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The Brain Rot Epidemic of Social Media

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Abstract: *Recently, or, to be precise, during the Covid-19 pandemic and after it, a wave of content has filled the internet, content with no exact filter, direction, or reason behind it, that it was forcefully fed to consumers. Through this research paper, I aim to spread awareness of the epidemic that is happening in the online world with great repercussions in the real world, by understanding this new phenomenon, both by the experts' point of view, but also from the consumers' opinion. I chose this topic because these platforms have become a toxic wasteland with no light at the end of the tunnel. As a communications and public relations major, I believe that it is important to listen to the consumer's opinion on such content and to realize when a change has to be made.*

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1. Introduction

In a paper written by Emilie Owens in the PSYCHE journal, she explains that the term "brain rot" as follow "Brain rot as a term covers these as well as all other silly, dumb or time-wasting online content that does not fall into any specific category" (Owens, 2024). From this quote we understand the fact that this new trend is a collection of dumb, time-wasting content that does not make any sense or provide any comedic or educational material, it purely just exists. Alok Kanojia, or, as he is more known online, Dr. K, emphasizes this idea in his YouTube video related to brain rot when he explain the following "It's a weird thing to call, it's not a story, it's not a game, it's not a movie, it's "content", it's some weird, lifeless, amorphism pile of whatever that is not nowhere near an art form." (Dr. K, 2024)

Understanding the term "brain rot" we can deep dive into the space of origin and the effects it has on consumers. In an article written by thesummitwellnessgroup, we get a better understanding of this term and what it represents "Brain rot is not a medical term but rather an everyday expression that describes the perceived decline in cognitive abilities attributed to the overuse of digital media, mainly social media platforms. It suggests a deterioration in attention spans, memory, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The term often expresses concerns about how social media might make us less intelligent or diminish our mental capacities." (thesummitwellnessgroup). In other words, we understand that this content tendency is a result of an extra-consumption of digital media that have a negative effect on the consumers. From a psychological point of view, Dr. K explains that brain rot can also affect the dopamine receptors in our brain, explaining that "When you watch shorts for about 3 hours, nothing else feel engaging, it's not fun to read a book, it's not fun to hang out with other people, there is no amount of pleasure we experience from work." (Dr. K, 2024). This viewpoint enhances the idea that such meaningless content can reduce our activities as human beings, making it difficult to function in society, to create relationships and overall live our lives to the fullest.

Speaking from the position of a content creator, Julian Sarafian describes his experience with this trend in the Through the Noise journal, as follows "I didn't know it but I quickly became chronically addicted to social media. Spending hours scrolling TikTok became a habit. "Time to do some research" I'd say to

myself as I opened my FYP to aimlessly scroll. So too did I become addicted to the attention the platforms gave me as a creator: the follower growth, the comments, the likes, the views, but that's a story for another time." (Sarafian, 2023) .To understand this better, we can shorten his experience with this trend as something that a content creator can benefit from, experiencing follower growth, attention from the public and many other. On the other hand, he is well acquainted with the downsides of this type of content, the one that stands out being addiction. Furthermore, to amplify the idea of addiction and the downside of social media addiction and brain rot content, Dr. K explains "This is the core problem with why we are rotting our brains, people are figuring out how to artificially activate these various circuits and the more circuits that they activate, the more we get pulled into it." (Dr. K, 2024). In other words, these short-form content that offers artificial dopamine is something we can call a "black hole" or, metaphorically, an ice cream shop, because once we enter to consume it, we realize that this is the "easy way" to something that makes us feel good, either it being something funny, or even related to pornography.

From a company's point of view, this trend can be useful to attract younger audiences to buy their product or be part of their community, creating similar content, replying with slang, or making posts and re-posts to the original content. However, as beneficial this may be to the company's success, we cannot ignore the damage those companies are doing to the consumers by simply producing more content and not letting it "die out", although the damage is done indirectly. To amplify this idea, we can look at content made by some companies, such as Duolingo and Wendy's and notice the pattern in the posts following the trend. For the research's sake, I took out the following posts from each's Twitter/ X account to present below:

Figure 1 Duolingo Twitter/ X Page

Figure 2 Duolingo Twitter/ X Page

As we can see from Figure 1, Duolingo does not offer much information related to any of its features or tries to promote the app or anything to make people want to use the service, it purely just exists. In addition, from Figure 2, we can see Wendy's doing the same thing, not offering information to a new deal or meal, all the post communicate is the rivalry between Wendy's and McDonald's, but, at the end of the day, both offer no input to the consumers, those posts are used just to keep up with the trend. However, some may argue that these posts are not related to brain rot, and they are used just to create engagement and create a sense of community and to make them more relatable to the younger audience. Although this may be a fair point, in my opinion, a company that offers no information to itself and a post that have no call-to-action cannot be seen as one that engages with its community.

Closing to the end of the video, Dr. K explains the life-term problem the consumption of such content can have to us, describing it as follows "As we consume this weird AI generated, bot farm, rage bait inducing crap, the problem is that it destroys our motivation to actually build our lives, because what happens is that it offers us such a cheap and easy way to get mentally satisfied." (Dr. K, 2024). In other words, he presents the fact that this "crap" is a blocker to make something significant with our lives, either that being a relationship or a career because we get so distracted by this quick and easy way to get dopamine. Furthermore, I believe that the problem is deeper than that because as we live in a fast-paced, digitally predominated, challenging world, the faster it is for us to find dopamine in such content, forgetting what is truly important for us. Moreover, I want to emphasize the fact that because we live in such a changing world, with all the wars going on, politic-changing and technological

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environment and the idea that we don't know where we are heading, such content can be seen as a way to detach from reality.

Since this trend is pretty new, the deeps of brain rot are hard to evaluate, and the downside of such content may be deeper than we notice. As Sophia Kolios presents in woof magazine, where she talks about the problems individuals can experience with the consumption of such content, she explains that "For starters, individuals self-comparing to those they see in popular media has become synonymous with brain rot addiction as people cannot stop doing it regardless of the self-awareness of toxicity. Individuals observably seem to virtually need others to make decisions for them such as what shoes to wear, what words to throw into conversation and even what type of diet to follow for two weeks. Individualism is at an all-time high yet the TikTok brain rot epidemic is pushing people to be more alike — through the addiction of comparison — as well as the popularization of groupthink." (Kolios, 2024). In other words, she explains that another form of brain rot is the comparison with people we see online, such as models or bodybuilders and thinking that we must become like them.

Moreover, we notice a category of brain rot related to what Sophia is talking about, this being "looksmaxxing", which Emilie Owens presents as it follows "potentially problematic content such as 'looksmaxxing' videos, in which individuals go to extreme lengths to maximize certain aspects of their appearance" (Owens, 2024). To sum this up, she explains that this "looksmaxxing" is the idea that somebody must do activities to make themselves look the best. On the other hand, we have to note the fact that taking care of your appearance, such as going to the gym, or having a skin-care routine is not a bad thing, however, what "looksmaxxing" presents is either unrealistic beauty standards to the point where it can become very toxic to the consumers to follow through. Likewise, regarding bodybuilding and following models' advice, it can be dangerous because most people want to look as their "idols" as fast as possible, ending up using steroids or having surgeries.

Gautam Arun, writing for the cscsnews journal, closes the idea of brain rot as it follows "Overall, the new internet epidemic of brain rot has many downsides that come along with it. From it affecting how our basic cognitive functions work to affect the mental state and moods of teens, it seems to be a problem that needs

solving for now. Only time will tell the course of brain rot will take for years to come." (Arun, 2024). In other words, he explains that brain rot is a bad thing for us as consumers, affecting many of our brain's functions and mental state, the group that is most affected by this being teenagers.

Unfortunately, there is not a thing that we can do to solve this problem aside from trying to limit our social media consumption and to engage in meaningful activities. Dr. K offers his opinion on how to fight against this problem, explaining that "The real way to get off of this brain rot is to really think "Ok, what am I getting out of this and how can I get this outside of the brain rot content consuming, OnlyFans, video game kind of world? How can I get out of that?" And here is what I tend to find when I work with people is that when you start to work on getting it outside from whatever the brain rot content is, it actually reduces your dependence on the brain rot." (Dr. K, 2024). In other words, fixing the brain rot problem is engaging in activities that "counterattacks" the content, for example: instead of watching somebody play videogames for a couple of hours, or scrolling TikTok, I can force myself to go for a walk or read a book. Another example can be that instead of watching pornography or talking to an OnlyFans creator, I can go outside and try to socialize with people or try to get in a meaningful relationship.

2. Research methods

In order to understand this trend better, I have conducted a survey on the Microsoft Office

platform. The questionnaire was developed for a survey on January 08, 2025. It remained available for responses for a couple of days, during which a total of 54 responses were received.

The survey was posted on the social media platform Reddit, therefore, worldwide responders have given their opinion to the matter, with an age range of 16 to over 60 years. They were tasked with providing responses to a series of 11 questions, offering their input and being able to choose how a question made them feel.

Furthermore, I have conducted a content analysis in order to understand the factors that have resulted in this epidemic. To get a better understanding of this content, I analyzed two social media posts from a personal perspective: one from the "Sigma male" trend and one from the "Looksmaxxing" trend.

The analysis was realized considering three main areas: context, success factor (likes, comments, shares) and quality. During the analysis, I focused on the following aspects:

- the nature of content (educational, entertaining, artistic)
- the influence towards the comments
- the repetitiveness of the context

The purpose of this study was to explore the public's opinion on the presented content and to ascertain their level of engagement with this trend.

To that end, an analytical grid was developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the content in question on consumers and their upcoming responses. Key aspects considered in the analysis included slang usage, repetition across different content formats, and the aftermath of the content's utilization (i.e., responses). Employing a subjective approach, two posts were examined to ascertain their impact.

3. Results

The great majority of respondents to the survey have stated that they use most of the social media platforms in order to consume the content provided by those social networks. However, after showing 5 sample videos, there was a greater minority of respondents that rated them as "Very good", with only 14.8% of the total of participants, most of the videos getting rated "Very bad" and "Bad" by around 80% of the total of participants.

Further up, the respondents were asked to choose the definition they thought would fit the term "brain rot" best.
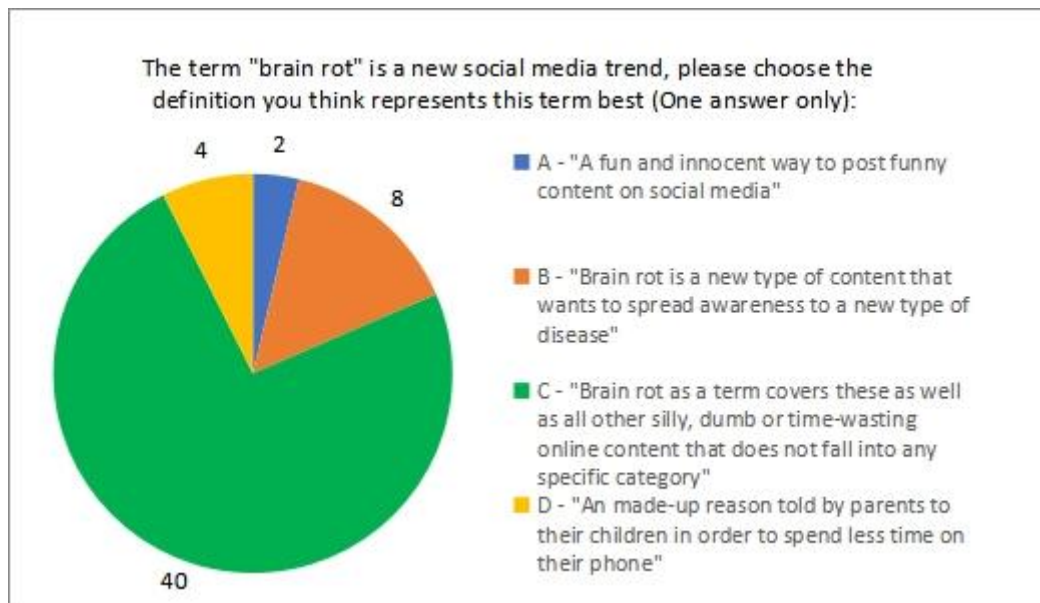
Figure 3 Graph of answers for the following question "The term "brain rot" is a new social media trend, please choose the definition you think represents this term best (One answer only):"

Further up, the respondents were asked to choose the definition they thought would fit the term "brain rot" best. As we can see from Figure 3, and from the information we've gathered so far, we can notice that the majority of participants are aware of the definition of this trend and chose the right answer.

On the other hand, we have to point out that, although 4 is a small number of people, they thought that it was a made-up thing and not a real problem. The other 10 respondents were either under the impression that it tries to spread awareness to a new type of disease, which it may be true to a certain degree, either thought that such content was "fun and innocent".

After we made sure that the respondents were aware of the definition of this trend, they were asked to choose or to add the negative effects the consumption of such content it may have on consumers.
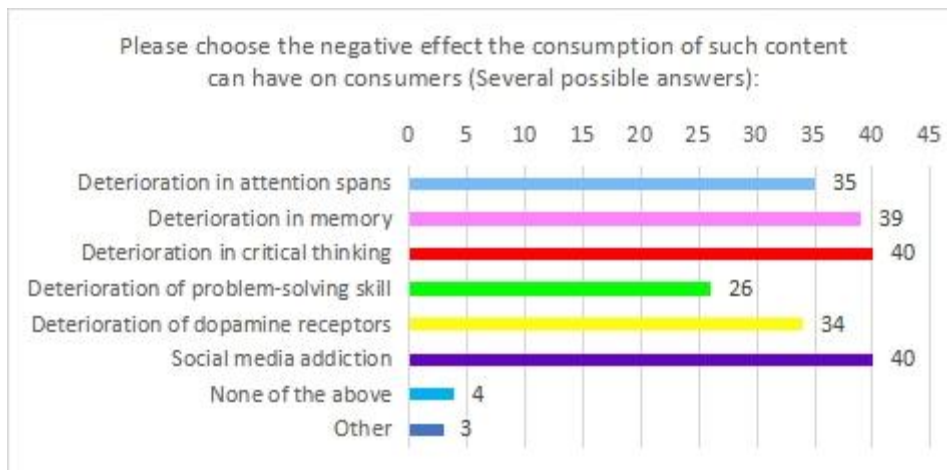
Figure 4 Graph of answers for the following question "Please choose the negative effect the consumption of such content can have on consumers (Several possible answers):"

As we can see from Figure 4, most of the participants are aware of the negative effects brain rot content have on consumers, most of the chosen effect being "Deterioration in memory", "Deterioration in critical thinking" and "Social media addiction" with ≤ 40 votes. Other effects that are mostly chosen are "Deterioration in attention spans" and "Deterioration of dopamine receptors" with ≤ 35 votes.

On the other hand, the least chosen negative effect is "Deterioration of problem-solving skills", with only 26 of participants voting for this. After analyzing this, we can notice the fact that the participants are mostly aware of the downside of consuming short content online. However, it is alarming to notice that 4 respondents chose "None of the above", believing that brain rot content have no personal outcome.

Furthermore, the "Other" answer, chosen by 3 respondents, could be quoted as "low self-esteem", "low emotional regulation" and "delayed development of aesthetic sensibility".

Lastly, the participants were offered the possibility to give their feedback related to this trend, a couple of answers were as follows:

- "Get rid of TikTok honestly. Although the other platforms that have implemented something similar (YouTube shorts, Instagram reels,

Facebook reels, etc.) are still a part of the problem. But I think that removing short-form content all together is the only solution."

- "Brain rot is hurting the cognitive ability of younger generations such as myself. I think this can be combatted if people read more. So far it's working for me."
- "I think it's just something that naturally is with this generation. Only by self-control, and no phone addiction, we can overcome these for a productive life."

The content I chose to analyze was posted on YouTube as Short form and on Instagram as Reel form.

Both are categorized as "brain rot", therefore we cannot pinpoint the nature of the content, as we mentioned before, this trend doesn't have any meaningful contribution to consumers, it excels, however, in giving negative effects to the people watching it.

When it comes to the influence towards the comments, we will have to analyze each post separately. The "Sigma male" post, posted on YouTube Shorts created a complex environment where comments were divided between people that are taking this seriously and resonate with the post and people that are commenting to make fun of the content. Furthermore, we notice the comments that are showing resonance with the content creator are mostly appreciated by the community and by the creator itself, hence creating continuity to the trend. On the other hand, the comments that are making fun of this content are either unnoticed or are "attacked" in the reply section.

Secondly, the "looksmaxxing" post, posted on Instagram Reels, have a simpler community, all the participants replying within the same context as the reel, unlike the first analyzed post. Moreover, we have to notice the repetitiveness of the context because the entire account is revolving around "looksmaxxing", creating content, and offering the consumers the same material, which results in the same comment section environment.

However, we must point out that although they may be similar, there are a couple of differences between these two posts. The figures in the grid represent that the Instagram Reel analyzed have a greater level of engagement and visibility even after the trend's slow fall than the second one. However, this

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doesn't mean the YouTube Short is not harmful to the consumers, the rise in engagement in the Instagram Reel can be because it was posted on Instagram, a platform where such content is more visible and more prone to getting into people's algorithms.

Grid of analysis

Aspects to be followed	YouTube Short analyzed	Instagram Reel analyzed
Slang usage	1	1
Repetition across different content formats	0	1
The aftermath of the content's utilization (i.e., responses)	1	1

1 – Positive   0 – Neutral   -1 – Negative

Score:

YouTube Short: 2

Instagram Reel: 3

- Slang usage: refers to the informal, often non-standard way of using language, typically in casual conversation, among specific groups, or within particular cultural or social contexts;
- Repetition across different content formats: refers to delivering a consistent message, theme, or concept through multiple types of content or media;
- The aftermath of the content's utilization (i.e., responses): focuses on what happens after the content is consumed, including audience reactions, behaviors, and engagement.

Conclusions

In conclusion, brain rot is a real and persistent problem we are encountering in the digital world that has effects in the real world. The research methods used in this paper have helped me understand better the consumers' point of view and in reaching this conclusion. The respondents have shown me that they are aware of the negative effects of this trend and their hopes that it will pass for the best of every generation, present or those that are to come.

Social media content is a powerful method to engage with your public, either if you are a company, influencer or a simple content creator, it all lies on which type of content, if either you decide to make something that people can benefit from or be drawn back because of it.

In my opinion, content creators, from any type of business level should be more aware of the negative effects their popular content can generate and be more open to creating content that are beneficial to the consumers.

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Creating a New Brand from Theory to Practice.

Guide for Local Businesses

Alina – Alexandra Crihan

Abstract: *The article addresses the topic of branding and local entrepreneurship, analyzing the process of creating local brands. The research aims to explore how entrepreneurs build relevant brands within the local market context. The study is based on a qualitative methodology, consisting of semi-structured interviews with the founders of several local brands (Tombabe, Tudor Personal Tailor, KIRIZZA). The results show that the founders' values, visual identity coherence, and authentic communication play a central role in shaping the brand. The paper offers both an overview of the stages and challenges encountered in this process and a practical guide for entrepreneurs who wish to develop their own local brand.*

1. Introduction

In the context of accelerated globalization and constant changes in consumer behavior, local brands are gaining increasing relevance through authenticity, community closeness, and positive impact on the environment in which they operate. Branding is no longer just a tool for commercial differentiation but has become a strategic means of identity construction and of building long-lasting relationships with the audience.

The success of a brand increasingly depends on its ability to offer distinctive value and to build an authentic connection with the public by integrating the founders' personal values and relevant cultural references. In a society that is becoming more socially aware and engaged, brands are no longer seen merely as commercial tools, but also as forms of expression and responsibility. Global trends such as sustainability, social equity, and the growing influence of technology shape contemporary brand strategies, while recent years have witnessed a growing interest in local brands. Choosing local brands reflects a form of social engagement and support for the local economy, becoming a significant factor in consumer decision-making. In this context, "localness" becomes a strategic value in contemporary branding.

Building a strong brand involves several essential stages: analyzing the organization (vision, mission, values, communication), defining brand positioning, and summarizing the brand's essence in a strategic brief. Visual identity, as an expression of positioning, contributes to brand recognition and differentiation, supported by two fundamental criteria: the notoriety and uniqueness of the identity elements. The next step involves developing key elements that strengthen the brand's relationship with the public, followed by brand resource management through a guide that ensures consistency and coherence of both visual and verbal communication. Together, these stages contribute to the development of a strong and strategically positioned brand identity (Beverland, 2021; Lalaounis, 2020; Roșca, 2023; Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024).

This paper investigates how these theories are reflected in the practice of local entrepreneurs in Romania, with the objective of analyzing the brand creation process in small businesses. The research method is qualitative, based on semi-structured interviews conducted in three case studies: Tombabe, Tudor Personal Tailor, and KIRIZZA. The variables investigated include the brand-

building process, the influence of the founders' personal values, the effectiveness of visual identity in communicating the brand's essence, and the challenges faced by entrepreneurs.

The study's hypotheses focus on the progressive nature of the brand-building process, the role of visual identity in conveying the brand essence, the influence of personal values on brand strategy, and the common challenges encountered during the branding process.

The results confirm that, although the processes were not always formalized, entrepreneurs intuitively applied essential branding principles, and their personal values were reflected in the identity of the brands they created. Ultimately, the paper proposes a practical guide for developing a local brand, offering an integrative approach that combines theory, empirical research, and practical application. This contribution aims to support both the advancement of knowledge in the field of communication and branding and the development of local entrepreneurial initiatives.

2. Research methods

The research method used in this study is the semi-structured individual interview, specific to qualitative research, chosen for its ability to capture in-depth the perceptions, experiences, and decisions of entrepreneurs in the process of brand building. This type of interview offers a balance between the rigor of a predefined question guide and the flexibility needed to adapt to each respondent's particularities, facilitating the collection of nuanced and relevant answers.

The interview guide was developed based on key theoretical concepts in branding, with questions grouped to cover all stages of the brand-building process: from initial research and strategic definition to the development of visual identity, creation of key brand elements, and brand resource management. Additionally, the interviews explored topics such as the influence of founders' personal values, challenges encountered, and their perception of the coherence between strategy and the brand's visual expression.

By analyzing the responses, the interview method enabled a comparison between entrepreneurial practices and established theoretical models, highlighting both intuitive approaches and deliberate strategies. Thus, the research contributes to the validation or refinement of the proposed hypotheses and offers an authentic perspective on the realities of branding in the local entrepreneurial environment.

3. Results

The Tombabe business started spontaneously from the founder's personal need to wear T-shirts with original messages, and positive feedback led her to turn this idea into a business. As it grew, the messages on the T-shirts were expanded onto various complementary products such as bags, mugs, and keychains, while maintaining a clear focus on educational messages called "cultural indecencies." The founder's communication experience and the support of designer friends were essential in managing the brand and communication channels.

The brand's visual identity reflects the founder's personal preferences, opting for a neutral, unisex aesthetic accessible regardless of gender, with a strong emphasis on sustainability and local production in Romania, using recyclable packaging. The community built around the brand resonates with values of linguistic education, authenticity, and social responsibility, and the brand has established itself online and through collaborations with various cultural organizations. Consistency in communication and brand strategy is well defined, and the products create a sense of belonging and social validation.

Regarding challenges, the biggest difficulties for the founder were bureaucracy and the administrative complexity of running the business, as well as issues with brand copying, which highlighted the need for legal protection. These obstacles did not stop her but strengthened her determination, demonstrating that the success of a local brand requires not only good ideas but also courage, perseverance, and adaptability in the face of difficulties.

Tudor Personal Tailor was created based on the founders' strategic vision, shaped after a visit to London, where they identified a gap in the Romanian

market for a premium service with Western influences. From the start, they collaborated with branding and visual design experts to develop a detailed brand manual, planning the business for long-term growth and geographic expansion. The brand aims to educate clients about proper dressing by combining quality products with personalized services, ensuring each client receives tailored styling advice and perfectly fitted products.

The visual identity of Tudor Personal Tailor supports masculine elegance through a carefully chosen color palette, classic fonts, and a logo reflecting attention to detail and bespoke tailoring expertise. This visual coherence is reflected in all communication materials—from the website and social media to packaging and showroom décor. Products are carefully packaged and personalized by category, reinforcing the premium brand image. Thus, the combination of the founders' vision, brand strategy, and positioning successfully conveys the essence and values of Tudor Personal Tailor.

Among the biggest challenges faced in building the brand were managing financial aspects, especially the significant investments needed for marketing and building brand awareness in a competitive market. Balancing expenses related to sales, salaries, inventory, operations, and marketing while maintaining a sustainable profit margin proved complex. Additionally, legal protection of the brand through trademark registration at OSIM was essential to secure the investment and safeguard Tudor Personal Tailor's identity.

The business started as a personal clothing creation workshop, specializing in custom-made dresses, and evolved over time through diverse collections and personal projects, leading to a rebranding that resulted in the creation of the KIRIZZA brand. KIRIZZA positioned itself in the luxury segment, offering unique wedding and evening dresses with artisanal craftsmanship, reflecting the founder's attention to detail and authenticity. At the same time, the KRZ line was launched to express a more urban, rebellious, and socially active side, promoting sustainable fashion and social causes through design and dedicated campaigns.

The founder's personal values, such as supporting local entrepreneurs, social responsibility, and sustainability, have formed the brand's identity, creating a strong emotional connection with clients. The stories and messages

behind the collections reflect these beliefs, with the brand acting as an authentic extension of the founder's personal identity.

During development, the founder faced numerous challenges, both personal and external, such as complex bureaucracy, fiscal uncertainty, and lack of concrete support from public institutions for local businesses. These obstacles required patience, adaptability, and perseverance to ensure the business's growth and stability.

The interpretation of the interviews revealed that the analyzed brands were built both through spontaneous initiatives and strategic planning, with the entrepreneurs' experience playing an important role in shaping their direction. Tombabe originated from the founder's personal need to wear T-shirts with designs different from those available on the market. Her communication knowledge facilitated the management of the brand image and promotion channels, supported occasionally by designer friends. Tudor Personal Tailor was the result of a strategic decision, based on a careful analysis of the premium clothing services market. From the start, the founders collaborated with branding specialists, developing a brand manual with a clear long-term direction. In the case of KIRIZZA, the brand was formed gradually, based on the founder's extensive experience in fashion design. Initially, she used her own name, then underwent a rebranding process to separate the person from the professional component and to build a coherent premium image. The process was gradual, based on continuous adjustments, with external support being occasional and punctual.

The brands' identities were clearly expressed through visual elements and messages reflecting their character and values. Tombabe uses a unisex, neutral aesthetic, without obvious logos, relying on educational messages and sustainable local production. Tudor Personal Tailor asserts its premium positioning through an elegant, classic identity that combines a sober color palette with refined fonts and great attention to the showroom's ambient details. KIRIZZA emphasizes uniqueness and personal storytelling, with the main line featuring an elegant style and the KRZ line showcasing urban designs with social accents, targeting a young and active audience. The differentiation between the two lines is an integral part of the brand strategy.

The founders' values directly influenced the brands' development. Tombabe promotes correct Romanian language, integrating educational messages into T-shirt designs and supporting local production. Tudor Personal Tailor offers not only products but also wardrobe education, emphasizing quality, personalization, and refinement. KIRIZZA reflects the founder's concerns regarding sustainability, social responsibility, and support for other entrepreneurs, values integrated into the KRZ line collections.

The interviewed entrepreneurs faced both general difficulties and challenges specific to their fields. Tombabe encountered issues related to brand copying and bureaucracy, creating the need to strengthen identity and legal protection. Tudor Personal Tailor struggled with the pressure of maintaining a premium brand in a competitive market and the need for constant investments in marketing and legal protection. KIRIZZA experienced both personal challenges in managing the business and external difficulties such as fiscal instability and lack of institutional support.

Discussions

Based on the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the three local businesses, the following recommendations can be made for future founders of local businesses aiming to develop a sustainable business and a coherent brand:

- A business should be founded on personal values and original motivations. Personal motivation helps create an authentic brand with a strong identity. The founders' values were reflected in all branding decisions, from the product portfolio to visual identity and communication. Founders who align their personal values with those of the brand build a deeper emotional connection with the audience.
- From the very beginning of a business, a coherent visual identity should be built and the trademark legally registered. Early development of brand manuals, establishing color palettes, choosing fonts, designing the logo, and standardizing visual applications across all communication materials are essential steps in the success of a brand.
- The visual identity and other key elements must align with the essence of the brand. Consistence between the brand's essence,

product offerings, visual design, and communication is an important factor in strengthening the brand's market positioning.

- Product selection should not be random.
- Bureaucratic difficulties, marketing costs, and the need to manage financial balance represent obstacles in the entrepreneurial process. Building and developing a brand involves substantial investments in promotion, financial management, logistics, personnel, and infrastructure. It is recommended to seek specialists' support.

- Creating a core group of consumers who identify with the brand's values and messages facilitates loyalty building, social validation, and organic growth of the brand's recognition in the long term.
- The success of a local brand requires entrepreneurial courage, resilience, adaptability to market dynamics, and a constant willingness to learn from each stage of business development.

Conclusion

Even though they don't always follow a formalized model, entrepreneurs intuitively apply essential branding principles: clarifying the brand's essence, creating a coherent visual identity, strategic communication, and clear positioning. The visual identity of each brand expresses the desired relationship with its audience. The success of these brands is linked to the authenticity of their message, consistency of visual elements, and the founders' ability to build communities around their values. Personal values, vision, and motivations of the

founders not only influence the development direction but also become identity elements that provide relevance and differentiation in the market.

Regarding the challenges faced by entrepreneurs, the research identified additional significant obstacles: brand identity copying, lack of institutional support, and the pressure to maintain sustainable financial balance in a competitive and bureaucratic environment. The development and consolidation of local brands are important not only for the success of those businesses but also for strengthening the cultural and economic identity of a region. They stimulate innovation, create jobs, and generate a positive cycle of sustainable growth. Moreover, local brands offer a responsible alternative to mass consumption, meeting society's growing need for meaningful products with real impact.

The process of creating a local brand does not necessarily require strict adherence to a formalized model but can be guided by intuition, experience, and embraced personal values. Entrepreneurs succeed in building authentic brands by clarifying the brand's essence, developing a coherent visual identity, and aligning strategic communication with the founders' values and vision. This authenticity is a key factor in success, encouraging the formation of engaged communities around the brand. Thus, visual identity becomes not just a set of graphic elements but a faithful expression of positioning and the desired relationship with the audience. However, the research also identified real challenges beyond lack of resources or expertise: absence of institutional support, excessive bureaucracy, financial pressure, and risks related to protecting brand identity. These obstacles can limit the sustainable development of local brands.

Still, the stakes of building local brands go beyond individual entrepreneurship: they strengthen the cultural and economic identity of a region, contribute to innovation and sustainable development, and offer consumers authentic and responsible alternatives in a globalized economic context. The local brand thus becomes a vehicle of meaning, connection, and progress within the community.

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The Role of Social Media Strategies in Tourism Promotion: A Comparative Content Analysis of Four Romanian Travel Agencies

Carmen Popa

Abstract*: This article examines how social media platforms are utilized as strategic tools for digital marketing in tourism sector. By analyzing the online communication approaches of four Romanian travel agencies- eSky.ro, Veltravel.ro, Vola.ro and DirectBooking.ro- on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, the study identifies key promotional techniques, user engagement strategies, and content personalization. Using qualitative content analysis of six posts per company (two per platform), the article highlights differences in digital behavior, preferred media formats, and platform adaptability. The research contributes to understanding how tourism brands communicate in the evolving digital landscape.*

Keywords: *social media, tourism marketing, digital communication, user engagement, facebook, instagram, tiktok*

1. **Introduction**

    In recent years, the digital transformation of communication has had a profound effect on the tourism industry. The emergence and widespread adoption of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have reshaped how tourism services are marketed, perceived, and consumed. These platforms are no

longer used merely as channels for information distribution; they have evolved into powerful tools for engagement, emotional branding, and customer retention. Social media has empowered users to become both consumers and co-creators of tourism experiences.

Digital tourists- today's tech-savvy, connected travelers- expect not only information but also entertainment, personalization, and authenticity in the content they interact with. As a result, tourism marketing has shifted from static brochures and general advertisements to dynamic, data-driven, and user-centric strategies. Brands must now compete for attention in a saturated online environment, where the success of a campaign is measured not only by reach, but also by likes, shares, comments, and conversions.

Given this context, the importance of understanding how tourism brand adapt their content to various social platforms becomes critical. Facebook allows for more informative and structured communication with clear calls-to-action and detailed campaigns. Instagram, on the other hand, emphasizes visual aesthetics, storytelling, and influencer collaborations, appealing especially to millennial and Gen Z audiences. TikTok, the newest and fastes-growing platform, relies heavily on trends, humor, and short-form video content to engage its users.

The main objectives of this research is to explore how Romanian tourism agencies leverage these platforms, to identify what strategies are most effective in the local context, and to draw conclusions that could inform broader digital marketing practices in tourism. Specifically, the study performs a comparative analysis of four companies- eSky.ro, Veltravel.ro, Vola.ro, and DirectBooking.ro- evaluating how each utilizes social media tools to achieve visibility, brand engagement, and use interaction. This research also aims to assess how well companies adapt their interaction. This research also aims to asses how well companies adapt their messages to the unique features and user expectations of each platform.

By integrating theoretical knowledge with empirical content analysis, this article contributes to the academic and practical understanding of digital promotion in tourism, with emphasis on personalization, platform adaptation, and user engagement.

Furthermore, the study offers insights into the limitations and ethical concerns raised by current social media practices, such as the risk of overtourism, misinformation, and digital fatigue.

2. Literature Review

Social media marketing is widely recognized as a vital component of modern tourism strategies. Scholars such as Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social

media as collaborative platforms where users create, distribute, and engage with content. These platforms influence user decision making (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), brand visibility, (Tuten & Solomon, 2018), and destination image (Mariani et al., 2016)

Content formats, influencer marketing, personalization, and user-generated content (UGC) are considered essential tools in tourism promotion (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Abidin, 2016). The integration of emerging technologies like AI and big data allows agencies to target users with increasing precision (Tussyadiah, 2020)

Ethical considerations are also central, especially regarding transparency in sponsored content and the risk of overtourism caused by viral promotion (Gössling & Hall, 2019; Richards, 2020)

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative content analysis method, focusing on the social media presence of four Romanian travel agencies: eSky.ro, Veltravel.ro, Vola.ro, and DirectBooking.ro. For each agency six posts were analyzed- two form Facebook, two from Instagram, and two from TikTok.

The posts were evaluated using the following criteria:

- Purpose of communication: promotional, informative, inspirational
- Visual and textual elements: tone, emojis, design, call-to-action (CTA)
- User engagement: likes, shares, comments
- Platform-specific adaptation: storytelling on Instagram, trends on TikTok, CTA clarity on Facebook
- Advanced tactics: influencer collaboration, UGC usage, content personalization

The selected posts were form a consistent period to ensure a uniform basis of comparison.

4. Results and Discussion

eSky.ro demonstrates a professional and consistent visual identity across platforms. Its Instagram and Facebook posts often feature travel offers with concise CTAs, while TikTok is used less frequently, with a focus on humor or trends. User engagement is moderate, and storytelling is primarily informative.
Veltravel.ro emphasizes visual promotion through carousels and static posts, Although it lacks a presence on TikTok, its Facebook and Instagram content are

well-structured. Engagement is limited due to low interactivity or static CTA design.

Vola.ro shows the highest adaptability to TikTok, integrating humor, trends and viral audio into its videos. The same video content is occasionally cross-posted on Instagram. Facebook content is minimal, with a focus on memes and informal tone. Vola demonstrates a strong understanding of each platform's audience.

DirectBooking.ro focuses on clear travel offers and campaigns, especially contents and discounts. Errors in written text and graphic design reduce the professional perception. There is no TikTok presence, limiting its reach among younger audiences.

Across all four companies, TikTok is the least professionally leveraged platform-except by Vola.ro. Instagram emphasizes visual aesthetic and branding, while Facebook still functions as a space for promotional information and links.

5. Conclusions

The comparative analysis reveals that digital promotion in tourism requires flexibility, creativity, and a deep understanding of platform-specific trends. Agencies that adapt tone, format, and strategy to each social media channel perform better in terms of user engagement and content relevance.

Key recommendations include:

- Investing in TikTok content creation, especially short-form videos with humor and trends
- Enhancing personalization and storytelling on Instagram
- Leveraging Facebook for contents, links and structured CTAs
- Ensuring content accuracy and graphic consistency
- Collaborating with micro-influencers for authenticity and niche targeting

The results underline that strategic use of social media enhances not only visibility but also customer loyalty and brand differentiation.

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Artificial intelligence in public relations: opportunities and dangers. Qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews

Alexandra Cristina Florea

Abstract: *The study aims to analyse the perception of public relations (PR) professionals regarding the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in communication activities. In a context of accelerated digital transformation, the research seeks to highlight the advantages, opportunities, but also the risks of using AI in everyday work. To achieve this objective, a qualitative study was conducted based on semi-structured interviews with a group of seven public relations specialists from various types of organisations. Analysis of the data obtained allowed for the identification of recurring themes, common perceptions and differences of opinion regarding the integration of AI in the PR sector. The results indicate that artificial intelligence is perceived as an effective tool for optimising communication processes, such as automatic content generation, media monitoring and complex data analysis. The major benefits identified are time savings and support in organising and adapting messages. However, risks have been reported regarding the authenticity of messages, the standardisation of content, the decrease in human control over communication, and the risk of slipping into a form of 'intellectual laziness' due to the excessive use of artificial intelligence. In conclusion, although artificial intelligence is seen as a valuable opportunity, professionals emphasise the need to maintain human intervention in essential activities such as direct interaction with the public, empathy and crisis management. The responsible and strategic integration of artificial intelligence into public relations is essential for the development of effective and sustainable practices in modern communication. In an ever-changing environment, the ability to remain human, personal and creative in an automated and formulaic world will make all the difference.*

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, public relations, qualitative interviews, communication*

1. Introduction

In the context of accelerated transformations generated by digitisation and the development of artificial intelligence (AI), the field of public relations (PR) is undergoing a continuous process of adaptation and redefinition. Public relations, as an essential strategic function of any organisation, no longer focuses exclusively on conveying messages or managing institutional image, but integrates complex processes of building, strengthening and maintaining

relationships with multiple categories of audiences, both internally and externally.

AI has begun to play an increasingly important role in shaping organisational communication strategies and practices. AI-based technologies provide PR professionals with innovative tools for automating repetitive tasks, personalising messages according to the characteristics of the target audience, real-time monitoring of the online environment and analysing large volumes of data to gain valuable insights into consumer behaviour and perceptions.

However, the integration of artificial intelligence into public relations activities opens up not only new opportunities but also a number of ethical and strategic challenges. Dilemmas regarding the transparency of automated processes, maintaining the authenticity of messages, protecting personal data, and maintaining public trust are becoming central themes in the debate on the responsible use of AI in organisational communication. In this sense, the ability of PR professionals to strategically manage these technologies and integrate them harmoniously into their current activities will largely determine the success or failure of communication efforts in the digital age.

Although there are numerous international studies and scientific articles dedicated to the use of artificial intelligence in public relations, in Romania, exploration of this topic is limited. In this context, the present study aims to investigate how PR specialists integrate artificial intelligence into their daily work.

This was achieved by analysing interviews with public relations specialists from various fields of activity: multinational companies, private firms, public institutions, non-governmental associations and the media. This qualitative approach aims to provide an applied and contextualised understanding of how AI is perceived and used in professional practice, as well as the benefits, difficulties and ethical dilemmas encountered by practitioners.

The study highlights the main trends, challenges and directions for development in public relations in the era of artificial intelligence. Possible directions for future research are also proposed, aimed at deepening the impact

of emerging technologies on organisational communication and contributing to the development of sustainable and ethical practices in the field of digital PR.

2. Research methods

The research is qualitative and exploratory in nature. In order to obtain a practical and relevant perspective, the study is based on the collection of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with seven public relations specialists from various sectors of activity: multinational companies, private firms, public institutions, non-governmental organisations and the media. The choice of professionals from various fields allowed for a complex and nuanced perspective on how AI influences PR activity in those fields. The age range of the participants was between 25 and 50 years, thus ensuring representation of different generations and stages of professional career, which facilitated an in-depth analysis of the impact of AI technologies on various segments of professionals. The choice of the qualitative method was based on the need to capture the nuances and complexity of human perceptions, which cannot be captured by standardised quantitative methods.

To analyse the collected data, the interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis, a method specific to qualitative research that consists of identifying, organising and interpreting recurring patterns within the textual data. The themes were extracted inductively, starting directly from the participants' responses, without imposing predefined categories, which allowed for an authentic interpretation adapted to the professional realities of the respondents.

The interviews followed a structured guide based on six key themes: the trigger for integrating AI into daily work, advantages, challenges, exclusively human activities, the quality and authenticity of messages, and the perception of AI (opportunity or threat?)

3. Results

The first topic analysed was the moment when PR professionals realised the help that AI can offer in their daily work. For all the specialists interviewed, high workloads and deadline pressure were the main factors that led them to

integrate artificial intelligence into their work. In addition, for some of them, quick access to information and ease of use were additional reasons for adopting these technologies. The results indicate that the integration of AI in public relations is mainly motivated by the need to respond to the demands of a dynamic and competitive environment, where quick access to information and efficient resource management are essential for success.

The next topic focused on highlighting the limitations of artificial intelligence, but also on identifying those activities that essentially require emotional intelligence, creativity or human intuition. Most respondents emphasised that interpersonal relationships and empathy remain exclusively human skills that are difficult, if not impossible, for artificial intelligence to replicate. Also, a significant number of participants mentioned managing image crises as an activity that requires direct human intervention. Intuition and vision were also highlighted by some experts as essential traits that are hard to replace with technology. These results confirm that, despite rapid advances in technology, certain essential aspects of communication and management in public relations remain closely linked to human cognitive and emotional abilities, thus highlighting the need to maintain a balance between digital tools and human input.

In terms of the benefits of AI in their professional work, the main advantage mentioned was the reduction of repetitive tasks. This highlights the essential role of technology in automating routine activities, thus freeing up the time and resources of specialists for tasks that require creativity and strategic thinking. A significant proportion of participants also mentioned content generation as a notable benefit, highlighting the ability of artificial intelligence to support creative processes and accelerate the production of communication materials. Other frequently mentioned advantages include more efficient time management and quick access to relevant information, which contribute to improved decision-making and increased productivity. These benefits enable a more prompt and informed response to changes in the communication environment and the market. Overall, the results indicate that PR professionals recognise the added value that AI brings to various aspects of their work, from simplifying repetitive tasks to supporting creativity and optimising working time.

The risks of using artificial intelligence were also among the topics covered by the study. The most frequently mentioned risks relate to a decline in the authenticity of messages conveyed, a lack of empathy and human tone, and the possibility of spreading inaccurate information. These issues reflect a general concern that automating communication processes may diminish the human component that is essential in building trust and authentic relationships with the public. Also, a lot of experts pointed out risks related to professional ethics, data protection, and the confidentiality of sensitive info, suggesting that using these technologies without any control could lead to losing decision-making autonomy and breaking some basic ethical principles in communication. Excessive reliance on AI tools can easily lead to a form of 'intellectual laziness'. A less frequently mentioned but still significant risk was the possibility of information manipulation, highlighting the fear that these technologies could be used to generate misleading content or misinformation, thus affecting the transparency and accuracy of communication.

To better understand the issue of message authenticity, specialists have come up with solutions to ensure their quality. Human validation and empathy are essential to ensuring the quality and authenticity of automatically generated messages. Specialists emphasise the importance of adapting AI content to the specifics and values of each brand in order to maintain the relevance and credibility of communication. At the same time, verifying the information provided by AI is considered necessary to avoid the spread of erroneous data. Thus, human intervention remains indispensable, even with the increased efficiency offered by new technologies.

The last topic analysed is the question: is AI an opportunity or a threat to the PR profession? Well, most participants see AI as a valuable opportunity with the potential to streamline and improve activities in the field. Artificial intelligence-based technologies can automate repetitive tasks, support rapid content generation, and facilitate access to relevant information, all of which frees up time for creative and strategic activities. At the same time, it is emphasised that the benefits of AI come with the responsibility of ethical use and the need for constant human validation in order to maintain the authenticity and credibility of communication.

Some respondents mentioned that AI could become a threat only to those who are reluctant to change or to professionals who fail to adapt to new technological requirements. This opinion indicates that the risk lies not in the technology itself, but in how it is adopted and integrated into work processes. Thus, artificial intelligence is perceived primarily as an opportunity, but one that requires careful and responsible management. Specialists recognise both the innovative potential of AI and the risks associated with uncontrolled or unethical implementation.

This mature perspective suggests that the future of AI in public relations will depend on the ability of professionals to combine technological advantages with the core values of the profession: authenticity, empathy and strategic thinking.

Analysis of these results reveals that, although artificial intelligence brings significant benefits to the field of public relations, there is clear concern among specialists about the ethical and professional risks involved. These fears highlight the need for strict regulations and well-defined ethical frameworks, as well as the importance of ongoing training for professionals to use AI responsibly.

The successful integration of these technologies into the field of PR will therefore depend on a careful balance between innovation and ethical responsibility to ensure authentic, transparent and human communication.

Conclusion

The results of the study demonstrate that AI is no longer a mere innovation reserved for the future, but a tool already integrated into the current work of PR professionals. From content generation and campaign structuring to the automation of repetitive tasks and data analysis, artificial intelligence optimises processes and brings added efficiency, without however replacing human creativity or intuition.

Although the benefits of using AI are obvious – time savings, speed, versatility – the paper also highlights the inherent risks, namely loss of authenticity, standardisation of messages, excessive dependence and ethical limitations. At the same time, new professional requirements are emerging:

critical thinking, digital literacy, empathy and adaptability. These become essential in a context where communication must remain human, even in an accelerated digital environment.

Qualitative research provided a realistic and diverse perspective on how AI is perceived and applied in organisations from different environments. All respondents emphasised the importance of a balance between technology and humanity, between automation and authenticity. This synthesis shows that the successful integration of AI into PR does not depend solely on infrastructure or resources, but above all on mindset, professional training and responsibility.

The study is a starting point for future research. The need for continuous learning and familiarisation with new technologies is essential to remain relevant in this field and to cope with competition. However, digital adaptability must be combined with strategic thinking. AI should be used as a tool, not as a one-size-fits-all solution. The client must be studied and their business understood in order to provide relevant advice. In an ever-changing environment, the PR specialist's ability to remain human, personal and creative in an automated and formulaic world will make all the difference.

It is also recommended to maintain a curious but critical attitude towards the use of technology. Authenticity, along with the continuous development of writing and strategic thinking skills, remain essential elements that will make a difference, no matter how sophisticated technology becomes.

In conclusion, artificial intelligence represents a real opportunity for development in the field of public relations, but one that requires a strategic, ethical and deeply human approach. Modern communication will not mean choosing between humans and AI, but rather intelligent collaboration between the two. The aim of this paper was to highlight, from the perspective of specialists, the importance of integrating AI into

PR and to explore both the benefits of this technology and the challenges and risks that come with its implementation.

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The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in Strengthening Brand Image: A Case Study of Orange Romania

Anemona-Gabriela Achim

Abstract: *This article investigates the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on brand image, using Orange Romania,a leading telecommunications company—as a case study. The topic is both timely and relevant, as organizations are increasingly evaluated not only based on their economic performance but also on their social and ethical involvement.*

The main objective of the research was to determine the extent to which CSR initiatives contribute to strengthening the positive perception of the Orange brand. To achieve this, several specific objectives were defined: analyzing the theoretical concepts of CSR and brand image, examining the company's CSR campaigns, and measuring public perception through a quantitative instrument.

The methodology involved a questionnaire with 18 Likert-scale items (1 to 5), distributed to a predominantly urban sample. The research tested four key hypotheses related to the influence of social involvement, environmental initiatives, educational projects, and CSR communication on brand perception.

Findings showed that educational and social inclusion initiatives are the most positively perceived by the public, while environmental actions and external partnerships require more effective communication. Three out of the four hypotheses were confirmed or partially supported, emphasizing that CSR serves as a strategic investment in organizational reputation.

The paper concludes with a proposed communication plan for Orange Romania and provides a set of recommendations aimed at maximizing the visible impact of CSR campaigns in the eyes of stakeholders.

Keywords: *corporate social responsibility, brand image, public perception, Orange Romania, strategic communication, sustainability.*

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and increasing competition across international markets, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved into a core strategic element for organizations. No longer just a moral obligation, CSR has become a key factor in ensuring long-term success and maintaining a strong brand identity. As consumers grow more informed and socially conscious, they expect ethical behavior, transparency, and commitment to sustainable development from the brands they support.

This paper explores the complex relationship between CSR and brand image, using Orange Romania as a case study. As a major player in the Romanian telecommunications sector, Orange has consistently demonstrated its commitment to social responsibility through campaigns and initiatives that aim to benefit both society and its organizational reputation.

The first chapter provides the theoretical foundation for understanding CSR and its evolution—from early philanthropic models to contemporary strategic approaches integrated into core business models. It also emphasizes the importance of corporate image as a social construct influenced not only by commercial performance but also by the organization's societal engagement and communication practices.

Further, CSR is examined as a key factor in brand building and differentiation, particularly in a saturated and volatile marketplace. Companies that align ethical messaging with authentic actions gain customer loyalty and long-term reputational capital.

The second chapter focuses on Orange Romania's CSR strategies, analyzing strategic directions, objectives, and their alignment with both the global Orange Group vision and local market conditions. Initiatives in digital education, environmental protection, social inclusion, and public health are discussed, with emphasis on their measurable impact and visibility.

A distinct section evaluates the role of digital communication in promoting CSR, highlighting the use of social media, influencers, storytelling, and visual content to increase engagement and brand credibility.

The third chapter presents the empirical research, assessing public perception of Orange's CSR efforts and their effect on brand attitudes. Through quantitative analysis, the study identifies correlations between exposure to CSR initiatives and brand favorability.

In conclusion, the study highlights CSR as a strategic investment in brand reputation, advocating for authentic integration, transparent communication, and meaningful engagement with stakeholders.

2. Research methods

This research aims to explore the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies on the brand image of Orange Romania, from the perspective of

consumers,considered key internal actors in shaping and validating organizational identity. In a time when public image is shaped not only by commercial activities but also by ethical and social engagement, it becomes essential to systematically assess how internal stakeholders perceive CSR initiatives.

A quantitative research approach was employed, using a structured questionnaire as the main data collection instrument. The decision to adopt a quantitative methodology was motivated by its ability to provide a rigorous and objective analysis of the relationships between variables, allowing for coherent hypothesis testing and generalization of findings within the internal organizational context.

The questionnaire was designed to evaluate not only the level of awareness regarding CSR campaigns and initiatives undertaken by Orange Romania, but also to capture perceptions of their authenticity, effectiveness, and visibility, in connection with the company's projected brand image. It consisted of 18 Likert-scale items (1 – Very little to 5 – Very much), formulated as statements to which respondents indicated their level of agreement. This format enabled the quantification of attitudes and nuances in perception.

The survey was distributed digitally via a secure online platform. Responses were collected anonymously to ensure privacy and encourage honest feedback. Data collection took place in May 2025, and the completion rate reached 94%, indicating strong engagement from participants. The average response time was approximately 10 minutes.

Overall, the methodology provided a valid and relevant framework for analyzing the connection between CSR strategies and brand image from the internal perspective, offering a basis for evidence-based recommendations to strengthen Orange Romania's reputational capital.

3. Research objectives

To support the overall aim of the study, the following specific research objectives were established:

• To assess the public's level of awareness regarding the social and environmental projects carried out by Orange Romania.

• To determine the perceived impact of CSR actions on consumer trust and loyalty towards the Orange Romania brand.

• To analyze the degree to which values of responsibility and ethics are associated with the Orange Romania brand in the public's perception.

• To compare the respondents' level of agreement with statements regarding Orange Romania's social involvement and its impact on the company's reputation.

4. Research hypotheses

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In line with these objectives, the study tested the following hypotheses:

H1: The public perceives that Orange Romania's active social involvement strengthens the brand's positive image.

H2: Orange Romania's CSR campaigns and projects increase consumer trust and loyalty towards the brand.

H3: Clear and transparent communication of CSR initiatives leads to better public awareness of these actions.

H4: Environmental initiatives and partnerships with non-governmental organizations enhance the public's positive perception of Orange Romania in society.

5. Results.

Organic results

Based on the defined methodology and the structure of the questionnaire, the following section presents the main findings of the empirical investigation. Each item is analyzed in relation to the corresponding research hypothesis (H1–H4), aiming to assess how different dimensions of CSR—social involvement, environmental action, educational programs, and communication—impact public perception and the overall brand image of Orange Romania.

Item 1. Orange Romania is perceived as a company actively engaged in socially relevant community projects.
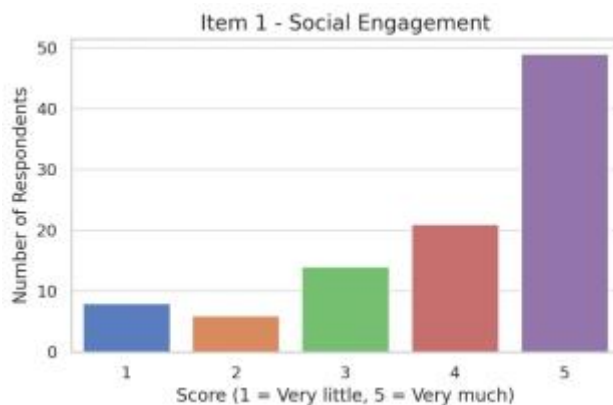
The results indicate a strongly positive public perception of Orange Romania's social involvement. Half of the respondents (49 out of 98) gave the highest score (5), showing high trust in the company's commitment to CSR. When combined with those who selected score 4, 70.4% of participants perceive Orange as socially responsible. This confirms Hypothesis H1, supporting the idea that CSR strengthens brand image. The relatively small group giving low scores (14.2%) suggests a marginal but notable

skepticism, which could be addressed through enhanced communication and visibility of CSR actions.

Item 2. I am well aware of the educational and training programs supported by Orange Romania.

Item 2 - Education Awareness
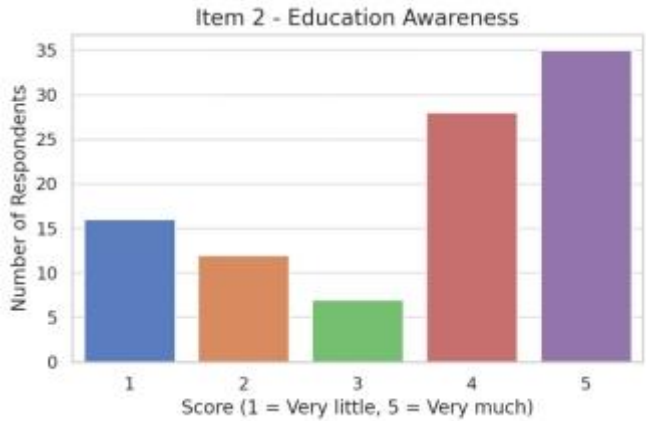
This item tests Hypothesis H3 concerning CSR communication. Over 64% of respondents selected scores 4 or 5, indicating strong awareness of initiatives like Digitaliada. However, 28.5% chose the lowest two scores, revealing a significant segment that lacks familiarity with these programs. This highlights a need for broader outreach and improved communication, especially targeting less engaged audiences. The data supports H3 partially, showing high visibility in some segments, but not across the board.

Item 3. I consider Orange Romania's environmental protection initiatives to be effective.

Item 3 - Environmental Action

This item clearly contradicts Hypothesis H4. A combined 64.3% of respondents gave scores 1 or 2, suggesting that Orange's environmental initiatives are either poorly understood or perceived as ineffective. Only 22.4% rated them positively. This discrepancy may stem from insufficient visibility, lack of public engagement, or limited

perceived impact. Strategic communication and tangible proof of environmental success are crucial to improve perception in this domain.

Item 4. In my opinion, Orange Romania communicates its CSR activities in a clear and transparent manner.
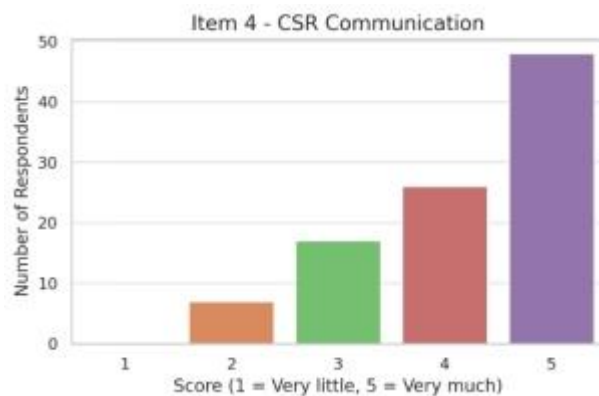
A clear majority (75.5%) rated Orange's CSR communication as highly transparent (scores 4 and 5). This supports Hypothesis H3, affirming the company's ability to convey its social values effectively. The neutral responses (17.3%) indicate an opportunity to improve clarity or reach more passive audiences. Overall, the data confirms that the company's messaging strategy is well-received and contributes positively to its public image.

Conclusions

The study conducted on the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on the brand image of Orange Romania confirms the growing importance of such initiatives in strengthening the reputational capital of modern organizations.

The comprehensive analysis of all items in this study reveals a generally favorable perception of Orange Romania's corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts among the general public. However, the findings also underscore the presence of perception gaps and critical areas that require strategic recalibration. CSR is no longer perceived as an auxiliary endeavor but rather as a fundamental element of corporate identity—one that can significantly influence consumer trust, loyalty, and brand image.

One of the strongest findings is the clear recognition of Orange's social involvement, particularly in education. Respondents demonstrated high levels of awareness and appreciation for initiatives such as Digitaliada, confirming that visible and well-communicated programs can enhance the brand's credibility. At the same time, environmental initiatives were met with skepticism, highlighting a gap between

company actions and public recognition. This discrepancy suggests the need for more impactful storytelling, greater transparency, and perhaps a reevaluation of project visibility and relevance.

Communication stands out as a decisive factor in the success of CSR initiatives. The majority of respondents acknowledged Orange's efforts to communicate its social engagement in a clear and transparent manner, reinforcing the link between consistent messaging and positive brand perception. However, neutrality in certain response categories indicates that some segments of the public remain under-informed or unconvinced, which creates opportunities for improving message targeting and emotional engagement.

Furthermore, emotional dimensions such as brand loyalty and trust are significantly influenced by charitable actions and ethical positioning. While a notable segment of the audience associates CSR with increased loyalty, another portion remains indifferent or skeptical—emphasizing the need for authentic, measurable, and participatory CSR strategies. The public wants to see results, not just declarations.

The final items of the questionnaire pointed to a relatively strong, though not outstanding, competitive positioning for Orange Romania in the CSR landscape. The company is seen as aligning with industry standards, but still has room to elevate its profile to that of a national CSR benchmark.

In summary, this research confirms that Orange Romania's CSR efforts are largely well-received, especially in areas related to education and communication. However, there remains a critical need for strategic coherence, deeper community engagement, and enhanced transparency, particularly in underperforming sectors like environmental responsibility. By addressing these gaps and consolidating its efforts through sustained communication and clear impact measurement, Orange has the potential to build a stronger, more resilient brand reputation in an increasingly values-driven marketplace.

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Timisoara as a destination for Hungarians: reasons, expectations, and perceptions of the Hungarian community about opportunities.

Beáta Gergelyfi

Abstract: *This paper explores what the motivations and perceptions of the newly come Hungarians to Timisoara are, especially in the economical area. It also explores how well this minority succeeds in the integration process. For this analysis two methods were used: the questionnaire and the interviews. The questionnaire has 57 respondents, all Hungarian people who moved to Timisoara, and the interviews were made with 5 business owners. The results show a highly positive view of Timisoara, indicating that the minority is satisfied with the quality of life in this city. They rarely mention problems*

in interethnic relationships, and those who did are mostly women. But generally, they say that the people in this city are very open-minded and tolerant. Also, it is mentioned that the Romanian majority of the city values work quality over ethnicity. The study shows that most of this group come to this city for studies and later find a job or start a business. However, the respondents are not satisfied with the support of the leaders of the Hungarian

1. Introduction

Timisoara has become a popular destination for students from all over Romania, and many Hungarians choose this city for multiple reasons examined in this case study. This multicultural background makes this city an ideal setting to study the integration process of minorities in an urban environment and the obstacles faced by them. The results of this case study could be a starting point for advancement in the Hungarian community for Timisoara.

This study examines the perceptions of Hungarians who were not born in Timisoara but chose to move to this city. Their expectations related to the opportunities offered by the city will be analysed.

In the first chapters, aspects highlighted by different authors will be analysed from a theoretical point of view, focusing on the concept of urban space, the economic profile of the city of Timisoara, migration theories, the integration of minorities into the majority, interethnic relations in the urban environment, the relationship between the Hungarian minority and the Romanian majority in Timisoara, etc.

Mumford says that urban space cannot be defined only as a physical place, but also as a dynamic environment, influenced by factors such as economic, social and cultural. Research in this field highlights the fact that cities must be designed with a focus on social aspects and support on community life (Mumford, 2011, p.93).

Forbes Romania published an article that highlights how Timisoara is becoming more and more important in the economic and cultural field, as it is the city with the highest economic growth in the European Union. Timisoara is also at the top of world rankings regarding the quality of life and the city continues to attract foreign investments (https://www.forbes.ro/forbes-best-cities-for-business-2024-timisoara-live-text-385222, accessed on 01.04.2025).

Ravenstein talks about the fact that every migration flow generates a counterflow. This can mean either that those who have migrated in the first place can decide to return to the place from which they left, or that others will migrate to the places left free by those who migrated initially. The law formulated by the author highlights the fact that migration is not a unidirectional process, it is an extremely dynamic one, and it affects the place of departure, but also the place of destination (Ravenstein, 1889, p.287).

Brubaker emphasizes how ethnicity does not necessarily depend on the existence of well-defined ethnic groups, but rather on the social organizations that reproduce these cultural identities. He introduced the concept named „groupness", which defines collective cohesion, that cannot be constant. It fluctuates based on the historical, social and political contexts of the region (Brubaker, 2004, pp.67-68).

Another author, Maass, talks about how minorities can influence the attitudes of the majority, but only if they are consistent. If the community lacks consistency, the majority will not find it confident and competent, which leads to the majority not being able to be influenced by the minority (Maass, 1984, pp. 429-430).

As for the study case, two research instruments will be used in this paper: the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. They will be used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the perceptions of Hungarian community in Timisoara, who are not born in this area, but chose to settle in this city.

Finally, the conclusions of the paper will be presented, along with some recommendations to solve the main problems identified in the integration process of the Hungarian minority from Timisoara.

The final objective of the case study is to contribute to enhance the understanding of the perspectives, motivations and expectations of Hungarians who were not born in Timisoara regarding moving to this city, but also to clearly identify the challenges they encounter in the integration process.

2. Research methods

In this research, two data collection tools are used: the questionnaire, a tool to collect quantitative data, and the individual interview, to collect qualitative data.

The questionnaire is a method built of a set of written questions, which are organised in a logical order. For this case study the answers were recorded by self-administration, using the Google Forms platform. It was shared with members of the Hungarian community in Timisoara who were not born in this city. Through the questionnaire socio-demographic information was obtained, but also non-factual information about the main reasons for choosing Timisoara.

The semi-structured interview consists of a where the topics are predetermined, and the interviewer uses a flexible guide. The interviews were conducted with Hungarians who moved to Timisoara and started a business in this city. The interviewees are people with ages between 35 and 52. Four of them were born in different parts of Romania and one person was born in Hungary. The interviews were made between April 10th and May 6th , 2025.

The questionnaire was chosen to reach a wide public, in order to reach a conclusion as close to the truth as possible. The individual interview was conducted to receive more detailed answers and focused on business opportunities in Timisoara.

3. Results

Results of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was completed by 57 respondents, from various age groups, gender and education level.

Regarding the motivation to come to Timisoara, 40 people out of the 57 respondents chose this city to study at prestigious universities and 22 state that another reason was the large amount of job opportunities. In addition, 14 respondents chose Timisoara for the high quality of life,

and 13 for the local Hungarian community. A small number of two respondents chose place for its proximity to Hungary, and another 5 moved for family reasons.

As for the importance of the Hungarian community in the decision to move to Timisoara, 18 people consider it very important, 28 find it quite important, 3 think it is neutral, while another 3 think it was not very important. Only one person considers it is not important at all. Compared to the precedent question, the answers for the importance of the community in the decision seem much more positive, with approximately 80% of respondents giving importance to this aspect, while in the previous question, only 13 respondents admitted that it was part of the decision.
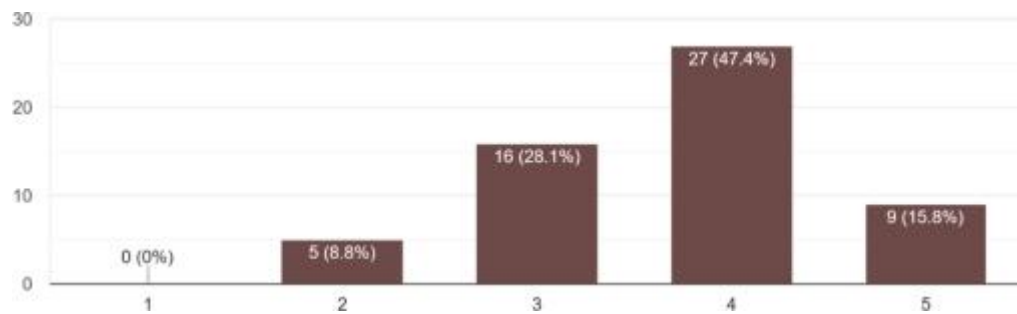
Fig. 1 Representation based on the evaluation of economic opportunities in Timisoara for Hungarians

The image shows that 9 people consider that there are very good economic opportunities for Hungarians in Timisoara, while 27 people think that these opportunities are good, and 16 believe that they are neutral. However, 5 of the respondents are not completely satisfied with the economic opportunities. Nevertheless, no respondent believes that they are very poor. All in all, the respondents are mostly satisfied with the economic opportunities for their minority.

As for the fields in which Hungarians think they have the most chances to succeed in, education and culture were on the top of the list with a number of 32 voters. 26 people chose IT and technology and 17 chose trade, services and entrepreneurship. Next, 10 respondents chose industry and production. Lastly, two people believe that Hungarians have chances in any field.

The next question was "Do you feel that there are enough initiatives to support the Hungarian community in Timisoara?". The responses are mostly neutral. 30 people answered that there are partial initiatives and 20 of them answered yes, while 8 answered no. These responses can also mean that the initiatives are not promoted enough and they do not reach the community.

Regarding how Hungarians perceive interethnic relations between Hungarians and Romanians in Timisoara, the answers are mostly positive. 17 respondents claim that they are very good, 27 consider them to be good. Furthermore, 11 people had a neutral response, and 2 think that relations are tense, but no one believes that they are very tense. All in all, 77.2% people have a positive view of Romanian-Hungarian relationships in Timisoara.
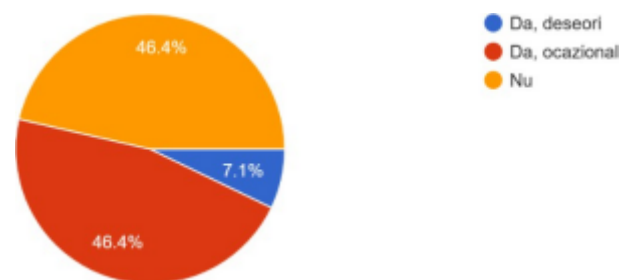

Fig. 2 Representation of the difficulties encountered related to ethnicity in Timisoara

As shown in the image, 27 people claim that they did not encounter any difficulties related to their ethnicity, while another 27 respondents

say that they did, but only occasionally. Only 3 people of the 57 respondents claim that they often encounter difficulties because of their Hungarian ethnicity, which means that Timisoara is considered an open and tolerant city.
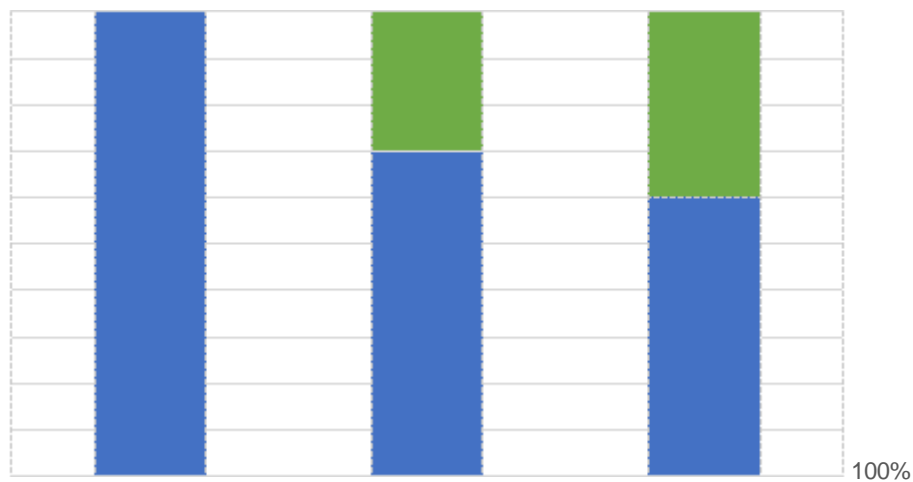
Fig. 3 Representation of difficulties encountered related to ethnicity in Timisoara by gender

As seen in the image above, genders have different experiences related to difficulties encountered because of ethnicity, as all people who claim to often meet these kinds of problems are female, and no man has serious difficulties. Regarding those who occasionally met such situations, 70% are women, which is a very high number compared to the 30% of men who rarely encounter such situations. When it comes to people who have not encountered difficulties because of their ethnicity, the gender distribution is more balanced. It becomes clear that women are a lot more exposed to facing obstacles because of their different ethnicity, than man.

Moving on, 7 people claim to have opened a business in Timisoara, which represents 12.5% of the respondents that consider themselves entrepreneurs, which is a reasonable percentage for the sample of 57 people.
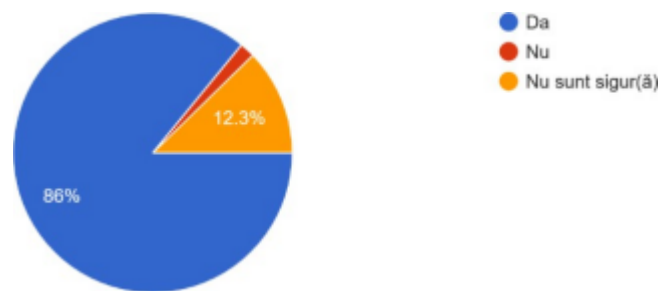
Fig. 4 Representation according to respondents' willingness to recommend Timisoara to other Hungarians

50 respondents would recommend Timisoara to other Hungarians, while 7 people are not sure if they would do so. Only one person would not recommend Timisoara to others of their ethnic group. So, the majority is satisfied with the quality of life offered by Timisoara and believe that others would feel the same.

In conclusion, Timisoara is generally seen in a positive way by the majority of Hungarians living in this city. Most of the respondents come from other urban areas, but still chose another city to move to, because of the higher life quality. However, some problems are identified, mostly amongst women.

Results of the interviews

The interviews were conducted with members of the Hungarian community of Timisoara, but who were not born in the city and built a business in this new location. These helped in collecting detailed, subjective and business-focused information.

After analysing all the interview individually, we can state that the motivations for coming to Timisoara were in some cases for studies, but some were also influenced by family reasons, which means they were influenced by professional and emotional factors.

When asked about Timisoara as an economic opportunity for Hungarians, the interviewees think that this city has great possibilities. Remarkably, only one person stated that the proximity to Hungary is an important factor for Timisoara's Hungarian minority. However, the Hungarian language was not an obstacle. Only one person mentioned that they met some impediments in the business jargon.

The motivation for starting a business vary from financial necessities to hobby-inspired businesses to emotional exhaustion caused by the previous job. Nonetheless, the interviewees pointed out that starting the process was hard because of the lack of information in Hungarian about tax regulations and procedures for setting up a business.

The next topic discussed was about the interethnic relations from Timisoara. Romanian-Hungarian relations are generally viewed in a positive way. However, some interviewees reported some isolated cases when they were discriminated because of their ethnicity and mother tongue. In light of this, several interviewees talk about the high tolerance offered by the city from the western part of the country, compared to their place of origin.

When asked about their integration process, they state that they did not encounter major difficulties. It is mentioned by some respondents that the city is very open and welcoming. More respondents emphasized that for the majority quality work is more important than ethnicity. Someone also said that Romanians prefer to work with Hungarians, because they are more reliable.

Regarding the relationships within the Hungarian minority, the opinions are disappointing, as the majority is not at all satisfied with the support offered by the leaders of this community and other members. Some respondents believe that support exists, but they were not able to

name any initiatives. Nevertheless, three out of five interviewees state that this kind of support is missing and they are left feeling ignored. Some even noted that envy is an obstacle in reaching this kind of support within the community. They think that it would be important to make improvements in this area. However, some of the business founders could name a small number of initiatives that have the goal to help Hungarian entrepreneurs.

When asked whether they would recommend Timisoara as a living space for other Hungarians as well, the answers were undoubtedly positive. Timisoara is described as a beautiful, open, tolerant city. It is mentioned to be more developed economically and socially than other cities from Romania.

The interviewees were also asked to make suggestions for improvements to reach a higher quality of life for the minority. These recommendations focus mainly on the need of the leaders of the community to open towards the Hungarian business founders and other members. Another suggestion includes the need of better internal communication. Someone also mentioned the need to organize events more frequently for the minority. Some also mention that it would be important to have information from important websites translated to Hungarian as well.

Taking all things in consideration, Timisoara a good place to live as a member of the Hungarian community, and the ethnicity is not an obstacle in the professional life, as the people in this city are very open and tolerant, and value quality over ethnicity. Nevertheless, the interviewees did mention some isolated cases of discrimination, but they are very rare. The most problems were identified within the community itself, as people feel that the leaders of the community do not offer enough support.

Conclusion

After the analysis of the questionnaire and interviews we can conclude that the first hypothesis was proved. It sounded like this: Most Hungarians who come to Timisoara choose this city for economic reasons: many jobs, high salaries, compared to other cities in Romania, business opportunities in many fields. The questionnaire clearly proved it, with 70% of the respondents claiming that they chose this city to study at prestigious universities and 39% for the good job opportunities. Also, 25% chose Timisoara for its high quality of life, which shows that they are satisfied with the salaries offered in this region. Furthermore, in the interviews the business founders mostly chose Timisoara to study at well-known universities too.

The second hypothesis was the following: It is assumed that the history of the city has an influence on the choice of the city by Hungarians: there is a community of this ethnicity in Timisoara that is active and organizes events for them and helps to integrate them into the majority. In the questionnaire, when first asked about the reasons of moving to Timisoara, only 23% of the respondents stated that the present Hungarian community had a role in the decision-making process. However, when asked separately about the importance of the community, most see it as an important factor, the percentage being around 80%. When examining the interviews, these did not choose to move to this area because of its Hungarian community, but more for family reasons, or studies. Several interviewees note that in other cities in Romania the Hungarian community is much larger than in this western area. Therefore, we can conclude that the second hypothesis was partly confirmed, as this aspect was not the main factor in the decision-making process, but it was still an important factor for a part of the respondents.

All things considered, the case study emphasizes the need for broader involvement of the Hungarian community's leaders in the activity of their members, but in general Timisoara and its interethnic relations and the integration processes are viewed positively.

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Podcasting as a Strategic Communication Tool in University Public Relations: The Case of TeleUniversitatea Timișoara's UPTrend Podcast

Roxana AMARANDE

Abstract: *Podcasting is emerging as a participatory, narrative-driven medium that higher-education public relations (PR) professionals are increasingly using to engage stakeholders (Jenkins, 2006; Persohn et al., 2024). This study synthesizes a master's thesis case study of the UPTrend podcast produced by TeleUniversitatea Timișoara, examining how a university-based podcast functions as a strategic PR tool. Through content analysis, student surveys, and interviews with program creators, we find that the podcast constructs compelling stories around student experiences and institutional goals. This two-way, audio narrative format "promotes connectedness and engagement" in ways distinct from traditional publications.*

Respondents reported that listening to the podcast increased their awareness of campus news and pride in the university community. These findings suggest that podcasting can broaden institutional visibility and strengthen student engagement cost-effectively. They align with literature showing that academic podcasts disseminate knowledge widely and build community (Mobasheri & Costello, 2021; Persohn et al., 2024) while operating within a participatory culture paradigm (Jenkins, 2006)

Keywords: *podcasting; higher education public relations; participatory culture; narrative engagement; institutional visibility.*

1. Introduction

Podcasting has seen explosive growth as a media format in recent years. In the United States, for example, 42% of Americans (ages 12+) now report listening to a podcast monthly. (edisonresearch.com) This reflects podcasts' appeal as portable, on-demand audio storytelling that bypasses traditional broadcast barriers. Berry notes that podcasting "not only removes global barriers to reception but, at a stroke, removes key factors impeding the growth of internet radio: [its] portability, [its] intimacy and [its] accessibility", creating a scenario where "audiences are producers" with renewed voice. (researchgate.net) In other words, podcasts epitomize media convergence: leveraging digital infrastructure to transform listeners into active participants (or prosumers).

Academically, podcasting sits at the intersection of narrative journalism, digital media, and public communication. It is uniquely suited to long-form narrative, allowing experts and institutions to delve into topics more deeply than in short-format content. As a low-barrier medium, podcasting decentralizes production: anyone with basic equipment can create content. This shift supports participatory cultures (Papacharissi 2015) and affective publics that build trust through authenticity and dialogue. In the higher-education context, these affordances suggest that podcasts could help universities reach and engage students in new ways. For example, podcast series by academic institutions often highlight campus research, student stories, and expert commentary, strengthening the university's brand and community ties. This article investigates the role of podcasts as PR tools within a university setting, focusing on Politehnica University of Timișoara's campus media. UPT participates in the E³UDRES² European University Alliance (Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as Driver for Smart & Sustainable Regions).

As part of this network, UPT's media center – TeleUniversitatea Timișoara (TeleU) – has expanded into podcasting, notably launching "UPTrend," a lighthearted talk podcast featuring local academics and students. TeleU itself was founded in 1994 as Politehnica's educational TV channel "Teleuniversitatea", aimed at providing thematic, student-focused news and debates. Today it operates under UPT's administration with Caterina Ledrer as chief editor.

This study synthesizes theoretical insights with empirical analysis to assess podcasts' potential in academic PR. We first review relevant literature on podcasting, storytelling, and institutional communication. We then describe our mixed-methods approach: a content inventory of E³UDRES² university podcasts, a quantitative student survey at UPT, and a qualitative interview with TeleU leadership. Findings from each are presented in turn. Finally,

we discuss how podcasts like UPTrend can enhance university visibility, engage students, and fit into strategic communication plans.

2. Theoretical Framework

Podcasting and Narrative Storytelling. Podcasting evolved from early audioblogging in the 1990s to a mainstream digital medium by the 2010s. As Berry (2006) notes, the success of MP3 technology and platforms like iTunes catalyzed podcast uptake. Podcasting's power lies in its storytelling: by using voice and sound, it can create an intimate, immersive experience. One scholar likens podcasting to "cinema for the ear," underscoring its capacity for rich, serialized narratives delivered directly to listeners' personal devices. This format allows institutions to present in-depth content – interviews, discussions, or documentaries – that engage audiences longer than typical social-media posts. The narrative nature of podcasts often fosters strong listener loyalty; repeated episodes build a familiar relationship over time (Shapiro 2016). Participatory Media and Prosumers. The rise of podcasting fits into broader media convergence theory. Jenkins (2006) describes a culture where consumers are "prosumers" – they not only consume but also create and share content. Podcasting exemplifies this: listeners often respond via social media, fan forums, or by creating their own podcasts. As a do-it-yourself medium, podcast production is highly decentralized. Llinares, Fox and Berry (2018) point out that podcasting opens a new space for interactive journalism: listeners can comment, discuss, and even influence content, blurring lines between broadcasters and audience.

In an educational environment, this participatory potential means students could contribute story ideas or feedback, strengthening a sense of co-creation and community. Public Relations and Institutional Communication. In PR theory, authenticity and engagement are key. Podcasts lend themselves to authentic communication: unlike formal press releases, hosts speak in conversational tone and often reveal personal stories. Such authenticity can build trust: Zaltman (2003) shows that audio cues can enhance emotional connection. Academics like Siapera (2020) note that new media forms like podcasts can function as "ideological labs," where communities form identities around shared content. A university podcast thus can serve both informative and identity-building roles. In higher education marketing, storytelling is increasingly valued to differentiate institutions (Morgan & Dennehy, 2014). By sharing student and faculty voices, a podcast humanizes the university brand. Studies on academic podcasting are emerging. For example, some U.S. universities host podcasts by their PR or communications departments to highlight campus initiatives. At Boston University, a PR podcast "The Crux" has published 100+ episodes of interviews with faculty, illustrating universities' interest in this medium.

Similarly, many technical colleges use podcast assignments to boost student. These trends suggest that podcasts can be potent tools for institutional outreach, especially to younger, digitally-attuned audiences.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods case study of TeleUniversitatea Timișoara's UPTrend podcast. Three complementary components were used to gain a rounded understanding. First, a comparative analysis of official university podcasts (both internationally and in Romania) provided qualitative context. Notable examples were examined to identify best practices and common strategies in educational podcasting.

Second, a quantitative student survey measured TeleU's reach and perceived efficacy. I administered a structured questionnaire to 109 undergraduate and graduate students at Politehnica University Timișoara. The survey items assessed respondents' familiarity and consumption of TeleU media, their knowledge of TeleU's distribution platforms, and their opinions on TeleU's initiatives – especially the podcast format.

The key goal was to gauge awareness of TeleU (and its podcast) and attitudes toward podcasting as a university communication tool. Third, a qualitative interview with TeleU's editor-in-chief (the podcast's producer) elicited insider perspectives. This semi-structured interview explored the original motivations for launching UPTrend, the strategic objectives pursued, the resources and processes involved, and the challenges encountered.

It also clarified the institution's vision of the podcast's role within overall PR strategy. By integrating these approaches – contextual comparison, audience survey, and internal interview – the research triangulates evidence on how UPTrend functions as an instrument of institutional PR.

3.1. Results

The student survey revealed that TeleU's media channel is still in an early adoption phase. Only 30.2% of respondents reported high familiarity with the TeleU channel, whereas 41.3% reported very low familiarity. Nearly half (48.7%) perceived TeleU's visibility within campus life as insufficient, and 59.3% admitted to minimal engagement with any TeleU-produced video or audio content. Crucially, 55.9% of students were initially unaware of the existence of a TeleU podcast. Despite this low awareness, the idea of podcasting elicited very positive reactions:

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71.6% of students considered podcasts a suitable format for university–student communication, and about 83.5% said they would find a weekly TeleU podcast bulletin highly useful. Moreover, nearly 70% of respondents showed strong interest in podcasts on educational, career and culture topics.

Table 1. Student awareness and attitudes toward TeleU and its podcast

Survey Item	Percentage of Respondents
Low familiarity with TeleU channel (Awareness)	41.3%
High familiarity with TeleU channel	30.2%
Low perceived visibility of TeleU in academic context	48.7%
High perceived visibility	17.5%
Unaware of TeleU's podcast existence	55.9%
View podcasts as a suitable communication format	71.6%
High interest in educational/career podcasts	~70%
Support for a weekly TeleU podcast bulletin	83.5%

In addition to the survey, the interview with TeleU's editor-in-chief provided strategic insights. The staffer confirmed that UPTrend was created to modernize TeleU's communication and reach younger audiences. Key motivations included fostering a stronger campus community and providing students a platform to share stories. The interviewee emphasized that, strategically, the podcast is meant to boost TeleU's profile and to complement traditional channels (TV and web) with a more flexible, student-friendly medium. Challenges cited involved limited promotion of the podcast so far and the need for dedicated production resources. These qualitative insights corroborate the survey: TeleU's podcast is valued as a credible means of outreach, but it requires better awareness and institutional support to realize its potential.

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4. Discussion

The findings highlight both challenges and opportunities for podcasting in university PR. On one hand, the low levels of familiarity and visibility indicate that TeleU's communication has not yet fully penetrated the student body. Less than one-third of students knew TeleU well, and over half were unaware that a podcast even. This suggests a gap in internal marketing and digital accessibility. On the other hand, the very positive attitudes toward podcasts – with 71.6% seeing the format as appropriate and a vast majority welcoming a weekly audio bulletin demonstrate latent demand. In effect, students behave like Jenkins's "prosumers": they are eager to consume and interact with content when it resonates with their preferences.

These student responses align with participatory communication theory. Papacharissi (2010) characterizes podcasts as part of a "deliberative forum" where diverse voices engage in dialogue. The high interest in TeleU's podcast suggests students are ready to enter such a dialogue. Moreover, Papacharissi (2015) notes that podcasting's intimate, voice-only format can create a personalized connection with listeners.This may explain why even a previously unaware student audience quickly recognized the podcast's value once introduced: the format's humanizing effect fosters loyalty and a sense of community. In practical terms, the data imply that UPTrend can function as a two-way channel, inviting feedback and suggestions from the student public. This matches Boczkowski's (2016) argument that digital feedback in podcasting allows co-creation of content. TeleU could therefore refine future episodes based on listener input, deepening engagement. From a PR standpoint, the results confirm that podcasts can serve important strategic roles. Spinelli and Dann's observation that podcasts allow "unmediated" brand communication with empathy is evident here: students perceive the podcast as a candid, student-centered medium. By showcasing university experts and student experiences in an informal style, UPTrend helps "demystify" campus life – a form of storytelling that traditional press releases often lack. The willingness of students to tune in also implies the podcast can gradually accumulate institutional symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990) through regular, coherent messaging.

This continuous narrative strengthens trust and transparency; in the survey, 83.5% rated a weekly audio bulletin highly useful suggesting that routine communication via podcast could become a reliable channel for community announcements.

In summary, the empirical insights are consistent with the theoretical literature: TeleU's experience shows that podcasting can transform university PR into a more dialogic, participatory model. The perceptual gap (low current awareness vs. high interest) underscores the need for strategic integration. If the university promotes the podcast more actively – e.g. by embedding

links in course materials or social media – it can leverage the high receptivity uncovered. This would realize Jenkins's vision that media convergence turns audiences into collaborators, and Papacharissi's vision of an inclusive public sphere. As the data indicate, podcasting is not a trend but a medium with substantive effect: it offers depth of attention and a human voice in an academic environment, thereby "revitalizing institutional communication" and fostering authentic connections.

5. Conclusion

This study of the *UPTrend* podcast at TeleUniversitatea Timișoara demonstrates that podcasting has concrete strategic value for university public relations. The combined evidence from theory and practice indicates that podcasts enable universities to communicate more empathetically and participatorily. The survey shows that despite limited current awareness, students strongly embrace the podcast format. In light of Jenkins's prosumer culture and Papacharissi's deliberative media, this suggests that an invested audience is willing to engage. The interview with TeleU's staff also confirmed that the podcast was intended to enhance dialogue and branding.

To capitalize on this potential, institutions should focus on embedding podcasting into a coherent and integrated communication strategy. This means actively promoting the podcast and its distribution channels to increase awareness among target audiences, engaging students in the content development process to encourage participation and responsiveness, and ensuring a consistent publication schedule that supports long-term audience engagement. Through these combined efforts, TeleU—and by extension other universities—can position podcasts not merely as broadcast tools, but as dynamic bridges that strengthen the connection between institutions and their communities.

In conclusion, the case of *UPTrend* supports the view that a thoughtfully produced university podcast can reinforce institutional visibility, cultivate trust and position the university as an approachable source of knowledge. As one conclusion succinctly stated, podcasts "far from being a mere digital fad, [are] a medium with real impact" capable of strengthening the bond between senders and their publics. The TeleU experience thus contributes empirical support to the broader argument that in the modern educational landscape, podcasting is an instrument worth investing in for effective public relations and communication.

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Gender Discrimination in Contemporary Music Industry

Andreea-Daniela BÎRLĂDEANU

Abstract: *Despite notable progress in gender equality, the music industry continues to reflect deep-rooted inequalities, especially within urban music genres such as trap and rap. This paper examines the forms of gender discrimination in the music industry from both institutional and representational perspectives. Through theoretical analysis and case studies, it explores how women are marginalized in access to artistic visibility, leadership positions, and fair remuneration. Additionally, the study highlights the media's role in constructing and perpetuating gender stereotypes, and how contemporary feminist movements challenge this status quo.*

Keywords: *gender discrimination, music industry, urban music, feminism, representation, misogyny, stereotypes, media culture*

1. Introduction

In an industry that claims to champion creativity and selfexpression, gender inequality remains deeply entrenched. Women continue to face systemic challenges — from underrepresentation in leadership roles to objectification in lyrics and music videos. Urban music, especially trap, is a significant cultural phenomenon but also a space where misogynistic portrayals of women are widespread (https://www.unesco.org/creativity/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2 023/01/375706eng.pdf, accessed in June 2025).

This article aims to critically assess the manifestations of gender discrimination in the contemporary music industry by examining its cultural, institutional, and symbolic dimensions. The study includes a theoretical framework on sexism and gender roles, supported by a case study focused on the Romanian urban music scene.

2. Theoretical Framework: Sexism, Gender Roles and Media Ideology

Sexism, a central concept in feminist theory, refers to the systemic devaluation of femininity alongside the institutional privileging of masculinity. Deeply rooted in historical patriarchy, sexism shapes social and cultural structures that have persisted for centuries. It manifests in numerous ways, from persistent wage gaps and unequal representation in decision-making roles to rigid stereotypes about gendered abilities and roles. Thus, sexism is not merely an individual prejudice but a complex system that perpetuates imbalance and marginalization on a broad scale (Miroiu, 2004).

Within this framework, media plays a crucial role in maintaining and naturalizing dominant ideologies, as theorized by Douglas Kellner. Cultural products such as music, television, and film do more than entertain; they function as powerful tools for social

conditioning. In the context of urban music, these mechanisms become particularly visible through the promotion of hypermasculinity, exaggerated traits of aggression, dominance, and competition, while women are often relegated to subordinate, sexualized, and decorative roles. This distorted representation contributes to sustaining the status quo by undermining and limiting feminine expression, thereby reinforcing harmful stereotypes and power imbalances both within the industry and society at large (Kellner, 1995).

Moreover, urban music, given its growing popularity, has become an influential cultural space where gender norms are both reflected and challenged. Analyzing how sexism manifests within this musical genre is thus not only relevant to the study of art and culture but also carries significant social implications, contributing to a deeper understanding and potential transformation of gender relations in contemporary contexts.

3. Theoretical Framework: Sexism, Gender Roles and Media Ideology

Initiatives like Keychange or SheSaid.So demonstrate that change is possible. These organizations promote female leadership and inclusion in the music sector, providing mentorship, visibility, and professional development

(https://culture.ec.europa.eu/funding/cultureu-funding-guide/casestudies/keychange, accessed in June 2025).

Still, grassroots activism and feminist critique remain essential in confronting the deeply cultural nature of gender discrimination in music. Feminist theory emphasizes not only equal access but also the transformation of symbolic representation (Miroiu, 2004).

Furthermore, European strategies for gender equality emphasize the critical importance of transparency in organizational practices, equitable representation of all genders in decision-making roles, and proactive efforts to combat deeply ingrained stereotypes. These strategies recognize that achieving true gender equality requires not only policy reforms but also cultural and institutional changes that dismantle systemic barriers and promote inclusive environments across all sectors. By addressing these key areas, the European Commission aims to foster societies where individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to participate, contribute, and thrive (European Commission, 2023).

3. Research methods

The research employs both qualitative and quantitative content analysis of music lyrics and music videos, complemented by a comprehensive literature review on gender discrimination and sexism. Additionally, the study analyzes the social media presence of a Romanian female artist and a Romanian male artist to understand how they promote themselves online and how audiences perceive them based on the gender of the viewers. To gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences, I conducted an interview with a prominent female artist from the Romanian trap music scene.

To further explore these perceptions, separate focus group interviews were conducted with men and women to gain deeper insights into how each gender interprets and reacts to an international trap music video. I interviewed seven women and seven men, focusing the questions on how they perceive the representation of women in trap music. These discussions aimed to uncover differences in emotional responses, attitudes towards the content and the artists, as well as to identify any underlying gender-based biases or stereotypes that might influence their views. By separating the groups by gender, the study ensured a safe space for participants to express their honest opinions and allowed for a more nuanced analysis of how gender shapes the reception of urban music culture.

4. Case study conclusions

The qualitative and quantitative analysis of musical content and social media presence for artists Erika Isac and Ian, alongside interviews with different audience groups, reveals significant differences in how female and male artists are perceived within the Romanian trap industry. Erika's songs and videos portray women in sexualized and often objectified ways, provoking polarized reactions, especially due to her feminist and political messages that challenge traditional gender norms. In contrast, Ian's focus on success and confident masculinity receives a more favorable reception, even when his lyrics contain sexualized or misogynistic themes, being perceived as "real" and "cool." Interviews show that both women and men recognize the sexualization and inequality present in the content, yet women are more critical and aware of its negative impact on gender stereotypes, while men tend to separate art from reality more readily.

Furthermore, social media analysis highlights a gendered audience response: Erika faces misogynistic attacks and harsh judgments, whereas Ian enjoys greater tolerance for his expression. These findings underscore that, despite some progress, sexism and gender stereotypes remain deeply rooted in public perception and reaction, reflecting ongoing social tensions and unequal treatment of female and male voices in Romania's cultural landscape.

5. Conclusion

Gender discrimination in the music industry, especially within the urban genre, remains a deeply entrenched and multifaceted issue. Despite some advances toward equality, women still face significant barriers that limit their visibility, restrict their access to leadership and decision-making positions, and marginalize their voices in the cultural narratives that shape the industry. These inequalities manifest not only in unequal pay and opportunities but also in the persistent stereotyping and sexualization of female artists, which often undermines their artistic contributions and reinforces harmful gender norms. Addressing these challenges requires more than isolated efforts; it demands comprehensive systemic change that tackles the root causes of discrimination. Educational reforms are crucial to foster critical awareness of gender biases from an early age, while the industry itself must adopt transparent policies promoting equal representation and fair treatment. Ultimately, a collective societal shift is essential, one that redefines traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity, values diverse expressions of identity, and supports an inclusive creative environment where all artists can thrive equally.

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Greenwashing Between Brand Responsibility and Lack of Citizens' Information: Case Study of Zara & H&M

Ema EÖRDÖGH

Abstract: *This article investigates the phenomenon of greenwashing within the fast fashion industry, focusing on consumer perception and knowledge gaps concerning sustainable practices, with a specific case study on H&M and Zara. Through a quantitative survey of 108 predominantly young, urban Romanian consumers, the study reveals a significant awareness of fashion's environmental impact, yet a pronounced lack of understanding regarding textile recycling processes and low trust in brands' recycling initiatives. A considerable intention-behavior gap is identified, alongside a strong motivation for recycling when direct rewards are offered. Based on these findings, the paper proposes a comprehensive communication campaign, "Detectivii de Greenwashing" (The Greenwashing Detectives), aimed at educating consumers, fostering authentic sustainable behaviors, and empowering individuals to identify and counteract greenwashing tactics. The campaign's strategic framework, including its mission, vision, objectives, and communication tactics, is detailed, supported by a SWOT analysis. This research underscores the critical need for transparent communication and robust consumer education to bridge the current information deficit and encourage genuine brand responsibility.*

Keywords: *greenwashing, fast fashion, consumer perception, sustainable fashion, textile recycling, brand responsibility, communication campaign, H&M, Zara.*

1. Introduction

The fashion industry, particularly its fast fashion segment, has long been under scrutiny for its significant environmental and social impact, encompassing high resource consumption,

pollution, and extensive waste generation (Fletcher, 2008; Morgan, 2015). In response to growing consumer environmental consciousness and regulatory pressures, many brands have initiated sustainability campaigns and introduced "eco-friendly" collections. However, this shift has also paved the way for "greenwashing", the deceptive practice of marketing products or organizations as environmentally friendly when they are not, or by making unsubstantiated claims (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). Greenwashing undermines consumer trust, hinders genuine sustainability efforts, and perpetuates unsustainable consumption patterns.

This article explores the intricate relationship between brand responsibility and consumer information, particularly in the context of greenwashing within the fast fashion sector, using H&M and Zara as prominent examples due to their widespread market presence and highly publicized sustainability initiatives. While these brands frequently promote textile take-back programs and "eco-conscious" lines, public skepticism regarding the authenticity and efficacy of these efforts remains high. The research aims to understand the current state of consumer knowledge and trust in Romania concerning these practices and to identify the barriers preventing more sustainable behaviors.

Building upon a comprehensive quantitative survey, this paper first analyzes consumer perceptions, awareness of greenwashing, understanding of recycling processes, and motivations for sustainable actions. Based on the identified gaps and opportunities, it then proposes a strategic communication campaign, "Detectivii de Greenwashing" (The Greenwashing Detectives), designed to empower citizens with accurate information, cultivate critical thinking towards green claims, and promote tangible sustainable choices. The paper concludes with a SWOT and PEST analysis of the proposed campaign, highlighting its strategic positioning within the current socio-economic and technological landscape.

2.Defining and Understanding Greenwashing

Greenwashing, a term coined in the 1980s, refers to the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service (TerraChoice, 2010). It manifests in various forms, including vague claims, irrelevant information, hidden trade-offs, fibbing, and outright falsehoods (Jain & Kaur, 2004). In the fast fashion industry, common greenwashing tactics include promoting small, "eco-friendly" collections while maintaining unsustainable core business models, using ambiguous terms like "conscious" or "sustainable" without clear definitions or certifications, and highlighting recycling initiatives that manage only a tiny fraction of returned garments (Niinimäki et al., 2020; Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011). The proliferation of greenwashing erodes consumer trust and makes it challenging for individuals to make truly sustainable purchasing decisions.

2.1.The Intention-Behavior Gap in Sustainable Consumption

Despite growing environmental awareness, a significant gap often exists between consumers' stated intentions to behave sustainably and their actual behavior (Carrington et al., 2010; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). This "intention-behavior gap" is particularly relevant in industries like fashion, where convenience, price, and aesthetic preferences often outweigh environmental considerations. Factors contributing to this gap include lack of knowledge, perceived high costs of sustainable alternatives, limited access to sustainable options, and a lack of clear, trustworthy information (Ajzen, 1991; Joshi & Rahman, 2015). For textile recycling, specifically, barriers can include inconvenience of collection points, lack of clear instructions on what to recycle, and doubts about the ultimate fate of donated garments.

## 2.2.The Role of Consumer Trust and Information Asymmetry

Consumer trust is paramount in driving sustainable consumption. When brands engage in greenwashing, they erode this trust, making consumers skeptical of all green claims, even legitimate ones. Information asymmetry, where brands possess more or better information than consumers, exacerbates this problem. Consumers rely on brand communication to make informed choices, but greenwashing exploits this reliance, leading to misinformed decisions (Cho et al., 2011). Effective communication campaigns aimed at counteracting greenwashing must prioritize transparency and provide verifiable information to rebuild and maintain consumer trust.

3.Research Methodology

3.1. Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following research questions to thoroughly investigate the phenomenon of greenwashing in the fast fashion industry:

1. How do consumers perceive greenwashing, and how does it influence their consumption preferences?
2. What factors contribute to the persistence and effectiveness of greenwashing campaigns in the digital era?
3. To what extent can recycling initiatives promoted by fast-fashion brands, such as H&M and Zara, be considered forms of greenwashing, and what is their real impact?

1. Feminin

2. Masculin
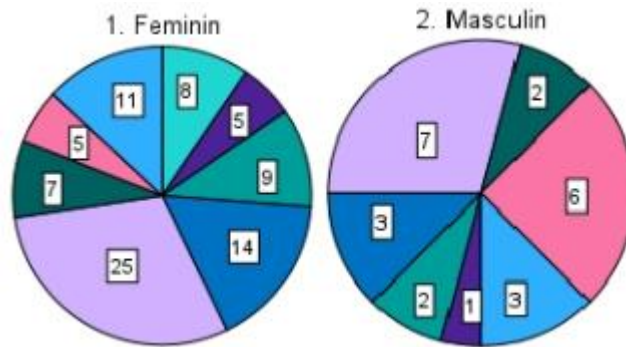
3.2. Data Collection

Figure 1. Age and gender distribution

A quantitative survey was conducted online to gather insights from 108 predominantly young, urban Romanian consumers. The questionnaire captured data on general environmental awareness, knowledge of textile recycling, trust in brand and NGO sustainability claims, and motivations for sustainable behaviors. The sample primarily consisted of women (77.6%), residing in urban areas (86.9%), and belonging to the 21-26 age demographic.

3.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the collected quantitative data, identifying key trends and patterns in consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. This analysis formed the empirical foundation for understanding the current landscape of greenwashing and informing the proposed communication campaign.

3.4. High Awareness, Low Specific Knowledge:

The survey results paint a nuanced picture of consumer engagement with sustainable fashion and greenwashing in Romania.

79

Figure 2. Degree of agreement with sustainability-related statements

A remarkable 70% of respondents demonstrated awareness of the fast fashion industry's negative environmental impact. This high level of general consciousness suggests a receptive audience for sustainability messages. However, this awareness does not translate into specific knowledge; a striking 80% (only 20% understanding) of respondents lacked a clear understanding of the textile recycling process, particularly what happens to returned garments in brand-led initiatives. This knowledge gap is a critical barrier, as consumers cannot trust or engage with processes they do not comprehend.

The case study of H&M and Zara revealed significant skepticism. Only 35% of respondents trusted that clothes returned in H&M or Zara campaigns are genuinely recycled, and an even lower 28% believed these brands contribute effectively to reducing textile waste. This low trust underscores the pervasive impact of perceived greenwashing. Brands' broad, often vague, sustainability claims, without transparent reporting or verifiable evidence, have led to consumer cynicism, a phenomenon well-documented in academic literature (Cho et al., 2011). The lack of confidence indicates that current brand communication strategies regarding recycling are largely ineffective in building genuine credibility.

3.5.The Intention-Behavior Gap and the Role of Rewards:

80
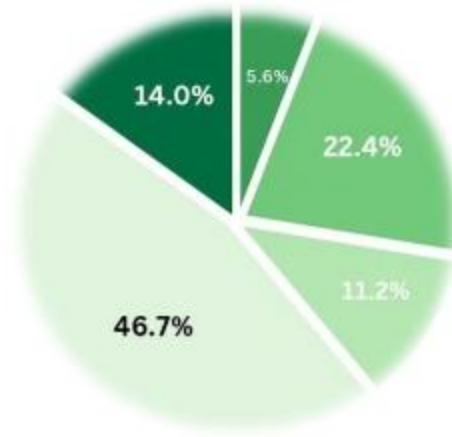
Figure 3. Participation in clothing collection campaigns

While 46,7% of respondents frequently donate unwanted clothes, actions with a potentially larger environmental impact, such as active textile recycling, only 22,4% or selling second-hand clothes (only 14%), are less common. This highlights the intention-behavior gap. Crucially, 67.3% of respondents stated they would be "very motivated" to recycle old clothes if offered direct rewards(e.g., vouchers, discounts). This finding suggests that financial incentives can effectively bridge the intention-behavior gap, aligning with economic theories of consumer motivation (Kotler & Keller, 2016). It also indicates that while intrinsic motivation for sustainability exists, extrinsic motivators can significantly accelerate desired behaviors.

4.Proposed Campaign: „Detectivii de Greenwashing" (The Greenwashing Detectives)

Based on the research findings, a comprehensive communication campaign, "Detectivii de Greenwashing," is proposed to address the identified challenges of information asymmetry, low trust, and the intention-behavior gap in combating greenwashing in the fast fashion industry.

4.1.Campaign Goals and Objectives (SMART):

The mission of the "Detectivii de Greenwashing" campaign is to educate and empower Romanian consumers, especially young urban residents, to identify and combat the phenomenon of greenwashing in the fashion industry. By providing clear information, practical tools, and promoting concrete sustainability actions (such as authentic recycling), we aim to transform the public's positive intention into responsible behavior and stimulate demand for truly ethical and transparent environmental practices.

We envision a future where consumers are fully informed and critical of marketing messages, capable of distinguishing authenticity from superficiality. Our vision is a fashion

industry where transparency and real sustainability become the norm, not the exception, and greenwashing is a practice deterred by the pressure of an active and conscious public.

The goal of this campaign is to create a national platform and movement that acts as a "radar" against greenwashing, consolidating public trust in genuine ecological initiatives and stimulating active involvement in solutions for reducing the carbon footprint in the fashion industry.

Campaign Objectives (SMART):

- Increase Understanding and Trust: By December 31, 2025, increase by 40% (from 20% to 60%) the proportion of respondents who understand the textile recycling process and by 20% (from 35% to 55%) trust in authentic sustainability campaigns from brands and NGOs, through transparent educational content on the campaign platform.
- Stimulate Concrete Recycling Actions: By March 31, 2026, improve by 15% (from 30% to 45%) the effective textile recycling rate and by 10% (from 25% to 35%) second-hand clothing sales among the target group, by introducing a reward system and an interactive map indicating collection points.
- Empower Consumers: By December 31, 2025, 70% of the campaign platform users will be capable of recognizing at least 3 common greenwashing methods, as evaluated by interactive quizzes, and will be motivated to report deceptive practices.

4.2. Target Audience:

Primary: Young adults (18-35 years old), predominantly women (77.6% of the sample), students and young professionals, from urban areas (86.9%), with a general high environmental awareness but lacking detailed knowledge of sustainability processes and low trust in greenwashing campaigns. These individuals are motivated by rewards and active on digital platforms.

Secondary: Mass media, environmental NGOs, consumer associations, regulatory bodies, and sustainability influencers.

4.3.Core Message and Slogans:

Core Message: „It's time to see beyond green! Discover the truth about your clothes, debunk eco-lies, and transform intention into action. Together, we build truly sustainable fashion – transparent, responsible, and rewarding!"

Slogan:

Fii tu detectivul care face curat în marketingul verde." (Be the detective who cleans up green marketing.)

4.4.Logo variants:

Table 1. SWOT Analysis:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
High Problem Awareness: 70% of respondents are aware of the negative impact of the fashion industry. **Receptive Target Audience:** Young people are open to educational messages and behavior changes. **Motivation through Reward:** 67.3% of respondents are motivated by vouchers/discounts.	**Lack of Process Understanding:** Only 20% understand the textile recycling process. **Intention-Behavior Gap:** Only 30% actually recycle and 25% sell second-hand, despite awareness. **Dependence on Partnerships:** The success of the rewards map and collection points requires strong collaborations..
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Growing Global Interest in Sustainability: The public agenda is increasingly focused on the environment. **Stricter EU Regulations:** A clear trend towards more rigorous standards for ecological claims (Green Claims Directive). Potential for NGO Collaboration: A receptive segment (40%) offers opportunities for strategic partnerships. Innovations in Recycling Technology: The emergence of new technologies can increase confidence in the process.	Fast Fashion Brands' Marketing Power: The financial capacity of large brands to invest heavily in greenwashing campaigns. Consumer Skepticism: Oversaturation of sustainability messages can lead to cynicism. Subject Complexity: Difficulty in simplifying information without losing accuracy. Rapid Changes in Consumer Trends: Fluctuations in consumer preferences can affect long-term engagement.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This research highlights a crucial paradox in contemporary consumer behavior regarding sustainable fashion: a high level of general environmental awareness coexists with a significant knowledge deficit about practical sustainability processes, particularly textile recycling, and a pronounced lack of trust in brands' green claims. The case of H&M and Zara underscores how perceived greenwashing by prominent fast fashion brands contributes to this cynicism, reinforcing the intention-behavior gap. The strong motivation elicited by direct rewards for recycling suggests a pragmatic pathway to encouraging more sustainable actions.

The "Detectivii de Greenwashing" campaign is strategically designed to address these core issues. By providing clear, verifiable information, empowering consumers with tools to identify greenwashing, and leveraging tangible incentives for recycling, the campaign aims to bridge the knowledge and trust gaps. Its comprehensive digital and offline tactics are tailored to engage a young, urban, and digitally native audience, fostering critical thinking and promoting genuine sustainable practices.

Recommendations for Future Research and Industry Practice:

- Longitudinal Studies: Future research should conduct longitudinal studies to track the evolution of consumer knowledge, trust, and behavior over time in response to such campaigns.
- Qualitative Insights: Deeper qualitative studies (e.g., focus groups) could explore the specific nuances of consumer skepticism and the most effective ways to rebuild trust.
- Brand Accountability: Further research is needed on the impact of regulatory frameworks (e.g., Green Claims Directive) on brand communication and actual sustainable practices.
- Industry Collaboration: Brands should prioritize genuine transparency, invest in verifiable certifications, and collaborate with credible third-party organizations (including NGOs) to validate their sustainability efforts and rebuild consumer trust.
- Infrastructure Development: National and local authorities, in partnership with the private sector, must invest in robust textile recycling infrastructure to support increased consumer participation.
- Ultimately, "Detectivii de Greenwashing" represents more than just a communication initiative; it is a commitment to fostering a more responsible consumer culture and promoting a truly sustainable fashion industry. Its success will not only be measured in engagement metrics but also in concrete shifts in consumer behavior and a renewed public trust in authentic green initiatives.

In conclusion, although the path to truly sustainable fashion consumption is complicated, the results of this study suggest a promising terrain for effective interventions. Based on these findings, we proposed an awareness campaign about the phenomenon of greenwashing and the effect of the textile recycling process on the environment.

The role of social media in attracting the public to museums in Timișoara

Bianca-Lorena GÎNGU

Abstract: *In recent years, museums in Romania and Europe have faced a growing need to adapt to the digital era to maintain relevance among the public, especially among younger audiences. This study analyzes how museums in Timișoara use social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok) to increase visibility, attract visitors, and promote cultural heritage. Through a combination of content analysis and a small-scale case study based on audience perceptions, the paper examines the effectiveness of digital communication strategies. The findings show that the use of interactive, visually appealing, and informative content contributes significantly to increasing museum attendance.*

Keywords: museums, Timișoara, social media, digital marketing, audience engagement, cultural communication

1. Introduction

In an era of digitization, traditional cultural institutions like museums must evolve to stay connected with modern audiences. According to ICOM (International Council of Museums), the role of museums is not only to preserve heritage but also to engage, educate, and inspire diverse publics. In Romania, particularly in Timișoara, museums are exploring digital communication channels, especially social media, to fulfill this mission.

Timișoara, as the European Capital of Culture in 2023, offered a fertile ground for cultural experimentation and innovation. In this context, the use of social media by museums is not just a marketing tool, but a form of digital mediation. This paper aims to analyze the concrete impact of social media on audience development and cultural participation in museums, focusing on content strategies, interactivity, and user perception.
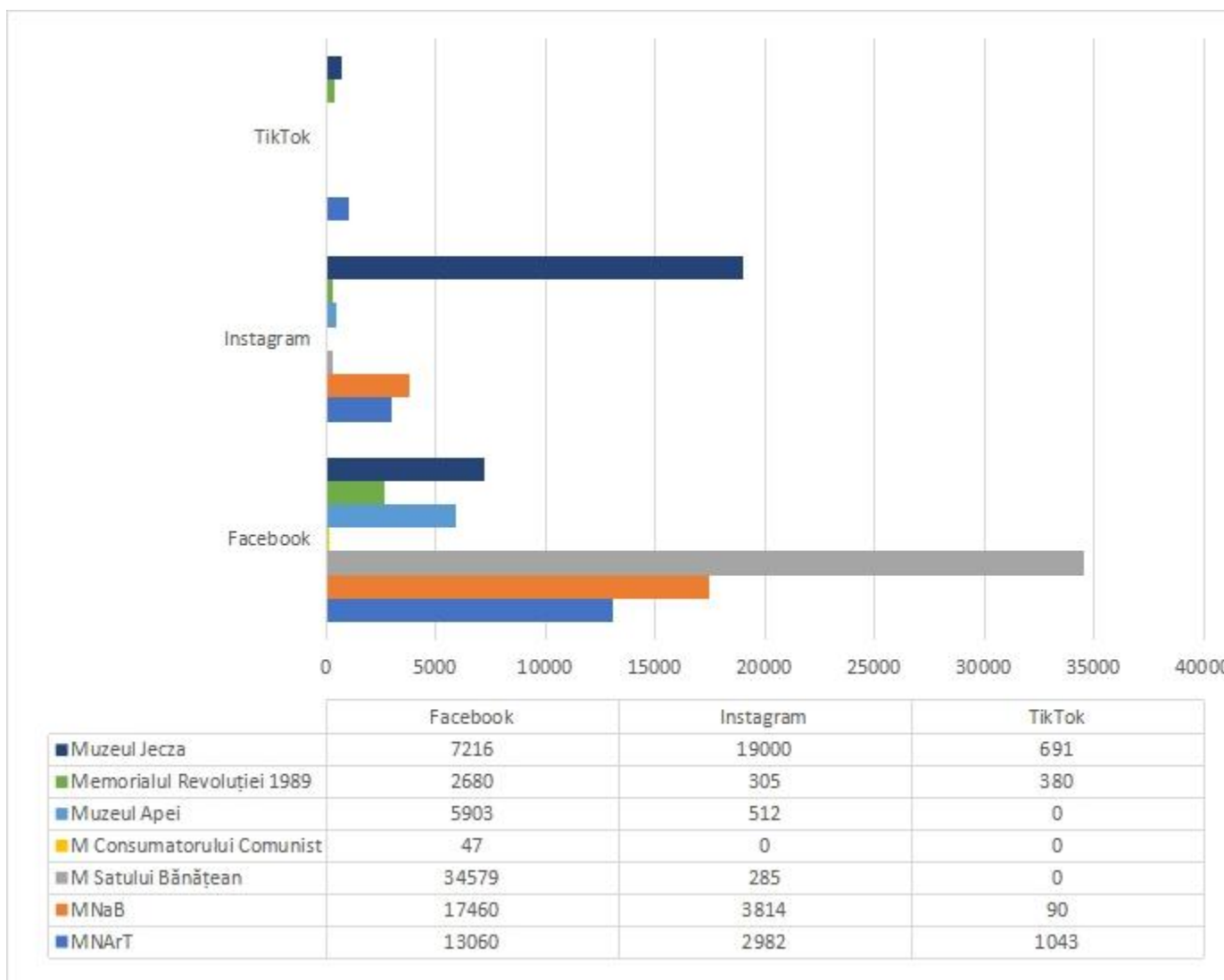
2. Research methods

The research is structured in two main parts: the theoretical framework and the practical investigation. The theoretical part reviews literature on the role of social media in cultural promotion for museums, while the practical part includes a comparative content analysis of the major museums in Timișoara.

Additionally, a qualitative questionnaire was distributed to 112 people to see how they view and explore the interaction with museums via social platforms and their motivation to visit.

3. Content Analysis Criteria
- Social media presence (platforms used)
- Posting frequency and engagement (likes, comments, shares)
- Use of multimedia (video, stories, reels, livestreams)
- Creativity and authenticity of content
- Integration of digital promotion techniques

	Facebook	Instagram	TikTok
Muzeul Jecza	7216	19000	691
Memorialul Revoluției 1989	2680	305	380
Muzeul Apei	5903	512	0
M Consumatorului Comunist	47	0	0
M Satului Bănățean	34579	285	0
MNaB	17460	3814	90
MNArT	13060	2982	1043

Table 1: Results regarding the followers of Timișoara museums on the three major social platforms

Score: Facebook: BVM – 34579, Instagram: JM – over 19000, TikTok: MNArT - 1043

88

Interpretation: Banat Village Museum has the most followers on Facebook, while on Instagram Jecza Museum has the most followers and for TiKTok MNArT has 1043 followers.

Case Study: Questionnaire

The 112 respondents were mostly students and young employees, aged between 18 and 30.

The data reflects the opinions, perceptions and behaviors of the participants in relation to the topic addressed and were collected anonymously, respecting confidentiality and informed consent. The analysis of these results forms the basis for the interpretations and conclusions formulated in this paper.

The majority declared that they discovered recent exhibitions through social media. Respondents also emphasized the importance of storytelling in posts and reels, behind-the-scenes content, and direct interaction via comments or live Q&A.

4. Discussion

Social media has become a vital element in the communication strategy of cultural institutions. The analysis demonstrates that engaging digital storytelling, visual formats like reels, and a high posting frequency significantly influence audience interaction. In Timișoara, the National Museum of Banat uses diversified content including collaborations for the cultural initiative Spotlight Heritage Timisoara which increases reach and interest.

On the other hand, Banat Village Museum relies heavily on physical events and traditional communication, which narrows its digital footprint. It misses the opportunity to present immersive experiences or user-generated content. The study also suggests that including visitors' stories and feedback can enhance the sense of community around museums.

Conclusion

This study confirms that social media is more than a marketing tool, it is a bridge between museums and new generations of visitors. To remain relevant, museums must:

- Develop a strong and consistent visual identity online.
- Invest in creative multimedia content (short videos, stories).
- Collaborate with cultural influencers or artists.
- Encourage interaction through polls, Q&A, and user-generated content.
- Use Instagram and TikTok actively for short-format, dynamic communication.

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AI tools used by PR specialists in Romania

Diana KRISTOF

Abstract: *This study examines the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) within Romania's public relations (PR) industry, focusing on how these emerging technologies are reshaping professional practices. The research is conducted in two phases: initially, it presents an analysis of the key AI tools relevant to the PR field, followed by an evaluation of the awareness and adoption levels of these tools among current PR practitioners and students preparing to enter the profession. By exploring how AI facilitates data-driven decision-making, message personalization, audience engagement, and campaign optimization, the study emphasizes the critical need to incorporate AI literacy into PR education and training. The findings offer valuable insights into the current adoption landscape among Romanian PR professionals, identify the most commonly utilized tools, and underscore the importance of equipping future specialists with the skills to leverage AI effectively.*

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming public relations (PR) by automating repetitive tasks, enhancing data analysis, and personalizing communication. These advances enable PR professionals to develop more effective strategies and respond swiftly to the dynamic challenges of the digital environment (Waddington, 2019, p. 33).

A key example of AI's impact in PR is the use of chatbots, which manage customer inquiries, distribute information, and maintain large-scale public engagement without requiring direct human intervention. This allows companies to communicate faster with their audiences, improving efficiency and responsiveness (Benítez Rojas, 2025, p. 1). Beyond chatbots, various AI-powered tools support PR activities. For instance, ChatGPT speeds up the creation of press releases and social media content (OpenAI, 2023), while design platforms like Canva simplify creative processes by suggesting visuals automatically (Canva, 2023). Tools such as Jasper.ai, Grammarly, and Copy.ai help save time and ensure stylistic consistency across communications (Kietzmann, 2018, p. 18).

AI also enhances media monitoring and public sentiment analysis through platforms like Brandwatch and Meltwater, which provide real-time insights into campaign impact (Wallace & Luttrell, 2023, p. 87). Communication efficiency is further improved by applications like Otter AI, which transcribes meetings automatically.

Moreover, new AI technologies expand creative possibilities by generating videos (Synthesia, Rephrase.ai), images (DALL·E), or transforming text into video clips (Pictory). Rather than replacing human creativity, these tools amplify it by automating routine tasks and enabling personalized content creation. Advanced software like Descript streamlines multimedia editing, optimizing workflow for PR professionals.

2. Research methods

The research employed three complementary methods to achieve a comprehensive and rigorous understanding of the use of artificial intelligence tools in public relations: content analysis, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys. Content analysis was conducted to systematically identify and evaluate the existing AI technologies relevant to the field, providing

a solid theoretical foundation. Qualitative interviews with public relations specialists offered in-depth insights into their experiences, challenges, and practical applications of these tools. Meanwhile, the quantitative survey gathered representative data on the perceptions and familiarity of current and future professionals with AI technologies.

By integrating these methods—content analysis, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys—the research provided a well-rounded perspective that combines theoretical frameworks, practical expertise, and social viewpoints. This mixed-methods approach proved essential for developing a nuanced and applicable understanding of how artificial intelligence is perceived and utilized within the domain of public relations.

3. Results

3.1 Content Analysis – AI Tools Comparison

To standardize the analysis of AI tools, a set of key criteria was selected to reflect their popularity, accessibility, and practical applicability: cost (financial accessibility), functionality (practical utility), Romanian language support (effective local use), online popularity (Google search volume), and adoption rate (estimated number of users).

AI Tool	Cost	Functionality	Estimated Number of Users	Google Search Volume	Romanian Language Support
ChatGPT	Free version: limited access ChatGPT Plus: ~$20/month	Natural and conversational text generation Support for creative/professional writing Translations and paraphrasing Idea generation & brainstorming	~474 million weekly active users & 4.3 billion visits	Max volume on Google Trends (score 100); ~50M searches/month Most searched in Bucharest, Cluj, Timiș	Excellent support – fluent conversations, translations, and text generation in Romanian

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Grammarly	Free version: basic checks Premium: ~$12–15/month Business plans: custom pricing (higher for teams)	Grammar and spell checks Style and tone suggestions Plagiarism detection Clarity and conciseness improvement Vocabulary recommendations	~30 million daily users + 50,000 business accounts	High volume (score 65–70) – often in top 10 writing tools Most interest in Bucharest, Timiș, Iași	English-only support (does not correct Romanian text)
Canva AI	Free version: limited design access Canva Pro: ~$120/year (free for students/teachers) Teams: $300/year (3 users) Business: custom pricing	AI graphic design generation Fast creation of templates and layouts Auto image and element adjustment Font/color suggestions Visual content generation (text & graphics)	~180 million monthly active users 16 million paying Pro users (includes AI features)	High volume (score 70) – "Canva AI" frequently searched Popular in Bucharest, Iași, Cluj	Romanian interface available; AI text generation in Romanian is weaker than in English
Jasper AI	Creator Plan: $39/month Pro Plan: $59/month Business: custom pricing	AI content writing for marketing and social media Blog, email, ad copy generation SEO optimization Idea generation, multiple variants Style/tone adjustment for target audience	~100,000 paying users	High volume (score 60) 500K+ visits/month (Google Analytics); volume increasing Mostly searched in Bucharest, Cluj, Timiș	Can generate Romanian text, but lower quality than English
Rephrase.ai	Functionality now available via Adobe Creative Cloud	AI avatar video creation Facial/voice customization Text-to-video transformation	User data not public	Medium volume (score 45) Top searches:	No Romanian support (avatars do not pronounce Romanian correctly)

		Marketing and communication messages		Bucharest, Timiș, Cluj	
Otter Voice Notes	Free: limited transcription minutes/month Pro: $8.33/month Business: $20/month Custom plans for companies	Audio-to-text transcription Speaker identification Conversation summaries & highlights Integration with collaboration tools	~20 million users	Medium volume (score 55) Used mostly in Bucharest, Cluj, Timiș	Good voice recognition in English; weak/absent for Romanian
Brandwatch	Custom business pricing only	Social media sentiment monitoring Brand & competitor tracking Demographic/behavioral analysis Marketing strategy reports	~100,000 users and 9.9 million site visits	Low volume (score 45) Most interest in Bucharest, Brașov, Cluj	Can include Romanian in social media analysis depending on advanced settings
Synthesia	Free version: limited transcription minutes Starter: $18/month Creator: $64/month Business: custom pricing	AI video generation with avatars Avatar and background customization Fast video content for education/marketing	~50,000+ users	Medium volume (score 50) Popular in Sibiu, Constanța, Bucharest	Can generate video in Romanian, but voices are limited/artificial sounding
DALL·E 3	Free version via ChatGPT (image generation limits)	Realistic/artistic image generation from text prompts Unique, varied visuals	~50 million active users	High volume (score 85) Most searches	Romanian commands work (best with clear phrasing); may require

DALL·E 3	More images available with ChatGPT Plus	AI image manipulation/editing		in Bucharest, Timiș, Cluj	English reformulations
Pictory PICTORY	14-day free plan Starter: $19/month Professional: $39/month Teams: $99/month (3 users) Business: custom pricing	Auto video creation from text/articles AI-powered video scene editing Automatic subtitles/visual elements	~1 million active users	Low volume (score 35) Top interest: Ilfov, Bucharest, Timiș	Does not support Romanian for text extraction from video/articles
Descript descript	Free plan (1 transcription/month) Hobbyist: $16/month Creator: $24/month Business: $50/month Enterprise: custom pricing	Text-based audio/video editing (like word processor) AI transcription & synced editing Voiceover generation Noise removal and audio optimization	~6 million+ users	No significant search volume data	Audio transcription/editing only in English
Eleven Labs Eleven Labs	Free plan: 10,000 characters/month, 3 voices Starter: $1/month – 30,000 chars Creator: $11/month – 100,000 chars Pro: $99/month – 500,000 chars Scale: $330/month – 2M chars Business: $1,320/month – 11M chars	Natural voice generation for audiobooks, podcasts, voiceovers Voice/intonation customization High-quality text-to-speech	~1 million+ users	Low volume (score 40) Popular in Satu Mare, Vrancea, Coșava	Excellent Romanian voice synthesis support, including voice cloning
Hootsuite	30-day free trial (full features) Standard:	Social media post scheduling Mentions/conversation	~18 million+ users	Very low volume	Interface and features in Romanian; no

Hootsuite	$99/user/month Advanced: $249/user/month Enterprise: custom pricing	tracking Content performance analytics Team collaboration		(score 20) Most searched in Dâmbovița, Suceava, Bucharest	Romanian AI features
Meltwater <O> Meltwater	Custom business pricing only	Media monitoring & sentiment analysis News and press tracking PR/marketing insights and reports Competitor & trend analysis	~270,000 users	Very low volume (score 15) Interest in Bucharest, Timiș, Cluj	Can analyze Romanian content depending on local sources
DeepSwap DeepSwap	Free plan (limitations such as low resolution, watermark, 5 swaps); Monthly Plan: $9.99 (promotional price, then $19.99/month), includes 20 credits; Annual Plan: $49.99/year ($4.17/month), includes 20 credits per month – a significant saving compared to the monthly subscription	Deepfake video creation (face swaps) Avatar and video personalization	~150 million+ active users	Very low volume (score 30) Popular in Bucharest, Cluj, Timiș	Works regardless of language; AI narration is in English

Table 1. Data collected by the author

The most popular and widely used AI tool from the list is ChatGPT, with over 474 million weekly active users and the highest Google search volume, also offering the best Romanian language support for fluent text generation and conversations. For Romanian voice synthesis, Eleven Labs is the top-performing option, while Grammarly, although very effective and affordable for English language checking, does not support Romanian.

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In the visual content domain, Canva AI leads in quick design and creation, while DALL·E 3 excels at generating artistic images with Romanian commands, albeit with some limitations. Most AI video and audio tools have limited or weak Romanian language support, except Eleven Labs, which provides advanced voice synthesis. Therefore, the choice of AI tool strongly depends on specific needs—text, voice, image, or video—while considering Romanian language support.

3.2. Interview with PR Specialists

Six interviews were conducted, each structured around ten questions exploring familiarity with AI, its benefits, limitations, and challenges in public relations. The findings reveal an early-stage integration of tools like ChatGPT, Google Translate, Grammarly, Canva, and Hootsuite, which improve communication efficiency and quality. However, respondents stress the importance of human oversight and transparency to maintain public trust. A key insight from the interview with Iulia Marcu, PR specialist at Iulius Group, emphasizes that AI serves as an enabler rather than a replacement: "PR is not just about writing and organizing events, as it is often perceived. A good PR professional is actually a strategist. AI can support us, but it cannot anticipate crises, read social dynamics, or build human relationships — the core of our profession." This highlights that while AI transforms PR work, human skills remain essential, and the integration of AI must be accompanied by clear regulations and proper training.

3.3. Questionnaire distribution among upcoming PR Specialists

The questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms to Public Relations students, selected for their relevance to the field. A total of 106 responses were gathered from an estimated pool of 500, providing a robust foundation for analyzing future professionals' perceptions of
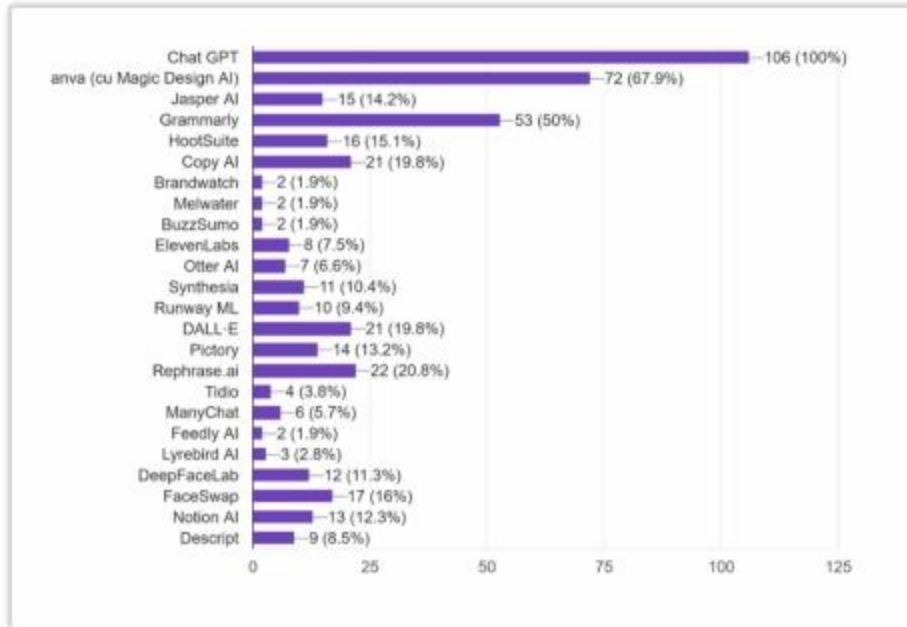
artificial intelligence in PR. This method ensured standardized data collection and facilitated objective analysis.

Figure 1. Awareness of existing AI tools

Results, shown in Figure 1, reveal high awareness of popular, broadly applicable platforms: 100% of participants knew ChatGPT, followed by Canva's Magic Design AI (67.9%) and Grammarly (50%). In contrast, specialized AI tools for public relations, such as Brandwatch, BuzzSumo, and Meltwater, were recognized by only 1.9%, highlighting a significant knowledge gap. This disparity points to a clear need for enhanced professional training focused on advanced AI applications within the PR field.
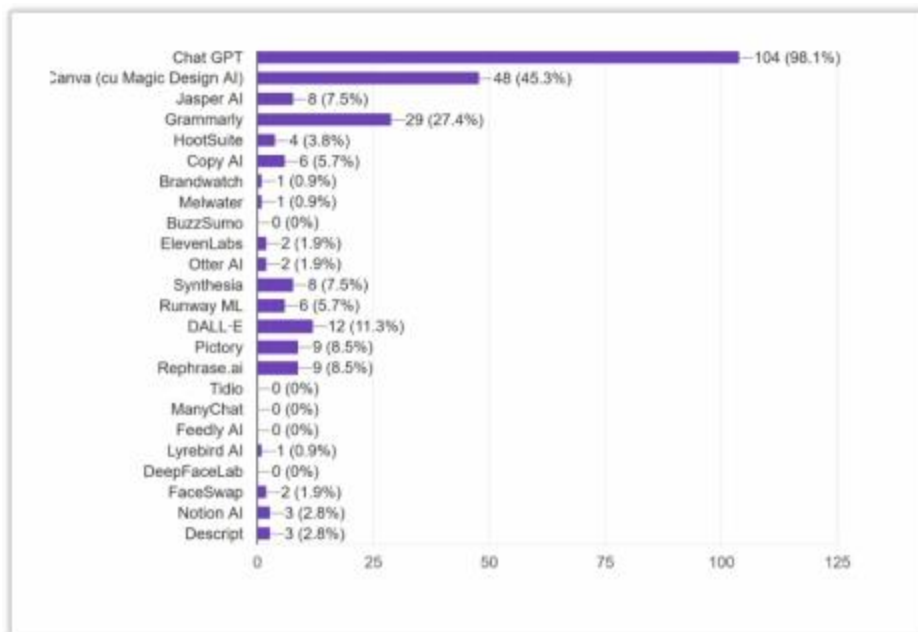

Figure 2. Usage of AI tools

The survey results presented in Figure 4 indicate that an overwhelming majority of respondents (98.1%) use ChatGPT, followed by Canva AI (45.3%) and Grammarly (27.4%), demonstrating a clear preference for AI tools focused on writing and design. Other tools like DALL·E, Pictory, and Jasper AI see moderate usage, while many specialized AI applications (e.g.,

Brnadwatch, Meltwater, DeepFaceLab) remain almost unused. These findings suggest users favor generalist AI solutions that are easy to incorporate into daily tasks.
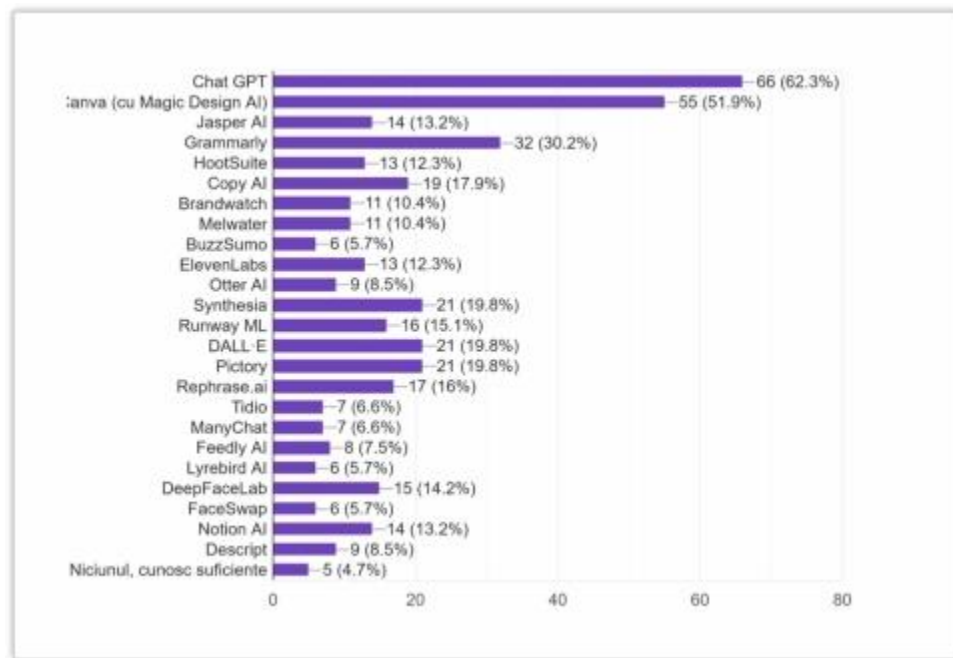
Figure 3. Interest in studying various AI Tools among future PR professionals

Figure 3 illustrates that the majority of respondents (62.3%) wish to study ChatGPT, followed by Canva's Magic Design AI (51.9%) and Grammarly (30.2%), reflecting strong interest in AI tools for content creation and editing. Other popular choices include Synthesia, DALL·E, and Pictory (each at 19.8%), indicating an attraction to video and visual applications. In contrast, niche tools like BuzzSumo, Lyrebird AI, and FaceSwap garnered low interest (5.7%), while only 4.7% of respondents stated they do not wish to study any AI tools, feeling sufficiently knowledgeable. These results highlight a clear preference for creative, conversational AI that integrates easily into professional activities.

4. Conclusion

The research revealed that the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in public relations in Romania is already underway, though still at an early to medium stage, with notable differences between the public and private sectors. Tools such as ChatGPT—which is used by 98.1% of students surveyed—alongside Canva AI (used by 45.3%) and platforms like Grammarly and Hootsuite, are the most commonly adopted for tasks like writing, translation, content verification, and multimedia creation, valued for their efficiency and ease of use. Moreover, over 60% of respondents expressed a strong interest in deepening their knowledge and skills related to these AI tools. Despite this widespread use and interest, adoption of more advanced technologies specialized in video, audio, or media analysis remains low, reflecting limited familiarity and resources among professionals. The study also found an uneven distribution of AI knowledge, concentrated mainly in large cities, with a clear preference for user-friendly tools.

Perceptually, AI is viewed as an operational support rather than a human replacement, with professionals emphasizing the need for human oversight to avoid errors, lack of context, and ethical risks. Both practitioners and students recognize AI's benefits in improving communication efficiency and quality, alongside challenges related to ethics, privacy, and transparency. The findings highlight the emergence of a new professional profile combining traditional skills with digital and critical competencies, underscoring the urgent need to rethink educational curricula to include practical AI training and digital ethics.

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Analysis and Optimization of the Event Organization Process. Case study: PoliKids Fest 2023

Raluca ILISIE

Abstract: *The planning and execution of successful events are crucial in various areas of activity ranging from business conferences to cultural festivals. This scientific article explores the intricate world of event organization, focusing on the analysis and optimization of the processes involved. By studying the existing methods and implementing strategies for improvement, this research aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of event management. Realizing the impact of well-organized events on the economy and society, this study offers valuable insights for practitioners and researchers alike.*

Keywords: *planning, events, conferences, process, organization, improvement, optimization*

Introduction

In today's world, the planning and execution of events has become an integral part of various sectors, from corporate conferences and trade exhibitions to cultural events, sports gatherings or kids events. Events, in their diverse forms, serve as powerful platforms for communication, connection, and engagement, making them a cornerstone of modern society. Whether they aim to convey a message, celebrate culture, foster innovation, or drive economic growth, events demand careful orchestration, strategic planning, and flawless execution. The efficacy and success of these events, thus, hinge upon the proficiency and acumen of the event organizers.

The theme of this scientific article, *"Analysis and Optimization of the Event Organization Process. Case study: PoliKids Fest 2023"* dives us into the heart of event management, finding its complexities and exploring strategies for enhancement. By examining the fundamental aspects of event organization and identifying opportunities for refinement, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights to practitioners, researchers, and stakeholders alike.

The process of organizing an event is an important endeavor, requiring the harmonious collaboration of various elements. From setting clear objectives and identifying the target audience to meticulous planning, effective resource allocation, promotion, seamless execution, and postevent evaluation, each stage demands careful consideration and

expertise. The pursuit of event organization excellence mandates an understanding of current trends, innovative practices, and adaptable strategies.

This scientific article aims to unveil the intricate layers of the event organization process. It provides a comprehensive overview of the

PoliKids Fest 2023 event, highlighting both its strengths and weaknesses.

Furthermore, with an analytical perspective focused on the various stages of the event organization process, we intend to examine each aspect regarding strengths, challenges, and potential areas for improvement. By conducting a rigorous analysis and incorporating practical strategies for optimization, our research will provide a plan to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of event management.

Research method

The primary objective of this paper is to conduct a thorough analysis and optimization of the event organization process, focusing on the case study of the *PoliKids Fest 2023* event.

After consulting various specialized event organization books, I have created a framework with which I will evaluate the *PoliKids Fest 2023* event. This framework will help identify the strengths and weaknesses in the organization of this event.

I have employed a single research method, namely comparative analysis. Comparative analysis allows us to compare different aspects of the event organization process, identify effective practices, and uncover potential inefficiencies. As follows:

Aspect	Criteria	Description	Evaluation
Budget	Cost estimation	5.000 €	✓

	Funding sources	Partners sponsorship	✓
Venue	Location	Stadionul Știința Parcul Mecanică	✓
	Capacity	5.000	✓
Schedule	Date and time	27.05.2023	✓
Marketing	Promotion strategy	Facebook, Instagram, Linkedin, posters, city led screens, Avizier, StudentUPT application press release,	✓
	Target audience	1 year – 99 years	✓

Speakers/ Entertainm ent	Selection		✓
		Hot air balloon rides, Slides, trampolines and carousel, Animation from "Degetu' mic", The play – "Albă ca zăpada și mai mulți pitici", magic show, workshops for children, Face painting, Bicycle competition with prizes,	
	Contractors	Degetu' Mic, Nora Restaurant, Oltenia SKY Team,	✓

Logistics	Transportat ion	It was ensured by a department of the Politehnica University of Timișoara.	✓

	Equipment	-	X
Catering	Menu	Nora restaurant	✓
	Dietary restrictions		X
Registratio n	Online registration		
	On-site registration		X
		It was a free admission event. Registrations were only made at the hot air balloon rides.	
Evaluation	Feedback collection	Facebook comments, Face-to-face feedback	✓

	Post-event analysis	Revista presei	✓
Safety	Emergency plan	We had a SMURD team throughout the event.	✓
	Security measures	There was a security team present throughout the event.	✓
Promotion	Social media presence	Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIN	✓
	Media partnerships	TeleUniversitatea Timișoara	✓

Results

The evaluation of various aspects of the Poli Kids Fest 2023 event provides a comprehensive perspective on its strengths and areas that require attention.

The management of the event's budget and funding sources was well-coordinated, with cost estimation staying within the allocated budget and secured partnerships for financial support. The choice of the venue at Stadionul Știința, Parcul Mecanică, with a capacity of 5,000, was appropriate, and the set date for May 27, 2023, was also well-timed.

The marketing strategy was extensive, encompassing a wide variety of promotional tools to reach a diversified target audience, from 1 to 99 years old. The selection of speakers and entertainment options was diverse, offering a wide range of activities for participants, and contracts were secured with experienced specialists.

Logistics, transportation, and safety measures were appropriately addressed, with an SMURD team and security personnel present during the event. The promotion strategy through social media and media partnerships contributed to the visibility and success of the event. Five Facebook posts, five on Instagram, three on LinkedIn, two press releases, and three weeks of advertisements on seven LED screens throughout the city were executed.

However, there are specific areas that require attention for future improvements. Equipment provision was not very well executed, which slightly affected the event's effectiveness. Dietary restrictions could be taken more seriously, especially considering it is an event involving children. What caused more inconvenience were the limited registration options for hot air balloon rides.

To summary, the Poli Kids Fest 2023 event highlights multiple strengths in its planning and organization, particularly in budget management, venue selection, promotion, entertainment, and safety. To enhance the overall event experience, it is recommended to approach equipment provision more seriously, give more consideration to dietary restrictions, and offer more convenient registration options for participants in future editions. The event's ability to adapt and improve in these areas will be essential for its long-term success.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article delves into the intricate world of event organization, with a particular focus on the analysis and optimization of the processes involved. The case study of PoliKids Fest 2023 serves as a valuable example for dissecting the strengths and weaknesses of event planning and execution. The research has provided a comprehensive evaluation of various aspects of the event, from budgeting and venue selection to marketing strategies, entertainment choices, logistics, catering, registration, safety measures, and promotion.

The examination of PoliKids Fest 2023 reveals a well-organized event with several commendable aspects, including effective sponsorship partnerships, a suitable venue with ample capacity, a diverse array of entertainment options, and strong marketing efforts through various channels. Additionally, the presence of safety measures, a robust emergency plan, and a dedicated security team enhance the overall safety and security of the event.

However, there are areas that warrant attention and improvement, such as equipment provision, dietary restrictions for catering, and a more streamlined approach to registration. Nevertheless, the event's successful feedback collection and post-event analysis demonstrate the commitment to continuous improvement.

Overall, this analysis and optimization process serve as a valuable resource for event organizers and researchers, offering insights into best practices and areas for enhancement in the ever-evolving landscape of event management. As events continue to play a vital role in modern society, the pursuit of excellence in event organization remains paramount, and this study provides a roadmap for achieving just that.

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Evaluation of educational platforms for learning English

Andreea-Maria ȘDIREA

Abstract: *The English language has long been an asset, facilitating communication between people of different nationalities for the exchange of information since ancient times, when the ability to communicate between different nations began to change the world. But in recent years, learning English has become increasingly necessary as globalization takes its toll. The world has become increasingly interested in learning this international language, and for those who haven't had the opportunity to learn it in school, one way that makes it easier for them to learn it is through digital English learning platforms. For those who have also had the opportunity to study it, they are an extra help. The aim of my research is to analyze different educational platforms for learning English, such as Duolingo and Coursera. A built survey on the same topic had the objective of finding out which are the most appreciated English language learning platforms in Romania and how useful they are, how they help and how they fit into the requirements of the Common European Framework of Reference levels that help to certify a level of knowledge.*

Keywords: English, learning platforms, digital platforms, CEFR levels, Duolingo, Coursera

1. Introduction

In today's world, people are at a time when they are more aware than ever about the importance of communication, the ability to exchange information, experiences, discoveries, helping humanity to evolve. For that to happen though, people have

discovered in time, by evolving, and through a long history of misunderstandings and miscommunication, that it is necessary, by any means, to find a way not only to communicate, but to actually understand each other. That's where the English language came in, a means to finally be able to communicate, and it all started through the colonization of the British Empire which made English mandatory in the different territories it conquered around the world and that built the foundation of it spreading everywhere.

In time and through globalization, English has gone from being Europe's language to becoming the world's lingua franca (Salemone, 2021). A linga franca refers to a language which is spoken by people with different mother tongues in order to understand each other. Through time, the world has known a good number of lingua franca such as Armaic, which was used in ancient times as a lingua franca before Greek and Latin; but also French, which is still an important language especially in the European Union, but that has been slowly but surely ousted by English. Through today's technology, people are able to do so much more about their abilities to communicate in a different language than their native one, being able to access different digital sources which help them improve their languages skills, and by doing that they open more doors with opportunities.

It is well acknowledged and has been proven through research in a vast number of studies, such as "The World's Most Spoken Languages" published by Statista in 2020 and conducted by researchers from Ehnologue, that the English language is not the most spoken foreign language as a mother tongue, but it is still found in top three alongside Chinese (Mandarin) and Spanish, being followed then by Hindi in the fourth place. The same ranking in terms of people having these languages as their native ones is valid in 2025 as well, but of course, with different numbers. Even though English is on the third place in the ranking of native speakers of this language, a more recent Ethnologue study of the top twenty most widely spoken languages shows that English is by far the most known as the second language known people nowadays, making it the most widely spoken language in the entire world.

2. Research

The purpose of my research is to dive in a thorough analysis of digital platforms that are used for learning the English language, that is a tool for everyone today because

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of all the extra opportunities it offers, analysis realized based on a set of criteria regarding both the pedagogical aspects of learning a language according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the technological features of the platforms through which the learning is facilitated nowadays. Besides the in-depth analysis of the digital platforms, a survey was conducted to investigate Romanian learners' knowledge, opinions, preferences regarding digital platforms for learning foreign languages and their effectiveness, specifically for learning English, so as to combine the analysis of the applications with user perspectives for more clarity on the progress they can offer in learning this skill.

In this paper is presented a comparative analysis of two out of the fifteen educational platforms for learning English that were analysed in the dissertation paper, the two chosen ones for this analysis being Duolingo and Coursera. Duolingo, more known as a mobile application for foreign language learning, even though it's not only a mobile application, but also one of the most popular platforms in terms of language learning. It offers accessible language practice through bite-sized content that highlights gamified learning through a daily commitment to learning. Its comparison English learning platform, Coursera it's a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) that contains courses that were developed by certified institutions, therefore academic content, focusing on specialised English language programs for a variety of professional contexts. The chosen educational platforms help distinguish between the informal and formal digital learning environments.

The criteria used for their analysis were split in five different categories that contain tables for a better visualisation of the met or unmet criteria for each platform. The technical and financial accessibility, the course structure and progression, the competences emphasized, the content type and feedback and the motivation and interaction are the five main criteria that were used for the evaluation of the chosen digital platforms.

To add value to the evaluation through the analysis of the digital platforms, I have also conducted a survey that has 74 respondents, all Romanian people that had helped to give an opinion about these digital platforms. The main topics the survey covered were the platforms that are known by the Romanian people and used, the opinions on costs, content, features, AI usage, recommendations, and CEFR levels knowledge.

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3. Results

For a better evaluation of English learning platforms, a total number of fifteen applications were analyzed. In this article, the focus will be on only the two mentioned in the research part, namely Duolingo and Coursera.

3.1 Platform Comparison

The comparison between the educational platforms is highlighted through five main categories that contain different, but relevant criteria, that were also visually aided through tables which help with an easier distinction of what both Duolingo and Coursera have to offer. In the tables, the following symbols were used to show to what extent each of the platforms meets the listed criteria: (+) for a criterion met, (/) for a criterion partially met and (-) for one that was not met.

- **Technical and Financial Accessibility of the English Learning Platforms**

Platform name	Mobile app.	Desktop access	Offline mode	Free content	Trial or demo	UI friendly design
Duolingo	+	+	/	+	+	+
Coursera	+	+	/	/	+	+

Table 1: Technical and Financial Accessibility

When it comes to the technical accessibility of the platforms, both Duolingo and Coursera can be accessed through a mobile application and through a device with desktop, such as computers and laptops. The offline mode is somewhat accessible for both, but in certain conditions. In Duolingo's case, the offline mode is accessible if the user has a subscription to the premium plan, for Coursera, it depends on the way of access of the chosen course, which differs from one to another.

Regarding the content of the courses, Coursera's would be qualified as partially free, and that is because the platform itself isn't free, but as highlighted in the table, it

offers a trial period in which it can be tried and used for free. The trial is seven days long, and it requires the credit card data for the user to be allowed to access all the platform has to offer. Then, there are still some courses that require payment for full access to them. Whereas, Duolingo can be used and offers content for free, but with a twist. It is marked with a positive mark in the table in the trial box since this application also has a seven-days trial for what it's called ''Super Duolingo'', a subscription that provides more learning content, unlimited tries for one makes mistakes, actual skills practice, reviews of the mistakes, and also no advertisements.

The UI-design is friendly for both the platforms, but the nuance is different, as Duolingo looks more cartoonish and even childish, colourful and cheerful, whereas Coursera has a more professional look, but still as easily to navigate.

- **Content Type and Feedback of the English Learning Platforms**

Platform name	Content variety				Feedback	
	Video	**Audio**	**Text**	**Speaking**	**Automated**	**Teacher-based**
Duolingo	-	+	+	+	+	-
Coursera	+	+	+	+	/	+

Table 2: Content Type and Feedback

In terms of content, the video content is the only kind that Duolingo is lacking. Besides that, even in the free version, the learner has access to content that consists of exercises requiring reading and writing, so with the use of text, and speaking and listening exercises, so also audio content and speaking lessons. The feedback on the exercises is automated, machine based, lacking a teacher's perspective or explanations for a better understanding, especially when the user has got something wrong.

Coursera, however, checks all the criteria when it comes to the content it provides, as it offers a variety of courses for different purposes, so a person can select a course more focused on writing, speaking, or even one that is helpful for obtaining a CEFR certificate, which would train all the skills needed. Compared to Duolingo, the content provided on this platform is formal and academic. The feedback might lack the machine learning speed, as it is not automated, but it is teacher-based as the courses provide explanations from specialized people.

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- **Competencies Emphasized**

Platform name	Grammar	Speaking practice	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Listening	Reading
Duolingo	+	/	/	+	/	+
Coursera	+	/	/	+	+	+

Table 3: Competencies Emphasized

When using these platforms in order to learn a language, it is more than learning how do the words translate, but training different skills in that language. The skills that the CEFR levels are highlighting are reading, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension. As such, it is important to see how worked these skills with the help of digital English learning platforms are.

In the table assigned for criteria regarding the competencies, can be observed that neither of the apps is fully lacking any of the skills. For the partially marked ones, Duolingo is not specific enough. When it comes to exercises that are practicing speaking and pronunciation, the only review gotten in the free version is that the app did not capture the sound through the microphone. And of course, if you do not get the pronunciation right, it makes you repeat but does not explain why it is wrong. You have to listen, by clicking manually, on what you have to reproduce in order to finally be able to get it. Also, speaking exercises are not mandatory, you can choose an option for not being able to speak, so there is really no focus on the oral practice.

Coursera meets all the criteria but with the right English course chosen. As mentioned in the previous segment, about the content type, is all about what the user chooses from the courses that are found on the platform.

- **Course Structure, Time Efficiency and Progression of the English Learning Platforms**

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Platform name	Structured course	Efficiency		Placement tests	Adapted CEFR	Certification
		Time consuming	Reminders			
Duolingo	+	+	+	+	-	-
Coursera	+	/	/	/	+	/

Table 4: Course Structure and Progression

Both Duolingo and Coursera contain a clear structure, even though in different ways. In Duolingo, it is about levels, and those are divided in chapters with a number of sections which conclude with a revision and a test before being able to unlock the next chapter. For Coursera, it again depends on the course, as they all differ in regard to their purpose, but they contain a clear structure developed by a specialised person in the language. The placement tests are an optional choice for Duolingo, for Coursera being required only in case of enrolling for a programme with a CEFR certification. Speaking of CEFR levels, they are followed and applied clearly in the content Coursera has to offer, whereas Duolingo lacks the adaptation on the requirements set by them, while also lacking the possibility to obtain a certification through this platform.

- **Motivation and Interaction Features of the English Learning Platforms**

Platform name	Gamification	Personalized learning	Human interaction	AI functions	Real-life applicability
Duolingo	+	/	/	+	/
Coursera	-	+	+	+	+

Table 5: Motivation and Interaction

Just as significant as others, the motivational and social aspect of the platforms can't be neglected. When it comes to most of the initial mobile apps only, gamification is a mostly met feature, such is the case of Duolingo. It refers to the usage of elements that are game-like, such as points for experience, levels, badges, streaks, leaderboards and ''lives'' (limits for the mistakes made) such as Duolingo has implemented. Coursera does not contain any of these features, being focused on academic motivation. The personalised learning is obvious in the contents offered by Coursera, whereas Duolingo

has content somewhat personalised once subscribed to the premium variant of the platform.

Human interaction would have been positively marked two years ago for Duolingo as well, as Coursera offers access to contact the teachers of the courses or other learners. Until 2023, Duolingo also had a forum where learners could have interacted with each other. Now, the only interaction is through leader boards, where you can see the progress of the friends you add on the app. The artificial intelligence, however, was implemented on both apps, Duolingo even having an AI-chatting feature which to help with learning Englis better, also through calls. Coursera's AI is more about reliability, helping with translations of the courses, facilitations for the exams, as well as plagiarism detection.

The real-life applicability is partial in the case of Duolingo, as it is positive for those who are looking for more elementary bits of knowledge of a language, especially by only using the free version. Coursera, as mentioned earlier, is academic and facilitates access even to accredited courses through which can be obtain a certification, so more useful in real life contexts.

3.2 Survey results

For a better understanding of how people perceive the English learning platforms and how useful they are, I have conducted a survey about the evaluation of English learning digital platforms. All the 74 respondents of the survey are Romanian, with ages varying from under 18 to over 45, the most answers being from people with ages between 18 and 25, but with no data about the gender or residence of the people.

Among the first questions, the sixth one, the people were asked about the English learning platforms they have heard about, closely followed by a question about which ones have they also used. In both these questions, amongst the 15 options with the possibility of more being added, Duolingo was the most chosen one. Out of the 74 people, 63 have heard about it and 57 have also used it, showing the widespread recognition of the app among Romanian English learners. Coursera wasn't mentioned by any of the respondents, which indicates a lack of awareness among this demographic.

The most preferred features by the respondents were the interactivity caused by gamification and the daily routine of the platforms, with a percentage of 58,1% and 55,4% at a significant distance from other options. According to this, the preferences align more closely with Duolingo's design, highlighting how relevant is the engagement aspect of an English learning platform.

A concerning aspect of the results of the survey consisted in the percentage of over 20%, more specifically 20,3% out of the 100% of persons that said that are not aware of the CEFR levels, showing how some of the platforms need to implement the standardized proficiency levels which would also help with educating people about them.

4. Conclusion

The increasing reliance on digital tools for language acquisition has significantly reshaped the way English is learned, practiced, and assessed. This work set out to evaluate a wide range of English learning platforms through clearly defined pedagogical and technological criteria, including accessibility, skills targeted, course structure, personalization, feedback mechanisms, and motivational features.

The comparison between Duolingo, a gamified, skill-focused app, and Coursera, a formal course provider, highlights how platforms cater to different learning goals and user profiles, from casual daily learners to exam-preparing professionals. Both platforms offer progress, but their contrast underlines the importance of matching platform choice with learner needs and objectives.

The value of these English learning platforms lies in their alignment with users' proficiency levels, learning goals, and preferred methods of engagement. This study emphasizes the need for critical evaluation when selecting digital tools for English learning and shows the evolving role of technology in making language education more accessible, flexible, and personalized.

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The Impact of Social Media on Personal Branding. Case Study: Medical Credibility in the Digital Space

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Abstract: *In the context of rapid digitalization and increasing reliance on social media, medical professionals are under growing pressure to cultivate an authentic, ethical, and trustworthy personal brand in the online space. This study explores how medical practitioners leverage social platforms to build their professional image and how these efforts are perceived by the public. The theoretical section examines the evolution and functions of social media, the concept of personal branding, and how these platforms are used by medical professionals to communicate and build trust. Special attention is given to interpersonal and parasocial relationships, branding strategies, and ethical challenges specific to the medical field. In the second part of this paper a mixed methods approach was adopted, including both a content analysis of two active medical social media accounts and a survey targeting social media users. This paper is intended for medical professionals, communication specialists, and researchers interested in understanding how social media impacts the perception and effectiveness of personal branding within the healthcare field.*

1. Introduction

Social media has redefined the landscape of communication, transforming how information is created, disseminated and consumed. Within this evolving digital context, professionals across numerous sectors, healthcare included, are increasingly engaging with online platforms to construct and promote their personal brand. Traditionally, the authority of medical professionals stemmed from their qualifications and institutional affiliations. Today, public visibility and perceived credibility are also significantly shaped by their online presence. For medical professionals, the social media environment represents a double-edged sword. On one side, these platforms offer valuable tools for increasing visibility, disseminating medical knowledge and fostering trust-based relationships with patients. On the other, they expose practitioners to the challenges of maintaining credibility in a space where misinformation spreads easily, promotional content can overshadow professional ethics and the distinction between education and self-promotion becomes increasingly blurred. Navigating this space requires a strategic approach that upholds both accessibility and the ethical standards of the medical profession.

This study aims to investigate the extent to which the online presence of medical professionals influences public perception regarding their personal brand. Specifically, it examines factors such as credibility, professionalism and ethical standards. By analyzing both audience perceptions and the digital behavior of healthcare practitioners, the study identifies the elements that contribute to either enhancing or damaging a doctor's reputation in the digital environment.

2. Research methods

To comprehensively address the objectives of this research, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This included a structured survey and a content analysis of two medical professionals' social media accounts.

The content analysis focused on evaluating the nature of communication on selected medical social accounts. Parameters included posting frequency, tone of voice, content categories (educational, testimonial, commercial), audience engagement, and ethical considerations. According to Sfetcu, such an analysis provides essential insights into how effectively digital

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communication strategies align with professional branding efforts and audience expectations (Sfetcu, 2022, p.94).

The questionnaire aimed to capture social media users' perceptions regarding online medical content. In line with Chelcea's framework, the survey was structured to elicit responses about credibility, communication tone, visual aesthetics, ethical behavior, and professional image (Chelcea, 2001, p. 57).

The study pursued the following research objectives:

- **O1**: To identify key factors influencing users' perceptions of a doctor's online credibility;
- **O2**: To assess which types of medical content are perceived as trustworthy by audiences;
- **O3**: To evaluate how online behavior, such as tone, clarity, empathy, and ethics, impacts public trust and willingness to seek medical services;
- **O4**: To identify best practices and pitfalls in online medical communication through content analysis;
- **O5**: To propose practical recommendations for ethical and effective digital branding in the medical field.

3. Results

3.1 Survey

The questionnaire gathered responses from a diverse group of social media users, offering insights into the elements that shape trust in medical professionals online. It was conducted via Google Forms platform and was available between May 6th and May 21st, 2025, gathering a total of 271 responses. The questionnaire included 27 questions, of which the first four were factual, followed by items designed to support and analyze the main research objectives.
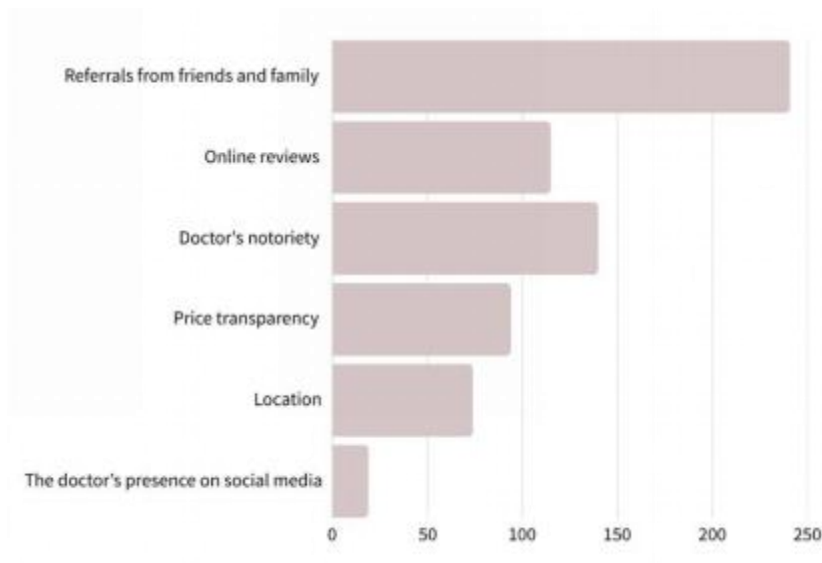
A significant majority of respondents (89.7%) were between the ages of 18–25, reflecting the demographic most active on social media and the most frequently cited criteria in the process of choosing a doctor were recommendations from close acquaintances (88.9%), online reviews (42.4%), and the doctor's notoriety (51.7%). Other relevant factors included price transparency (34.7%), clinic location (27.3%, and notably, the doctor's presence on social media (7%).

(Fig. 1 - The most frequently cited criteria in the process of choosing a doctor)

As for preferred platforms, TikTok was most frequently mentioned (83.8%), followed by Instagram (49.8%), YouTube (19.9%), and Facebook (15.9%), while platforms like LinkedIn and X (Twitter) were significantly less utilized.
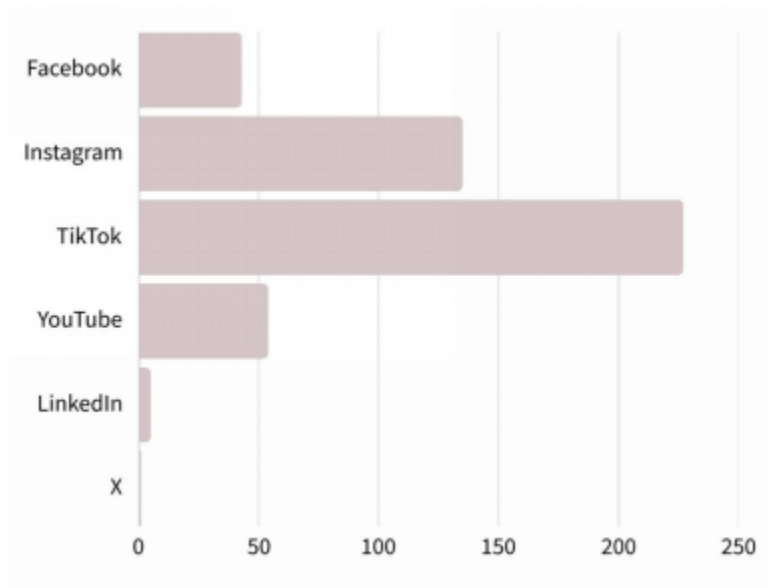
(Fig. 2 – Platform preferences)

When assessing which traits contributed most to a physician's credibility online, the use of professional language was the most valued aspect (31.4%), followed by active engagement with the audience (27.3%) and the feedback received in the comments section (26.2%). Interestingly, 29 respondents also highlighted the display of medical diplomas or certifications as an important trust factor.
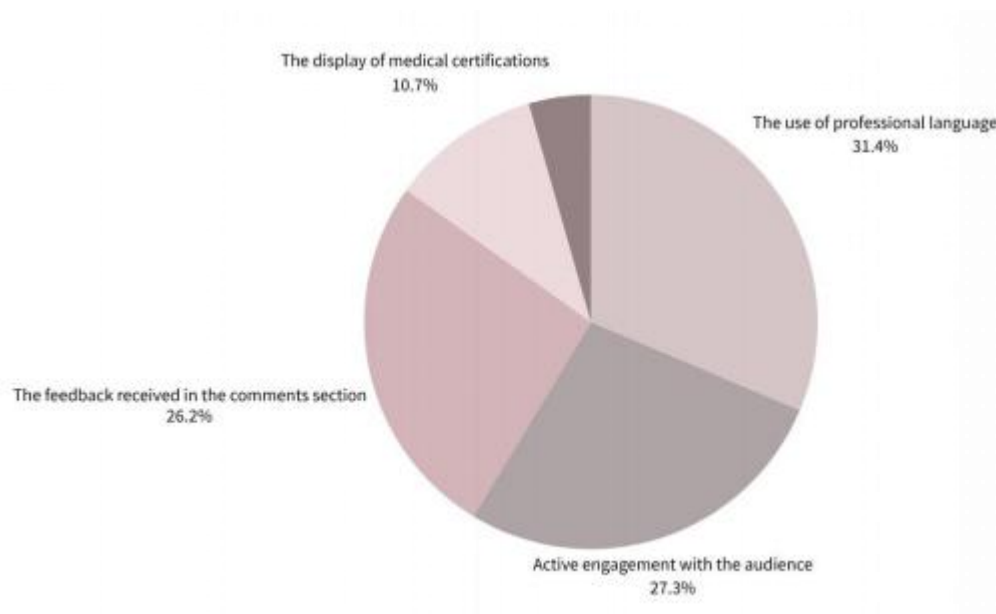
(Fig. 3 - Key credibility traits)

Respondents were particularly sensitive to unethical or unprofessional behavior. The most problematic behaviors identified were the publication of false information (91.9%), sharing patient photos without consent (85.6%), vulgar content (84.5%), and discriminatory messages (75.3%). These responses clearly underline the high public expectations regarding ethics and professionalism in doctors' digital communication.

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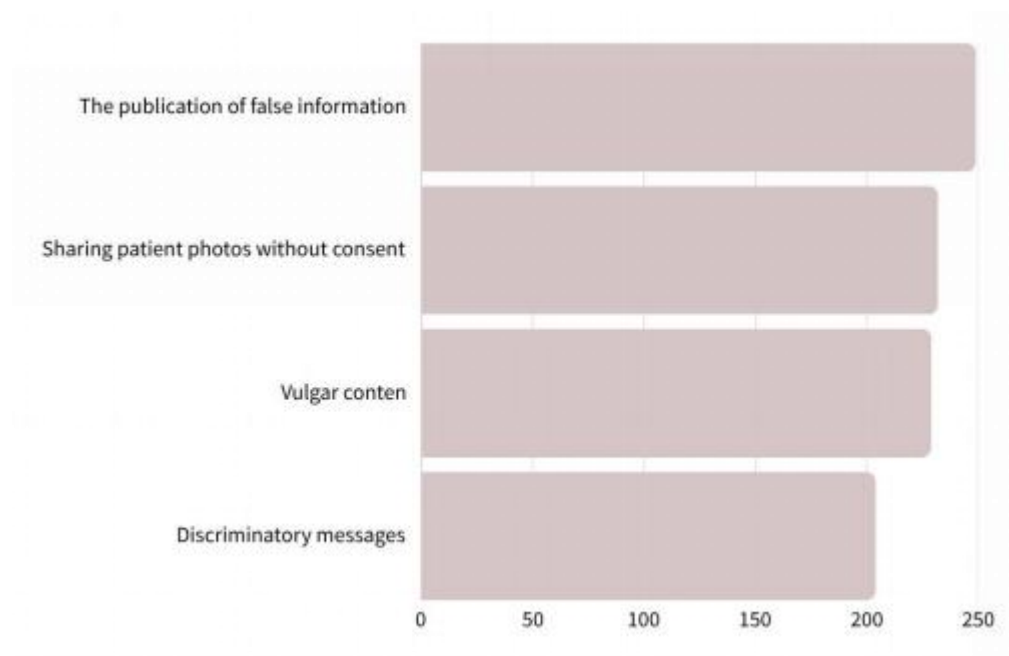
(Fig. 4 - Unethical behavior concerns)

While 50.2% of respondents were prompted by medical advertising to seek more information, the remaining majority were either unaffected or did not recall such ads, indicating that advertising is important for visibility and engagement but does not automatically build trust.

Overall, the findings emphasize that clarity and tone of communication are essential to perceived credibility. Respondents favored accessible, empathetic language and showed discomfort toward overly technical or authoritarian tones. Educational and informative posts were rated as most trustworthy, while testimonial content received moderate trust, and promotional or commercial posts were often met with skepticism.

3.2 Content Analysis

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The content analysis examined two medical professionals' social media accounts with distinct strategies. Dr. Adam Dragoș maintains a steady presence on Instagram and Facebook, using a cross-posting strategy. His content is exclusively medical and not specifically adapted for each platform. Visual materials appear to be created all at once and shared gradually. Although his communication tone is professional, empathetic, and ethically responsible, there is a lack of visual consistency. Even though the doctor frequently appears in posts, his personal brand lacks a clearly defined visual identity. Interaction with the audience is occasional and the engagement is low to moderate, with posts generating few likes and comments and not creating an active community. While polite and professional, some responses feel formal or distant. Ethically, Dr. Adam respects professional standards by protecting patient confidentiality, responsibly using "before and after" images, and communicating clearly without exaggeration. Without a unified visual identity and structured approach, his online image, though professional, risks seeming disorganized, which may reduce communication effectiveness and public trust.

In contrast, Dr. Alexandru Lupoi has a much more structured and coherent online presence. His content is primarily shared on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, focusing on medical education, myth busting, and daily practice insights. Although he recycles content across platforms, Dr. Lupoi maintains a strong visual identity. He consistently appears in uniform against neutral backgrounds and his posts follow a uniform graphic style. Branding elements such as logos, color schemes and fonts are applied consistently, enhancing immediate brand recognition. His communication tone is professional, empathetic, and balanced. Dr. Lupoi responsibly addresses sensitive topics with clarity and respect, using language that is accessible yet medically accurate. He actively promotes patient education, refuses to support medically unjustified procedures and encourages direct consultation, thereby increasing public trust and reinforcing the credibility of his messages.

Audience engagement is a major difference. Dr. Lupoi actively responds to comments, organizes polls and Q&A sessions, especially through Instagram Stories, which he archives for later viewing. His engagement is significantly higher, especially on TikTok, where he has gained hundreds of thousands of likes. Ethically, he follows all standards, using "before and after" images only with patient consent, avoiding misleading advertising, and actively fighting misinformation. Dr. Lupoi effectively uses the three persuasive appeals: ethos through professional authority and consistent branding, pathos through empathy and humor, and logos through clear, evidence-based explanations.

Dr. Adam Dragoș conveys seriousness and professionalism but would benefit from a clearer visual and structural strategy to strengthen his personal brand. Meanwhile, Dr. Alexandru Lupoi

represents an example of effective digital medical communication, marked by consistency, interactivity, and a balanced mix of information and empathy.

Their differences highlight the importance of a well-defined visual identity and genuine public engagement in building a credible and influential medical presence online.

5. Conclusion

In an era where digital communication is increasingly integral to professional visibility, the online presence of healthcare professionals plays a decisive role in shaping public perceptions of credibility and competence. This research confirms that while social media offers valuable tools for medical branding, their effectiveness hinges on ethical, consistent, and strategically curated communication. Audiences are attentive to nuances in tone, language, content type and visual identity. Informative and educational materials resonate most strongly with users, reinforcing trust and perceived competence. Conversely, too much promotional or personal content can diminish a doctor's professional image if not carefully managed.

The study further demonstrates that ethical consistency is not only a legal obligation but also a critical component of building an authentic digital identity. For medical professionals seeking to establish or enhance their digital brand, this study offers a framework rooted in ethical communication, content clarity, and audience engagement. By prioritizing these elements, the medical professionals can use social media not merely as a marketing tool, but as a meaningful platform for education, empathy, and public service.

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Digital Promotion Tools of the Banatul Philharmonic in Timișoara

Anamaria TATH

Abstract: *This article explores the impact and optimization of digital promotion strategies in the cultural sector, with a focus on the Banatul Philharmonic of Timișoara. Through a case study and comparative analysis with the Vienna Philharmonic, the paper examines current digital communication practices and identifies areas of improvement. The research provides concrete, feasible proposals to enhance the institution's online presence through website modernization, social media expansion, content creation, and educational digital platforms. The findings highlight the growing necessity of digital tools in maintaining cultural relevance and attracting diverse audiences.*

Keywords: *digital promotion, cultural marketing, philharmonic, classical music, digital communication, social media strategy*

Introduction

In the digital age, cultural institutions are increasingly challenged to remain visible, relevant, and connected to a rapidly evolving audience. As communication habits change and technology reshapes the way people consume culture, traditional forms of outreach are no longer sufficient. Today's audiences, especially younger generations, expect immediate access to content, interactive experiences, and personalized communication. In this context, digital promotion has become not only a strategic asset but also a vital necessity for institutions seeking to expand their reach and fulfill their educational and artistic missions.

This article explores the case of the Banatul Philharmonic of Timișoara, a well-established classical music institution in Romania, analyzing its current digital communication practices and proposing tailored strategies for optimization. Although the Philharmonic benefits from artistic excellence and regional prestige, its digital presence remains underdeveloped. The website is outdated, social media content is inconsistent, and audience engagement is limited. These challenges hinder the institution's ability to grow its audience base and connect meaningfully with diverse demographic segments.

By applying a qualitative research approach, including content analysis and comparative benchmarking with the Vienna

Philharmonic, the study aims to highlight both gaps and opportunities.

The objective is to offer actionable recommendations to modernize the Philharmonic's digital outreach, enhance its online identity, and build stronger, lasting relationships with its community.

The findings are relevant not only for the Banatul Philharmonic but also for similar cultural institutions navigating the digital transition in Central and Eastern Europe.

Research methods

 The main purpose of this paper is to evaluate and improve the digital promotion strategy of the Banatul Philharmonic of Timișoara by analyzing its current online communication practices and proposing tailored, actionable strategies based on best practices in the cultural sector.

The main research questions I want to answer in this paper are: Q1: What digital tools and platforms are currently used by the Banatul Philharmonic to promote its activities?

Q2: How effective are these tools in engaging and expanding its audience?

Q3: How does the Banatul Philharmonic's digital strategy compare to that of a leading international institution such as the Vienna Philharmonic?

Q4: What concrete strategies can be implemented to optimize the Philharmonic's digital presence and communication efforts?

To answer these questions, I used a qualitative research approach based primarily on content analysis. First, I examined the digital channels used by the Banatul Philharmonic—including its official website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel—assessing their structure, consistency, and effectiveness in reaching audiences. Then, I conducted a comparative analysis with the Vienna Philharmonic to identify successful models of digital communication. I also reviewed academic literature on digital marketing in the cultural sector to ground the evaluation in theory and to shape practical, evidence-based recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in contemporary literature on marketing, digital communication, and cultural management. In the digital age, institutions are compelled to integrate communication and marketing strategies across multiple platforms to remain competitive and relevant. Marketing is a social process that must continuously adapt to the changes in its environment (Kotler & Keller, 2020). In the context of cultural institutions, this means embracing digital transformation as a strategic imperative.

Digital marketing theory highlights the importance of multichannel communication, user-generated content, and personalized engagement. According to Philip Kotler, strategic marketing involves not only promoting a product or service, but building lasting relationships through consistent and relevant communication (Kotler & Keller, 2020). Applied to the cultural sector, this perspective urges institutions to go beyond simply advertising events and to foster digital spaces where audiences can interact, learn, and become emotionally invested.

Cultural marketing brings its own nuances. Storytelling, especially in the form of video content, interviews, and behind-the-scenes narratives, becomes a critical strategy for humanizing the institution and building long-term audience loyalty.Email marketing, although often overlooked, remains one of the most efficient tools in digital promotion. In the cultural field,

newsletters and targeted campaigns can be valuable for event promotion, donor communication, and audience retention.

These theoretical perspectives provide the backbone for this research and shape the strategic recommendations made in the second part of the paper. Together, they frame a holistic view of digital promotion, not as a set of isolated tools, but as a comprehensive approach to audience engagement, institutional visibility, and longterm cultural sustainability.

Case Study: The Banatul Philharmonic of Timișoara

The Banatul Philharmonic is a prominent cultural institution with a history dating back to 1947. It plays a vital role in the musical life of Timișoara and the region of western Romania. However, its current digital strategy is underdeveloped. The website is outdated, lacks interactivity, and does not provide an immersive experience. The Facebook page is active, but posts are often repetitive and lack audience engagement strategies. The YouTube channel is functional but not consistently updated or curated.

Despite these limitations, the Philharmonic benefits from several strengths: artistic quality, a loyal local audience, and involvement in music education. These assets can be leveraged through a modernized digital approach to strengthen the institution's presence, especially among younger and international audiences.

Comparative Insights: The Vienna Philharmonic

The Vienna Philharmonic is a world-renowned model of excellence in classical music performance and cultural branding. Its digital ecosystem is highly developed, featuring a modern, multilingual website, a dedicated streaming service, educational projects for children, and robust activity on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. While the resources available to the Vienna Philharmonic are far greater, several of its practices, such as segmenting content by audience type and integrating storytelling, can be scaled and adapted to the Banatul Philharmonic.

Strategic Proposals for Digital Optimization

Based on the case study and comparative analysis, the following five strategies are proposed:

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- diversifying digital content
- optimizing social media presence
- developing the institutional website
- using digital marketing tools
- engaging the community through interactive projects.

The questionnaire design follows best practices in cultural audience studies with questions divided into sections covering demographic data, concert participation, digital preferences, and qualitative feedback. This allows for segmentation and strategic adaptation of promotional content. Moreover, the inclusion of openended questions fosters co-creation, encouraging respondents to participate in shaping the institution's future offerings.

The action plan proposed for the Banatul Philharmonic integrates digital tools such as TikTok, Instagram, livestreamed concerts, newsletters, and an educational microsite. It is designed to address the communication gap with younger audiences by offering accessible, engaging, and interactive content.

Together, the questionnaire and the action plan form a coherent, audience-oriented strategy that bridges data collection and implementation. This integrated approach enables the Banatul Philharmonic to respond not only artistically, but also socially and digitally, to the evolving dynamics of cultural consumption.

Conclusion

The findings of this research highlight the increasing importance of digital promotion in the cultural sector. For institutions such as the Banatul Philharmonic of Timișoara, a strategic and consistent digital presence is essential for reaching new audiences and strengthening community engagement. Although the institution benefits from a strong cultural reputation and artistic excellence, its digital tools are currently underutilized.

By analyzing the current practices of the Philharmonic and comparing them with an international model like the Vienna Philharmonic, the study identifies clear areas of improvement and proposes ten actionable strategies. These range from website modernization and content creation to targeted advertising and educational outreach.

In the case of the Banatul Philharmonic, the use of a structured questionnaire enables a deeper understanding of its public, revealing key insights that inform the development of

targeted, inclusive communication strategies. When combined with a practical, theoryinformed digital action plan, this approach ensures that promotional efforts are not only visible but also meaningful and relevant to the audience's cultural habits and expectations.

By aligning its outreach with contemporary digital behaviors— through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and interactive content—the Philharmonic can reposition itself as a culturally dynamic, accessible, and future-oriented institution. The framework presented here demonstrates that strategic digital transformation, grounded in both data and theory, is not only achievable but necessary for building lasting relationships with both current and future audiences.

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Digital Media Strategies: A Comparative Analysis Across Four Global Industries

Roxana Liliana VELCU

Abstract: This paper aims to analyze and compare the media strategies used by international brands across four key industries: fast food, digital entertainment, gaming, and online travel services. Through a qualitative analysis, the methods employed by McDonald's, Burger King, Netflix, Disney+, PlayStation, Xbox, Airbnb, and Booking.com to build digital communication and connect with audiences are examined. The study looks at content tactics, channel selection, message personalization, and the level of interactivity. It emphasizes how adapting media strategies to each industry's particularities strengthens brand identity and fosters customer loyalty in an increasingly dynamic digital environment.

Keywords: digital branding, media strategies, online communication, interactivity, personalized content

1. Introduction

In the digital era, communication has become increasingly sophisticated, and the importance of digital media strategies in shaping a brand's identity is critical. The rapid evolution of technology and the diversification of communication platforms have created a highly dynamic media landscape in which brands must constantly adapt to remain relevant and competitive. Beyond simple promotion, digital communication today involves building an authentic, interactive relationship with the audience, where messages are personalized and tailored to the platform's nature and consumer behavior.

This paper aims to comparatively analyze how international brands in four global industries (fast food, digital entertainment, gaming, and travel platforms) develop their online communication strategies. The focus is on identifying the tactics used to attract and retain audiences, as well as the similarities and differences that characterize these approaches. The study focuses on eight representative brands: McDonald's and Burger King (fast food), Netflix and Disney+ (streaming), PlayStation and Xbox (gaming), Airbnb and Booking.com (travel).

2. Objectives and methodology

2.1. Objectives

- The main objectives of the study are:
- To observe the channels brands use to reach their audience;
- To identify the main types of content promoted;
- To determine how messages are adapted to target audiences;
- To compare the level of interactivity and personalization in communication strategies;
- To highlight differences in tone and style between brands in the same industry.

2.2. Methodology

- The research employs a comparative qualitative approach based on the analysis of public media content, including:
- Digital advertising campaigns (videos, banners, sponsored posts);
- Official pages and activity on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, Discord, Twitch);
- Mobile apps and official websites;
- Articles and marketing studies relevant to each brand and industry.

- This method enables a detailed understanding of how each brand structures its digital communication, adapting to the industry's specifics and audience profile.

3. Theoretical framework: digital communication and media strategy

Media strategy represents an organized set of decisions and actions aimed at creating, distributing, and managing a brand's messages in the digital environment. In a context marked by platform diversity and changing consumer behavior, media strategies must be flexible, personalized, and relevant.

Key Concepts:

- Digital storytelling: Creating a coherent and emotional narrative that captures attention and reinforces brand values;
- Engagement: Actively involving the audience through reactions, comments, shares, and other forms of interaction;
- User-generated content (UGC): Encouraging consumers to create and share brand-related material, increasing authenticity and trust;
- Personalization: Adapting messages and content based on the audience's interests, behavior, and demographics, often using data and algorithms;
- Bidirectionality: Communication is no longer one-way but involves ongoing dialogue between brand and consumers.

- These elements define the modern digital communication landscape, where content becomes a strategic asset, and tone a distinctive brand marker.

4. Comparative analysis by industry

4.1 Fast Food industry: McDonald's vs. Burger King

McDonald's

McDonald's has built a solid global brand based on values such as family, comfort, and familiarity. Its digital communication reflects this positioning through a warm, emotional, and

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positive tone. Digital campaigns are strategically integrated with other media (TV, outdoor), ensuring a consistent global message with local adaptations to cultural specifics.

Key platforms include Facebook, Instagram, and the mobile app, used to promote special offers, new products, and loyalty programs. Social responsibility is also emphasized through CSR campaigns focused on nutrition and sustainability. Content includes family story videos, interactive posts for children, polls, and contests.

Burger King

In contrast, Burger King employs a bold strategy using irony and humor to differentiate itself. Communication is provocative, targeting a young audience that appreciates wit and a nonconformist attitude. Messages often revolve around rivalry with McDonald's, generating controversy and viral content on social media.

Preferred platforms are TikTok and Twitter, where Burger King launches challenges, memes, and direct responses to competitors. While risky, this approach has increased brand awareness and engagement, turning communication into an interactive and dynamic game.

4.2 Digital Streaming: Netflix vs. Disney+

Netflix

Netflix is a native digital brand, built and developed exclusively online. Content personalization is the core of its strategy, relying on algorithms that tailor recommendations and promotional messages to each user. Every series or film release is accompanied by complex digital campaigns, including trailers, themed social media posts, memes, and influencer collaborations.

The tone is relaxed, friendly, and humorous, targeting a young and digitally active audience. YouTube and Instagram are used for teasers, actor interviews, and behind-the-scenes content, while Twitter serves for real-time fan interactions.

Disney+

Disney+ leverages its well-known brands (Marvel, Star Wars, Pixar) to create integrated, emotional campaigns. The communication style is more formal but visually impressive, with a focus on storytelling and magic. Messages target families and evoke nostalgia, reflecting the company's traditional values.

Key channels include TV, YouTube, and Disney+ itself, which offers exclusive content and promotions tied to iconic franchises. The focus is on delivering a complete experience that connects digital content with other Disney products and services.

4.3 Gaming: PlayStation vs. Xbox

<u>PlayStation</u>

PlayStation positions itself as a premium brand, focused on exclusivity and high-quality games. Its communication is cinematic and sophisticated, targeting a discerning audience passionate about complex stories and immersive gaming experiences.

Promotional campaigns include spectacular trailers, high-quality videos, and exclusive events (conferences, launches). Central channels include YouTube and the official website, reinforcing an elite and innovative brand image.

<u>Xbox</u>

Xbox adopts a more friendly and inclusive approach, emphasizing community and accessibility. Communication highlights collaboration and social aspects of gaming, using platforms like Discord and Twitch to maintain ongoing dialogue with gamers.

Strategies include supporting user-generated content, hosting live events, and promptly responding to audience feedback. The tone is casual, approachable, and focused on building a united community.

4.4 Travel services: Airbnb vs. Booking.com

<u>Airbnb</u>

Airbnb promotes authentic experiences and a sense of belonging to local communities. Communication is based on personal stories from hosts and travelers, presented through genuine photos and videos. Visual minimalism and emotional appeal define the content.

Instagram is the main channel, used to showcase unique destinations and memorable experiences. Blogs and interviews supplement the strategy, offering personalized recommendations and travel tips.

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<u>Booking.com</u>

Booking.com takes a pragmatic approach focused on efficiency and functionality. Messages are clear and direct, highlighting practical benefits such as ease of booking, variety of options, and competitive prices.

The media strategy includes paid Google ads, SEO campaigns, and mobile app promotion. The tone is neutral, professional, and performance-driven, aimed at a diverse, pragmatic audience.

5. Results and interpretations

The comparative analysis reveals the following conclusions:

- Content personalization is a decisive factor for user engagement and loyalty. Digital-native brands (Netflix) use algorithms to tailor messages, achieving superior results.
- Message tone significantly influences brand positioning and audience perception. Humor and irony are effective in youth-driven industries (fast food, gaming), while emotion and nostalgia work better in entertainment and travel.
- An active digital community (Xbox, Burger King) boosts loyalty and generates valuable brand content.
- Creativity combined with cultural relevance is essential for virality and digital success.
- Social platforms offer opportunities for testing, rapid feedback, and direct interaction, enabling quick strategy adjustments.
- Major differences across industries reflect consumer behavior specifics and the nature of products/services offered, requiring continuous strategy adaptation.

6. Conclusions

In a constantly evolving digital landscape, brands that succeed in building authentic connections with their audience are the ones that dominate the market. Effective media strategies are flexible, personalized, based on clear values, and conveyed through relevant and emotional content.

Personalization, creativity, interactivity, and adaptability are the cornerstones of modern digital communication. The analyzed brands provide valuable strategic models from which useful lessons can be drawn for any digital marketing professional.

7. Comparative Table – Brand Communication Tone

Brand	Tone	Core Content	Dominant Channel
McDonald's	Emotional, warm	Family, comfort	TV, app, Instagram
Burger King	Ironic, humorous	Challenge, rivalry	Twitter, TikTok
Netflix	Playful, digital	Personalization, virality	Social media, YouTube
Disney+	Nostalgic, epic	Franchises, exclusivity	TV, YouTube, Disney+
PlayStation	Cinematic, elite	Exclusive games	YouTube, official website
Xbox	Communal	Access, collaboration	Discord, Twitch
Airbnb	Emotional, local	Authentic experiences	Instagram, blogs
Booking.com	Practical, informative	Efficient booking	Google, mobile app

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