropriate answer. After starting the application, a camera records the answers and the teacher can see each student's replies. At the same time, the results are available along with their distribution at the Plickers website. Thus, the respective answers can be projected for the whole class to see, and exporting options are available as well.



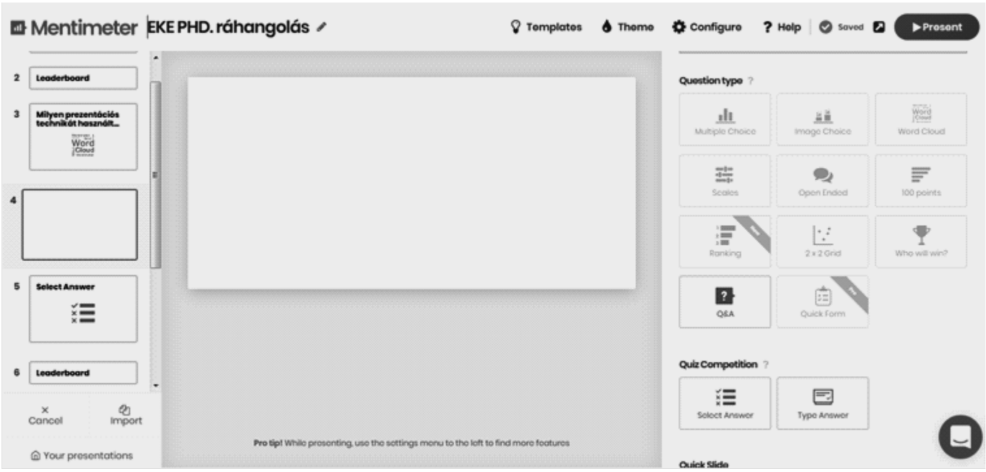
Source: author's screenshot

Figure 1. *The user surface of Plickers after entry*

2. Menti (https://www.mentimeter.com; https://www.menti.com)

Mentimeter is a presentation software enabling students to answer questions with the help of a code. The method does not require any instalment or adjustment as students can use their own laptops, tablets, or smart phones. The respective results can be shown in real time, but it is possible to hide them until everyone finishes answering. Furthermore, there is no need for documentation or additional administration as the results are automatically saved by the webpage, and they can be downloaded later as well. The Mentimeter is an open-source code-based application facilitating the preparation of 13 types of questions.

The software helps teachers in making lessons interactive via surveying the opinions of students regarding a given question or issue. Moreover, it can also be used as a formative evaluation device. Another option is establishing a ranking order among the members of the class if they identify themselves by name before answering. Additionally, the system is suitable for preparing a traditional presentation and can help in the compilation of interactive word clouds too. *Figure 2* shows the editing surface of the program.



Source: author's screenshot

Figure 2. *The editing surface of Mentimeter following entry*

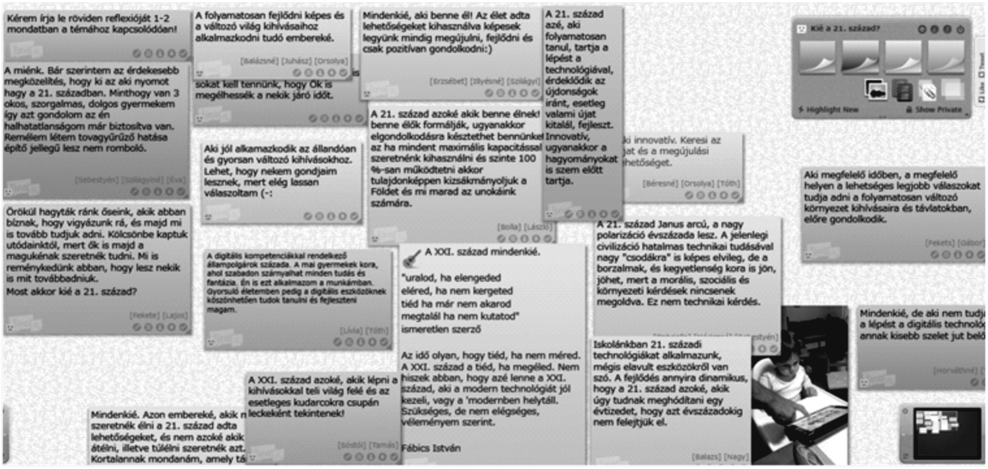
3. Linoit (https://en.linoit.com)

Linoit is a virtual wall to which virtual paper slips can be attached. Such slips could include videos, pictures, simple texts, or even LearningApps tasks. The wall can be shared with learners so that they can work on the given tasks at home. Furthermore, differentiated learning activities and anonymous user options are available as well. In addition, the wall facilitates gamification as students can select from assignments to be solved. The application also makes the collection of the ideas of learners and colleagues in a given topic and question possible. Students only need a smart device, and they can take notes on-line, and sharing can take place via QR codes or links.

The most frequent user options provided by Linoit are:

– Brainstorming
– Question bank
– On-line student portfolios
– Conceptual maps
– Exit ticket

The next figure shows the digital surface of Linoit.



Source: author's screenshot

Figure 3. *The editing surface of Linoit following entry*

4. Community Bookmarks

These options allow the user to save the addresses of webpages into a list for the availability of contents he considers important in the future. Each component of the bookmark can be labelled with key terms facilitating a grouping effort. The bookmark collection receives a community role when we share them with others. Consequently, the shared bookmarks and the respective labels form a large, mutually usable set enabling the user to identify the websites marked by the given identical label or key term. Compared to the use of search engines, information acquisition can become more effective this way. At the same time, we can find users interested in similar topics. Therefore, it is recommended to follow or monitor such collections as it can help us in obtaining up-to-date information.

The use of bookmarks in cooperative learning: students and the teacher sharing their own bookmarks can help each other in obtaining information by using the resulting content during a project work.

– The use of bookmarks in collaborative learning: the teacher establishes a bookmark set of a given theme with the help of students, thereby constructing the reference register of a given theme. The labels help in the categorization of the specific sources.

– The bookmarks related to the given subject can be shared with the students, thereby establishing a reference knowledge base.

One such specific solution promoting community bookmarking services is Symbaloo.

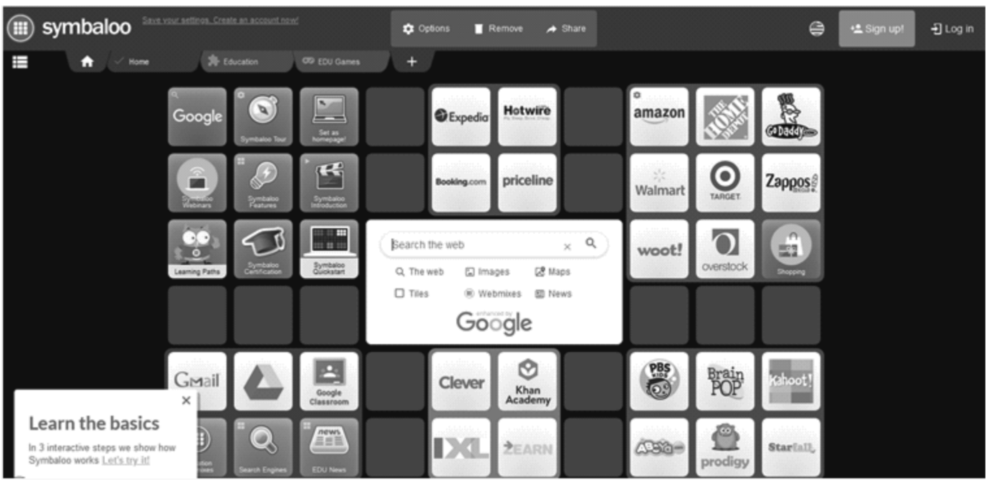
Symbaloo *(https://www.symbaloo.com)*

Symbaloo is a webpage for the collection of links facilitating the construction of individual learning routes. It is suitable for the creation of digital bookmarks regardless of the given search engine. One's favourite links can be found via any computer, and the links can be shared as well.

Links to frequently used or essential webpages or Web 2.0 applications should be built in a "digital tile" on the opening pages.

All favourite webpages are automatically synchronized with the smartphone or the tablet after downloading the Symbaloo application and registering.

It is very easy to operate, and favourite websites or applications can be added by a single click. The links can be grouped into a digital tile according to location, colour and/or pages, or themes. Its favourable appearance is coupled with an ability to create an attractive webmix or emphasizing links and topics. Students will enjoy the webmix to be used during projects or class work. Students can be provided with super-fast access to websites by sharing the link in e-mail or on social media surfaces. Thus, the chances of surfing to other pages, mistyping web addresses, or opening non-relevant pages can be minimized.



Source: author's own screenshot

Figure 4. *The editing surface of the Symbaloo program*

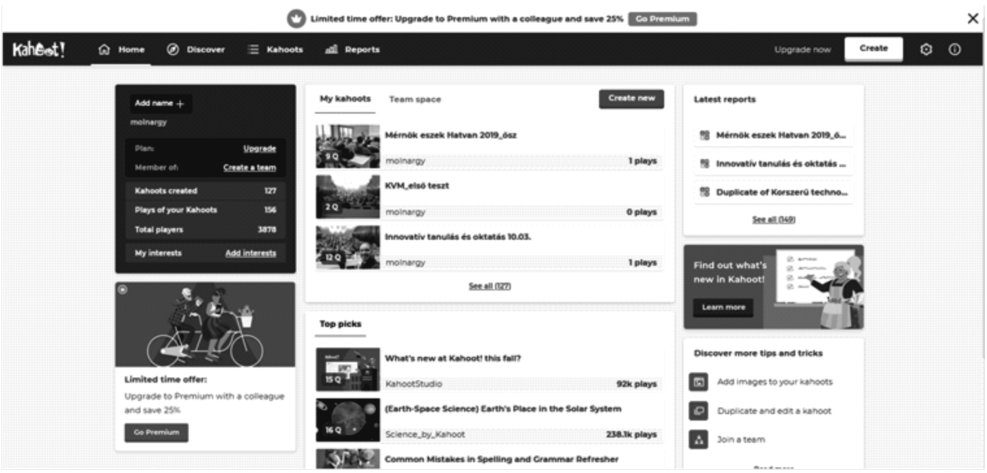
5. Kahoot! (https://kahoot.com)

If we want to arrange a digital quiz or voting in a given class, the best method is Kahoot!. Its greatest advantage is that it can be used with any device regardless of platform.

Students can use their own phones or tablets, the voting surface is available from the browser, and the program can be downloaded also as an application. According to students' feedback, Kahoot! and Plickers are considered simple to use, but the former one not only establishes the appropriateness of the answer but measures the speed of giving a response. The number of the questions is determined by the person who prepares the test, while pictures, figures, or videos can enliven the questions. Students providing fast and right answers are given the most points. The answers and points related to each question are saved on the teacher's website, and the related statistics can be saved, analysed, or used for summative evaluation.

Teachers can register, prepare, and start the game free of charge. The game is accessible via a "Game Pin" available through a webpage or application. Students are identified only by a nickname and can answer each question within a set time limit. In addition to one's own (private) questions, the question series can be shared with other users. Anyone can select or edit any publicly accessible quiz.

After the game, students can provide feedback concerning how they felt during the game or whether they learned anything new. Hence, it can function as an exit card. The next figure shows the editing surface of Kahoot!.



Source: author's own screenshot

Figure 5. *The editing surface of Kahoot! after entry*

6. LearningApps (https://learningapps.org)

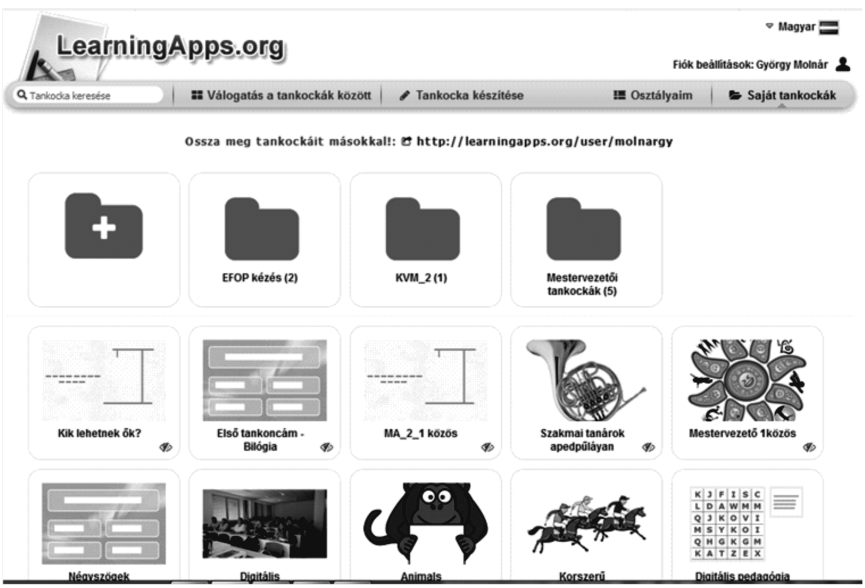
LearningApps.org is a result of a joint research and development project of the Pedagogical College of Bern, the University of Mainz, and the College of Zittau/ Görlitz. It is a web surface suitable for the preparation of interactive educational support materials. After registration, users can create or share applications or learning cubes via the use of templates or patterns. As a result of the efforts of a master teacher workgroup, the program is available in Hungarian as well.

The “learning cubes” are basically the specific tasks that can be created by the users after filling the task templates, or moulds, with content. At the same time, there is the option of selecting from the learning cubes created by the other users, and the given learning cubes can be converted or transformed upon demand.

The webpage is easy to use and facilitates differentiated task assignment. Students can be invited into a virtual class where the learning cubes can be shared and completed. The given tasks presented by the learning cubes can be solved on an interactive board frontally or on the students’ own devices independently. The program allows students to practice at home as well. Since the completed learning cubes are not considered self-contained, closed teaching units, they have to be embedded or integrated into a proper learning environment. Thus, a given type of learning cube can be used with other subjects in a variety of ways.

The program includes a multiplayer mode, and users can create a collection of tasks (Matrix). When preparing the collection, one’s own exercises and those created by others can be used along with the option of including references. Such data can be integrated into our blog or website as in the case of any other application.

The most frequent assignment types include matching, arranging concepts into categories, establishing the chronological order or timeline, crossword puzzle, word search, and filling gaps in a text. *Figure 6* illustrates the editing surface of the learning cubes.



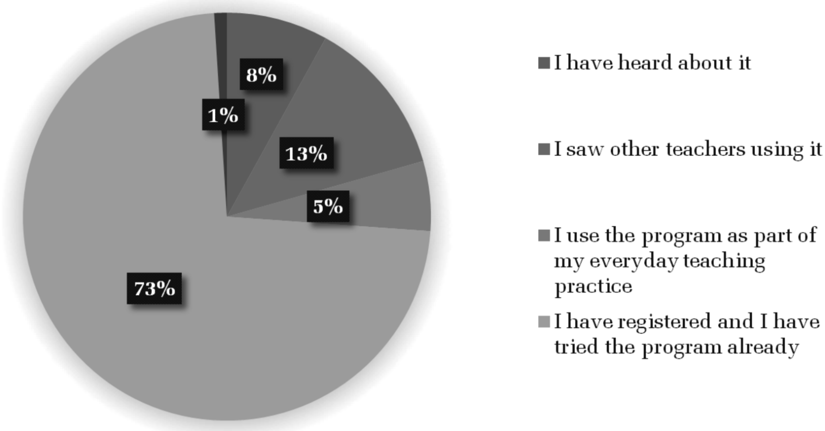
Source: author’s own screenshot

Figure 6. *The editing surface of learning cubes after entry*

Empirical, Inductive Research Related to the Present Theme

Today's knowledge-based society requires experience-based learning and an environment which encourages students to explore and achieve results. Web 2.0 devices enabling students to systemize their knowledge while not closing it off from each other, thus making a collaborative effort in solving the given tasks, is an important context of our research. Accordingly, in the autumn of 2019, an on-line questionnaire-based inquiry investigated students' preliminary knowledge and familiarity with the previously described programs and the relevant using skills or proficiency levels. The random and simple sample yielding 197 valid responses included full-time students in the 18–22 age-group enrolled in business- and management-related programmes. The survey utilized the questionnaire form of Google Drive. Below, I will introduce the most significant results related to the abovementioned applications.

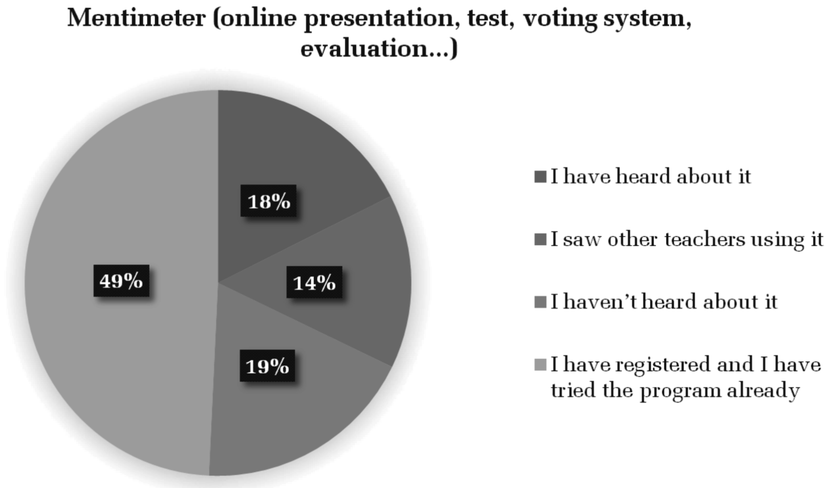
Kahoot! (online test, voting system, evaluation...)



Source: author's own chart

Figure 7. *The range of familiarity with and the use of Kahoot!*

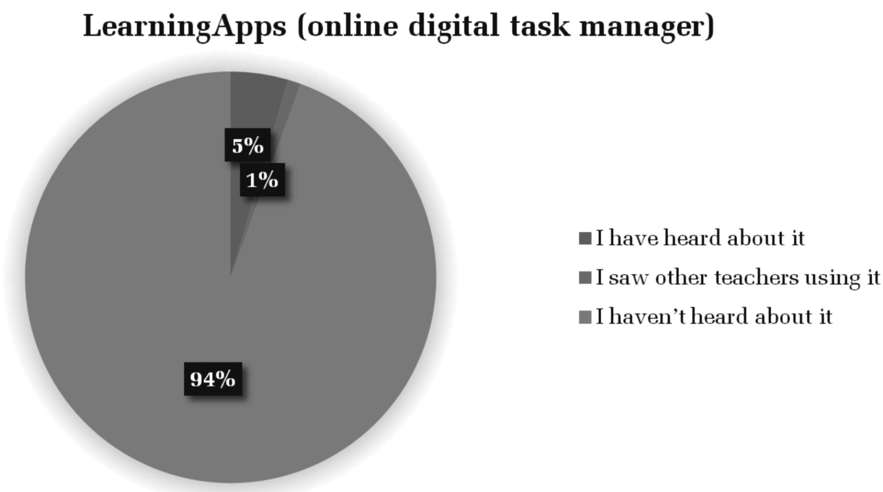
Figure 7 describes users' familiarity with Kahoot!. Accordingly, 73.1% have already tried it out, 12.7% of the respondents saw other teachers using the program, and 7.6% have only heard about the application.



Source: author's own chart

Figure 8. *The range of familiarity with and the use of Mentimeter*

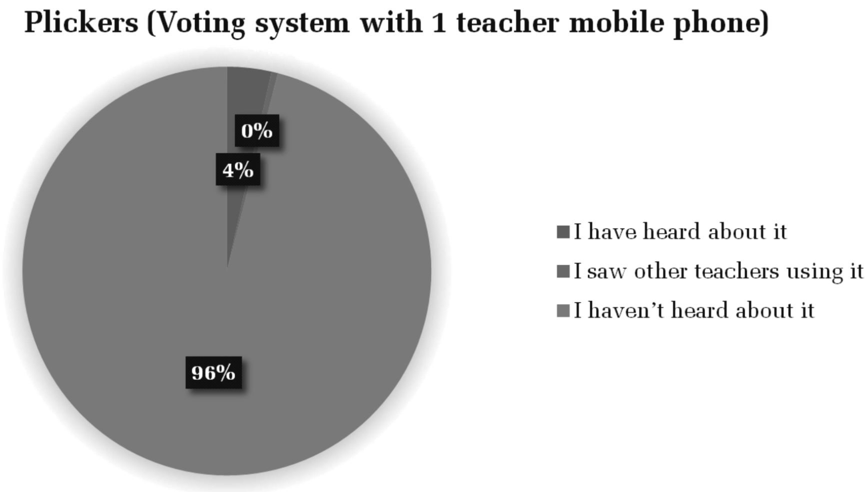
Figure 8 demonstrates that 49.7% of the respondents have used and already tried the program, 18.3% have never heard about it, 17.8% were familiar with it, and 14.2% saw other people using it.



Source: author's own chart

Figure 9. *The range of familiarity with and the use of LearningApps*

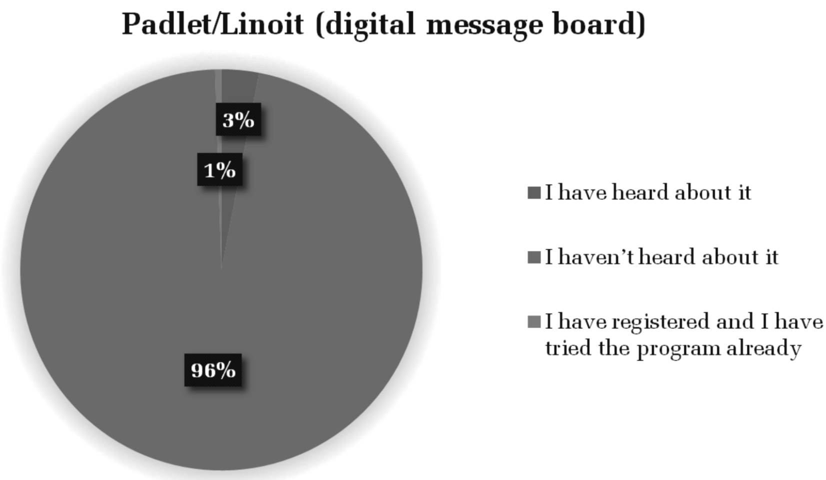
Regarding the use of LearningApps or the learning cubes, 94.4% of the respondents have not heard about the program, 4.6% have heard about it, and 1% have already seen somebody using it.



Source: author's own chart

Figure 10. *The range of familiarity with and the use of Plickers*

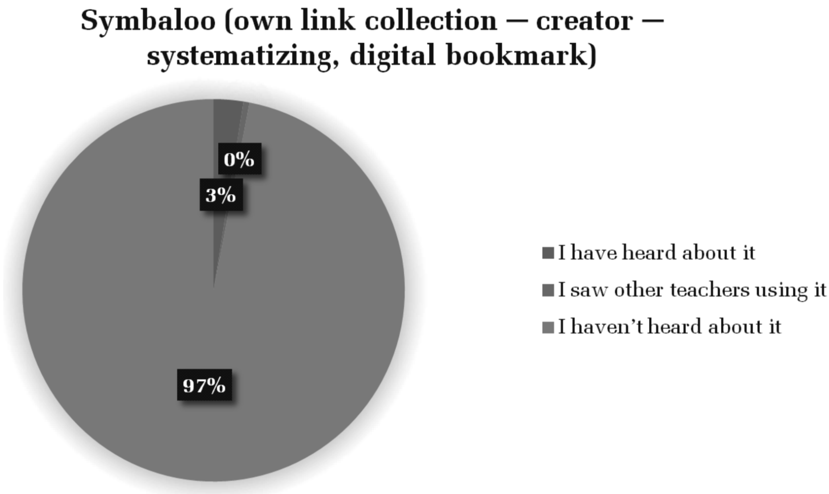
The chart shows that 95.9% of the respondents have not heard about the program, 3.6% have heard about it, and 1% saw somebody using it.



Source: author's own chart

Figure 11. *The range of familiarity with and the use of Padlet/Linoit*

As far as the program is concerned, 3% have heard about it, 96.4% had no knowledge about it whatsoever, and 1% have already registered for it.



Source: author's own chart

Figure 12. *The range of familiarity with and the use of Symbaloo*

The lack of familiarity was the greatest in the case of Symbaloo as 97% have never heard about it, only 2,5% were familiar with it, and merely 1% saw other people using it.

Summary of Results

Our study focused on ways of supporting the process of knowledge transmission and acquisition in the digitalized world and explored relevant student feedback with the help of digital tools. Our empirical survey assessing the respective demands concluded that even the younger generation is relatively unfamiliar with most of the interactive learning support systems, especially the Symbaloo, LearningApps, Linoit, and Plickers. Consequently, such programs and approaches should be integrated into the methodological arsenal of teachers. The emphasis on such modern approaches will naturally present a challenge for today's teachers while providing professional enhancement and enabling them to accommodate the needs of the new digital generation more effectively.

References

Bodnár, É.–Sass, J. (2014). Kihívások: Változó tanulók – változó módszerek – változó tanárszerepek. In: Tóth, P.–Ősz, R.–Várszegi, Á. (eds.), *Pedagógusképzés – személyiségformálás, értékközvetítés, értékteremtés: IV. Trefort Ágoston Szakmai Tanárképzési Konferencia tanulmánykötet.* Budapest: Trefort Ágoston Centre of Óbudai Egyetem, 183–196.

Hülber, L. (ed.). (2017). *A digitális oktatási kultúra módszertana* [*Methodology of Digital Education Culture*]. Eger: Eszterházy Károly Egyetem.

György, M.–Szűts, Z. (2016). What is the Worth of Digital Content and Online Curriculum for Students? Lessons from Survey Conducted at BME. In: *SISY 2016, IEEE* 14^{th} *International Symposium on Intelligent Systems and Informatics*. Szabadka, Serbia, 29–31 August 2016, 245–250.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon* 9(5): 1–6.

(2012). *From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom: Hopeful Essays for* 21^{st}*-Century Learning*. Los Angeles: Corwin Press.

Skills & Learning, Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole, 2017. <https://www.skillsandlearningace.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/SE-Brochure-Final-Proof.pdf> (accessed on: 3 November 2019).

Szűts, Z. (2014). Szingularitás előtt – papír és képernyő között [Before Singularity – Between Paper and Screen]. *Korunk* 3: 29–34.

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio, **6** (2019) 121–129

DOI: 10.2478/auscom-2019-0007

Digital Naïves Go Online

Rozália Klára BAKÓ
Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
Cluj-Napoca, Romania
e-mail: bakorozalia@uni.sapientia.ro

Abstract. We live in a networked world with a fast pace of digitalization, and yet about half of the humanity is still offline (United Nations, 2018). Information and communication technologies are playing a key role in our public and private lives, both during work- and playtime. No wonder that social inequalities are increasingly reflected as digital inequalities in terms of infrastructural access, skills, and cultural practices online: those left behind can hardly keep up. The present research note brings together theoretical and practical resources related to *digital inclusion issues globally, with local examples* from Romania, where *digital naïves* – the poor, the rural, the elderly, the disabled, and the less educated – are more at risk.[1]

Keywords: digital naïves, digital inclusion, global perspective, local example, Romania

From "Little Boxes" to "Networked Individualism"

The Internet is nowadays embedded in daily community life, rather than a separate socio-technical system (Wellman et al., 2003). Virtual groups can be perceived as *imagined communities* of anonymous people with similar interests or values (Anderson, 2006). Concerns over online communication taking over face-to-face interactions, conceptualized by the Canadian sociologist and his NetLab, are louder than ever:

– Do we communicate more given the extra opportunity of online channels and tools?

– Do we favour these online, affordable channels over offline meetings?

– Do we have less offline time due to the growing amount of time spent online?

– Do we spend less time in offline communities due to the growing number of online groups?

– What kind of sense of belonging do we, networked people have?

1 Funded by Sapientia Foundation – Institute for Research Programmes, Romania.

There is no simple answer to these questions formulated before the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram dominating online communication today, and there are multiple answers when it comes to children and teens (Bock–Macgilchrist, 2019; boyd, 2014). Living in a networked society brings about both opportunities and challenges (Benkler, 2006; Cardoso, 2006; Castells, 1999; Jenkins, 2006; Rainie–Wellman, 2014; Shirky, 2008; Van Dijk, 2006; Westera, 2013). Digital spaces enable and enhance what Wellman called "networked individualism" (2001) – an age of the individual with his/her sparsely knit ties, partially replacing small group units ("little boxes") as a frame of reference. The shift from the tightly knit groups to loose and geographically dispersed networks has happened gradually, with the Internet playing an instrumental role (Wellman et al., 2003; Wellman, 2018). Multimodal experience facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) enables multiple identity layers, many of them anonymous (Bauerlein, 2011). Epitomized by the young woman hidden behind her laptop screen in a coffee shop, Bauerlein's Internet user – and possibly abuser – can go wherever she wants online, into spaces with no gatekeepers. "With the screen disengaging her from the surroundings, others nearby have no gatekeeping power" (2011: 132). In a way, we are all digital naïves: we may encounter challenges and traps in virtual worlds of deepfake videos and misleading information.

Who Is Left Behind? The Need for Digital Inclusion Policies

Can we connect easily and affordably to the Internet? Not all of us and not affordably. Do we understand what we find online? Not all of us and not all of it. There is a strong need for local content in terms of language and relevance since only a quarter of Internet users worldwide are English speakers, whereas half of the web content is in English (United Nations, 2018). Meanwhile, there is still a significant gender-based digital divide: "in 2017, about 51 per cent of men globally were online compared to about 45 per cent of women" (United Nations, 2018: 37). There are multiple digital divides globally, as shown in the table below.

Table 1. *Multiple socio-economic and geo-cultural digital divides*

Divide	Description
Access	Key infrastructural barrier as more people globally remain offline rather than stay online
Affordability	An important difference in adoption within countries and between them
Age	Older people are using ICTs to a lesser extent than younger populations.
Bandwidth	Capacity to transmit and receive information varies between countries and within them.

Divide	Description
Content	Relevant content in local languages may stimulate adoption.
Disability	If websites are not compliant with web accessibility guidelines
Education	Education and literacy rates are fundamental challenges to bridge.
Gender	A small, persistent difference in online usage between men and women
Migration	Digital literacy, content, and language divides encountered by migrants in their new countries
Location	Rural and remote areas are often at a disadvantage in terms of speed and quality of services
Mobile	Opportunities to bridge the access gap. New divides – technology, speed, and usage
Speed	The gap between basic and broadband access makes it difficult to be part of the digital culture.
Useful usage	What people do with their access to take full advantage of the digital culture

Source: adapted from the United Nations report (2018: 34)

These gaps suggest some ways of bridging them by developing little daily practices or digital inclusion policies: supporting access, developing skills, helping the elderly, the less educated, and those more at risk to benefit from the digital culture.

Digital Inclusion: Good Practices

A simple and comprehensive definition states: "digital inclusion is whether a person can access, afford and have the digital ability to connect and use online technologies effectively" (Thomas et al., 2019: 8).

The World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) *accessibility standards*[2] show the long-lasting effort to bring the Internet closer to its users. Recommendations related to improving content and developing multimodal channels for online resources are aimed at easing the access of all categories of users to Internet, living temporarily or long-lasting with disabilities. Meanwhile, the *Right to Repair* movement brings infrastructural access closer to its users by supporting independent repair shops around the world and teaching users to fix their own devices instead of throwing them away – actions deeply rooted in environmental sustainability principles.[3]

Based on a thorough literature review, Tőkés and Velicu (2015: 71) define the set of skills necessary for achieving digital competence: technical skills, or the ability to use ICTs in general; cognitive skills, or the ability to decode and properly interpret online messages; social skills, which are instrumental to interact in online spaces; last but not least, attitudes and personal perspectives enabling participation in

2 https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/
3 A good example is The Restart Project, at https://therestartproject.org/.

digital life. Schools and civil society organizations may have a key role in fostering digital inclusion by working closely with those left behind, research has shown (Bakó, 2016; Bauerlein, 2011; Bock, Macgilchrist, 2019; Castells, 2004; Helsper, 2008; Meneses, Mominó, 2010; Van Deursen–Helsper, 2015).

Similarly, Van Deursen and Van Dijk (2010: 3) describe the Internet skills that should be developed for achieving a well-rounded digital literacy: operational Internet skills derived from basic skills in using Internet technology; formal Internet skills related to navigation and orientation online; information-seeking skills; strategic Internet skills aimed at using the Internet for improving one's position in society.

Digital Divide in Romania

There is a steady growth of Internet penetration rate in Romania, including mobile broadband penetration, as shown in *Table 2*.

Table 2. *Evolution of the Internet penetration (IP) in Romania (2016–2018)*

Indicator	31.12.2016	31.12.2017	31.12.2018
Landline IP for 100 households (%)	53.7	57.7	61.6
– for urban areas	67.5	70.9	73.7
– for rural areas	35.8	40.7	46.0
Mobile IP for 100 inhabitants (%)	96.4	98.9	102.0
Mobile IP for 100 inhabitants: 3G, 4G (%)	82.0	84.5	87.9

Source: ANCOM (2019)

Despite the steady growth of broadband mobile Internet access across the country, Romania is still lagging behind when it comes to digital skills and attitudes/practices related to Internet use, as presented in the section below.

Digital Economy and Society Index: Digitalization in Europe and Romania

The *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)* measures the level of digitalization in the European Union (EU) countries, using five criteria and several indicators (European Commission, 2019):

– Connectivity: access to broadband Internet;
– Human capital: basic and advanced digital skills among the population;
– Use of Internet services: online content and transactions;
– Integration of digital technologies: e-business, e-commerce;
– Digital e-services: e-government and e-health.

According to the latest report, Romania ranks 27 out of the 28 EU countries, with Finland on the top of the list, as shown in tables 3–7.

Table 3. *Connectivity in Romania, Finland, and the EU (ranks in parenthesis)*

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
Fixed broadband coverage % households	87% (26)	94% (20)	97%
Fixed broadband take-up % households	66% (22)	58% (27)	77%
4G coverage % households	77% (28)	99% (4)	94%
Mobile broadband take-up Subscriptions per 100 people	85% (20)	156% (2)	96%
Fast broadband coverage % households	76% (21)	75% (24)	83%
Fast broadband take-up % households	55% (9)	29 % (22)	41%
Super-fast broadband coverage % households	75% (14)	58 % (19)	60%
Super-fast broadband take-up % households	45% (3)	21 % (14)	20%
Broadband price Score (0 to 100)	86 (16)	94 (1)	87

Source: compilation based on EC 2019b, EC 2019c

While Romania ranks better than Finland for superfast broadband take-up (3rd versus 14th of the 28 countries), it is for the benefit of the young, urban, educated, and connected population.

Table 4. *Human capital in Romania, Finland, and the EU (ranks in parenthesis)*

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
At least basic digital skills % individuals	29% (28)	76% (4)	57%
Above basic digital skills % individuals	10% (28)	45% (6)	31%
ICT specialists % total employment	2.1% (27)	6.8% (1)	3.8%
Female ICT specialists % female employment	1.3% (16)	3.1% (1)	1.4%
ICT graduates % graduates	4.9% (6)	7.1 (1)	3.5%

Source: compilation based on EC 2019b, EC 2019c

When it comes to basic and above basic digital skills, Romania ranks the worst among EU countries. This result will be further reflected in the low level of ICT use among the population and businesses, as shown further in tables 5 and 6.

The only competitive result for Romania is related to ICT graduates, ranking 6th among EU countries.

Table 5. *Use of Internet services in Romania, Finland, and the EU (ranks in parenthesis)*

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
Never used the Internet % individuals	21% (24)	4% (6)	11%
Internet users % individuals	68% (27)	93% (4)	83%
News % Internet users	69% (24)	90% (4)	72%
Music, video, and games % Internet users	63% (28)	94% (1)	81%
Social networks % Internet users	86% (1)	71% (17)	65%
Professional social networks % Internet users	6% (25)	20% (6)	15%
Doing an online course % Internet users	5% (23)	17% (2)	9%
Banking % Internet users	10% (28)	94% (1)	64%
Shopping % Internet users	26% (28)	74% (8)	69%

Source: compilation based on EC 2019b, EC 2019c

More than 20% of Romanians have never used the Internet, below the EU average, while those who use it excel mainly on social networks (1st among the EU countries, the only outstanding Romanian "performance"). Small- and medium-sized enterprises perform no better than individuals in terms of digital services adoption, as shown in *Table 6*.

Table 6. *Integration of digital technologies in Romania, Finland, and the EU (with ranks)*

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
Electronic information services % enterprises	17% (27)	39% (9)	34%
Social media % enterprises	9% (27)	29% (6)	21%
Big data % enterprises	11% (14)	19% (5)	12%
Cloud % enterprises	7% (25)	50% (1)	18%
SMEs selling online % SMEs	8% (27)	20 % (8)	17%
SMEs selling online cross-border % SMEs	2% (28)	6% (23)	8%

Source: compilation based on EC 2019b, EC 2019c

Romania has performed best for big data service integration, above the EU average, and worst for online selling cross-border among small and medium-sized enterprises – ranking 28 of 28. The situation is no better for digital public services, as shown in *Table 7*.

Table 7. *Digital public services in Romania, Finland, and the EU (ranks in parenthesis)*

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
E-government users % Internet users needing to submit	82% (7)	92% (3)	64%
Pre-filled forms Score (0 to 100)	10% (28)	82% (5)	58%
Online service completion Score (0 to 100)	67% (27)	96% (5)	87%
E-public services for businesses Score (0 to 100)	54% (28)	96% (6)	85%
Open data % of maximum score	62% (18)	62% (19)	64%
E-health services % individuals	11% (21)	49% (1)	18%
Medical data exchange % general practitioners	19% (24)	65% (7)	43%
E-prescriptions % general practitioners	39% (18)	99% (2)	50%

Source: compilation based on EC 2019b, EC 2019c

Availability and take-up of e-government services in Romania lag behind other European countries despite a dynamic and competitive IT sector and substantial investment via the World Bank and the EU (Bakó, 2016).

Conclusions

The case of Romania shows that more access does not mean more understanding of what Internet is and how it should be used efficiently. On the contrary: it creates more risks and paranoia (Herian, 2019) given the digital naïves unaware of the security risks and unable to protect themselves from scams, personal data phishing, and cyberbullying. The faster infrastructural access grows without efforts invested in developing digital literacy, the more challenges individuals and organizations face.

Schools and civil society organizations can play an important role in bridging multiple digital divides but cannot replace digital inclusion policies set by governments and other big players such as the tech industry giants, always hungry for new users yet slow to stop abusers.

References

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities.* London–New York: Verso.

ANCOM (Autoritatea Națională pentru Administrare şi Reglementare în Comunicații). (2019). *Piața serviciilor de comunicații electronice din România. Raport de date statistice – semestrul II 2018*. <www.ancom.org.ro> (accessed on: 3 November 2019).

Bakó, R. K. (2016). Romania: Participatory Culture and the Internet. *Global Information Society Watch 2016. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Internet*, 189–193.

Bauerlein, M. (ed.), 2011. *The Digital Divide*. London–New York: Penguin Group. Kindle Edition.

Benkler, Y. (2006). *The Wealth of Networks. How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven–London: Yale University Press.

Bock, A.–Macgilchrist, F. (2019). Mobile Media Practices of Young People in «Safely Digital», «Enthusiastically Digital», and «Postdigital» Schools. *MedienPädagogik* 35: 136–156 <https://doi.org/10.21240/mpaed/35/2019.10.23.X.> (accessed on: 3 November 2019).

boyd, d. (2014). *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. New Haven–London: Yale University Press.

Cardoso, G. (2006). *The Media in the Network Society: Browsing, News, Filters and Citizenship*. Lisbon: Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology.

Castells, M. (1999). Toward a Sociology of the Network Society. *Contemporary Sociology* 29(5): 693–699.

(ed.). (2004). *The Network Society: A Cross-cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham, UK–Northampton, MA, US: Edward Elgar.

European Commission. (2019a). *Digital Economy and Society Index, 2019* <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi> (accessed on: 3 November 2019).

(2019b). *Digital Economy and Society Index, 2019. Finland* <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/scoreboard/finland> (accessed on: 3 November 2019).

(2019c). *Digital Economy and Society Index, 2019. Romania* <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/scoreboard/romania> (accessed on: 3 November 2019).

Helsper, E. (2008). *Digital Inclusion: An Analysis of Social Disadvantage and the Information Society*. London: London School of Economics.

Herian, R. (2019). Tokens of Technical Progress: Blockchains, Data Dysphoria & Fantasies of Control. *The World Financial Review* September–October: 66–69.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. Chicago: MacArthur Foundation.

Meneses, J.–Mominó, J. M. (2010). Putting Digital Literacy in Practice: How Schools Contribute to Digital Inclusion in the Network Society. *The Information Society* 26: 197–208.

Rainie, L.–Wellman, B. (2014). *Networked: The New Social Operating System*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Shirky, C. (2008). *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London–New York–Toronto: Penguin.

Thomas, J.–Barraket, J.–Wilson, C. K.–Rennie, E.–Ewing, S.–MacDonald, T. (2019). *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2019*. Melbourne: RMIT University and Swinburne University of Technology, for Telstra.

Tőkés, G.–Velicu, A. (2015). "I Learned All by Myself": Romanian Young People's Self-Perception of Their Digital Competence. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio* 2: 67–91.

United Nations, 2018. *United Nations e-Government Survey 2018. Gearing e-Government to Support Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies*. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Van Deursen, A.–Helsper, E. (2015). The Third Level Digital Divide: Who Benefits Most from Being Online? *Communication and Information Technologies Annual: Digital Distinctions and Inequalities. Studies in Media and Communications* 10: 29–53.

Van Deursen, A.–Van Dijk, J. (2010). Internet Skills and the Digital Divide. *New Media and Society* XX(X): 1–19.

Van Dijk, J. (2006). *The Network Society*. London–Thousand Oaks–New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Wellman, B. (2001). Little Boxes, Glocalization, and Networked Individualism. *Kyoto Workshop on Digital Cities 2001. Digital Cities II: Computational and Sociological Approaches*, 10–25.

(ed.). 2018. *Networks in the Global Village. Life in Contemporary Communities*. New York–London: Routledge.

Wellman, B.–Quan-Haase, A.–Boase, J.–Chen, W.–Hampton, K.–Díaz, I.–Miyata, K. (2003). The Social Affordances of the Internet for Networked Individualism. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 8(3) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2003.tb00216.x>.

Westera, W. (2013). *The Digital Turn: How the Internet Transforms Our Existence*. Bloomington: Author House (accessed on: 3 November 2019).

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio, **6** (2019) 131–146

DOI: 10.2478/auscom-2019-0008

Digital Media Use of Older Adults in Mureş County, Romania

András VAJDA
Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
Cluj-Napoca, Romania
e-mail: vajdandras@yahoo.com

Gyöngyvér Erika TŐKÉS
Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
Cluj-Napoca, Romania
e-mail: gyongyvert@ms.sapientia.ro

Abstract. This paper analyses the media practices of older adults from Mureş County (village and small town). The first part of this paper examines the integration of digital media into current society and everyday life along with the characteristics of the knowledge and skill acquisition related to digital media. The second half, grounded on empirical qualitative data, offers insight into the digital media practices of older people in Mureş County, Romania, as well as into their opportunities and the contexts regarding the knowledge and skill acquisition necessary for the use of digital media. The paper is based on an exploratory qualitative research aimed at offering insight into the Romanian situation, identifying the obstacles to the digital media use of the older people living in rural areas, and laying the groundwork for a more extended study.

Keywords: older adults, digital media, digital inequality, digital practices, digital skills, Romania

Introduction

The social embeddedness of digital media does not implicitly mean the development and spread of useful and effective user practices among all social segments. The regular use of digital media and the development of beneficial digital practices are more frequent among socio-economically middle- and upper-class people living in urban settings. Studies support that young adults and families with children are more likely to integrate digital media use into their daily practice. Older adults and adults living in rural areas are represented in greater proportion among disadvantaged users, and this digital backwardness is even greater among lower education groups and people in their last stage of life (Hofer–Hargittai–Büchi–Seifert, 2019; Helsper, 2012).

This paper[1] analyses the media use of older adults from Mureş County (village and small-town), i.e. their individual and collective use of various smart devices and their new-media-based practices, with particular focus on qualitative aspects, while also mapping the effects (efficiency and satisfaction) of digital practices on various areas of life (Hofer–Hargittai–Büchi–Seifert, 2019).

The paper is based on an exploratory qualitative research aimed at offering insight into the Romanian situation, identifying the obstacles to the digital media use of the older people living in rural areas, and laying the groundwork for a more extended study. During this research, we asked 49 older people regarding their digital media usage practices and conducted semi-structured interviews with 45 of them. Their selection was based on a combination between the reliance on the available subjects and specialist sampling. Of the 45 people interviewed in the study, 28 respondents were female and 17 were male; 11 of the subjects live in rural and 34 of them in urban areas. The interviews were conducted in January and February 2018.

Based on the available literature on the subject, the first part of the paper examines the integration of digital media into our current society and everyday life along with the characteristics of the knowledge and skill acquisition related to digital media. The second half, grounded on empirical qualitative data, offers insight into the digital media usage practices of older people in Mureş County, Romania, as well as into their opportunities and the contexts regarding the knowledge and skill acquisition necessary for the use of digital media.

1. Aging in the Information Society

The mapping of the digital practices of older people and, if necessary, helping them catch up with the requirements of information society are key issues of the aging Europe (Hofer–Hargittai–Büchi–Seifert, 2019). Eurostat statistics show that the EU is characterized by the gradual aging of the population. According to statistical forecasts, the percentage of older people (65+) is projected to increase from 18.5% to 28.7% by 2080. These demographic changes will turn the age pyramid upside down, representing a serious provocation both for the entire population and for the elderly themselves. The European Union, including Romania, has to face

1 The study is based on the research conducted as part of the Domus group project *Digital Media and Social Diversity: The Digital Literacy of Various Social Groups* (2017–2018) and was written in the framework of the project *Parallel Ruralities. Current (Existential) Forms of Rurality in Four Transylvanian Microregions* (K 120712), of the National Research, Development and Innovation Office.

the specific problem of the ageing population, which significantly affects every aspect of life: the social care system, the occupational structure, intergenerational communication, and the management of intergenerational/social tensions (see Molnár, 2010: 49).

The accumulation of losses – such as exclusion from the active roles in society, the breakdown of relationships and, not least, declining health – is characteristic of the older generation (Hofer–Hargittai–Büchi–Seifert, 2019). Hence, digital media represents a resource that provides an opportunity for reducing the losses accumulated by older people.

2. The Social Integration of Digital Media

"The ongoing invasion of digital media" (Szijártó, 2015: 43) and the overflow of digital device use have directed attention towards the issue of acquiring, implementing, and domesticating digital media. What is the significance of certain technologies from the perspective of the user? What kind of usage practices are developed by individuals and communities as a result of the – slower- or faster-paced – integration of these new devices into our living space?

Roger Silverstone was among the pioneers of media studies conducted from an ethnographic stance. He examined the ways in which new media are incorporated into the homes, how they become part of everyday practices and turn into instruments of social actions (see Szijártó, 2015: 43).

In his study presenting the conceptual framework to be employed in the research on Generation Z, Zsolt Szijártó mentions the "increasing media determination – the all-pervading mediatization – of everyday reality". "Our everyday life has become unimaginable without the constant use of digital media" (Szijártó, 2015: 35). "The presence of media devices and contents – mediatization – has become an everyday phenomenon: several media are present in the most varied contexts of everyday life." In fact, digital technology and new media have become such an organic part of everyday life and so embedded in our everyday practices that one could almost say that "it is the medialess world itself that has become fully utopian" (Szijártó, 2015: 35).

According to Gábor Szécsi, "the use of new communication technologies (computer, mobile phone, etc.), besides becoming the source of new forms of community, also creates a hitherto unknown system of relationships, the synthesis of different community types" (Szécsi, 2013: 7). This is the source for the emergence of the "mediatized communities" "through which the Internet or mobile phone user can successfully connect at the same time to the global informational flow and cultivate stronger and more conscious attachment to the local social groups considered particularly important" (ibid.).

However, Zsolt Szijártó also points out in his above-cited paper that "within the global trend of mediatization, there are significant differences between social groups regarding their media use" (Szijártó, 2015: 35). While the computer and the Internet represents the natural environment for the socialization of younger people, who "are native speakers of the digital language of the computers, video games and the Internet", the members of previous generations – and especially older people –, who may be dubbed as "digital immigrants", speak this language "with a certain 'accent' which reveals that they do not completely dominate this idiom" (Szijártó, 2015: 36). In this new media environment, the latter users apply the "grammars" and "genres" of the former media periods along with the practices and interpretations associated with them.

The use of digital media has also become embedded into the everyday life of the Romanian society with the widespread penetration of the Internet. However, there is no uniform and homogeneous use as specific social and cultural models have been developed for digital media use, influenced by factors both on the individual level (motivational and situational) and the group (cultural) as well as the social level (socio-economic situation) (Livingstone et al., 2015: 10).

In Romania (as well), we have a unique situation of the implementation of the information society. According to the 2016 Eurostat data, of the 28 EU Member States, the percentage of the non-Internet-using population is 30% compared to the 14% EU average. On average, 71% of the population uses the Internet on a daily basis in the 28 EU Member States, while the proportion of daily Internet users is only 42% in Romania. While 12% of the population has advanced knowledge regarding Internet use in the 28 EU Member States, the corresponding rate is only 5% in Romania. Globally, the statistics reflect that the digital inequalities created at the level of the EU affect Romania even more seriously.

In every society, there are groups with attitudes, value systems, world views, and behavioural patterns that support change. Thus, a gap is created between the subgroups who have already experienced the change and the stagnating social groups or the groups who are slower in mastering the new technology. Older people represent a social group that is falling behind in adapting the digital media and/or in its familiarization with it (Schreurs K.–Quan-Haase A.–Martin K., 2017). In Romania, according to the 2015 statistical data (TEMPO Online, 2015), 40% of the households with householders between the ages of 65 and 74 have a computer, while the same proportion is only 19.6% for households with householders above the age of 75. Internet connection is present in 38.7% of the households with householders aged 65 to 74 and in 18.6% of those with householders above 75.

Rural communities can also traditionally be included among the late majority (the last 34%) or among the laggards (the last 16%) when it comes to applying innovations (Rogers E., 2003). The results of Romanian studies also indicate that, along with age, education, and occupation, the living environment is also an important determinant regarding the access to digital devices (see Tufa, 2010). The urban–rural computer access ratio is 3:1 and as high as 5:1 for Internet access (Tufa, 2010: 11). In 2015, 72.2% of the urban and 48.4% of the rural population had a computer in their household, while 71.9% of the Romanian urban population and 46.6% of the rural population had Internet access (TEMPO Online, 2015).

Cultural norms, values, attitudes, and rituals are structured into world views, and their characteristics determine the success of the local communities' adaptation to digital media and, more generally, to innovation. Hermann Bausinger has previously shown that the perception of technology has for centuries been mainly characterized by mistrust in rural (i.e. in many respects disadvantaged and less educated) environments, often coupled with the demonization and mystification of machines (see Bausinger, 1995). This attitude can also be noted – especially among older people – regarding digital media devices. As Árpád Rab noted in one of his studies, the attitude of older people towards digital media devices is currently characterized by aversion and radical opinions, most often manifested in practice as reluctance and rejection (Rab, 2009: 54). Due to their lack of understanding the operating principle of the computer, the elderly often "ensoul" it, e.g. by calling it "capricious".

Nevertheless, these carefully kept and fearfully used devices have found their way into their personal living spaces during the past one and a half decades, becoming the foundation for specific practices and even the objects of reflection by creating a characteristic narrative basis around their use and presenting their "nature". Through the domestication of digital media (i.e. the familiarization process), these devices are involved in navigating the world, structure the space of the home, contribute to filling time, and shape social relations.

In the case of older people, due to the narrowing of the living space and to social relations, the importance of certain local registers and commemorative rituals increases (cf. Keszeg, 2009: 124). At the same time, digital media use becomes increasingly widespread (e.g. mobile phones and Facebook) since it can, to a certain degree, widen this narrowed living space and repair the defective social network. Hence, the older generations use digital technologies as a kind of prosthesis.

The use of new media devices among the elderly is often motivated by need and necessity, with the cultivation of family connections as a stronger motivational factor than increasing personal benefits and satisfaction, which may be part of the reason why this device use has an intense emotional motivation and is strongly ritualized and characterized by the combination between admiration and "the dread of technology". Usage practices are formed in the context of these two opposed processes (the need of communication, which increases the frequency of use, and the fear of the new media, which reduces it).

3. Inequalities in the Social Integration of Digital Media

We are currently witnessing the dynamic development of information society, the accelerating generational change of hardware and software, and the widening spread of Internet access. These tendencies are present both in developed and developing countries (Correa–Pavez, 2016). All this widens the rural–urban gap even more, and – although several countries are making significant efforts to stimulate Internet access in rural communities – the degree of acceptance and use is not identical in rural and urban areas (ibid.). The same tendency and a similar knowledge gap can also be detected on the basis of the comparison between the digital competence of the younger and of the older generation (Van Volkom–Stapley–Amaturo, 2014).

The analysis of the social use of digital media and its effect upon different areas of life is rooted in the discourse related to the spread of the Internet (Rogers, 2003) and to the development of the digital gap (Hargittai, 2001; Van Dijk, 2005; Van Deursen–Helsper, 2017). Digital inequality was attributed to access difficulties (first-level digital divide). However, very soon, it became clear that there are significant differences in use even among people having Internet access (second-level digital divide). Currently, the centre of attention is on the efficiency and usefulness of Internet use (third-level digital divide). According to the studies, there is a clear relationship between digital capabilities, digital practices, and usage results (Hofer–Hargittai–Büchi–Seifert, 2019). One of the most important research questions is to what extent the characteristics of digital practices and the level of digital skills contribute to efficiency and satisfaction in the various areas of everyday life (Van Deursen–Helsper, 2017; Hofer–Hargittai–Büchi–Seifert, 2019).

4. The Circumstances of Acquiring Knowledge of Digital Media and Digital Skills

Studies are consistent in showing that digital literacy goes beyond the use of digital devices and even beyond acquiring and possessing the necessary (technical) knowledge. The important thing is how this knowledge is integrated into everyday practices. This latter aspect is simultaneously "digital behaviour, socio-cultural practice, and identity" (ELINET, 2016). The differences between users appear in the form of such different behaviours, practices, and identities that are shaped by the digital skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge of the users. It also contains several social and cultural patterns influencing everyday life in different ways – according to the quality, goal, and intensity of digital activities –, forming and operating a variety of online identities (Powell, 2007). Different social groups and even individuals belonging to the same group may have very different access levels, with value creation and the merely reproductive use at the two extremes (Rab, 2009: 50).

Digital literacy is thus not merely a question of device use and possession but a social fact. It is not only the analysis of produced and consumed content and of its supporting infrastructure that is important from a research perspective but primarily the acceptance of the digital media, the fact of the use, its motivations, and, finally, its social effect or results. Thus, not only the goals and ways of digital media use are worth analysing but also the related opinions of the users, the extent to which they consider it useful, the efforts needed to operate it, and the satisfaction with the achieved results since all these factors greatly influence usage practices (Davis et al., 1989; Venkatesh–Davis, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2012).

Older people often lack the necessary knowledge regarding digital media and its possibilities of use. Hence, they are wary of new media, which leads to the avoidance of media use (Hofer–Hargittai–Büchi–Seifert, 2019).

At the same time, media ethnographers emphasize that it is worth considering not only how new media reshapes our everyday lives but also the ways in which new media is built into the everyday practices of different user groups and is ultimately influenced and reshaped during its collective use (Miller et al., 2016).

5. The Integration of Digital Media Use into the Everyday Lives of Elderly People Living in Mureş County, Romania

The Internet and the various digital devices are used primarily for staying in touch with the family/friends, strengthening communication, and/or restoring the damaged face-to-face communication: "nowadays, it's enough to tell them on the phone that we're fine or to send them pictures on Facebook, so they can see how we look like" (A56). This practice has become generalized especially in the case of families whose younger generations have moved away from the settlement or are working abroad, and so they can only come to visit for more or less lengthy periods only a couple times a year. As an interviewee stated:

> Oh, we talk daily with the kids. Why? If we can't talk, we have quite a bad day indeed. We sometimes talk with our friends as well, but it is especially important to talk with my children. I take great comfort in knowing that they are well, that all the family is well, and that the grandchildren are alright, and, naturally, they are also interested in how we are doing. As for our friends and relatives, we talk with them maybe once a month or on special occasions, such as on birthdays, name days, mostly on occasions such as holidays.

The same interviewee stated that: "our computer is a used one, but it meets our needs. Our son gave it to us as a gift because he bought a new one. He also talked us into getting an Internet connection so we can more easily access information, read newspapers, and keep in touch with friends who live abroad..." (A 54).

Because in the early 2000s international phone calls were quite expensive in Romania, family members have become specialized in using various Internet-based free services, primarily Skype in the early days, followed more recently by Facebook Messenger.

In addition to keeping in touch, our interview subjects most often mentioned reading the news and – the majority of the women – cookery recipes as their regular online activities.

In young families, online videos and games designed for tablets and smartphones are increasingly widespread even among 2- and 3-year-old children. In order to ensure their availability to their visiting grandchildren, a growing number of elderly people decide to get Internet subscriptions and to buy tablet devices. These older adults often participate as passive viewers in the use of digital media, as if watching over the shoulder of their grandkids: "when my grandson is with us, and my husband puts on a game for him on the tablet, then I sit down next to him as an assistant, and, of course, I enjoy him having fun. But only as a spectator" (A 54).

These users later gradually become independent in their use of the device under the supervision of the grandkids. From the perspective of Internet use, one can observe the phenomenon of reverse socialization: many older adults may be considered "disciples" of their grandchildren.

The interviews reveal that there is a certain distribution of functions in the domain of the use of the various digital devices: they watch television especially in the evening, and the TV serves entertainment purposes, while the laptop and the smartphone are used primarily for connection and communication. One of the interviewees explicitly stated this state of affairs: "So, let's start with the television. It fills my leisure time, or rather provides my evening entertainment, while the laptop is used for Facebook and for keeping in touch, and the phone is, of course, for keeping in touch as well" (A 40). It should also be mentioned that in the case of the elderly the various digital devices and media are used simultaneously and almost equally. The interviewees are almost without exception television viewers, radio listeners, and Internet users as well. Furthermore, they also read newspapers and novels. Hence, the general tendency described as "cannibalization" in the scholarly literature is absent in this setting (cf. Fehér, 2016: 22).

Among the older adults who count as regular Internet users, the use of social media for entertainment and leisure purposes is dominant. The reasons for this can be identified as follows: (1) older people do not know what to do with the spare time created as a result of their retirement or due to abandoning agricultural and the more intensive backyard and garden work, (2) the encouragement and the expectations of their children and their grandchildren (in order to be able to play with their grandchildren, they have to be able to become involved in their activities; hence, they have to keep up with them also in terms of media use).[2]

Digital devices also play an important role in health preservation[3] and in creating a sense of security in the case of older people living alone. The latter objective is achieved by the mobile phone, which makes it possible to immediately call for help in case of trouble or feeling sick. Accordingly, the phone is kept right next to the bed overnight (on the bedside cupboard, nightstand, or windowsill).

The importance of the phone for creating a feeling of security is well illustrated by the following interview fragment:

> The phone battery died the other day, and I didn't know what to do, so I went out front to stop any passer-by for help. It was almost dark, and I didn't know what to do until the next morning if I get sick, as my neighbours had already gone to bed. But one of my cousins, who lives down there, went past in her car, and I stopped her and explained that I'm in trouble with my phone. So, Jóska, her husband, told me to plug it in to recharge it. (A 62)

There are also cases in which, in addition to providing entertainment, the Internet and social media helps religious life: "I use Facebook for looking up my friends, and I also use YouTube, mostly for listening to Protestant sermons, for example, those of Kálmán Cseri and Miklós Bódis, as well as for listening to and watching the Reformed men's choir. This is what I like" (A 39).[4]

The older adults included in our study did not use digital media either for economic, political, or cultural purposes or for becoming involved in activities taking place on public or semi-public platforms (e.g. job search, financial operations, voting, enforcement of civil rights, involvement in online communities, etc.).

2 This is suggested, e.g., by the following interview fragment: "At first, I was not very impressed, but we also thought of the fact that our grandchildren will be able to watch cartoons and children's movies when visiting us…" (A 54).

3 This is to say that they use the Internet to search for remedies and prescriptions for various illnesses or the side effects of medications and instructions for the use of medicinal products: "I sometimes search for drugs, prescriptions… things like that. Or, if I don't understand the meaning of a word, I search for its meaning…" (A 54); or: "we have checked out the recipes, the health articles" (A 45).

4 This interviewee has also mentioned religious programmes among her favourite television shows.

6. Characteristics of the Digital Media Use of Older People Living in Mureş County, Romania

The various researches conducted in European rural and urban areas indicate that the members of the older generations who are already Internet users are, for the most part, using it daily/weekly (Rab, 2009). This is also confirmed by our own study.

The use of digital devices among the elderly is characterized by strong ritualization and by the mechanical repetition of the specific sequence of actions. The ritual character of the device use is primarily due to the fact that older adults do not understand the functioning of the device, and the performance of certain operations becomes thus the mechanical repetition of a sequence of actions scribbled down on a note paper that is kept near the computer. One of our interviewees described this as follows:

> My keyboard is not Hungarian. So, I have it written down where the question mark and the accented vowels are… I have it all written down. I am starting to remember quite well where the accented vowels are on the keyboard, but I am still having some difficulties with the less common ones such as the letter "ű", but the "á", the "é", the "í" are not a problem anymore, and I have these written down. I have my notes on where the question mark and the exclamation mark are. So, these are somewhat tricky… But I have these written down, and I use my notes (A 40).

From a technological perspective, this type of device use has always been characteristic for the older generation. In the years after the regime change of 1989, similar procedures were observed regarding their television and radio use. Partially related to this issue, the Internet use of the elderly is restricted to a relatively low number of software and websites, which is also characteristic of the number of devices.

Older adults left behind by their family members, who have moved away in the context of economic mobility and labour migration, keep in touch with them through two main instruments: the mobile phone and the Internet, characteristically with the complementary use of these instruments/media. The mobile phone ensures a digitally mediated communication that acts as a replacement/surrogate of direct human contact but without fully conveying the cosiness of direct communication (cf. Benczik, 2001). In the interpersonal communication mediated by the Internet – primarily through Skype and Facebook Messenger –, the sound is complemented by the visual dimension. Finally, social media (in our case, Facebook) serves as a wider framework and context of maintaining contact through monitoring the important events in the lives of family members, relatives, and friends living away from home and acknowledging them via likes and comments, with an infrequent use of the communications options (liking, commenting, and messaging) provided by the program.

In addition to the active use, older adults are also involved in a use that can mostly be considered passive. This is the practice of gaining insight into the world of the Internet through "looking over the shoulder" of their children and grandkids. In these cases, younger people use their own social media page for showing them pictures of relatives and acquaintances, for writing letters/messages to the far-off relative or former friend, and sometimes browse for information on behalf of the older adult.

We have already cited Herman Bausinger, according to whom our new technological devices, while transforming our everyday practices and worldviews, often also bring back earlier "community forms" in use (Bausinger, 1995: 40). In the case of Internet use behaviour and the digital device use of the elderly, this means the reactivation of specific forms of collective media consumption:

> I mostly use the Internet alone, but it also happens that my friend comes over, and we browse together and discuss the topics we see; so, we use it together. My husband is often there beside me. If I see something interesting, and he's not there beside me, then I write it down 'cause I can't save it; if he's around, I ask him to save it, as he already knows his way around; so, it depends on who's home and what the circumstances are; it depends on many things, but usually I use it by myself. (A 45)

Another interviewee responded as follows to the question of how she keeps in touch with her children living abroad: "We talk on the mobile phone, and sometimes, rarely, I go next door, and we talk on Messenger at my neighbour in the evening, after they've come home from work" (A 39). This type of use of digital devices and media recalls the practice of collectively listening to the radio in the 1950s and 60s or of collectively watching television in the first half of the 1990s.

7. The Role of Social Context in Acquiring Digital Skills by Older People Living in Mureş County, Romania

Digital devices enter into the possession of the older generation primarily through family mediation. Sometimes their children or grandchildren give them their used devices as gifts, and at other times they buy new ones for their aging parents:

> Our computer is a used one, but it meets our needs. Our son gave it to us as a gift because he had bought a new one. He also talked us into getting an Internet connection so we can more easily access information, read newspapers, and keep in touch with friends who live abroad... At first, I was not very impressed, but we also thought of the fact that our grandchildren will be able to watch cartoons and children's movies when visiting us… (A 54)

Also, there are examples that the neighbours[5] or the employee of the phone company[6] recommends the purchase of the new-generation device (the smartphone) and the Internet subscription.

Some of our interviews have revealed cases in which older adults acquire smartphones and laptops upon their own initiative and begin to use the Internet on their own. However, the motivation coming from their immediate environment can be felt even in these cases: their children, grandchildren, and neighbours are already using such devices, and they do not want to "fall behind". A smaller but not insignificant part of the 65+ generation has become acquainted with computers as active workers, in employment circumstances or has bought computers for their children in the second half of the 1990s. In their case, using the computer did not present any difficulties; they only had to learn how to use the Internet.

According to the unanimous findings of the available literature, facilitators also play an important role in shaping the digital skills of older adults (see Rab, 2009: 51–52). Members of the older generation often rely on the knowledge of people from their immediate environment, who are more familiar with digital devices, for solving personal problems. These helpers most often come from the immediate family (i.e. children and grandchildren), but relatives, close friends, and neighbours or – in rare cases – certain "specialists"[7] are also called upon. However, the spread of digital skills occurs more commonly within the family, and family members have a key role in "closing the gap" in this knowledge area (cf. Rab, 2009: 52): "I was taught by my son and my husband. They have

5 An interviewee responded to the question regarding the people helping with his Internet use: "As long as my son was still at home, it was primarily he who helped me, otherwise… my neighbours" (A 59); and yet another subject: "I use it [i.e. the Internet] with the help of my neighbour" (A 39).

6 E.g.: "My husband's two-year contract had expired, so he went to the shop and one of the clerks offered him a new phone for renewing the subscription. Eventually, he accepted it. Since then, he has a Facebook profile and sends greetings to relatives and acquaintances on holidays. Now that Henrietta [her second daughter] lives with her family in Sweden, they send us pictures, and we also send them. We also use it for keeping in touch" (A 66).

7 E.g.: "It happened that we didn't know what the problem was, so we called Gazsi on my phone, and he told us what to do; if we couldn't solve the problem even then, my husband would go over to the Orange shop, and the girls there would fix it" (A 66).

showed me the basics, and some things I have figured out by myself. The initial difficulty was the panic that I may press the wrong button or do something wrong, perhaps visiting a pay site and generating additional expenses…" (A 54). Another interviewee reminisced: "Internet use came later. My grandchild first taught it to my husband so they could talk, do stuff, watch the news, and they did everything on the Internet, and I was just watching them with envy. I did not dare to intervene 'cause I am a slower learner, but after my grandchild had left, I began pestering my husband, until he taught me as well" (A 47).

The facilitators identified above play a key role in the "first encounter" with the new technology and in the initial period of its domestication as well as, sometimes, in the periods following technological changes and the appearance of more recent generations of devices and/or programs. However, in their everyday use, the elderly has to rely on their personal skills. This is even more the case with older people who have been left alone. The interviews conducted in the framework of our research point to the fact that the older adults who live alone are the most successful in adopting the new technology as they are forced to familiarize themselves with it because otherwise they cannot stay in touch with their children and grandchildren living abroad.

Nevertheless, sometimes everyone is forced to resort to the specialist knowledge of the helpers, most often during technical breakdowns, for setting up new devices and putting them into operation, or when a new program or an updated edition of an already familiar program comes out. Overall, the mastering of digital technology and of Internet use happens with the support of social intermediaries (see Rab, 2009: 51).

Conclusions

As a result of the ongoing digitization, mediatization, and virtualization of our everyday existence (see Fehér K. 2016: 23), without the ownership of digital devices, digital skills, and digital practices necessary for the participation in the digital culture, in lack of the digital empowerment from society, communication, the maintenance of various interpersonal relationships, self-care, the efficient organization of leisure time, the acquisition of certain goods, and, generally, providing a sense of fulfilled existence seems almost completely impossible.

The use of digital media devices among older people is motivated by need and necessity. However, as a result of its "domestication" (i.e. familiarization), the digital device becomes involved in their everyday life and even improves their quality of life. At the same time, this use is also strongly ritualized and associated with the lack of confidence and uncertainty. Thus, usage practices develop in the framework of two opposed processes: the necessity of communication, which increases the frequency of use, and the fear of digital media, which reduces it. Digital media plays a significant role in overcoming the individual and social disadvantages of older people as it fulfils a prominent function both in the search for information satisfying personal interests and in the maintenance of contact and communication with the family.

The use of digital devices follows the patterns of the characteristic practices developed in the previous periods of media and device use among the elderly and is also characterized (especially in the early stages of familiarization with the technology) by the recourse to helpers from their environment and, in a smaller measure, by social (common) use.

References

ELINET. (2016). Position Paper on Digital Literacy. Lifelong Learning Programme. <https://goo.gl/hqKHLp> (accessed on: 25 March 2018).

Eurostat. (2016). Digital Economy and Society <https://goo.gl/nUPSsk> (accessed on: 4 November 2017).

Bausinger, H. (1995). *Népi kultúra a technika korszakában* [Folk Culture in a World of Technology]. Budapest: Osiris–Századvég.

Benczik, V. (2001). Másodlagos szóbeliség és mobil telefónia [Secondary Orality and Mobile Telephony]. In: Nyíri, K. (ed.), *A 21. századi kommunikáció új útjai.* Tanulmányok. [New Ways of 21st-Century Communication. Studies.] Budapest: MTA Filozófiai Kutatóintézete, 11–23.

Correa, T.–Pavez, I. (2016). Digital Inclusion in Rural Areas: A Qualitative Exploration of Challenges Faced by People from Isolated Communities. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 21(3): 247–263.

Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use and User Acceptance of Information Technology. *MIS Quaterly* 13(3): 319–340.

Fehér, K. (2016). *Digitalizáció és új média – Trendek, stratégiák, illusztrációk* [Digitization and New Media – Trends, Strategies, Illustrations]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Hargittai, E. (2002). Second-Level Digital Divide: Differences in People's Online Skills. *First Monday* 7(4) <http://firstmonday.org/article/view/942/864> (accessed on: 4 November 2017).

Helsper, E. J. (2012). A Corresponding Fields Model for the Links between Social and Digital Exclusion. *Communication Theory* 22(4): 403–426 <https://goo.gl/i9F2tS> (accessed on: 4 November 2017).

Hofer, M.–Hargittai, E.–Büchi, M.–Seifert, A. (2019). Older Adults' Online Information Seeking and Subjective Well-Being: The Moderating Role of Internet Skills. *International Journal of Communication* 13: 4426–4443.

Keszeg, V. (2009). 20. századi életpályák és élettörténetek [20th-Century Careers and Life Stories]. In: Vargyas Gábor (ed.), *Átjárók. A magyar néprajztól az európai etnológiáig és a kulturális antropológiáig* [Passages. From Hungarian Ethnography to European Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology]. Budapest: L'Harmattan–PTE Néprajz-Kulturális Antropológia Tanszék, 95–133.

Livingstone, S.–Mascheroni, G.–Staksrud, E. (2015). *Developing a Framework for Researching Children's Online Risk and Opportunities*. EU Kids Online. www.eukidsonline.net (accessed on: 4 November 2018).

Miller, D.–Costa, E.–Hynes, N.–McDonald, T.–Nicolescu, R.–Sinanan, J.–Spyer, J.–Venkatraman, S.–Wang, X. (2016). *How the World Changed Social Media*. London: UCL Press.

Molnár, Sz. (2010). Információs társadalom korhatárok nélkül [Information Society without Age Limit]. *Információs Társadalom* [Information Society] 10(1): 49–56.

Powell, A. H. (2007). Accessing, Habits, Attitudes and Engagements. Rethinking Access as Practice. *Computers and Composition* 24: 16–35.

Rab, Á. (2009). A magyarországi idős korosztály információs írástudása és motivációi [Information Literacy and Motivations of the Older Adults in Hungary]. *Információs Társadalom* [Information Society] 9(4): 55–69.

Rogers, E. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Schreurs, K.–Quan-Haase, A.–Martin, K. (2017). Problematizing the Digital Literacy Paradox in the Context of Older Adults' ICT Use: Aging, Media Discourse, and Self-Determination. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 42(2) <https://goo.gl/oPQ9oD> (accessed on: 9 March 2018).

Szécsi, G. (2013). *Nyelv, média, közösség.* Közösségfogalom és nyelvi kommunikáció az információ korában [Language, Media and Community: The Concept of Community and Linguistic Communication in the Age of Information]. Budapest: Gondolat.

Szijártó, Zs. (2015). "Forró témák" a Z generáció kutatásában: fogalmi keretek – módszertani megközelítések ["Hot Topics" in Generation Z Research: Conceptual Frameworks – Methodological Approaches]. In: Törőcsik, Mária (ed.), *A Z generáció magatartása és kommunikációja* [Behaviour and Communication among Generation Z]. Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem, 33–51.

TEMPO Online. (2015). <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table> (accessed on: 4 November 2017).

Tufă, L. (2010). Diviziunea digitală [The Digital Division]. *Calitatea vieții* [Quality of Life] 21(1–2): 71–86.

Van Deursen, A. J.–Helsper, E. J. (2017). Collateral Benefits of Internet Use: Explaining the Diverse Outcomes of Engaging with the Internet. *New Media & Society* 20(7): 1–19.

Van Dijk, J. (2005). *The Deepening Divide. Inequality in the Information Society*. London: Sage.

Van Volkom, M.–Stapley, J. C.–Amaturo, V. (2014). Revisiting the Digital Divide: Generational Differences in Technology Use in Everyday Life. *North American Journal of Psychology* 16(3): 557–574.

Venkatesh, V.–Davis, F. D. (2000). A Theoretical Extension of the Technology Acceptance Model. Four Longitudinal Field Studies. *Management Science* 46(2): 186–204.

Venkatesh, V.–Thong, J. Y.–Xu, X. (2012. Consumer Acceptance and Use of Information Technology: Extending the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology. *MIS Quaterly* 36(1): 157–178.

Book Review

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio, **6** (2019) 149–152

DOI: 10.2478/auscom-2019-0009

Online – A New Dimension in Social and Cultural Development

Zoltán Szűts: *Az internetes kommunikáció és média története, elmélete és jelenségei*
[Online. The History, Theory, and Phenomenon of Internet Communication and Media]. Wolters Kluwer, Budapest, 2018

Kristóf FEHÉR
Budapest University of Technology and Economics,
Budapest, Hungary
e-mail: fehkri16@gmail.com

As a subject of my review, I am going to introduce Zoltán Szűts's newest book, *Az internetes kommunikáció és média története, elmélete és jelenségei* [Online. The History, Theory, and Phenomenon of Internet Communication and Media], which has been published very recently by Wolters Kluwer publishing house. The author uses a lot of witty and reflective examples, which, of course, all contribute to the perception of the various effects of the online sphere and basically imply a really exciting and entertaining way to guide the reader in this subject. The 478 pages contain more than 950, basically bibliographic notes, and it can be a veritable niche. Similar writings have not been published in Hungarian yet, and we know about only a few English-language volumes that would examine online communication and media in the form of a handbook. In addition, it can be important to take into account that Zoltán Szűts approaches the phenomenon with the eyes of a Hungarian media researcher as he has a completely different cultural and social perception of the Internet here than someone from Western Europe or the USA, for example.

It could be surprising that despite this circumstance the author barely examines specific Hungarian cases and focuses only on the global picture. However, this is explained quite clearly in the *Introduction* as the Hungarian Internet history deserves a dedicated book. But if there are already several works around in this subject, then we can ask ourselves: what is so new in this book? There are several well-known Hungarian researchers in the online ecosystem, including László Z. Karvalics, György Csepeli, and László Ropolyi. At the beginning of the book, there is a significant chapter that highlights the creators of online ecosystem who have a reference value for this actual work. *Online* is not a textbook intended strictly for education as it does meet the format requirements. It does not contain highlights, summaries, or repetitive questions – this is a stop-gap manual because it accumulates a large amount of lexical knowledge and presents it to the readers, helping them to a deeper understanding and finding the connections.

Going into details, the phenomena discussed in the volume starts in the 1960s. The author will firmly guide the reader through the process of taking the computers from the scientific sphere into the universe of culture and society, thus becoming integrated into the different layers of everyday life. The language used in the book meets all the needs of a scientific paper – one may say it is very polite with the reader. Due to the nature of the field, the author has included many technical terms, which are constantly explained, and he does not allow the reader to be lost, making it a comprehensive, highly user-friendly scientific study. The understanding of the information presented is also reinforced by the fact that the book contains back and forth references; thus, if a phenomenon has already been touched upon before, or will be dealt with at a later point, the author refers to the other occurrence, creating a link between them. Also, in the footnotes, the author gives a complete bibliography to help the reader.

I think it is interesting to note that the publisher undertook to bring out a work with quite a big amount of notes in the footer, which is special because less and less of this kind of writings are around. As you read the book, it may be surprising that it does not contain a separate bibliography. Nonetheless, the series wherein *Online* is published is one of the most serious scientific undertakings in Hungary in recent years, which has emerged from the subject of media law and has published authors such as Cass R. Sunstein, Robert W. McChesney, or Denis McQuail, whose works on mass communication theory are well-known at universities all around the world. In terms of its physical appearance, *Online* is a "finely cut" piece of work in terms of the size and type of the fonts, which – from a technical aspect – also helps the readers. Its cover features the structure of a building, and there is no specific reference to its source in the book itself, but I had the impression that it represents networks and links, how things are connected – and perhaps the author's intention was to achieve this impression.

I highly appreciated that there are many cultural references in the text such as a quote from the movie *Blade Runner* in connection with passing away or the "Page Not Found" Easter-egg hidden in Footnote 404. It pretty much shows that while retaining the requirements of science Zoltán Szűts tried to make his work more colourful, and he used infotainment instead of the boring traditional explanations. Compared to most books, this volume is slightly unusual but not because it consists of five main parts – rather, we can say, because all of the parts are closed by an X chapter, which has to be rewritten by the author in the future due to the rapidly changing environment of this topic; so, all that is mentioned will be already the past, wherefore the author will have to rewrite this chapter in the possible expanded edition of the book.

Moving to the brief introduction of the different parts, in the first section titled *Zero*, the book introduces the science and history of networks and computers to the readers. This section is abound with technical description. The author tried to keep the attention of the audience during the presentation of this large amount of details, which is quite a bit of a challenge, but he surely succeeds in the continuous demonstration of the impact of new technologies on culture and society. Reading this section, I felt that although it was meant to support the topic, the world of computers in this form is a bit lacking socio-cultural connections. In an expanded or rewritten edition, it would be worth presenting this section more thoroughly in terms of what changes have computers and smart devices had on culture and society.

The first part is about the story of the old ARPANET, while some new forms of communication, such as e-mail or chat, are also presented. The author highlights that the appearance of multimedia, for example, has brought a significant change in content adoption, and the Apple Hypercard system – although it is a failure after all – may be considered as a forerunner of today's hypertext. From this section, it is already clear that the struggle of printed press for a new ground has been on the agenda since the emergence of online media. It is because of the lack of profit-making strategy. According to Szűts, publishers felt that they were having a disadvantage if they had not made the content available free online. However, nobody expected that the readers would not pay for the printed content as reading habits had changed a lot since before. For many readers, the book may carry novelties as the author also found the tracks of online media, which are absolutely not part of today's ecosystem. One example is Minitel, which has France as its birthplace and was in service for a long time in parallel with the World Wide Web. It has delivered a significant amount of content to the public, but in other countries this technology was not successful at all. Likewise, the Cybersyn in Chile is also an example for this, and researchers have even considered it to be a network for strengthening social communication.

In my opinion, the second and third chapters are the closest to the reader because they present some phenomena which many people may already have experience with. With the introduction of the World Wide Web, the author tried to place a number of communication theories into a new context – this will be the case with Web 2.0. Several phenomena are explained in detail in the book such as flow experience generated by media content, digital dementia, 15 clicks of fame, or activism. Practical examples include the timeline of online newspapers, the presentation of several vloggers' career, the role of influencers, the use of augmented reality, or the emoticons and memes. These are such up-to-date topics which the reader meets every day.

The fourth chapter examines the current phenomena of information society. Here we can read a discussion about fake news, which is also interesting because the author refers back to the fact that it is related to the basis of Web 2.0 and social media. According to this, the eroding of the gate-keeper system caused uncertainty, and the condition of credibility has disappeared. The book does not deal with communication between machines but touches a bit upon human–machine interaction with chatbots. This interaction is also extremely exciting as the machine masks itself and tries to look like a real human being. The chapter entitled *Big Data*, which I found highly useful for my MA thesis, points out that analysing databases has many potentials. Thus, for example, machines may notice patterns that the human eye is unable to focus on. Messages posted on Twitter can easily identify the mood of a particular community. *Online* can be also an exciting reading for anyone who is interested in Internet communication and media because the author blends techno-optimism and pessimism into reality. He points out at the same time that many authors are concerned about the unauthorized disclosure of data but also celebrates the fact that the online world contributes to a high level of cultural diversity.

Last but not least, the author makes it clear several times that he is aware of the fact that he presents "only" a few dozen from hundreds of phenomena in details and that it is a story what he can tell from his own point of view. Based on that, my suggestion would be to have a bigger role in an expanded edition for Big Data systems, which are only mentioned partly despite that it is absolutely reinventing the online world and emphasizing digital opportunities of the online sphere with other disciplines such as marketing – it would be really interesting to see that. If you remember, at the beginning, I raised the question as to what sort of novelties the book can bring. I think the answer is quite obvious: being able to present a scientific topic in a readable way in addition to a high degree of professionalism while not forgetting the presentation of theories and concrete examples – in science, this is what we can call a work of art. This work by Zoltán Szűts will soon become a fundamental piece in the great puzzle of online media and communication.

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae

The scientific journal of Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) publishes original papers and surveys in several areas of sciences written in English. Information about each series can be found at http://www.acta.sapientia.ro.

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae Communicatio

Sapientia University
sciendo
Scientia Publishing House

ISSN 2393-0438
http://www.acta.sapientia.ro

Information for authors

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio is a peer-reviewed scientific journal published yearly. It aimes at publishing theoretical and empirical research in communication studies, with a focus on information society issues. The journal is interested in all the variety of academic traditions in the field and promotes dialogue between them. *Communicatio* invites academic researchers and other professionals of communication and media to disseminate new and original works. It publishes genuine, previously unpublished research: surveys, case studies, reports, and reviews on both applied and theoretical aspects of communication issues.

All submitted manuscripts are reviewed by two anonymous referees. Papers should be submitted in English, in A4 format, electronically (in .doc, .docx or .rtf format) to the e-mail address of the journal: acta-comm@acta.sapientia.ro.

Manuscripts should conform to the following guidelines:

Articles should range from 4,000 to 10,000 words, including footnotes and references. Reviews and research notes should not exceed 4,000 words. All manuscripts should be accompanied by a 200–250-word abstract, with 3–5 key words and with authors' affiliation. Tables and graphs, if any, should be prepared in black and white, titled, numbered, and integrated in the main text. References should follow the author-date system of the APA Manual of Style (https://www.citethisforme.com/guides/apa). The list of references should appear at the end of the manuscripts.

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio is published once a year in November.

Contact address and subscription:
Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio
Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Romania
RO 400112 Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Str. Matei Corvin nr. 4.
Email: acta-comm@acta.sapientia.ro

Printed by F&F INTERNATIONAL
Director: Enikő Ambrus