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Contents

Promoting the Entertainment Industry Through a Podcast: "DA BRAVO!" by Mihai Bobonete

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Abstract: *The podcast has been created as an alternative to the radio and has served as a media tool used in various ways ever since its acknowledgement in the early 2000s. As the digital world has evolved, the demand for podcasts has also grown, and with it, the podcast niche as well. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many artists, content creators, and other creative industry workers have been restricted from carrying out their activity in traditional formats. However, many have managed to regain their positions in their field through podcasting. Media users have been easily drawn to this type of content, accessing podcasts on different topics. The case study presented in this paper focuses on a successful initiative that saved the public presence of a Romanian entertainer, Mihai Bobonete, who succeeded to positively spin the pandemic situation to increase his reach. The findings suggest that people related much more to the podcast content rather than to television and the news, and that the focus was set more on finding positive outlooks rather than staying continuously connected to other media. Even though podcasting is still an emerging phenomenon in Romania, podcasters seem to gain momentum and engage an increasingly larger audience.*

1. Introduction

Podcasting is a relatively new phenomenon, but it is growing momentum in Romania, counting over 3.5 listeners in 2020, according to Statista.com (Audio content consumption in Romania in 2020, by type, 2022). As Lucian Bălănuță rightfully points out, podcasts as on-demand media products have "rapidly evolved as a constant of daily life with specific characteristics and personality", […] "the internet and associated applications creating a fertile environment for their distribution and consumption" (Bălănuță, 2021: 33). The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have put on hold most real-life contacts, and have enhanced and accelerated media consumption, which basically exploded, engulfing new territories. As professor Gianna Pomata from the Institute of the History of Medicine at John Hopkins University explains in an interview published in The New Yorker on July 13, 2020, the pandemic proved to be "an accelerator of mental renewal", which has encouraged people to listen more and to talk to each other.

This paper focuses on the way in which podcasting has been used by entertainers known to the public from other media (mainly television or real-life shows) to save their image and career. Although anyone could participate in our survey, the main target audience for this research consisted of students, who were strongly affected by the pandemic (Cernicova-Bucă & Dragomir, 2021). Our interest was to refine data provided by audience measurements in large-scale studies, such as that carried out by BRAT & Banca Transilvania in 2020 (BRAT, 2020).

When it comes to the podcast phenomenon in Romania, attention should be first paid to its first layer, namely advertising (promotion), which is meant to transmit the right information towards the public to attract as many potential new followers as possible. Advertising is carried out via multiple platforms and accounts, such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok or even paid short advertisements that are present when accessing a video on YouTube. In this case, the public is

informed shortly about the existence of the podcast and if they find it to agree with their needs, they will watch it and decide if they want to keep following that content creator. Most of the engagement with the public can be a fair sign that can also influence a potential viewer to become part of the community (Evans et al., 2010: 15). According to Statista, the most popular podcast genre in 2020 (and the trend is here to stay) is by far comedy, with 52.7% of listeners; by comparison, the next most popular genre is news, with 38% of podcast consumers. Therefore, our research focuses on a comedy-centered podcast.

The second layer is the podcast itself, which must make its purpose clear from the very beginning. Podcasting is much more than the final product. From the introduction, which includes thanking the sponsors and speaking about them, to introducing the guest and providing a carefully planned talk between two people, which may turn into an interview as the discussion goes on, podcasting combines a multitude of different tools into one. (Morris et al, 2021:11).

By observing a certain timeline, generating the right atmosphere, and having professional equipment, one can have a successful start in the podcasting domain. The third layer is given by the pandemic context, which adds to the improvisation that had to be handled by the entertainment industry and which has led to a new generation of people that create content. (Tuten et al., 2018: 21).

2. Research methods

To fully understand podcast consumers, I have conducted a survey on the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire in the survey was created on May 15, 2022. It was open for answers for 48 hours, and it collected 166 answers. The respondents are from Romania and are aged between 18 and over 50 years old. They had to answer 12 questions, among which 5 were open questions requiring a detailed answer. Besides the questionnaire, I have also conducted an interview with the marketing specialist, content strategist and podcaster Robert Katai. Next, I have chosen a podcast, namely "DA BRAVO!" by Mihai Bobonete, which I have analyzed for a three-month period starting with the first aired episode, in order to track views and measure engagement.

3. Results

The great majority of the respondents to the questionnaire stated that they had watched a podcast at least once, and there were a few who were not familiar with the concept or had never watched a podcast deliberately. Most of those who had never watched a podcast reported that they did not have any reason for that or that they did not have time to consume such media content. When it comes to Romanian podcast creators, the favorites of the public are podcasters who cover areas such as entertainment and comedy, which parallels the data provided by Statista, followed by those who cover news, IT or social-related topics. People have come up with various methods of listening to podcasts while doing other activities, as suggested by the answers to our questionnaire, most podcast consumers saying that they listen to and/or watch podcasts daily. The majority answered that they preferred listening to or watching podcasts to the news or to reading press-related articles. On the other hand, many respondents chose streaming services as an alternative to podcasts and podcasts as an alternative to other social media. When asked about the other activities they took part in, the respondents chose sports, playing video games, reading books, watching movies and browsing the Internet.

The interview with Robert Katai offered a wider perspective on the topic, one from an expert in podcasting, with much experience in the field, who has witnessed the changes in podcasting during the pandemic. In what concerns the rise of podcasts and the increased demand for them, he explained the following: „The idea of podcasting is increasingly acknowledged by the public, as more and more people engage in listening and want to create; podcasting was boosted by the famous people from the entertainment industry, who started engaging in this business as an alternative to real-life touring and performances."

When asked whether he, as a podcaster, felt the closeness of the public during the health crisis, Robert Katai commented: „Yes and no, I believe that the people who were watching during the pandemic were the ones who had been following us before that. Even more so, I believe that it has been easier for me to connect with the guests as I have created

content by using Zoom. It was really important for me to get past this barrier of only doing audio podcast, and ever since, I have started posting on YouTube. To give you a more direct answer, I have not felt the closeness directly, but during the pandemic, I have seen a rise in the number of podcasts, starting from new creators and listeners." Katai also pointed to the difference between podcasts and television shows. In his view, while television shows have a well-established run time, with scripts to be followed thoroughly and certain limitations when it comes to communication and transparency, podcasts can last from one hour, one hour and a half on. Podcasters can take as long as they need to, even three minutes. "I am still waiting for that certain podcast that will have the same set of questions for the guests. That lasts only two, three, five minutes and has very good questions. That is why I believe that podcasts have their well-defined place in the entire ecosystem of communication and media", said Katai.

When asked about his opinion on the future of podcasts, Robert Katai answered the following: "I see very diverse content in the future of podcasts. These are the words I am using to describe the future of podcasts. Why? Firstly, we will see, hopefully, more podcasts of the *dirty* type, which have emerged during the pandemic and are more of a fiction podcast. Secondly, we will see more short podcasts; for example, I have started publishing *Vinerea Scurtă* (*Short Friday* – my translation), which airs on Fridays, and which is a podcast with very short episodes, only a few minutes. It has grown significantly. Third, we will see more diversified platforms on audio and video format and text that has been taken from the video or audio recordings. And I also see that the longer videos will continue to be shown on TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. So, this is how I want to describe the future of podcasts and podcasting in Romania".

Another part of my research was dedicated to the podcast "DA BRAVO!" by Mihai Bobonete - one of the most striking podcasts launched during the pandemic. Already known from other media (especially television), the author took the audience by surprise and gained 273.000 viewers, ranking 20th on Trending YouTube Romanian after only three days from the day it first aired.

Figure 1. Image from the first "DA BRAVO!" episode

The first episode of the podcast was awaited by many viewers and was regarded as a real success by many online newspapers and publications. In this first episode, the guest was chef Sorin Bontea, who was also the famous winner of a reality game show popular at the moment. Mihai Bobonete seized the opportunity and launched his podcast during the COVID-19 pandemic by conducting his first interview with such a notorious person. Starting from the first episode, Mihai Bobonete has used different social media platforms to promote his podcast, which include TikTok, Instagram, and even his official website.

The general analysis of the podcast "DA BRAVO!" by Mihai Bobonete leads to the following observations:

- It is a niche podcast, in the field of entertainment and comedy.

- It is a podcast that uses video and audio advertisements, always mentioning the sponsors in the introduction and by using visual marketing.

- It is a podcast that is based on dialogue, mainly following the guest's responses and participation in the discussion.

- It is a podcast that can be watched on YouTube, being encompassed in the audio-video ensemble.

- It is a podcast that posts weekly and follows a routine by posting on a specific day.

- It is a podcast that uses push notifications to provide information about the newly uploaded episode, which followers can watch while using the chat to talk to other viewers and exchange opinions online.
- It is a podcast that lasts at least one hour and a half.
- It is a podcast that accepts donations.
- It is a podcast that is open to the public and engages with them, listening to their suggestions.
- It is a podcast that uses timestamps, which allow one to rewatch any specific moment in the podcast.

A more in-depth analysis over a three-month period, starting from the first episode on February 19, 2021 until the 15th episode on May 28, 2021, has revealed the following:
- The podcast gained 962 971 views, which means a growth of 28% in only three months.
- The podcast became more and more popular and comments kept coming. Most comments were words of appreciation and suggestions. These comments had their own comments section filled with people expressing their agreement with a previous statement, with a suggestion or even with a request for a specific guest.
- The format of the podcast has become more varied in terms of questions, activities, improvisation, camera angles, greetings, etc., which were used more consciously by the host to improve the podcast.

When it comes to the topics of discussion, Mihai Bobonete proved to be a very knowledgeable host, sensing how and when to address the right questions. The topic of each episode is inspired from the personal sphere of the guest, their domain of activity, their wishes and desires. Sometimes the host suggests that the guest say something about themselves that is not so well-known, other times the host offers information about himself, in relation to the topic at hand. Bobonete sticks to the entertainment and comedy genre, with one guest per episode, in a dialogue format, with a designated time, and a well-established routine, engagement with the public and activity on different social media platforms.

The branding effort can be noticed even in the name of the podcast. "DA BRAVO!" is a Romanian expression specific to comedy, frequently uttered after a joke that is not funny for everyone. Another important factor is Mihai Bobonete's presence on Instagram and Facebook. Also, the profile picture that he has chosen as representative of his brand, which resembles a semi-realistic caricature of himself, makes him remarkable and appealing to the online community that already follows him or is captivated by these elements. His idea of podcast has been a real success considering the needs of the public, because he has a keen sense of humor, he is frank, and he posts regularly.

From a more technical perspective, Mihai Bobonete's team uses two Rode Procaster microphones, which are much appreciated in the Romanian community of podcasters. They also use three cameras for different angles: one for the guest, one for the host and one for both for a more realistic approach to this type of recording. The lighting is also important, because it creates the right atmosphere for the viewer and the studio. On the set, there is also a TV playing a fireplace on a loop, creating a feeling of comfort. These elements are more salient after the editing of the audio and video recordings. When the two are combined, the podcast is created.

4. Conclusion

Podcasts have evolved significantly to become such a worldwide phenomenon. From the development of mechanical electronic technologies into digital technologies, from the first published articles and the first sounds of a podcast that were listened to by many, the podcast has travelled a long journey. All the available media known to people have been transferred into one single audio file, containing all the topics one could search for. This type of media has been around ever since the early 2000s and is said to have an enormous potential for growth in the future as well. It is something that people could use nowadays to become part of the community, either as a creator, or as a listener or viewer.

During the pandemic, many people in the entertainment industry, especially in Romania, have turned to podcasting to preserve their presence in the minds and souls of the audience, and as such, many other creators have followed. The research conducted for this study, combining findings from a survey, an interview with an expert and the analysis of a successful podcast, has revealed various aspects to be considered when investigating such a complex phenomenon. "DA BRAVO!" by Bobonete is a brilliant example of how inventive creators can adapt to the realities of the digital society, as well as an instance of adaptability of the entertainers, who can prove their ability to adapt to and conquer new media territories. In short, the entertainment industry will continue to find new ways of being part of our lives, as it has proven during the enormous challenge of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

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Social Messages Hidden in Advertisements

Mălina Nicoleta Boca

Abstract: *Over time, various social messages have often been brought to people's attention through advertisements. The aim of the present paper is to find out if people are aware of the social messages conveyed through commercials, if these messages have an influence upon people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, in general, and how people react to this kind of communication.*

The objectives set by an organisation may be related, for example, to the consumers' final act of purchasing the promoted products or services, to a change in perception, attitude or behaviour towards a certain subject, or even to a combination between them. Sometimes, commercial and social campaigns can overlap. This paper specifically targets those campaigns that can be described as both social and commercial, called "two-in-one campaigns" or overlapped campaigns.

First of all, I shall analyse two different advertising materials, according to an analysis grid I have created. The analysis focuses on the same set of features for each material, which shall be discussed more broadly. The purpose of the grid is to highlight those aspects that outline the commercial and that have a role in conveying the social message. Secondly, I shall present the results of a survey based on a self-designed questionnaire meant to validate my research findings. In particular, I was interested in finding out what people think and feel about such campaigns that take a stand on social issues, whether the social messages these campaigns put forth affect the public and whether people find them obvious.

I have chosen to focus on this specific topic because I am fascinated by the complex field called "communication sciences" and how it successfully encompasses both psychological and sociological aspects. I believe that this subject related to social messages in advertisements covers complex aspects coming from different backgrounds, such the ones mentioned above.

1.   Introduction

The main objective of the paper is to find out if conveying social messages through advertisements is effective or not.

Besides the financial benefits that communication campaigns may gain, organisations sometimes also aim to gain non-commercial benefits for individuals and society. In general, the main goals of an organisation are to make a profit by marketing products or services, and to gain acceptance and appreciation from the public. In order for these goals to be met, communication is needed.

This paper investigates the communication within two distinct campaigns that simultaneously convey social messages and promote the company's products.

2.   Research method

In order to meet the objectives I have set, I have used two different research methods: content analysis and the questionnaire.

1.   Content analysis

The purpose of this research method was to examine the communication within the campaigns, following the same aspects for both advertising materials chosen. To illustrate and support the theory, two campaigns were analysed from a personal perspective: one from Coca-Cola and one from Fashion-Days.

The analysis was conducted taking into consideration three main levels: the context, the iconic level and the textual level. The analysis focused specifically on the following aspects:

- the placement of the product(s) on the screen;

- the characters in the commercial and the reasons for choosing those specific characters;

- the general atmosphere in the commercial, created mainly by emotion and background music.

My interest was to find out whether the elements listed above enhanced the social message or not.

Next, I used an analysis grid to compare the two commercials, taking into account four main aspects: the placement of product(s) on the screen, the characters involved, the emotions expressed and the background music. Using a subjective approach, I compared the two commercials in terms of their impact.

2.   The questionnaire

The online questionnaire I created on Google Forms served as an investigative tool and consisted of a few short questions (10-15) addressed to people coming from different backgrounds, of different ages, with different occupations, etc. The questions were either one-answer or multi-answer, some having a custom answer option. The questions were easily comprehensible to the participants.

The respondents were asked to watch one of the analysed advertising materials before completing the questionnaire, as all the questions concerned that particular commercial.

The questionnaire thus helped me find out if people noticed the social messages within the advert and if these had any effect on them. Moreover, it also helped me determine whether my own interpretation of the commercial was similar to other people's.

Results

The products of both companies were shot in such a way as to be presented in a positive light. However, the social message is more prominent in both cases.

Both advertising materials use ordinary people as actors, so that the public can easily relate to those people and identify with the stories they are telling. The actors in the ads hint at the brand's target audience, in general.

The images capturing different emotions and the choice of the background music are two important elements that set the general tone of the ads. At first, negative emotions can be noticed in both materials. As the action unfolds, positive emotions become more prominent. The outcome is positive and optimistic in both cases. The background songs play an important role in emphasizing the social messages to be conveyed, and they may also arouse people's feelings.

Nevertheless, there are some differences between the two commercials analysed. The figures in the analysis grid suggest that the first commercial analysed may have a greater impact on the public, increasing their awareness.

Grid of analysis:

Aspects to be followed	Coca-Cola	Fashion Days
Placement of the product(s) on the screen	1	0
Characters involved	1	1
Expressed emotions	1	1
Background music	1	0

1 – Positive   0 – Neutral   -1– Negative

Score:
Coca-Cola: 4
Fashion Days: 2

- Placement of the product(s) on the screen: it refers to how noticeable the promoted products are in the commercial, as well as to the commercial that presents the product(s) in a more obvious manner;

- Characters involved: it involves noticing whether the age of the characters is an indication of the average age of the target audience of each brand;

- Expressed emotions: it involves observing whether both positive and negative emotions can be identified in the ads;

- Background music: it refers to one's own perception of the music in the commercial and to the music piece that conveys the social message in a more impactful manner.

The answers provided by the 152 respondents to the questionnaire have led to the conclusion that the social messages within the ads are noticed by the audience, and they do not remain indifferent to them. A significant percentage of respondents believes that the advertisements with a social message can indeed change people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. People agree that promoting a brand is more effective if it appeals to emotion.

Comparing my own perspective, as expressed in the content analysis, and the respondents' perspectives from the questionnaire, I find that they are similar.

When asked "Can you notice the social message in the Coca-Cola Sunset commercial?", most respondents gave a positive answer, as shown in Figure 1 below. Therefore, it can be concluded that people are aware of the social messages conveyed.

Sesizați mesajul social din interiorul spotului publicitar „Coca-Cola Sunset"?
152 de răspunsuri
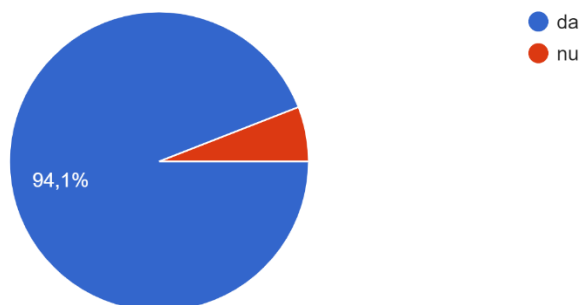
Fig. 1 Social message awareness

Similarly, when asked "Do you think that the social messages in commercials can induce certain changes in perception / attitude / behaviour?", most respondents gave a positive answer (Fig. 2). Therefore, people agree with the change that can be induced by this type of communication.

Considerați că mesajele sociale din interiorul reclamelor pot determina anumite schimbări de percepții/ atitudini/ comportamente în rândul publicului?
152 de răspunsuri
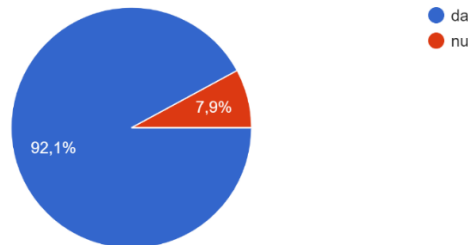
Fig. 2 Changing perceptions, attitudes, behaviours

Expert sources consulted

The bibliographic sources I have used are both electronic sources and printed books.

Larson (2003: 297) discusses three main campaign categories: advertising, political and ideological. Advertising campaigns are product-oriented, political campaigns focus on a person or a candidate for a specific position, whereas ideological campaigns, which are also called "mass or social movements", are oriented towards a specific cause.

On the other hand, Bălănescu (2007: 27) distinguishes between three major types of advertising campaigns: commercial, social and political. Commercial campaigns aim to promote a commercial product or service (e.g. banking, restaurants, tourism, etc.). Social campaigns aim to raise public awareness of the negative aspects of social life, providing solutions to prevent the shortcomings. Political campaigns aim to

promote a political party or candidate. These three types of campaigns may share many features and may sometimes overlap.

Dagenais (2003) argues that any kind of organisation should adapt to the needs of its audience. Conversely, every organisation seeks to "adjust" its audience to its own needs and goals, namely: survival, profit, progress, gain and power.

The same author also mentions the AIDA principle in his book "Public Relations Campaigns" (2003). The AIDA principle refers to the four stages to be considered in a communication campaign, designed to get the public to act on the objectives originally set. The four stages are as follows: "Attention", "Interest", "Desire" and "Action". The principle is considered to have been successfully adopted when the final stage concerning the "Action" is fulfilled.

In his book "Persuasion: Reception and Responsibility", Larson (2003) refers to Kenneth Burke's account of persuasion. Kenneth Burke (1970) argues that, in order to persuade successfully, one should create a feeling of identification. To be persuaded, one must feel the mode of address as close as possible to their own language. In Burke's view, persuaders achieve "true identification" when they act, think and express themselves in the same way as the audience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, most people are receptive to social messages conveyed through advertising materials. The research methods used in this paper played an important role in reaching a conclusion. The answers to the questionnaire reveal that people are aware of the social messages transmitted, and most of them are moved by them. Respondents showed empathy and solidarity as regards the social message conveyed.

Social messages transmitted in such a way can be truly impactful and can even change some perceptions, attitudes or behaviours in people. Therefore, delivering such messages through advertisements proves

effective. In my opinion, this is promising as we often encounter situations that really require mass movement.

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Digital Marketing Technologies for Entrepreneurship

Roxana Maria Momirov

Abstract: *In recent years, both in Romania and in the rest of the world, the number of start-ups has increased considerably, as well as that of people who want to become entrepreneurs. It is excellent that people show more and more interest in entrepreneurship and in starting new businesses, covering a wide range of services and needs, some of which unique or truly innovative. However, there is also a less positive side: how many of these businesses last over time? It can be quite easy to become an entrepreneur, to start a small business, but if one does not focus from the very beginning on the vital aspects of their business, it can be just as easy for the business not to bear fruit and eventually to withdraw from the market. In the age of technology and digitalization, I think it is quite easy to identify one of the most important factors that will make the business more than just a temporary one, namely marketing. Marketing is one of the most important "weapons" when entering the crowded market, where there are great battles for survival. First of all, it is very important to establish the target audience, to know exactly who we address, who are the people who will be delighted to turn to our services or products, and then to make the business known to them through various marketing methods and / or technologies.*

Keywords: *Digital Marketing; Entrepreneurship; Digital Marketing Technologies; Marketing techniques; Online Marketing.*

1. Introduction

There are two views of marketing. One of them defines marketing as a function or set of specialized activities, such as market segmentation, advertising and pricing, performed by a specialist or a group of specialists. The other defines marketing as a philosophy. There are two levels of marketing activities, namely strategic and tactical activities (Nijssen, 2022, p.11).

Kotler and Armstrong define marketing as "the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships to capture value from customers in return" (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013, p. 29).

The American Marketing Association (2013) provides the following definition: "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions and processes of creation, communication, delivery and exchange of offers that have value for customers, clients, partners and society in general."

Marketing philosophy stresses the need of companies to have a market-oriented culture that encourages all employees to systematically use market information and make market-based decisions in each of the business processes. Market information allows employees to understand the mechanisms underlying customer behaviour (Nijssen, 2022, p.12).

In the mid-20th century, entrepreneurs were seen as innovators. According to Schumpeter (1952, p.72), the role of entrepreneurs is to reform or revolutionize the pattern of production by exploiting an invention or, more generally, a technological method that has not yet been tried to produce a new commodity or an old one in a new way, by opening up a new source of supply of materials or a new outlet for products, by organizing a new industry, etc.

The concepts of innovation and novelty are an integral part of entrepreneurship, and the act of introducing something new is one of the most difficult tasks for the entrepreneur. It takes the ability not only to create and conceptualize, but also to understand all the forces that work in the environment.

Hisrich and Ramadani (2020, p. 16) note that many studies of entrepreneurship around the world reveal that the biggest problem areas are marketing and finance. Marketing problems often result from the lack

of a marketing plan, an inaccurate market size and uncertain sales forecasts. Solid marketing is a necessary component for the development of a new product / service for the market, for successful sales and growth of the company. Many entrepreneurs have limited knowledge of marketing and wrongly believe that all they need is an innovative product / service that people will just buy.

According to an article posted on HubSpot, digital marketing, also called online marketing, refers to all marketing efforts that take place on the Internet. Companies use digital channels, such as search engines, social media, email, and other websites, to connect with current and potential customers. They also include communication through text or multimedia messages (Alexander, 2022).

Digital marketing levels the playing field in an industry and allows one to compete with bigger brands. Digital marketing is measurable and, compared to traditional marketing, is easier to adapt when a change in marketing strategy is needed. Digital marketing can also improve the conversion rate and the quality of potential customers and allows audience engagement at every stage of a buyer's path to purchase (Alexander, 2022).

The statistics for Romania until 2021 show that, out of 19 million inhabitants, there were almost 15.5 million internet users in the country, of which over 11.6 million were users of social networks. The figures have changed slightly in terms of consumption of social networks, currently being 14.17 million users. The statistics also reveal that Romanians prefer Facebook, which is the most used social network in the country (Statista Research Department, 2022).

Before starting to work on the marketing campaign, a very important first step for the company is to answer the following 3 questions, in order to set the goals and expectations for the campaign: What (do we want to do)? How? Why ? The second step is to set a budget. It should be kept in mind that nothing of quality is free. For example, it is impossible to set a 100 euro budget to plan an event for 100 people to promote a business. Thus, first of all, one has to decide how much money they are willing to put into the game, which will determine the type and complexity of the campaign.

After setting the budget and deciding on how complex the event will be, the next step is to establish the target audience. If it is going to be a small event, only the expected participants in the event should be targeted. For a big event including socializing, which inevitably involves a significant budget, the campaign should not target only a specific group of people; instead, it should reach a greater part of the population so that more people find out about the event. Once the target audience has been identified, the way in which to reach that audience and the marketing technologies to be used should be established.

The following technologies are of utmost importance in entrepreneurship: SEM (Search Engine Marketing), which includes SEO (Search Engine Optimization), SEA (Search Engine Advertising) and PPC (pay-per-click); Email (newsletter); Content marketing; Social media (social networks); Influencer marketing. These are by far the best known. Some lesser known, yet used technologies, are augmented reality and virtual reality technologies. They are already used in quite a few fields and are becoming more and more popular, but they are not very common in marketing campaigns yet.

2. Research Methods

Following the presentation of the most used digital marketing technologies, each technology was outlined schematically in a chart, which was then used to create a questionnaire to be administered for feedback to people in the field of entrepreneurship or marketing. Although questionnaires and interviews are very similar in structure, I chose the questionnaire to shorten response time and give respondents flexibility in choosing the time they want to complete it. 10 respondents participated in this study by completing the questionnaire, all of them being people who run local businesses. 6 of the respondents are entrepreneurs, while 4 are marketing specialists. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out the technologies they used to promote their business, services and / or products.

3. Results

Most respondents use digital marketing technologies to create a connection between the company and the public. Digital marketing technologies have helped them to create this connection, gain an audience, build customer loyalty and make the public aware of the existence of the business. Most respondents rely on social media marketing and use paid advertising to reach as many people as possible. Some of the respondents said that they had also organized various events, which they also promoted on social networks, to attract the public and the partners.

6 of the respondents said that they used SEO and that it helped them a lot to increase the visibility of the site. They believe that SEO facilitates steady and organic growth. It is noteworthy that most are willing to invest money in this technology despite risks such as failure to achieve desired results.

This study confirms the fact that email is still widely used and can be a very effective digital marketing technology, as noted in the theoretical part, 7 respondents saying that they use or have used this method. Most use newsletter or email marketing to generate sales and say

this method is most likely to conclude a sale, as the recipient is presumably someone who already knows the business or product.

The answers on content marketing also confirm the information in the literature, namely that content marketing is the most important way to build authority and earn consumer confidence, despite requiring a great effort because of the authentic and relevant content that must be generated. All respondents have used and continue to use this method, and in most cases, create content marketing through posts on social networks.

As expected, social networks are in power. Marketing on social networks is the most used marketing technology, which often brings the best results, creating a great impact. There is no respondent who does not use social networks to promote their business, services and / or products. The most used networks are Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

Given that the respondents are local entrepreneurs and marketing specialists and that they mainly run small start-ups, some quite new on the market, most do not use digital marketing. 9 of the respondents confess that they have not used and do not currently use this marketing technology. Only one entrepreneur has used and still uses this marketing method, but he uses micro-influencers (i.e. influential people, with a fairly large community at the local level), confessing that he has gained visibility and trust in the local market, in particular.

As explained in the theoretical part, augmented reality and virtual reality have become quite well known lately, but they are not currently very common in the field of marketing. Of the 10 respondents, only one respondent said that he used these technologies on various projects, and although it is a method that requires considerable financial resources and effort, it really made a difference.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that, of the 6 proposed technologies, the most used technologies at local level are: social media marketing, content marketing (generally also published on social networks), email marketing, and, in the case of those who have a website, SEO and PPC technologies. The

answers to the questionnaire provide feedback on two other important issues that could be used when running a promotion campaign. A piece of advice received that can help measure efforts, efficiency but also finances, is to keep a constant relationship between the digital and the offline environment. One respondent completed the list of the technologies she used with text message marketing, which only a few companies still use nowadays, confessing that it works great for her as it is more personal.

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Micro-Interactions and Animations in UX Design for Mobile Applications

Alexandra Antal

Abstract: *Currently, over 80% of the world's population are smartphone users and there is no denying that access to a mobile device makes life easier. Because of this, the impact of digital economy has required a convergence of creative and technical skills, which has led today's graphic designers to focus more than ever on the interactivity and design of user interfaces. This is an essential part of any digital product and should be user-centered and easy to use and understand. The main purpose of this paper is to establish the role of micro-interactions and animations in the design of interfaces dedicated to mobile devices by defining micro-interactions and their structure as well as classifying their types and establishing a set of micro-interaction best practices.*

Keywords: *micro-interaction, micro-animation, UX design, UI design, mobile application, user experience, interaction design.*

1. Introduction

In this age, when almost everything is mobile, the demand for efficient and accessible communication between users and smartphone

application interfaces is also growing. Moreover, the rising number of available applications and the rapid evolution of technological progress make software developers deliver applications as easy to use and visually pleasing as possible, by improving their graphics. With the increase in bandwidth and Internet speed, with the evolution of HTML, jQuery and JavaScript, digital products have become more fun and enjoyable, besides being useful and practical (Lomakina, 2017).

A brand in the digital space is appreciated primarily for the user experience (UX) it offers and for the way it satisfies the wishes of the target audience. Thus, user experience design plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining customers. Creating a smooth, low-effort experience to get things done is the key to a successful application. Even the small and often overlooked design attributes, like the little animation that shows when something is loading, matter a lot. This is an example of micro-interaction - a functional and interactive detail of a particular digital product whose purpose is to improve its use (Lagerquist & Samuelsson, 2021).

2. Research methods

The main purpose of this paper is to establish the role of micro-interactions and animations in the design of mobile device interfaces.

The main research questions addressed in this paper are:

Q1: How are micro-interactions defined and which are the key terms used to describe them?

Q2: What is the structure of a micro-interaction?

Q3: What types of micro-interactions can be identified? Is it possible to create standardized categories of micro-interactions?

Q4: Are there universally valid examples of good practice in micro-interactions?

To find answers to these questions, a series of scientific papers in the chosen field have been investigated. The research was conducted on dedicated platforms such as Google Scholar and IEEE Xplore, by matching keywords and tracking specific features.

Moreover, to find examples of good practice in the field, both specialized sites and existing tutorials for micro-interactions have been consulted on platforms such as YouTube and Figma. The Figma tool and a series of corresponding plug-ins have been used to create the graphic materials used in the practical part of this study.

3. Analysis of micro-interactions and micro-animations

3.1 Definitions and role

According to Saffer (2014), a micro-interaction is a simple interaction that revolves around a single use case - a small piece of functionality that does one thing - that is triggered by a certain condition and causes the user to take a certain action. Ashbrook (2010), on the other hand, defines it as an interaction with a device that lasts less than four seconds, from start to finish.

Alita Joyce (2018) defines micro-interactions as trigger-feedback pairs in which the trigger can be a user action or a change in system status, and the feedback is a response to the trigger, communicated by small changes, extremely contextual (usually visual) in the user interface.

Animation is basically what allows and improves micro-interactions. Animations personify design; their presence may not be noticed, but their absence clearly affects the perception of users because they aim to make the simplest processes interesting and captivating. The main functions of animation in the user experience are to follow the action, provide a visual response, provide clues, highlight areas of interest, reduce cognitive overload, and generate user delight and satisfaction (Lomakina, 2017).

Table 1. Schematic representation of the main scientific articles studied

Author(s), year, title	Definitions	Role in UX
Lomakina M., 2017, "Defining microinteractions: animation in UX"	Every digital product is unique.	Motion draws attention to the areas of interest

Author(s), year, title	Definitions	Role in UX
		and captures the user's attention.
Saffer D., 2014, "Microinteractions: Designing with Details"	A micro-interaction is a piece of functionality that does one task.	Micro-interactions make the user experience much more satisfying and provide subtle guidance to users.
Joyce A., 2018, "Microinteractions in User Experience"	Micro-interactions are trigger-feedback pairs.	Micro-interactions can enhance the UX by providing subtle guidance and user response.
Boyd K. & Bond R., 2021, "Can micro interactions in user interfaces affect their perceived usability?"	Animations are elements that provide a very similar user experience to reality.	Micro-interactions can generate positive emotions about a brand and influence the user's actions.
Huhtala J. et. al., 2010, "Animated UI transitions and perception of time: A user study on animated effects on a mobile screen."	Animation is an element used to make digital products more enjoyable.	Animations are used to fill the latency time of an application.
Hinman R., 2012, "A New Mobile UX Design Material"	Animation is a movement that provides clarity, context information and delight.	Motion can be used to guide users through mobile experiences.

3.2 Structure

The structure of a micro-interaction consists of four main elements (Saffer, 2014): trigger, rules, response, and loop/modes.
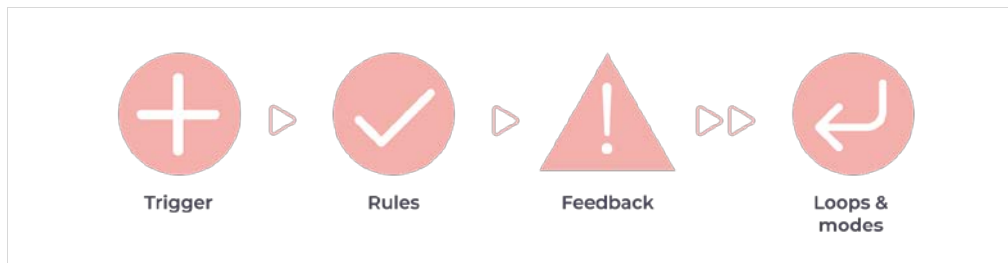
Figure 1: The structure of a micro-interaction (Saffer, 2014)

The trigger initiates the micro-interaction. It can be activated by the user, which means that the user does something to initiate the micro-interaction, or by the system, which means that the application or system meets a certain predefined condition and thus initiates a micro-interaction (Boyd, 2019).

The rules describe the behavior of the micro-interaction, the functionality or interactivity after a micro-interaction has been activated. They provide a framework for understanding how to help users achieve the goal of a micro-interaction (Saffer, 2014).

Once a micro-interaction has been triggered and executed according to certain rules, the user must get feedback on his action. As Saffer (2014) explains, the real purpose of the answer is to help users understand how the rules of micro-interaction work. The design of feedback, as well as the design of rules, should aim to reduce complexity and confusion for the user and should be explicitly connected both functionally and visually to what the user needs to know (Betz & Hall, 2015).

Finally, loops and modes describe meta-rules. Loops practically determine the speed and lifespan of a micro-interaction. They are the conditions that can happen many times depending on the circumstances. Modes are bifurcations of the rules. Saffer (2014) describes a mode as a point in a micro-interaction in which the user is exposed to a new process, interface, or state.

3.3 Types of micro-interactions and examples

Chin and Ismail (2021) argue that micro-interactions can be divided into five main types, namely: call to action (CTA), progress, completion (of an action), change, and visualization.

Call-to-action micro-interactions are about stimulating and encouraging clicks and conversions. This type of micro-interaction is usually in the form of mouse-switched states and triggered animations. Examples include animated sharing buttons at the end of blog posts, or buttons with messages like "Contact Us", which change color when the user hovers the mouse over them.

Progress micro-interactions are described as indicators that show how much is completed and how much is left in a process, often accompanied by percentage values or a count representing the remaining time (Fig. 2).
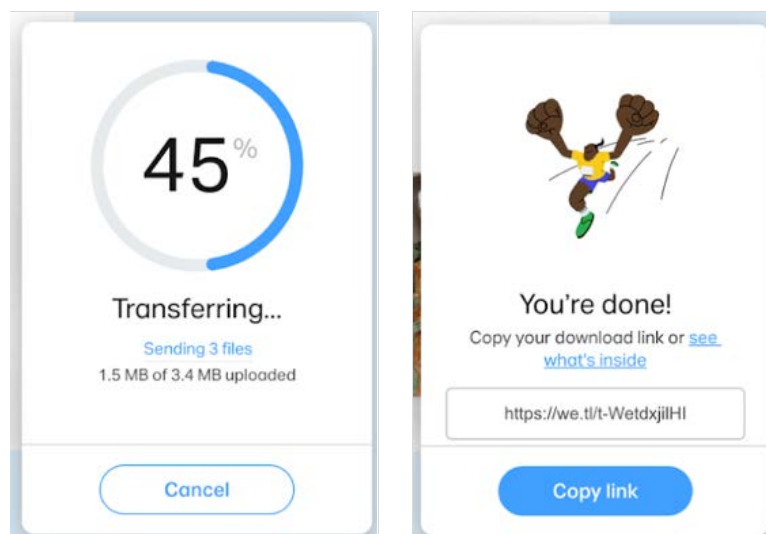
Figure 2: Progress micro-interaction - Upload animation on WeTransfer

They increase the willingness of users to wait for completion, creating the illusion of short waiting time; they can keep users distracted while waiting, but they can also encourage anticipation for a final result. Other examples include video or page upload animations and animations that show the progress of a file upload or download.

The response in completion micro-interactions informs users that a certain action has ended. Instead of a monotonous text that says "Complete: 100%" next to a progress bar, a subtle animation or sound effect can make completing a task feel more captivating and reassuring.

Change micro-interactions are transitions that help users navigate and understand where they are and where they are going in an interface (Fig. 3). Scrolling is one of the most basic examples of micro-interaction in this category. The interaction is triggered by the user who changes their location on the page and then receives a visual response from the system.
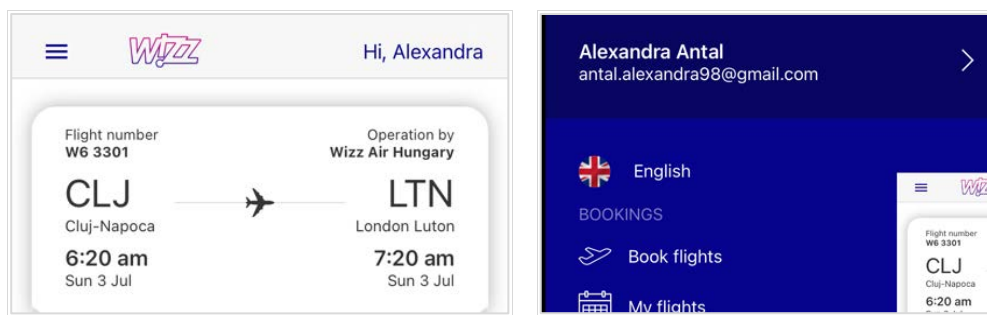
Figure 3: Change micro-interaction - Hamburger menu in the Wizz Air application

Visualization micro-interactions allow users to see immediate results in their smallest actions, ensuring that the digital elements they interact with are active and responsive to their actions. These micro-interactions can be seen in the case of live discounts that change when the user adds something to the cart in a shopping app, of password power measurement when creating a new account, or of an animated confetti explosion when the Twitter like button is clicked.

4. Best practices in micro-interactions

4.1 Suggestions for designing micro-interactions to improve UX

Micro-interactions should not be just nice elements added to the existing experience. They are essential ingredients in product design and should be considered in the design stage right from the start.

Based on the research conducted, the most important best practices in the development of micro-interactions for mobile devices are:

- Micro-interactions should be functional, while remaining almost invisible or as unobtrusive as possible (Gangadharan, 2021).

- Micro-animations should not prevent the user from interacting with the application, but also help the user to fulfill their purpose (Gokce, 2020).

- The long-term design goal should be pursued; micro-interactions should not cause stress to users due to repeated use (Ferguson, 2022).

- Micro-interactions should comply with industry conventions and behave as expected (Babich, 2016).

- Micro-interactions should be as simple as possible and should not overload or undermine user experience in any way (Gokce, 2020).

- Micro-interactions should be as natural as possible and observe the laws of physics (Nielsen, 2020).

- Micro-interactions should match the application branding and other design elements (Doron, 2019).

- The user should have control over how they want to interact with the application; micro-interactions should not be forced.

4.2 Micro-interaction testing

Like any other product for the audience, micro-interactions within mobile applications need to be tested and improved. User testing and iterative design are simple ways to reduce usability defects before launching a digital product (Gangadharan, 2021). Experiencing different micro-interactions within the mobile application and collecting user feedback could significantly improve product UX and user satisfaction (Doron, 2019).

According to Boyd (2019), there are several approaches that can be used to perform a usability test on micro-interactions. One of the most

common approaches is A/B testing, which is a method used to compare two versions of a webpage or application to determine which one performs better. A/B testing is essentially an experiment in which two or more variations of a design are randomly displayed to users, and statistical analysis is used to determine which variation performs better for a particular conversion goal. A/B testing allows designers to make careful changes to user experiences while collecting data about results. This allows them to build hypotheses and determine whether certain elements, such as micro-interactions, have an impact on user behaviour (Boyd, 2019).

Chichioco (2018) argues that user testing is part of the design process. Thus, testing the usability of micro-interactions, analysing the results and applying the necessary revisions are repeated until usability issues and weaknesses are addressed.

Essentially, testing should be related to users. Testing allows one to find out users' impressions, how they expect the micro-interaction to work and what problems they have encountered. Quantitative data can also be tracked. These include the completion rate, which is the percentage of users who complete the micro-interaction successfully, the time spent by users to complete the micro-interaction, the number of steps taken and the number of errors.

Micro-interactions do not receive much attention during product design, but they do have a significant impact on the impression that the product makes on users. Therefore, in many cases, the difference between the products users tolerate and the products they love is the quality of the micro-interactions in the application (Saffer, 2014).

4.3 Micro-interaction proposal

For the practical part of this paper, I have created a set of individual micro-interactions for teaching purposes. These micro-interactions can be easily integrated into most mobile applications.

For prototyping, I have used Figma, which is a free interface design application that runs online in the browser. It provides all the tools needed in the design phase of a user interface, including vector tools for

illustration and graphic design, as well as prototyping and transfer code generation capabilities.

The tables below illustrate…

Table 2a. Classification of micro-interactions based on the categories identified by Chin and Ismail (2021)
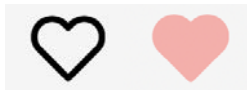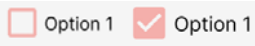
Name	Type	Details	Screenshot
CTA button	CTA	*On click - Move out, linear, smart animate matching layers, 800ms*	
Hamburger menu	Change	*On click - Smart animate, ease in and out back, 800ms*	
File upload	Completion	*On click - Smart animate, ease in and out back, 400ms* *After delay 50ms - Smart animate, ease in and out back, 50ms*	
Progress bar	Progress	*On click - Smart animate, ease out, 2500ms*	
Switch	Change	*On click - Smart animate, ease in, 300ms*	
Interactive menu	CTA	*On click - Slide out, ease in and out, smart animate matching layers, 300ms*	

Table 2b. Classification of micro-interactions based on the categories identified by Chin and Ismail (2021)

Name	Type	Details	Screenshot
Notification	Visualization	*On click - Smart animate, ease in, 100ms* *After delay 5ms - Smart animate, ease in, 100ms*	

Navigation menu	Change	*On click - Smart animate, ease in and out, 300ms* *While hovering open overlay - Dissolve, ease in and out, 300ms*	
Password strength	Visualization	*After delay 800ms - Smart animate, ease in, 300ms*	
"Like" heart	Visualization	*On click - Smart animate, ease in and out, 300ms* *After delay 1ms - Smart animate, ease out, 300ms*	
Checkbox	Change	*On click - Smart animate, ease out, 200ms*	
Drop-down menu	Change	*On click - Smart animate, ease in, 100ms* *While hovering - Instant*	

5. Conclusion

As users and digital tools become more inseparable, micro-interactions are those elements that can improve the overall user experience, with interactive design being a particularly important factor in the accessibility of a mobile interface. As a result, I believe that micro-interactions should be part of the curriculum of a digital media course because they are an essential part of UX and can bring real benefits in terms of learning ability, errors and the satisfaction and usability of a mobile application. Well-designed micro-interactions provide value, serving as a means of communication with the user. Micro-interactions provide visual feedback on system status and prevent user errors. In addition, micro-interactions enrich a product through brand communication, which encourages users to choose a particular product (application) over a competitive one. All these small details can turn a good product into a great product.

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The Role of Social Media in Promoting Organic Products

Bianca-Cristina Feruț

Abstract: *Most of the day, the main thought that goes through our minds is what we will have for breakfast, lunch or dinner. As society has become increasingly aware of the link between health and the food we eat, organic products have started to gain notoriety. As a result, these products are increasingly visible online, promoting a healthy lifestyle. However, people are not sufficiently aware of the benefits of these products or do not consider buying them frequently. Thus, promotion plays an important role in this respect. The aim of this research is to investigate how organic products are promoted online and to analyse the behaviour of young consumers regarding their use.*

Keywords: *organic products, healthy lifestyle, young consumers, promotion, online promotion.*

1.   Introduction

Today's well-known concept of the "organic farm" is an amalgam of different ideas rooted mainly in Germany and in English-speaking countries. They emerged in the late 19th century due to interest in agricultural science, reform movements and knowledge of Far Eastern farming systems. (Lockeretz, 2007).

Between the two World Wars, agriculture faced a crisis related to soil degradation, food quality and the decline of rural life and traditions. Thus, farmers developed a sound theory based on science between the 1930s and 1940s. However, it was not until the 1970s that organic farming attracted widespread interest, with growing awareness of the environmental crisis (Lockeretz, 2007).

Today, consumer attitudes towards organic food are complex, often associating food with health, the environment, ethics and identity. A recent European survey on the reasons for buying organic food has revealed that 48% of the respondents regard it as healthier, while 16% as "better for the environment". The participants in the survey also consider organic food to be more nutritious than conventional food (Lacal, 2010).

Even though organic food is more expensive, it is starting to gain ground with consumers. However, the promotion of organic food has to focus on sound techniques to reach and attract more age segments. The fact that the price of organic products is higher makes promotion more difficult to those aged between 18 and 25. Thus, promotion should always be geared towards new strategies, and why not, in line with digital promotion trends. How exactly can a brand differentiate itself from the competition in the context of modern advertising? This is the question that prompted the idea to conduct a study on the online promotion of organic products and on the behaviour of young consumers regarding the use of this type of food, and to analyse two regional organic brands in terms of marketing strategy in order to identify those aspects that need to be improved, so as to increase the number of customers.

2.   Research methods

The paper is divided into two parts: theoretical and practical. The latter is based on a comparative content analysis of two Romanian organic stores, Enigma Plant and Miracolul Plantelor, in terms of online product promotion. A case study was also conducted to analyse the behaviour of young consumers regarding organic food.

Content analysis involves a systematic reading of a corpus of texts, images, and symbolic material, not necessarily from the perspective of the

author or user. (Krippendorff, 2013). The content analysis I conducted focuses on the two above-mentioned brands' websites and social media pages, such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, which were analysed in terms of design, menu, content and focus on organic products. I also looked for elements of digital promotion, such as QR codes and 3D design. Other important aspects investigated are creativity and authenticity. More precisely, my aim was to analyse the ways in which all the elements listed above are used to build user trust on the website, Facebook pages, Instagram, etc.

The research method used for the case study was a questionnaire, which centered on young consumers' behaviour towards organic products. The questionnaire is a logical and psychological sequence of questions in writing or with graphic images with a stimulus function. In relation to the research hypotheses, it determines verbal or non-verbal behaviour on the part of the respondent to be recorded (Chelcea, 1975). To achieve effective results, the following objectives have been set: to interview 50 people to draw as clear a conclusion as possible about young consumers' behaviour; to determine the 3 main channels used to inform the target group about organic products; to find out the preferred way of purchasing organic products (online or in store); to identify the 3 main factors that influence their decision to buy an organic product. Based on the findings, I eventually came up with several suggestions to improve online promotion techniques to reach the target age group.

3.   Results

The research methods mentioned above were used to achieve the objectives. In what concerns the content analysis, the two brands were investigated in terms of social media pages, website, innovation of digital promotion techniques, creativity and authenticity. The analysis has led to the following results, presented in the table below:

Elements analysed	Enigma Plant	Miracolul Plantelor
Social Media pages (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc).	1	1
Website	1	0
Digital promotion techniques	0	0
Creativity	1	1
Authenticity	1	0

Table 1: Results of the content analysis

Grading grid: 1-Positive, 0 – Neutral, -1 – Negative
Results: 6, Enigma Plant: 4, Miracolul Plantelor: 2

The results reveal that the promotion of the Enigma Plant store is more structured than that of Miracolul Plantelor. However, Enigma Plant could still bring several improvements to its online promotion strategy, whereas Miracle Plant needs to focus more on online promotion, as it lacks important elements, such as a website that users can identify easily. Both producers could reach their target audience much more easily by reorganizing their online promotion strategies. By optimizing digital promotion, they could gain notoriety and trust from visitors.

The answers to the questionnaire have led to the following findings. The participants in the study were aged between 21 and 30 years old; they were the ones who reported using organic products. Out of the 50 respondents, 16 were male and 34 were female. The most used information channels were social media, websites, and others such as the radio or YouTube. 62% of the respondents prefer buying organic products directly from the supermarket. 44% of the respondents said that an advertising message should contain information about the product or manufacturers. According to 68% of the respondents, appropriate packaging is an element that can influence their purchasing decision, while only 2% are influenced by the packaging to a very small extent.

In addition to the appropriate packaging of organic products, affordability is another element that can influence their purchasing decision, according to 54% of the respondents. Also, many respondents believe that digital elements such as QR code scanning and 3D design will help people access information about these products much more easily, besides being a novel way to engage the public and gain time.

Conclusion

The content analysis has shown how organic products are promoted online, which has led to the conclusion that the online presence of the two selected stores facilitates interaction with the public. However, for added value, they could focus more on rebuilding their visual identity, adding new elements to their websites, or creating more interactive content on social media. They could also place more emphasis on promoting or informing about organic products.

The case study entitled *Consumption of organic food among young people* was aimed at analysing the behaviour of young consumers regarding the use of organic products, and it also achieved its objectives. According to the findings, yet contrary to expectations, most participants in the survey prefer purchasing this type of products directly from the supermarket, while only 34% prefer online shopping. That is why it can be argued that online promotion failed in what concerns organic products. Another conclusion is that social media, websites and other platforms such as TikTok and YouTube are among the main channels used by the respondents. The elements that influence their buying decision are: appropriate product packaging (i.e. the visibility of the certification label), the affordable price or information about the producers. As for new digitalization techniques, the respondents seem open-minded in this respect, perceiving them as useful for informing the public and as beneficial in terms of timeliness.

Therefore, the role of social media and digital marketing elements is to attract young people. They consume organic products but prefer physical shops. The focus should consequently be on the online environment.

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Increasing the Visibility of Digital Resources on Search Engines

Gabriela Șut

Abstract: *In today's world, where everything is digitalized, creating an image in the online environment is crucial for the success of a company. Search engine optimization (SEO) is more important than ever because it helps increase the visibility of a company's website, attracting more users interested in the products or services it provides. Optimizing the site for search engines will make the company visible and reliable for costumers, as it will appear on the first page of search results. The aim of this paper is to analyse several scientific articles in order to provide a more thorough understanding of search engine optimization, by presenting both the theory as explained by specialists and the way in which the theory was applied to specific cases. Moreover, the information presented in the theoretical part will be put into practice in an attempt to optimize the website of the e-Learning Center within Politehnica University Timișoara. The findings will highlight the importance of SEO strategies.*

Keywords: *search engine optimization, search engines, on-page optimization, off-page optimization, SEO.*

1.   Introduction

Search engine optimization (SEO) refers to "the process of improving your site's organic traffic and ranking on search engines such as Google, Bing, and other search engines" (Lyons, 2022). It is a set of practices designed to improve website content.

Search engines are autoresponders. They exist to discover, interpret and organize online content in order to provide the most relevant answers to search queries. Barnard (2022) explains that search engines like Google, Bing, or Yahoo use a complex set of algorithms to organize and rank content. In order to decide how good a site is and where it is located, algorithms use a wide range of factors. In short, search engines take digital content and organize this information into results pages.

According to Pittman (2021), SEO is "the most effective and affordable marketing strategy that exists. SEO is vital to the online presence of a business". In the digital age we live in, where websites compete against each other, the positioning of a site on the search engines is crucial. Thus, search engine optimization helps to increase the visibility of the sites.

Also, the higher a site is positioned on the search page, the more trustworthy it becomes for users. Users tend to take into account the recommendations that a search engine generates, so that "having a higher position for the keywords that a user is looking for will in turn strengthen your product or service as worthy of trust in the user's mind " (McGrath, 2019).

Search engine optimization helps to improve the usability of a site, which will make it more attractive to the user. For example, making a site more responsive will make it usable for mobile visitors, as well as for visitors who access the site from a laptop or desktop. Increasing the loading speed of a page will have the same effect.

In conclusion, search engine optimization has become the number one strategy for promoting websites. Traditional marketing has been left

behind because SEO is not only more effective than traditional marketing, but it is also cheaper.

2.   Research methods

The main research method consisted of analysing several scientific articles and books in order to provide a better understanding of search engine optimization and why it is important, as explained by specialists, and the main practical methods used to make the optimization efficient for any website.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify several aspects related to the chosen field, presented in the form of the following questions:

Q1 – What is search engine optimization and what is it used for?

Q2 – Why is search engine optimization important for websites, especially for those in education?

Q3 – What are the strategies used for optimizing a website for search engines?

Q4 – Which are the main methods used for optimizing a website?

To find answers to the previous questions, I had to analyse several scientific papers relevant to the domain. I searched for information on specialized platforms, such as Google Scholar and Google Books, using the appropriate keywords, and I looked for particular features (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Searching in Google Scholar and Google Books

Keywords	Search engine optimization, search engine, SEO, on-page optimization, off-page optimization, technical optimization, optimization for educational websites
Period of time	2011 - 2022

Criteria	Relevance
	High number of citations and views

3. Content analysis

After searching scientific articles on Google Scholar and Google Books, I selected only those that contained quality information and updated content specific to the field of search engine optimization.

To identify the articles that were of good quality, I had to keep in mind several aspects that make an article reliable, such as authorship, date of publication or update, and comments to the article. According to Kilyeni (2018: 37-38), the basic criteria for a reliable documentation source are:

- Authorship: In order for an article to be reliable it has to be evaluated in light of the author's credentials. The author's education, experience and reputation in the field, as well as positive or negative reviews should be taken into consideration, among others.

- Publication and affiliation: When examining a source, one should look for the date of publication, copyright, website's affiliation, etc.

- Audience and purpose: The target audience and the purpose of the article should be easily determined in order for it to be considered reliable.

- Accuracy: The accuracy of the article allows users to decide whether the information is correct and trustworthy. It can be established by looking at several aspects, such as authorship, affiliation, date of publication and updates, comprehensiveness, proper documentation, linguistic quality, etc.

- Layout: The reliability of an article can also be determined by the site's image. A good layout, one that is clear and easily understandable, makes it both easy and enjoyable for users to access information, and may therefore strengthen the credibility of a source. However, appearance may trick the user into considering the site as

reliable without checking the other criteria as well. That is why, when analysing a digital source all the above aspects should be taken into consideration.

4. Importance of SEO for educational websites

SEO has one of the biggest influences on website performance. SEO is essential for educational institutions to ensure that the right students find their school and receive the right information on the site. Although it is often overlooked, SEO is a key factor in online success. Littlefield (2022) argues that "SEO efforts can actually improve the results you get from advertising on platforms like Google Ads or Facebook by improving visitor engagement, as well as ensuring that the school ranks higher than competitors for a particular Google search".

Since most people who consider online education begin the process by online research, it is essential for an educational website to be easy to find in search engine results.

There are many benefits that SEO can provide for online education:

- **Increasing web traffic**: An effective SEO strategy will increase traffic to an online education site as a result of increased visibility in search engine results. This means that more potential students will read the content and learn about the institution. Increased site traffic means that more people will learn and talk about the institution, which can lead directly to increased enrollment and more students.

- **Cost-effective:** According to Littlefield (2022), SEO is known as "inbound marketing because it brings users to your site when they are actively looking for information about online education." This is the opposite of tactics such as flyers and billboards, which are called "outdoor marketing" and which reach an audience irrespective of whether or not they care about the promoted study programs. External marketing can be extremely costly because it essentially involves advertising to the masses without knowing how many people will be interested in the institution. There is no targeting, which means a lot of

money is wasted. With inbound marketing, including SEO, one can target a specific audience and attract them to the website. With a combination of well-researched keywords and targeted content, SEO can be extremely valuable and cost-effective for educational institutions.

- **Brand visibility**: Using SEO for an online education site will make it rank higher in search results, which means more exposure online. The more users see the website and logo, the more familiar they become with the institution's brand.

5. Results

For the practical part of this paper, I optimized for search engines the website of the e-Learning Center within Politehnica University Timișoara. The e-Learning Center coordinates distance learning and part-time study programs. To this end, the e-Learning Center created the online platform "Virtual Campus", which is an online and mobile educational environment, providing academic support and a communication channel to all the faculties at Politehnica University Timișoara.

The purpose was to increase the number of website users and to improve the ranking of the website on SERP (search engines result pages). The strategy used was on-page optimization, which means optimizing page content by finding the right keywords for titles and content, setting a meta-description according to the maximum size so that it can be previewed correctly on the Google results page, inserting images where needed and setting the alt attribute for them, checking for internal and external links, modifying the text so that it has the required number of characters, etc.

The results provided below are based on the parameters measured over two weeks, from 28.05.2022 to 10.06.2022. In terms of performance, in the period specified above, there were 1850 clicks, which meant an increase of 1700 clicks compared to the time before the optimization. Similarly, there was a total of 36,524 user views, i.e. an increase of 32.000 views compared to the period before the optimization. The average clickthrough rate (CTR) also increased from 4.2% to 5.1%, which means

there were more clicks on the link when it was displayed on the search page, and the average position decreased from 7.5% to 7.4%, which means that the website ranked higher. Figures 1 and 2 below show …
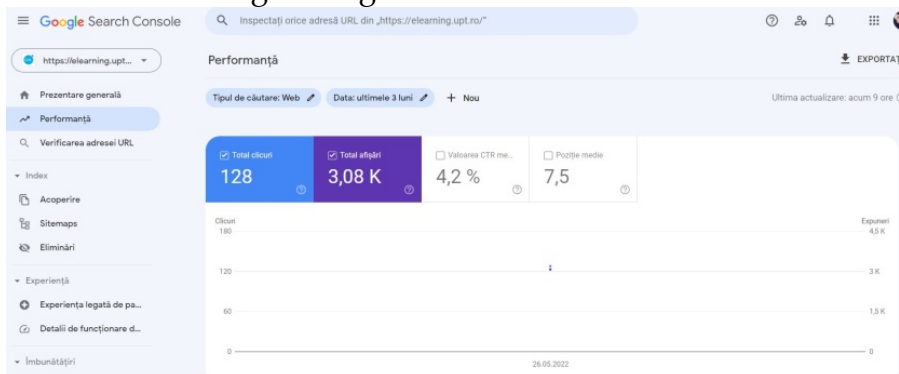
Figure 1.Performance before optimization
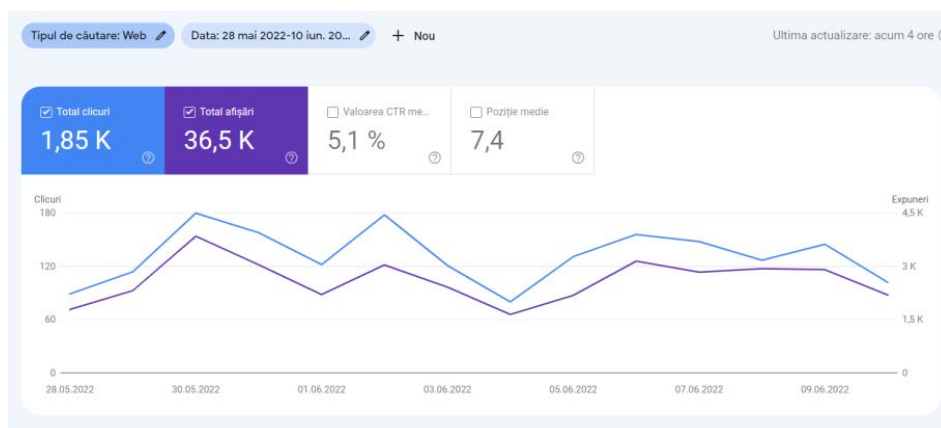
Figure 2. Performance after optimization

Regarding the users, 7983 active users were registered, out of which 4796 new users, with approximately 3800 more users than in the period before the optimization. The number of sessions increased from 5853 to 11458, and page views went up from 7341 to 16,043, which means that SEO optimization led to considerable improvements in some cases. The rejection rate also decreased from 86.50% to 83.02%.

Figure 3. Users before optimization
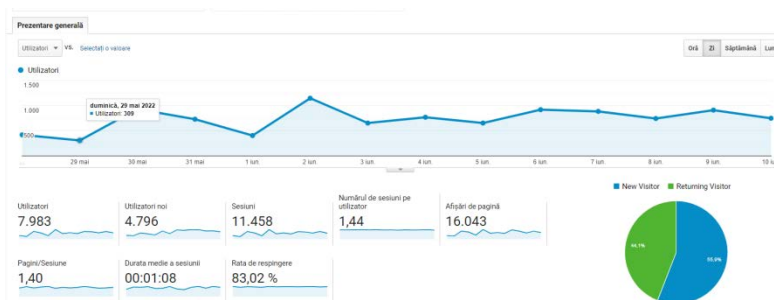
Figure 4. Users after optimization

There were also some changes in the ranking of the site: for the search "e learning", the site remained on the second page of search results but went up 2 positions, reaching the 4th position (Figure 5), whereas for the search "e-learning", the site made it to the first page of search results, ranking second to last (Figure 6).
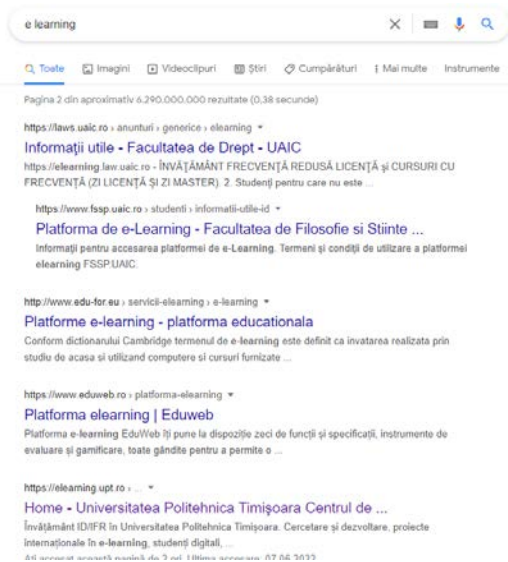
Figure 5.The "e learning" search   Figure 6. The "elearning" search
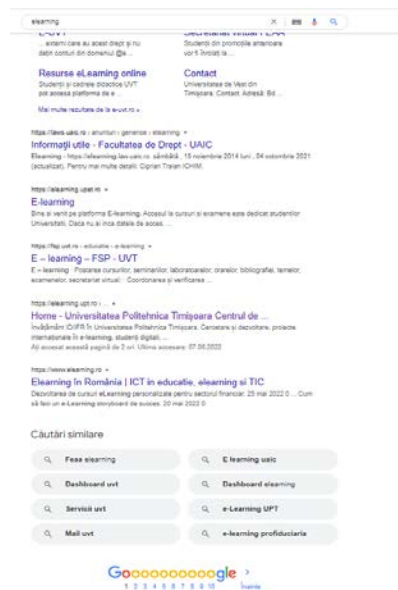
Search engine optimization can also bring changes regarding the devices used to access the website. Optimizing pages can increase their speed, making them easier to access from a desktop or smartphone. Optimizing pages specifically for mobile devices, ensuring that all content is displayed correctly, and that buttons / links can be accessed from a smartphone or tablet, makes user experience more enjoyable, which can lead to increased site access from mobile devices.

Accordingly, there have been changes regarding the devices used to access the site of the e-Learning Center. Before the optimization, 50.9% of the users accessed the site from a desktop, while after the optimization, the percentage increased to 53.3%. The percentage of users who accessed the site from a tablet increased from 0.2% to 0.6%, while the percentage of users who accessed the site from mobile devices decreased from 48.9% to 46.1%, which nevertheless means an increase of 95.5%, compared to the period before the optimization, when there was a decrease of 19.9%.

Sesiuni în funcție de dispozitiv
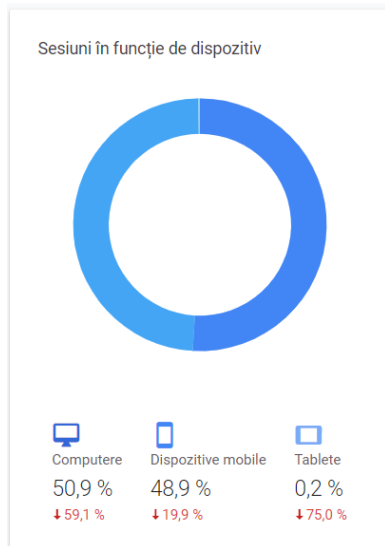
Figure 7.Devices before optimization

Computere	Dispozitive mobile	Tablete
50,9 %	48,9 %	0,2 %
↓59,1 %	↓19,9 %	↓75,0 %

Sesiuni în funcție de dispozitiv
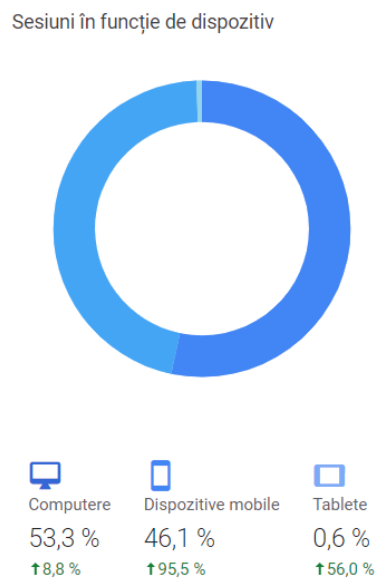
Figure 8.Devices after optimization

Computere	Dispozitive mobile	Tablete
53,3 %	46,1 %	0,6 %
↑8,8 %	↑95,5 %	↑56,0 %

6.   Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the importance of search engine optimization in the era we currently live in. The ranking of a website is crucial for the success of a business. Optimizing a website for search engines can improve its search engine result page ranking, which may in turn lead to an increase in the number of users.

In light of the results obtained after optimizing the website of the e-Learning Center, such as increases in the number of users, of views, of the average CTR, of clicks, an increase in ranking, and a decrease in the rejection rate, it can easily be argued that even the most basic website optimization can provide unexpected results.

The results obtained are promising despite the fact that only one of the three optimization strategies was used and that the analysis period was rather short. This can only mean that any optimization, no matter how small, can improve website performance. If all the optimization strategies are used and the period of observation is longer, thus having time to understand how the Google algorithm works, a website can reach its maximum potential, making it on the first page of search results and attracting significantly more users.

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The Movie Industry in the Digital Era

Flavia Anamaria Bogdan

Abstract : *Movies have been part of our lives since the beginning. All of us, one way or another, have consumed products of the movie industry, from the cartoons that we used to watch when we were children, to watching movies on TV, going to the cinema or now, in the digital era, subscribing to streaming platforms, such as HBO MAX or Netflix. The purpose of this research is to explore how the movie industry has evolved from the silent era to the digital films that we know today, as well as to investigate the factors that people take into consideration when choosing which streaming platform to subscribe to.*

1. Introduction

From the very beginning, the development of the film industry has been closely linked to the evolution of technology. From silent film to streaming channels, the cinema industry has gone through several stages.

Gone are the days when people had to go to a movie theatre to watch a movie or wait to watch it on a TV channel. Nowadays, thanks to

the digital era, one can choose a movie or a TV show just by clicking on a streaming channel.

Even though it lasted less than 2 decades, the silent era laid the groundwork for the future development of the movie industry. Although the invention of the "talkies" in 1927 marked the true beginning of the Classic Hollywood cinema, silent films were already a hit in terms of audience enthusiasm. Movies ranged from melodramas and Bible epics to Western movies, horror, gangster, war movies, romance, mysteries and comedies (from the masters of silent comedy Charlie Chaplin, Keaton and Lloyd).

By 1925, silent film was already a highly creative form of entertainment that was able to express sophisticated communication (https://www.filmsite.org, accessed on 29.04.2022).

The Golden Age of Hollywood boasted movie stars such as Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant, Grace Kelly and Clark Gable, who are known for their roles in classics that are a landmark for the movie industry even today: Gone with the Wind, It's a Wonderful Life, etc. This era can be characterized by the influence of the actors, the studio system, propaganda and emerging filming devices. There is a controversy over the beginning and the end of the Golden Age, but most critics say that it lasted from the end of 1910 until the end of the 1960s.

The Golden Age was also a time when five big production companies (MGM, Paramount, FOX, Warner Bros. and RKO) dominated movie production and controlled every aspect of the production process from casting and filming to distribution.

In the New Hollywood era, the film director took the role of key author rather than the studio. Movies made during that time are characterized by a narrative that deviates from the classical norms. Some of the movies that were a success during that era are *Bonnie and Clyde, The Graduate, Night of the Living Dead,* and *The Wild Bunch* (https://the-take.com, accessed on 03.05.2022).

The 1970s witnessed the biggest transformation of Hollywood since the conversion to sound film, and it is the defining period that separates the narrative style of the "Old Hollywood" and the "New Hollywood".

Incredibly talented directors started their careers in the Blockbuster era of the movie industry. To name a few: Steven Spielberg with the movie *Jaws* (1975), which is an example of the new style of producing movies in those years, Martin Scorsese with *Taxi Driver* (1976), Francis Ford Coppola with *The Godfather* (1971) (https://www.wikiwand.com, accessed on 04.05.2022).

What remained constant in many American films from the 70s is their self-conscious reflexivity through reference to other films, in their styles, dialogues and upheavals. This was probably inevitable from a generation of film directors who grew up with television, which is also a self-reflexive environment.

With so many streaming platforms such as Netflix, HBO GO, Hulu and Amazon Prime, which are the most important factors that make people choose which one to subscribe to and what do they think about the content of these platforms? Also, what would they change to make it a better experience? These are the main research questions I have used in order to find out users' behavior in terms of streaming channels, in particular, their preferences, their opinion of the content, design and ease of use, the factors that determine their choice of a specific streaming channel, as well as the changes they would bring to improve their streaming experience.

2. Research methods

The practical part of this research consists of two different, yet closely related studies. The first was a content analysis of the streaming channels HBO MAX and Netflix, which were compared and analysed based on the following factors: content originality, website design, website user-friendliness, the creativity of the advertisements for a certain TV show and their impact on the audience.

The second was a case study that consisted in a questionnaire about audience behaviour on streaming channels. The purpose of this case study was to identify, on the one hand, the most used streaming channels and the reasons for their popularity, and on the other hand, the

features of these channels that people dislike and would change. To achieve these objectives, I interviewed 50 people of different age groups in order to find out their opinion on this topic and to formulate a clear and explicit conclusion.

3. Results

As mentioned above regarding the content analysis, the streaming platforms HBO MAX and Netflix were compared and analysed in terms of content originality, website design, website user-friendliness, the creativity of the advertisements for a certain TV show and their impact on the audience. The table below shows the results of the content analysis :

	HBO MAX	NETFLIX
Original content	1	0
PR Campaigns	0	1
User-friendly website	1	1
Design	1	1
Subscription fee	1	-1

Table 1. Content analysis results

Grading grid : 1- positive, 0- neutral, -1 negative

Regarding the content and the PR campaigns of these streaming channels, the findings reveal that HBO MAX ranks first. Although these channels have similar content and design, there are certain elements that make a difference. For example, HBO MAX has several movies and series

available from more categories, so that the audience can choose the genre they prefer (e.g., comedy, action, thriller). The promotional campaigns of Netflix are more creative, more intensely promoted on social networks, thus attracting the attention of the target audience. However, Netflix has one big disadvantage, namely the price of the subscription fee, which is almost 5 times higher than the subscription for HBO MAX (i.e. 15 $ compared to 4$).

The questionnaire revealed the following findings. The participants in the study were aged between 21 and 52 years old, among which 33 were women and 17 men. 88% of the respondents say that they use streaming channels to watch movies or TV series. 54% spend between 1 and 5 hours weekly on these platforms. 42% of them agree that Netflix offers extremely varied original content, while 32 % say that HBO MAX has a good collection of original movies and TV series. The possibility to share the streaming account with another 3 users is an advantage, 54% of the participants in the case study sharing their streaming account with other users.

Conclusion

The content analysis has led to the following conclusions: both streaming platforms, HBO MAX and Netflix, have very similar content, but HBO has more original content and more genres available for the audience to choose from. Regarding the PR campaigns, Netflix has more creative campaigns, which allow them to reach the target audience, to create controversy around a certain TV show or movie, something that can catch the audience's attention. One disadvantage for Netflix is that the price is considerably higher, which may lead the audience to choose another streaming platform.

The purpose of the case study was to identify the main streaming platforms that people prefer and to find out their opinion about the content of streaming channels. As expected, HBO MAX and Netflix ranked the highest in the public's preferences, as they are the most common. This could be accounted for by the good PR campaigns that are done for HBO MAX and Netflix, as well as by the lack of creative

campaigns for other streaming platforms such as Hulu, Amazon Prime or YouTube Premium.

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Graphic Design and the Perception of Information: Creating Digital Graphic Content

Andreea Gavrilescu

Abstract: *In all phases of humanity so far, images have played a prominent role in sharing information, starting with the sketches on stone to the photographs that we take daily. Nowadays, design, whether digital or on paper, is present in every aspect of our lives. The aim of this paper is to examine how one's perception is influenced by the graphic style used to create an image. Furthermore, several successful tourist resorts from Romania will be analysed in terms of graphic design, by comparing the way they use specific elements and principles in order to have a greater impact on social media users. Finally, a visual concept for a local resort will be put forth.*

Keywords: *graphic design, design principles, design theories, social media, perception.*

1. Introduction

Today, design, whether digital or on paper, is indispensable. Everywhere around us, whenever we fall asleep or wake up, on the bed linen, on the

walls, on the wristwatch, on the face cream, on the phone and all around we find design in various forms (Arntson, 2012). In the evolution of design, several tools have been studied that help the user to perceive it in a certain way.

Due to its ubiquity in everyday life, graphic design tends to go unnoticed or, rather, to be taken for granted. Most people tend to perceive design as it is, without wondering, for example, why certain elements are placed in a certain way or why a certain color or a certain font is used.

2. Research methods

The purpose of this paper is to assess how social media users perceive digital graphic content. Perception assessment criteria are classified into subjective criteria and objective criteria. In terms of subjective criteria, this paper will examine the way in which the user's experiences and feelings make them perceive graphic content. Regarding the objective criteria, an analysis will be performed in an attempt to discover the elements, attributes and principles of graphic design used.

In this paper, the following research questions will be addressed:

Q1: How is graphic design defined?

Q1: Which are the component elements of digital visual content?

Q3: What graphic design principles are defined in the literature?

Q4: What role does perception play in interpreting graphic content?

3. Graphic design analysis

3.1 Definitions of graphic design

In the literature, graphic design has many definitions. In the article 'Good History Bad History', an influential graphic designer of the '90s argued that graphic design is not so rarefied or special; it is a mode of address, a means of communication (Kalman et al., 1991).

In her book, 'Graphic Design Basics', Arntson (2012) defines design as a way to solve a problem. She considers the organisation of information as a vital part of graphic design of any kind. The designer

should say something specific to a particular audience about a particular product or piece of information. Communication within specific parameters is a vital element in graphic design. As she explains, a designer should always stay informed, keeping up with current developments and trends, and should evolve constantly.

Ambrose, Harris and Ball (2019) note that graphic design has a wide spectrum that includes various aspects and elements, and that it is difficult to explain as a fractured discipline because designers may hardly ever cover all its aspects in practice, due to the variety of the field.

The table below provides the most important works consulted in the field under investigation.

Table 3.1.1. Main scientific articles studied

Category	Author(s)
Definitions of graphic design	Kalman et al., Good History/Bad History
	Arntson, Graphic Design Basics
	Ambrose et. al, The fundamentals of graphic design
	Puhalla, Design Elements: Form & Space

3.2 Component elements

During the evolution of the field of graphic design, two main design features have been defined and highlighted: design elements and design rules and principles. Thus, the interpretation and understanding of a visual message involves the control of elements and attributes, as well as of visual space (Puhalla, 2011: 94).

The main design elements are dots, lines, planes and volumes, while the design attributes are texture, scaling, space and colour.

Dots are coordinates in space without size and area. They locate positions in the workspace. Having no size, the dot cannot be drawn, but a representation of it can be shown in the design.

Figure 3.2.1: Lines

The fundamental characteristic of a **line** is the connection or union (Figure 3.2.1). This connection may be visible or invisible. Two dots on a page have a connection even if that connection, that line between them, cannot be seen (source: https://vanseodesign.com/web-design/points-dots-lines, last accessed at 16.04.2022).

The simplest shapes that can form **planes** are the square, the circle and the triangle (Figure 3.2.2).
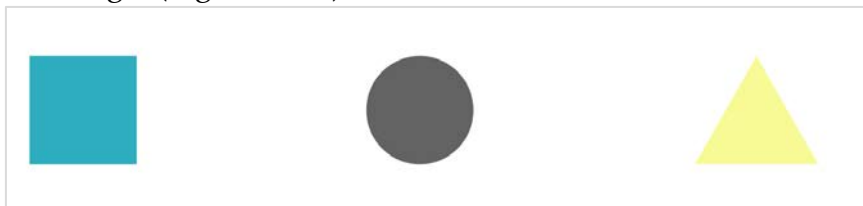
Figure 3.2.2: Geometric figures - square, circle and triangle
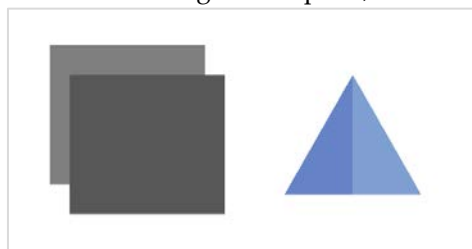
Figure 3.2.3: Volume in design

The **volume** is specific to three-dimensional space, but the illusion of its presence can be realized in two-dimensional space using cognitive processes. Size, shape, colour, overlap, transparency and angle are used to create volume. Figure 3.2.4 above shows how the overlap of elements may be used to achieve the desired effect for the square, and respectively, how colours may be used to create the illusion of a pyramid (Puhalla, 2011: 66).

Texture is the visual and/or tactile quality of a surface. Patterns can be perceived as texture if the units are small enough. The structural physical characteristics of texture are given to a material in relation to its size, shape, position and proportion (Puhalla, 2011: 66).

Scaling refers to three concepts: size, scale and proportion. Size is used from the beginning of the design process; it is necessary to determine the size at which the design will be created. Scale refers to relative measurements. Proportion is the ratio of elements to a comparative quantity.

Color is at the junction of mind and body, consciousness and reality, science and technology (Fine, 2021: 15). It is one of the most impactful elements used in design and beyond. It stands out immediately and is essential in conveying messages, influencing the way the user forms a visual impression of the design. In the book 'Color Theory: A Critical Introduction', Fine (2021) argues that no matter how much one tries to define a particular theory, one cannot characterize color in a single form. Fine (2021: 15) defines color as a muse, a powerful stimulus for imaginative thinking. In 'Applying Color Theory to Digital Media and Visualization', Rhyne (2017) describes color as the result of the interaction between the eyes and the spectrum of light. Color is the perceptual property of the environment and the objects around us. The brain is involved in color perception to make colourful human vision more interesting.

3.3 Graphic design principles

As Dabner, Steward and Vickress (2014) state in their book, good composition is an essential goal of all art, graphic or other, and should be considered the foundation of visual communication. The rules of composition are what underlies all aspects of design. Thus, when creating a work, one should always take into account the way in which the components are organized visually, the spacing between them, the style, size and format of the final work.

Unity refers to the way in which items are placed in the workspace so that they are perceived as visually or conceptually together. Success in

creating unity means using semantic, functional and visual integrity at the same time (Yilmaz et al., 2016). Dwiggins states that 'unity contributes to order and coherence and a generalized state of affairs. White (2011: 71) explains that one of the goals of graphic design is to achieve visual unity or harmony.

Alignment in graphic design is one of those topics that is not so well understood, but which is of great importance. Its correct application in graphic design can improve one's work, resulting in a clearer work, much easier to understand. The misuse of alignment makes a design look cluttered, unfinished and hence, very difficult to understand (source: https://www.coreldraw.com/en/tips/graphic-design-principles/alignment/, last accessed at 22.05.2022).

Poulin (2011: 188-189) defines **contrast** as a visual principle that gives the eye a noticeable difference between two things or objects - large and small, light and dark. In visual communication, contrast is the perceptible difference in visual characteristics, which makes an object distinct from other objects.

A **hierarchy** is an organization of elements on different levels of relative importance. Visual hierarchy is natural enough to create visual organization and prioritization. Hierarchy also gives a sense of order. Basically, visual hierarchy tells a story about what is happening in an image (source: http://vanseodesign.com/web-design/visual-hierarchy/, last accessed at 22.05.2022).

In their book 'Graphic Design School', Dabner et al. (2014: 36) define **Gestalt** psychology as a theory that suggests that the mind perceives and organizes holistically and finds patterns in what appears to be disconnected. Over time, a number of Gestalt principles have materialized: similarity, continuity, proximity, figure/ground, symmetry, common destiny, closure.

Similar elements tend to be grouped together. Even if all the shapes have the same space between them, four squares will form a group while four circles will form another group. This phenomenon is caused by elements that are similar in line, shape or form (Lee, 2007).

According to the principle of **proximity**, the elements that are closer to each other also tend to be grouped together, as illustrated in

74

Figure 3.3.1 below (source: http://vanseodesign.com/web-design/gestalt-principles-of-perception/, last accessed 21.04.2022), where each set of four black dots and four red dots appears to be in an individual group, with the groups separated from each other. This is because there is a larger gap between the three groups than there is between each individual circle (Lee, 2007).

Figure 3.3.1: Principle of proximity

The **figure/ground** principle is primarily the visual relationship between the foreground and the background of a composition. This relationship is one of the main principles of visual perception and visual communication. Design elements related to shape and contrast have a direct critical effect on how a figure and its background interact with each other. How and to what extent the figure and the background interact in a composition, creating tension or harmony, is fully determined by the graphic designer and will ultimately contribute to the success or failure of the composition (Poulin, 2011: 198-200).

White (2011: 41) defines **symmetry** as a predictable arrangement that involves order and balance, suggesting peace and stability. Symmetry in design refers to a spatial relationship between elements. Another meaning of symmetry refers to a sense of harmony, which in turn reflects beauty. A symmetrical composition makes the work calmer, quieter, while something more dynamic can be achieved if the elements are arranged asymmetrically. (Dabner et al., 2014: 38).

Closure can basically be described as a visual illusion. Human beings have an innate need to understand what they see; if a shape is anticipated, it will always be completed (Poulin, 2011: 150-151).

3.4 Perception in design

The creator of graphic content and the target audience may not always perceive things in the same manner. But when outlining a work, the creator should always keep in mind to whom they are sending the information. In the book 'Design Studies Theory' , it is argued that individual choice is influenced by cultural experience. Thus, when the creator and the target audience are not on the same wavelength, the creator should adapt to the user. Hence, they should do some research and perform their task based on the perception of users and not on their own intuition. Creators of graphic content are not only visual translators of ideas, but also emerging scientists and practitioners of design (Bennett, 2006: 21-22).

In terms of how design elements influence viewers, Puhalla (2011: 66) notes that both color and texture engage perception and memory, as they provide views on the visual and tactile realms that affect how an image or an object is understood and interpreted.

To illustrate the different ways of interpreting design, 'The Smashing Book' tells the story of a king who gathers together his most trusted advisers and covers their eyes to conceal what he wants to show them. He invites each of them to feel an elephant, telling them to touch different parts (leg, tail, abdomen) and to describe what they feel. They describe it as a pillar, a rope and a wall, respectively. The king explains that they are all right and wrong because, in fact, each of them has touched only a part of the whole elephant (Ward et al., 2011: 253).

4. Case studies

4.1 Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information about people's perception of various designs. The steps followed in creating the questionnaire were: establishing the target audience, formulating the questions and describing the context in which it was used. The target audience consisted mainly of social media users aged between 18 and

over 60. The questionnaire was completed by 211 people. Below are some examples of questions included in the questionnaire.

Q: To what extent do you think an image is easier to understand if colours are used?

For this question, a scale from 1 to 5 was used, where 1 stands for the answer 'to a very small extent' and 5 stands for 'to a very large extent'. The results are presented in Figure 4.1.1:
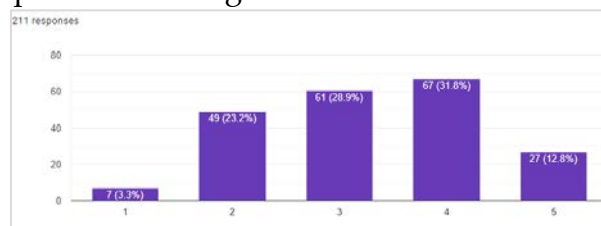
Figure 4.1.1: Results for question number 3

Q: Which of the two logos do you consider to be more visually appealing?

The two answer options are illustrated by Figure 4.1.2 (source: https://p.kindpng.com/picc/s/4-41448_high-resolution-fedex-logo-hd-png-download.png, last accessed at 21.04.2022) and respectively, Figure 4.1.3 (source: https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9Gc QLW_lG c9w CEYt_iSYHE-jJABUquCHSOZtwbg&usqp=CAU, accessed 21.04.2022). The results are presented in the pie chart in Figure 4.1.4.

Figure 4.1.2: Option 1

Figure 4.1.3: Option 2

Figure 4.1.4: Results for question number 6

Q: What do you notice at a first glance in the picture?

The picture is shown in Figure 4.1.5 (source: https://uploads.toptal.io/blog/image/125753/toptal-blog-image-1522045559221-12e437d49472555fcc386865fbabd074.jpg, accessed

21.04.2022) and the two answer options were: tree and birds (chosen by 193 people) and respectively, gorilla and lion (chosen by 18 people), as illustrated in the pie chart below.

Figure 4.1.5: Picture in question 10   Figure 4.1.6: Results for question number 10
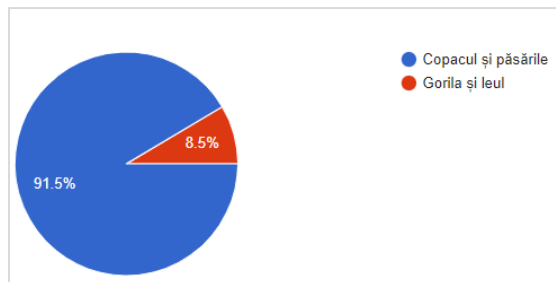
As exemplified above, the questionnaire comprises a series of questions with graphic materials created using design principles such as the figure/ground principle, the continuity principle, the proximity principle, the symmetry principle and the closure principle. Some of the most important findings are presented in what follows.

The average score (on a scale of 1 to 5) obtained in terms of how color may influence the understanding of a design is 3.27.

70% of the respondents remember a brand due to the graphic elements that arouse a certain emotion.

77.3% of the respondents consider that a graphic image is impactful when it awakens a certain memory in viewers, who recognize something familiar in it.

Over 98% of the respondents chose a design that applies principles such as unity and contrast over a design that does not observe any design principle. However, only about 20% of them could identify the features specific to those principles.

The results for question 10, which focuses on the use of the figure/ground principle in design, show that 91.5% of the respondents chose the expected answer. On the other hand, only 57.8% of the respondents chose the expected answer in question 11, which focuses on ….

As for the other Gestalt design principles, an average of approximately 98.5% chose the expected answers, noticing the applied principles.

4.2 Analysis of tourist resorts

The content analysis presented in this paper focuses solely on tourist resorts. More precisely, the content analysis centers on several Romanian tourist resorts, which were analysed in terms of the Instagram accounts used to promote them. An analysis grid was used to investigate these accounts, which had been selected based on a series of indicators, such as the number of followers, page type, the total number of posts, posting frequency, type of content posted, design, predominant colours used, type of logo and the colours used for it. The objective of the analysis was to highlight the differences and similarities between the accounts chosen and to identify those elements that influence users' perception of a particular type of content.

The following criteria were used to select the Instagram accounts: the resorts should be located in Romania, they should have more than 5,000 followers on Instagram, and they should provide at least three facilities to visitors (e.g. accommodation, restaurant, etc.).

The analysis grid facilitated the identification of the most common graphic design elements used on Instagram in order to promote the selected tourist resorts. The tables below reveal relevant information about the visual content on the Instagram accounts of three resorts.

Table 4.2.1: Analysis of three tourist resorts on Instagram

Tourist resort / Characteristic		@domeniulgruiu	@domniulmanasia	@domniulgreaca
Page type	official	-	-	-
	informal	✓	✓	✓

Tourist resort / Characteristic		@domeniulgruiu	@domniulmanasia	@domniulgreaca
Number of followers		9237	5479	17.000
Total number of posts		688	284	58
Posting frequency	regular	✓	✓	-
	irregular	-	-	✓
Type of content	photo	✓	✓	✓
	graphics	✓	✓	✓
	video	✓	✓	✓
	story	✓	✓	✓
	reel	✓	✓	✓
Predominant colours used	yellow	✓	-	✓
	green	✓	✓	✓
Predominant colours used	red	-	✓	-
	gray	-	✓	-
	blue	✓	-	✓
	brown	✓	✓	✓
	pink	-	-	-
	orange	-	-	-
Logo type	symbol	-	-	-
	logotype	-	-	-
	emblem	-	-	-

	symbol and logotype	✓	✓	-
	emblem and logotype	-	-	✓
Logo colours		white, gold	white/black	black

There are some important remarks to be noted regarding the data obtained from this analysis in terms of visual content and design features. The results show that most accounts use green, brown and yellow as predominant colours. The most common colours for the logo are gold, brown and green, whereas some accounts use only the logo in the non-color format (white, black). The predominant type of logo used is that consisting of a symbol and logotype. It is noteworthy that most of the promotion tools offered by Instagram are used, the reel being the least used.

5. Graphic design proposal

The knowledge gained from my research on graphic design and perception eventually materialized into a graphic design proposal for a tourist resort. In addition to the data collected in the analysis of the tourist resorts, the wishes of the resort managers were also taken into consideration in order to create a design concept that reflected the story of the resort as closely as possible.

In choosing the colours of the graphic concept, I considered the results of the analysis and the theoretical concepts acquired from my research. Hence, I chose a monochrome approach with a combination of non-colors. As for the font, I opted for a sans-serif one. Figure 5.1 illustrates.
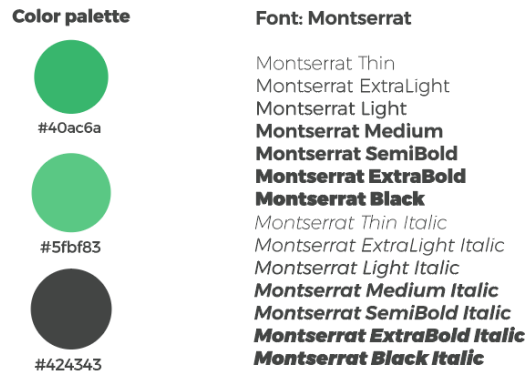
Figure 5.1: Color palette and font

For the logo, a simple geometric design was created, incorporating both visual and textual elements: a geometric chestnut leaf and respectively, the name of the resort written in the previously chosen font (Figure 5.2). Color variations, including monochrome and non-colour, were also developed for greater versatility.

Figure 5.2: Logo in color and in black

Figure 5.3: Logo in monochrome, white and black

A necessary graphic material for such tourist resorts is the business card, for which I created a minimalist design, using graphic elements and text.

Figure 5.4: Business card - front and back

For the presentation of the resort, I decided to create a brochure in a simple style, which includes graphic elements, text and a series of photos that depict the resort amenities, as illustrated in Figures 5.5 and 5.6. Figure 5.7 exemplifies some of the social media posts I created to promote the tourist resort.
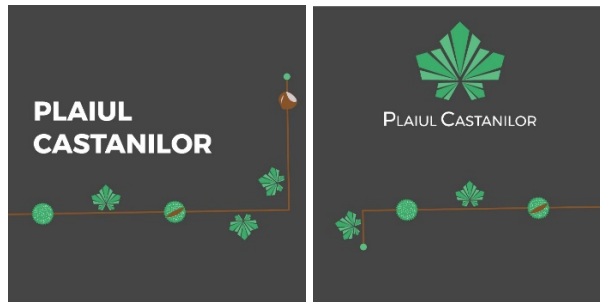
Figure 5.5: Brochure - cover
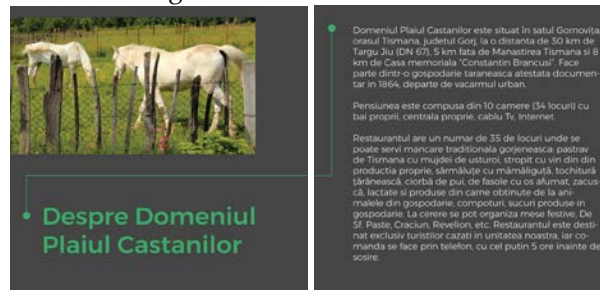
Figure 5.6: Brochure – pages 1-2
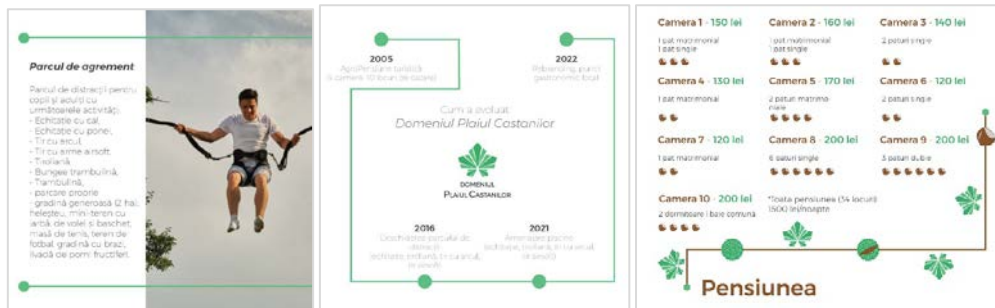
Figure 5.7: Social media posts

6. Conclusion

This paper has focused on the components of digital graphic content, the principles of graphic design and the role played by human perception in the interpretation of digital graphic content. The aim was to identify the peculiarities that emerge from the digital graphic content posted on Instagram, by analysing Instagram accounts in the field of tourism, as well as to conduct a case study on the relationship between human perception and graphic content.

The present study has outlined the way in which users interact with different types of digital graphic content and relate to it depending on the design techniques used. It has also pointed out a series of aspects that are essential to create domain-specific graphic materials which contribute to building the visual identity of a brand.

This study aims to supplement research in the field of digital graphic design. The theoretical aspects discussed in this paper together with the analyses and case studies performed relate to the evolution of digital graphic content, the basic elements in graphic design, types of images and their peculiarities, color theory, key principles and theories in graphic design, visual and brand identity, and the role of psychology in graphics.

This study has also led to answers to the research questions presented in the introduction of the paper, as follows.

Q1: How is graphic design defined?

Graphic design is a means of communication that should say something specific about a certain piece of information to a certain audience. It is a field that is constantly evolving and adapting to keep up with current trends.

Q2: Which are the component elements of digital visual content?

The component elements of digital visual content are: design elements (point, line, plane, volume), design attributes (texture, scaling, space, color), raster images, vector images, and design principles.

Q3: What graphic design principles are defined in the literature?

The principles of graphic design defined in the literature are: unity, alignment, contrast, hierarchy, and Gestalt principles (similarity,

continuity, proximity, figure/ground, symmetry, common destiny, closure).

Q4: What role does perception play in interpreting graphic content?

Perception influences how graphic content is interpreted. Depending on how the design is made, perception can either be driven by it, which makes the design understandable and interpretable, or it cannot, which leads to ambiguity and a feeling of confusion.

The practical contributions of this study are the following: the questionnaire, which points out how users perceive different images and how they relate to them; the content analysis on a corpus of twelve Instagram accounts created to promote various tourist resorts; the creation of various graphic materials in Adobe Illustrator CC and Adobe InDesign CC programs to build the visual and brand identity of a tourist resort (logo, business card, promotional brochure, various promotional materials).

The findings of the questionnaire have revealed that 65.4% of the respondents believe that a design that uses colours is easier to understand than a design that does not. Also, over 70% of the respondents correlated an impactful design with a feeling of familiarity, while over 98% consider a design based on design principles to be more visually pleasing. The content analysis has shown that tourist resorts in Romania usually use green, brown and yellow as predominant colours for the graphic materials, and the logos generally consist of a symbol and text, and typically use gold, brown and green as main colours. Finally, the graphic design proposal made for the tourist resort comprises the logo and a series of graphic materials for promotional use, both online and offline.

In conclusion, it can be argued that this study has achieved its purpose, namely to investigate the relationship between graphic design and user perception, and to implement the findings in a graphic design proposal.

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Phishing Attacks and Cybersecurity

Maria-Mirabela Pantea

Abstract: *As Internet usage has increased significantly, people have started sharing their personal data online, and as result, huge amounts of personal information and financial transactions have become vulnerable to cyberattacks. The most common way for cybercriminals to steal personal data, credentials or bank accounts is through phishing, which is a cybercrime in which attackers mislead Internet users or company employees in order to steal their personal information. The purpose of this paper is to raise awareness of phishing attacks among Internet users, but also to highlight the importance of cybersecurity in protecting confidential information, such as personal data, bank accounts or login credentials on various online accounts or online tools used at work, using two research methods: the interview and the questionnaire.*

Keywords: *phishing attacks, cybersecurity, online, company, employee, user.*

1.   Introduction

The history of phishing shows that the methods by which this type of cyberattack is launched on the Internet have evolved over the last two decades to evade detection by spam filters or other technology. However, the tactics used by attackers seem not to have changed that much. Although phishing tactics have remained largely the same, attackers have

changed their interests over time. Instead of getting free Internet access, they have started using various techniques to gradually destroy the global economy.

Phishing attacks are a form of psychological manipulation, where victims are tricked into divulging confidential information. These attacks can take place on various websites in the form of advertisements, via email and even phone messages, tricking users into sharing their personal information or downloading virus programs that may damage the device used. Once users access them, attackers can steal users' identity or make fraudulent purchases by accessing their bank or personal accounts.

2.   Research methods

The research methods applied in order to draw a conclusion about phishing and cybersecurity are: an individual interview with a specialist in the field of cybersecurity and a questionnaire, based on the interview, answered by 109 laypeople. These two research tools helped me investigate various aspects, such as different types of attacks, their characteristics, ways in which they can be detected and ways to protect oneself from them.

The following questions will be of great importance for the present research:

- Which are the most common types of phishing?;
- What are the characteristics and the consequences of the attacks?;
- Can Internet users identify phishing messages?

The objectives of this research are to demonstrate the importance of cybersecurity and the fact that many Internet users encounter these phishing attacks every day while exposing online their personal information, bank accounts and login credentials used at work.

3.   Results and discussion

The first research technique used is a self-designed questionnaire, targeting Internet consumers. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions

and it was answered by 109 people, both women and men, aged between 18 and over 50. This questionnaire allowed me to investigate and analyse the attitudes of Internet users towards cyberattacks, more precisely, if they are familiar with the term, if they can recognize a phishing message or if they have been victims of it.

In what follows, some questions and answers from the questionnaire will be presented, accompanied by tables which will highlight the findings through graphic representation. For the first four questions, the respondents have been divided by age, gender, background and occupation. The purpose of the first question was to find out whether participants knew what a phishing attack was, in an attempt to prove that most Internet users are not fully aware of the meaning of the term and of the consequences of phishing attacks despite their pervasiveness on social media platforms, websites and email.

Participants were also asked about the context in which they had encountered phishing attacks. Out of the 109 participants in the survey, 24 chose social media, 17 mentioned their personal email address, 8 chose websites, 7 mentioned their work email address, 4 mentioned both their personal and their work email address, 2 mentioned both their work email address and websites, whereas 3 respondents chose both websites and personal email address. Only 15 of them had encountered phishing in at least three of the variants presented, while 27 had never encountered this type of attack. Table 1 shows the context.

Table 1. Contexts in which phishing attacks take place

Social media accounts	37.6%
Personal email address	36.7%
No	26.6%
Websites	22.9%
Work email address	19.3%

When asked if they could recognize a phishing attack, 41.3% of the participants confirmed they could and 33% answered "probably". In

order to find out whether participants could really identify a phishing message, three possible answers were provided. Only 32 respondents answered this question correctly. In another question, participants were asked what methods they thought they could use to protect themselves against these attacks. Here, the most relevant answers were the following:

- "Check the domain of the sender, increase vigilance and avoid submitting personal information online and accessing suspicious links."

- "Check the links carefully before accessing them."

- "Check the authenticity of the messages."

- "Protect your computer with security software. It can automatically identify malicious attacks. Tighten user account security using multi-factor authentication. Beware of the links coming from unsafe sources and use a different password for each online account."

According to their responses, the participants in the survey seem to know how to protect themselves from phishing attacks, most of them being informed about how to act when faced with spam emails or malicious websites. The participants also had to take a test, which consisted of three messages: an actual message sent from Dropbox, and two phishing messages, sent from eFax and the Romanian Commercial Bank. The three figures below show the messages, while the tables following each figure reveal the percentages of those who identified each message as real or fake.

Figure 1. Real message sent by Dropbox
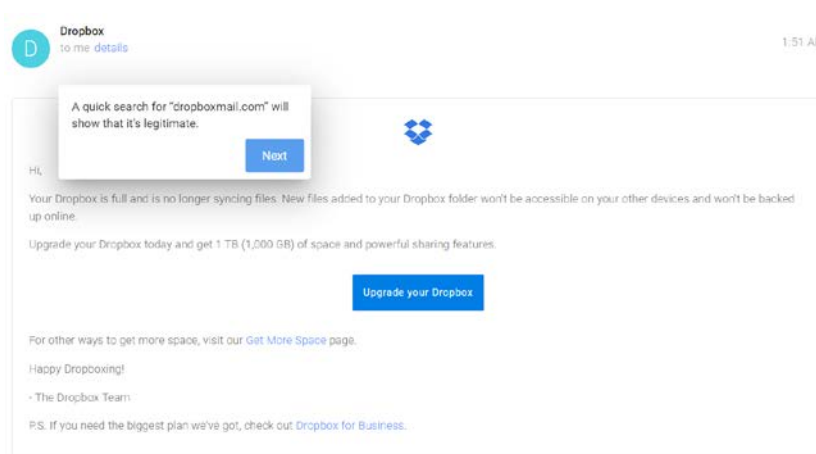
Table 2. Participants' responses

Actual message	58.7%
Phishing	41.3%

Figure 2. Phishing message sent by eFax
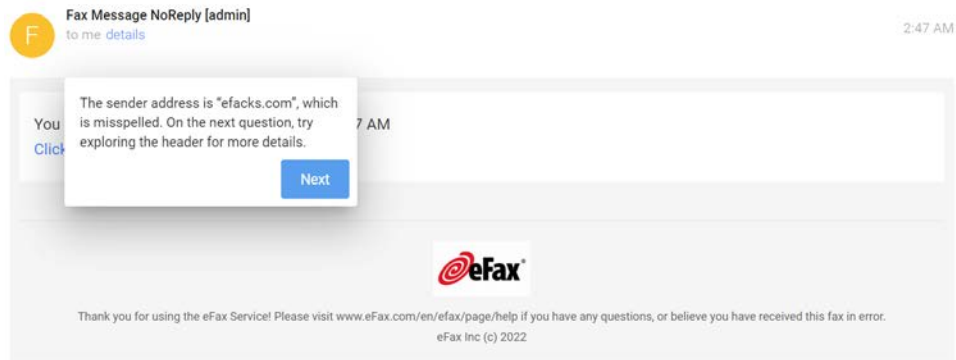
Table 3. Participants' responses

Actual message	25.7%
Phishing	74.3%

Figure 3. Phishing message sent by the Romanian Commercial Bank
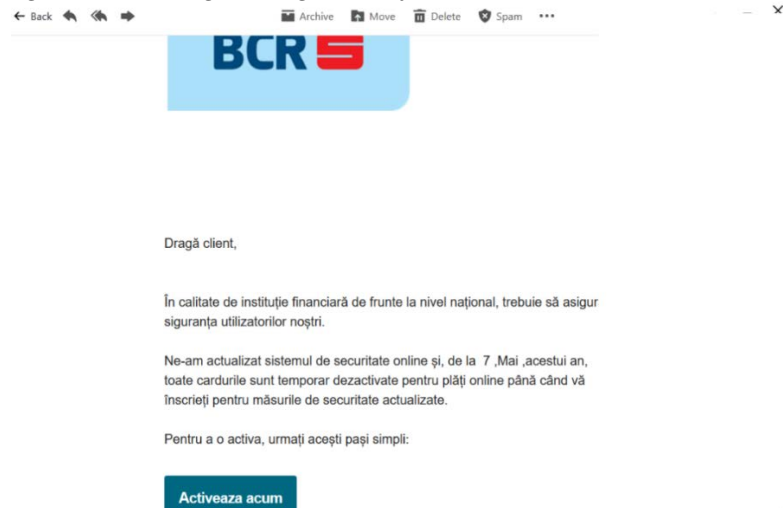
Table 4. Participants' responses

Actual message	25.7%
Phishing	74.3%

Participants were also asked whether they had ever experienced phishing attacks via email. To this question, 67 people said they had experienced this type of attack, 22 said they had not and 20 did not know. Of all respondents, 42 are aged between 18 and 28, 11 are aged between 29 and 39, 10 are over 50, and 4 are aged between 40 and 50. 33 of them are employed, 7 are students and 2 are either unemployed or retired. In the last question of the questionnaire, participants were asked whether they had encountered other types of phishing attacks. Respondents were given four answer options: vishing, spear phishing, pop-up phishing and no. The results are as follows: 39 participants chose pop-up phishing, another 39 chose vishing, and 11 chose spear phishing. 20 participants said they had not experienced any of these attacks.

The questionnaire has revealed how widespread phishing attacks are among Internet users in Romania, which are the most common types of attacks and where they take place. Social networks come first, followed by personal email, websites and work email. However, a fairly large percentage of participants said they had not encountered such attacks, and consequently, only 41.3% of participants could recognize such an attack, while 33% said they would "probably" spot it. This suggests that email phishing is the most common type of phishing, 61.5% of the respondents having experimented it, followed by pop-up phishing, vishing and spear phishing. Only 18.3% said that they had not experienced any other attack, except for email phishing.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to raise awareness of the presence and spread of phishing attacks among Internet users, but also to highlight the importance of cybersecurity in protecting confidential information, such as personal data, bank accounts or login credentials on various online

accounts or online tools used at work. As I have been a victim of these attacks myself, this research has helped me understand how phishing works, the environments and circumstances in which attackers operate, and how to recognize these attacks. This study has also highlighted how important cybersecurity is and what people can do to protect their personal data and confidential information.

In my opinion, phishing attacks are some of the biggest threats faced by both people and organizations. Attackers may use various factors, such as age, gender, stress and Internet addiction, to lure users, taking advantage of people's vulnerabilities. In addition to the traditional settings where phishing attacks have taken place so far, i.e. websites and email, attackers are constantly inventing new methods to steal personal data or bank accounts from Internet users, such as mobile phone attacks, i.e. smishing and vishing. While user training may be the most effective way to combat these attacks, it is difficult to eliminate them completely due to the social engineering elements used and their complexity. Furthermore, it is important to develop techniques to detect and then stop the attack, and to investigate user's susceptibility in order to design and create the most effective self-training systems.

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Visual Identity Design and Branding. Graphic Design Services for Organisations

Iasmina Iovănescu

Abstract: *From the earliest times, people who produce material goods or provide various services have used their personal brand to stand out. Specifically, by making their products easily identifiable, they have provided buyers with a way to recognize their products if they wanted to buy them again or recommend them further. That is why it matters so much which stands out the most and which is the most memorable. Visual identity can shape one's perception of a company's brand, as well as determine one's first impression of it. The main objective of this paper is to examine the concepts of branding and visual identity, as they are defined, explained and exemplified through case studies in the literature.*

Keywords: *branding, visual identity, visual branding, graphic design.*

1.   Introduction

Branding is the active process of building a universe around a product or service, and a company's image and reputation among customers, thus

shaping their perception of it. The ultimate goal of branding is to meet the needs of customers, as well as to gain their trust. (Levanier, 2019)

Dang (2018: 5) considers that branding can be defined as the differentiation of products or services that are part of the same area of activity. This process should not be confused with the production of high-quality goods or investment in advertising campaigns.

Visual identity is the 'face' of a brand, which can shape customers' perception of it, as well as determine their first impression of it. Visual identity primarily includes the company's logo, colours, images, typography, and creative design (Fabrikbrands.com).

Images can be a powerful form of communication. By using them, emotions can be aroused without the need for words. But with the power of this form of communication also comes great responsibility, including that of not conveying the wrong message. Visual identity includes all the images and visual materials that express who a brand is and differentiate it from all the others. In other words, it describes everything that customers can physically see, from the logo to the interior design of a store. The purpose of visual identity is to create an emotional reaction in customers, to inform them about the nature of the brand and the products or services provided, as well as to create an overview of everything that represents the brand (Fabrikbrands.com).

According to Levanier (2019), brand identity is a holistic expression of everything the brand represents. This includes, in addition to visual identity, non-visual elements such as the mission statement, core values, and promises made to customers. Visual identity is part of brand identity and involves a different creative process. Even if they overlap to a certain extent, each involves a different approach and profession. Brand identity is handled by marketing specialists, while visual identity is overseen by creative directors and designers.

In conclusion, brand identity describes who the brand is on the inside, whereas visual identity illustrates the concept behind the brand.

2.   Research methods

The main research method consisted in examining the literature to provide a sound analysis of the branding process and of visual identity as an integral part of it, as well as to present examples of how the theory was applied to some concrete cases.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify several aspects related to the chosen field, presented in the form of the following questions:

Q1 - What are the specific definitions of visual branding?

Q2 - What are the properties of a logo as a visual product, which determine the visual exposure of an organisation?

Q3 - What design and content elements define visual identity?

Q4 - What are the graphic materials that reflect the visual identity of an organisation?

To find answers to these questions, I examined a series of scientific papers in the chosen field. The research was conducted on dedicated platforms, such as Google Scholar (Table 2.1) and IEEE Explore (Table 2.2), using relevant keywords.

Table 2.1: Searching in Google Scholar

Keywords	Branding, Visual branding, E-branding, M-branding, Visual identity, Brand identity, Graphic design, Logo design, Color palette, Typography
Period of time	2011 - 2022
Criteria	Relevance High number of citations and views

Table 2.2: Searching in IEEE Xplore

Keywords	Branding, Visual branding, E-branding, M-branding, Visual identity, Brand identity, Graphic design, Logo design, Color palette, Typography
Period of time	2011-2022
Criteria	Publication Topics High number of citations and views (Paper Citations, Full Text Views)

3. Content analysis

After searching for articles on Google Scholar and IEEE Explore, I selected those that contained information of interest, which would help me answer the research questions. The selected articles are presented in Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.

Of course, I had to keep a critical and attentive eye on all the articles I had found, in order to check whether they were reliable or not. Therefore, I looked at the author(s) of the articles or at the comments, as well as at the type of language that was used in order to find the most reliable one.

According to Kilyeni (2018: 37-38), there are certain criteria that one should take into account when evaluating documentation sources:

• Authorship - the author's education, reputation and experience in the field, the presence or the absence of contact and biographical information, positive or negative reviews should all be taken into consideration in order to decide whether the information presented is reliable.

• Publication and affiliation – for online documentation sources, it is advisable to identify and examine the website's affiliation and to look for publisher information such as the date of publication/update and the copyright date.

• Target audience and purpose – these two criteria should be easily identified and taken into consideration to determine whether the content is appropriate for the user's needs.

• Accuracy – it allows the reader to decide if the information presented is correct and trustworthy; it can be established by looking at the following aspects: authorship, affiliation, date of publication, date of updates, comprehensiveness, proper documentation, objectivity and linguistic quality.

• Layout – this criterion may also play a role in assessing the reliability of a documentation source because a layout that is clear, uncluttered and visually pleasing usually points to a reliable source; appearances may, however, deceive, especially on the Internet, where a good layout does not necessarily guarantee credibility.

Table 3.1. Scientific papers that present practical approaches to building a visual identity

Author, year and title	Organisation	Characteristics	Summary
Agustin, S., 2020, *Branding Strategy of Contemporary Coffee Shops in Indonesia*	Kopi Kenangan, Kopi Janji Jiwa, Kopi Lain Hati, Kopi Bersahaja, Kata Kopi, Kopi Sejiwa, Kopi Ruang Hati dan Kopi Bahagia. Coffee shops	Design / content elements: logo, Instagram page Graphic products: packaging, cafe design	This article discusses the branding and marketing strategies of several coffee shops in Indonesia. The author concludes that a successful brand is one that manages to achieve a high degree of recognition among consumers. This is due to the differentiation caused by a distinct visual identity.
Bernard, A., 2019, *Visual Branding of Chinese restaurant in Tampere*	Loon Fung Chinese restaurant	Design / content elements: logo, color palette, Graphic products: Menu	In this paper, the author analyses certain elements of the branding of a Chinese restaurant and offers updated design proposals for the logo and menu. The customer is satisfied with the result because he considers that they match the aesthetics of the restaurant.

Dang, L., 2020, *Visual Branding: A Guide to Designing Visual Identity*	Plannr.eu Organising tool	Design / content elements: logo, color palette, Graphic products: business card, favicon, website homepage, and mobile application.	The aim of this paper is to emphasize the importance of visual branding and how a well-designed visual identity helps to distinguish a brand on the market. The author has designed a visual identity pack for Plannr.eu.

Table 3.2. Scientific papers that present practical approaches to building a visual identity

Destiadi, R., 2021, *Branding Design of The 39th Anniversary of Medan State Polytechnic*	Medan State Polytechnic University	Design / content elements: logo, color palette	This study describes the design of visual identity, as part of the branding process of the event "The 39th Anniversary of Medan State Polytechnic".
Kelly, M., 2016, *Analysing the complex relationship between logo and brand*	Ankara (city) Mlinda (NGO) Bario (community) Peru (country)	Design / content elements: logo, webpage Graphic products: billboard, banner, brochure, product packaging	This article emphasizes the importance of the logo in local branding because it serves as a tool in the formation of a visual strategy within a campaign. The author believes that the power

101

			of visual identity cannot be underestimated, and maximizing the flexibility of a logo helps to create a visual repertoire.
Lau, F., 2011, *Chongqing's City Branding: The Role of Graphic Design*	Chongqing (city)	Design / content elements: logo Graphic products: tourist products, maps of the region, government publications	The author examines the role of graphic design in the branding of Chongqing. He believes that the contribution of graphic designers to the city's branding has evolved from relatively isolated projects, such as the design of stamps and posters, to a much larger visual communication strategy. A graphic designer can communicate information, ideas, and concepts through visual language. The language is made up of images, illustrations, icons, photos, fonts, and other graphics.

Table 3.3. Scientific papers that present practical approaches to building a visual identity

| Marion, P., 2021, *Brand Strategy & Visual Identity for Layton Preparatory School in Nigeria* | Layton Preparatory School in Nigeria | Design/content elements: logo, color palette, custom font, artwork Graphic products: stationery, promotional materials, brand guide, brochure | This article discusses the brand strategy and visual identity of a Nigerian school. They were developed by Ellie Creative Design Agency, a creative agency based in Nigeria. The branding of the school was successful and received positive reviews from customers and the general public. After the school revealed its new visual identity and applied it in various communication channels, it received an overwhelming number of applications for admission for the new school year. |

4. Visual identity – best practices

Following the analysis of the specialised literature, I compiled a collection of good practices in the creation of visual identity. Below are some design principles that should be considered for the successful visual identity of a brand.

Fonts

According to Wheeler (2013: 15), the fonts used should highlight the most important ideas and concepts in the text. No more than two types of font should be used. A greater range of fonts will only load the page, instead of increase its visual appeal. There are also types of font that are easy to read on both computers and mobile devices. For example, an Arial font is more mobile-friendly than a sleeker font, which may not be as readable on a smaller screen.

Colour

Color has the rare power to evoke certain emotions and make the reader feel more connected to the subject. A color scheme should not include more than 2-3 colours as it may look chaotic (Elearningindustry.com). The psychology of colours should also be taken into account, as color can influence the user's condition. Color palettes can be automatically generated from photos (Onita, 2018).

Cohesion

It is important to choose individual visual elements, such as colours, fonts and images, but also to use them together.

In addition to making the design look elegant and professional, a good layout also creates a clear structure and helps draw the user's attention to the right place. There are countless ways to put content on a page, which is why some design options should be explored through lots of quick sketches on paper. When integrating visuals into graphic design, it is important to use high-quality, copyright free images. In addition, the chosen images should be closely related to the brand's visual identity. If they are there only for their aesthetic value, then it is best to omit them completely (Designlab.com).

Balance

Balance shapes the design and makes it stable. This does not mean that the elements should be the same size or that they should be symmetrical. Rather, it is about helping viewers scroll through the content in a way that helps them understand it as easily as possible. Symmetrical balance places the elements evenly on each side of the design, while asymmetrical balance uses contrast to even out the design (for example, dark elements are balanced by light ones). (Adobe.com)

Blank space

The white parts of the design are just as important as the ones filled with colours, text and images. White space, known as negative space, creates shape and can help highlight the most important pieces of information in a design. The power of simplicity should never be underestimated. (Adobe.com)

Consistency

Consistency is the way in which all the design elements are connected, each piece complementing the other. In a marketing campaign, it is vital that people can recognize the brand and understand its basic idea. Consistency arouses their interest, which is why it is important to constantly use the same elements of visual identity (Wheeler, 2013).

The findings presented above have led to the conclusion that the purpose of visual identity is to create an emotional reaction in customers, to make known the intentions and values of a brand and the nature of the services/products provided. At the same time, a good brand identity helps increase brand awareness.

5.   Fonic Lab – visual identity proposal

Fonic Lab is a record label from Timișoara, founded at the end of 2021 by four aspiring artists on the Romanian underground music scene. They aim to promote their own music, as well as other local artists' music, through various means. These means involve publishing their music and compilations on social networks and on the Bandcamp platform, as well as organising events where the label's artists are invited.

The target audience mostly consists of young adults and adults, lovers of techno and minimal music, who attend events where such music is played.

The record company currently carries out all its marketing activities online, more precisely on the social platforms Facebook and Instagram, and the music they produce is available on the Bandcamp platform, from where it can be downloaded for free or for a fee. The company does not have a physical location.

Based on the knowledge gained from the analysis of scientific papers in the field as well as on current branding trends and customer requirements, I created a graphic design proposal for Fonic Lab as part of their branding process (Table 5.1)

I used Figma to create the visual identity elements, and Photopea to create the graphic product presentation scenes. The images used are taken from Creative Commons licensed websites.

Table 5.1 Graphic products for Fonic Lab

Name	Description	Image
Business card	A simple, black, sophisticated business card including the customer's details.	

Table 5.2 Graphic products for Fonic Lab

| Badge | An artist badge suitable for events. | |

Poster	Exposed poster announcing the launching event.	
Bracelet	Bracelet created for the participants in the event.	

Table 5.3 Graphic products for Fonic Lab
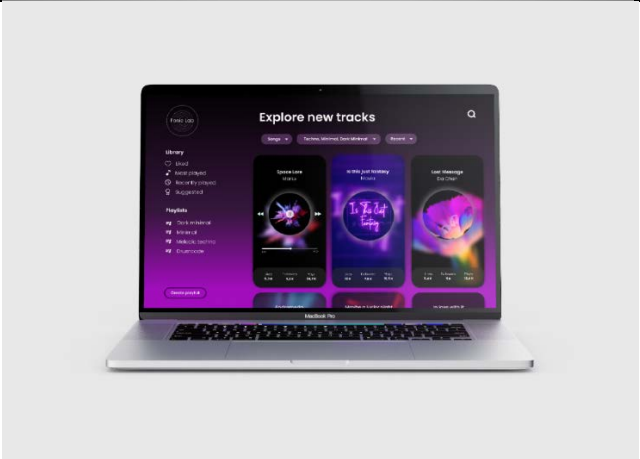
Tickets	Regular and VIP tickets for the event.	
Stickers	Pink and black stickers with the brand logo.	
CD	Artwork for CD.	

Table 5.4 Graphic products for Fonic Lab

Vinyl	Artwork for vinyl.	
Web application	Start page for web application.	
Mobile application	Start page for mobile application	

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to shed light on the crucial role that branding and visual identity play in the success of a business. I believe that the analysis of the scientific papers has helped me answer the questions mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Moreover, creating the graphic products for a record company has deepened the knowledge I gained throughout my research.

On one hand, one of the main findings is that visual identity can indeed shape the perception of a company's brand, as well as determine customers' first impression of it. Visual identity can arouse emotions without the need for words. But with the power of this form of communication also comes great responsibility - that of not conveying the wrong message.

On the other hand, branding has gained growing importance in the last decades because of its decisive influence on brand performance. At the same time, it continues to remain one of the major challenges in this domain because it causes long-term effects on the brand and there are also many resources involved.

In conclusion, if a company has very good branding and a consistent visual identity, it can give the brand a more human side, which will make customers relate more to it. It can appeal to people's emotions in many different ways and make them feel more connected to the company.

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Persuasive Elements in the Discourse of Political Leaders during the Pandemic

Raluca-Diana Boboc

Abstract: *This research focuses on two important aspects regarding the use of persuasion during the Coronavirus pandemic. First of all, the study identifies the main methods of neuro-linguistic programming used by European politicians in order to influence the citizens' behavior. Then, the applicability of these techniques within a company will be studied. This paper is the first part of the research and presents the detailed analysis of the persuasion techniques used by the politicians from 4 European countries: Romania, France, Spain, and Germany. The appeal to emotions, coercive means or gratitude to citizens are just some of the aspects targeted by the research. 12 speeches will be analysed from a comparative point of view, and then the most used means of persuasion will be identified.*

Keywords: *persuasion, discourse, neuro-linguistic programming, pandemic, politician, content analysis.*

1.   Introduction

The period of the Coronavirus pandemic has been one of the biggest challenges that humanity has faced in the last decades. The economic and social effects were felt in the health crisis that many of the European countries had to face. Political leaders and important health professionals have tried to influence citizens in order to comply with the recommendations of the authorities: vaccination and wearing a protective mask.

Moreover, the pandemic has also created a difficult situation for companies and the business environment. Both the employees and the employers have had to comply with the new regulations. The managers' speeches included, most of the time, not only informative ideas, but also different means of persuasion, meant to influence their employees' behavior.

Political figures around the world have tried to influence citizens to follow rules designed to protect their health. The speeches included multiple ways of persuading, adapted to the public. While some of the leaders of the states emphasised the restrictions generated by the pandemic, others emphasised the desire to return to a safe environment.

This research focuses on persuasion through discourse within two distinct situations. First of all, the techniques of large-scale neuro-linguistic programming used by the leaders of European states in order to influence the citizens' behavior will be analysed. Then, the applicability of these techniques will be studied within a smaller professional group, through leaders and subordinates in a company's departments.

2.   Research methods

The use of content analysis in this research allows a thorough study of the techniques of neuro-linguistic programming and persuasion used by political leaders in some major European countries. The quantifiability of the data obtained and its objectivity are two of the advantages of content analysis. Moreover, this method provides important information on the

comparative analysis of the ways of persuasion used in political discourse.

This first part of the research aims at discussing the comparative analysis of the speeches of the political leaders from 4 European countries, i.e. Romania, France, Spain and Germany, during the COVID-19 pandemic. For Romania, the chosen personalities are Klaus Iohannis, the president of the country, Raed Arafat, the head of the DSU and Florin Cîțu, the prime minister. As for France, the speeches of President Macron, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health were analysed. Germany's analysis focused on Chancellor Angela Merkel, the President and the Health Minister. For Spain, the speeches of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, the second Deputy Prime Minister and Caroline Darias, the Minister of Health, were investigated.

The purpose of the analysis is to determine to what extent political leaders have used persuasive means and neuro-linguistic programming techniques in their speech to influence the citizens' behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. The targeted actions are represented by the urge to vaccinate, the use of a protective mask or the observance of physical distancing when in contact with the people around.

In order to determine to what extent the political leaders of the four countries want to influence the citizens' behavior, I have created an analysis grid consisting of 5 categories. The premises of persuasion, the techniques of persuading the public, and the six principles of persuasion demonstrate whether political leaders use persuasion as a means of determining a behavioral change. The frameworks of problem solving and the presence of anchors in discourse are specific to neuro-linguistic programming.

3. Results

Discourse analysis - Romania

Categories	President	Prime-minister	The head of the DSU
Psychological premises	X	X	

Logical premises	X		X
Cultural premises	X		
Reciprocity			
Social example	X	X	X
Consistency	X	X	X
Authority	X		X
Admiration		X	
Deficit	X	X	X
Results against the concept of guilt	X	X	X
"How" as opposed to "why"	X		X
Possibilities over needs	X	X	X
Feedback against failure	X		
Curiosity over assumptions			
Visual anchors	X		
Audible anchors			
Kinesthetic anchors		X	
Appeal to emotions	X	X	
Constraints			
Facts and figures			X

The President of Romania uses all the three types of persuasion premises in his speech. Firstly, he appeals to psychological premises, emphasising essential needs such as health or the need to belong to a social group. Next, the president uses logical premises to persuade the audience and exemplifies his point of view through cause and effect statements. Thus, he states that because Romanians do not get vaccinated, there are not enough places in the hospitals and consequently, more people die. Last but not least, the President tries to influence the public behaviour through cultural premises. He first gives the example of the developed countries where the vaccination rate is over 80%, and then appeals to a sense of patriotism, using the term "Romanians" several times.

In his speech, Romania's Prime Minister, Florin Cîțu, uses psychological premises in order to influence the public to decide to get vaccinated. He uses arguments such as the need for physical security, the need to belong, by constantly repeating the words "together", "all of us". Moreover, he brings up the need for self-fulfilment, such as the people's desire to be creative and to show spontaneity.

The head of the DSU, Raed Arafat, uses logical premises as a means of persuasion. He gives dramatic examples, such as the number of deaths in the hospitals or gloomy predictions about the near future. Arafat constructs a part of the speech through cause-effect statements, so he presents the reasons why the COVID-19 pandemic persists and its consequences, namely serious health problems and increased restrictions and deaths.

Klaus Iohannis appeals to emotions in his speech and uses terms such as "freedom" or responsibility for the safety of his compatriots.

To a greater extent than the President of Romania, Prime Minister Florin Cîțu talks about family, love for children, parents and the freedom to reunite with all the loved ones, with the aim of getting citizens to get vaccinated.

Unlike the President and the Prime Minister, the head of the DSU relies on figures in his desire to influence the public to get vaccinated. He constantly uses dramatic facts and figures to describe Romania's plight due to non-vaccination.

Discourse analysis – France

Categories	President	Prime Minister	Health Minister
Psychological premises	X	X	X
Logical premises	X		
Cultural premises	X		
Reciprocity		X	
Social example		X	
Consistency	X	X	X
Authority	X		X
Admiration		X	
Deficit		X	
Results against the concept of guilt		X	X
"How" as opposed to "why"	X		
Possibilities over needs		X	X
Feedback against failure	X	X	
Curiosity over presumptions			X
Visual anchors		X	
Audible anchors	X		

Kinesthetic anchors			
Appeal to emotions			
Constraints	X		
Facts and figures		X	X

In terms of the five problem-solving frameworks, the use of the "how rather than why" principle is consistently found in the President's speech. He repeatedly emphasises the importance of vaccination as the only solution to combat the pandemic. Moreover, Macron assesses the current situation and gives clear instructions on future action.

The Prime Minister of France wants to influence the public by using more specific NLP frameworks. The first is "results over guilt", which manifests itself by reminding of the main problem, the pandemic, but the speech focuses on respecting the solutions of health representatives. It also emphasises possibilities and does not talk about obligations. He offers the recommendation to get vaccinated to all those who have not done it yet. In addition, he gives feedback on the number of people vaccinated and says he is satisfied with the progress and wants more people to get vaccinated every day.

France's health minister uses three problem-solving frameworks in his speech. First, he appeals to the presentation of the problem and the solutions and does not focus on the causes that led to the non-vaccination of a category of citizens. Then, he goes on to offer the possibility of further developing a downward slope in the numbers situation by presenting vaccination as a choice that brings with it a number of benefits. It is important to note that the Minister does not want to mobilise people through obligations, as happened with the President of France. Finally, he proposes to change the mindset of citizens who have not yet received the vaccine by giving a clear vision of the issue.

Discourse analysis – Spain

Categories	Prime Minister	Second Deputy Prime Minister's	Health Minister
Psychological premises			
Logical premises		X	
Cultural premises		X	X
Reciprocity	X		
Social example			
Consistency	X	X	X
Authority	X		X
Admiration	X		
Deficit	X		X
Results against the concept of guilt		X	
"How" as opposed to "why"			
Possibilities over needs	X	X	X
Feedback against failure	X	X	X
Curiosity over presumptions			
Visual anchors			
Audible anchors			
Kinesthetic anchors			

Appeal to emotions	X		
Constraints			
Facts and figures			X

In his persuasive speech, Spain's Prime Minister uses appeals to emotions as his main method of attracting public sympathy. He refers to the pride of being part of a society that has understood how important it is to protect its compatriots.

Facts and figures are the main persuasive technique used in Health Minister Carolina Darias's speech. She wants to mobilise citizens by presenting the total number of vaccine doses used in Spain and the short period in which this very high number of vaccinations was achieved.

Pedro Sanchez gives feedback in an optimistic way and assures citizens that their efforts are very important. He is monitoring the situation and says that Spain is at the top of Europe's vaccination rankings and wants to mobilise all citizens who have not been vaccinated yet. He proposes simple solutions for all citizens: vaccination and wearing protective masks.

Similarly, Carolina Darias uses the same two problem-solving frameworks. First, she provides feedback on the vaccination process, using accurate figures and data on the number of vaccine doses administered and time periods. Next, she proposes the same solutions as Spain's Prime Minister, vaccination and calling citizens to take responsibility for their safety and that of all the Spaniards.

In her speech, Nadia Calvino focuses on the favourable results in terms of vaccinating Spaniards against the coronavirus. She is optimistic and tells the public that the situation is under control due to the large number of people that are vaccinated. Thus, she is trying to convince those who have not been vaccinated so far to consider it. She then gives feedback on the process, the number of vaccinations and people's responsibility.

Discourse analysis – Germany

Categories	Prime Minister	Second Deputy to the Prime Minister	Health Minister
Psychological premises		X	
Logical premises	X		
Cultural premises		X	X
Reciprocity		X	
Social example			
Consistency	X		X
Authority	X	X	
Admiration		X	X
Deficit	X		
Results against the concept of guilt	X		
"How" as opposed to "why"	X		
Possibilities over needs		X	X
Feedback against failure	X	X	
Curiosity over presumptions			
Visual anchors			
Audible anchors			

Kinesthetic anchors		X	
Appeal to emotions		X	X
Constraints	X		
Facts and figures		X	

Angela Merkel is using coercion to influence German citizens to change their attitudes about vaccination. She says she will introduce severe restrictions for the unvaccinated and will also seek a way to introduce compulsory vaccination among all the German citizens.

In his speech, the Minister of Health focuses on accurate facts and figures, providing the public with information on the number of vaccines leaving the warehouses every day, the number of people vaccinated and the preference of the citizens for a particular type of vaccine. However, part of Spahn's speech also uses emotional appeals to influence citizens to act. He talks about life before the pandemic when people could get close to each other without major health consequences.

The President appeals to the public's emotions by emphasising a sense of belonging to a responsible community. Steinmeier reminds us several times during his speech why everyone should feel proud to be a German citizen.

4. Expert sources consulted

The first step in carrying out this research consisted in consulting the opinions of specialists on discourse and persuasion techniques. The study comprises two theoretical chapters that targeted, on the one hand, the discourse and its characteristics, and on the other hand, the means of neuro-linguistic programming and persuasion used to influence the behavior of a particular audience.

It has been shown that in order to influence people through language, it is necessary for the transmitter to know a set of criteria which the public relates to when taking certain actions. Thus, when the aim is to convince the interlocutor of the acceptance of an idea, the templates to

which they relate in general must be brought into question. These templates are often related to memories and emotions and the appeal to emotions is the easiest way to success (Charvet, 1995).

Alex Mucchielli argued that influencing involves choosing the right words at the right time. According to him, influencing is the fundamental action of communication, and nothing can be transmitted without persuasion. However, to influence someone, it is not enough to expose some well-chosen words. There is a need to build a framework with ideas and concepts that will lead the interlocutor to fulfill the goal. In the end, the recipient of the message must believe that it all happened for his/her own good (Crişan, 2009).

Thus, it was found that persuasion and neuro-linguistic programming are the methods through which the public can be influenced both in everyday life and in specific situations, such as the Coronavirus pandemic.

5.   Conclusion

Following the analysis, a number of similarities and differences between the ways of approaching the problem, specific to the four countries can be noticed. Each analyzed speech helped create a comparative overview between Romania, France, Spain and Germany.

A similarity between the four countries is the use of the principle of authority, specific to persuasion. At least one of the three political leaders of each country appeals to this principle in their speech. Thus, they try to persuade the public through personal expertise, but also through important health professionals.

The presence of anchors, neuro-linguistic programming technique, is not specific to Spain, whose politicians did not use this technique at all, or to France, where only one of the three politicians used the senses as a means of influencing public opinion. Germany and Romania are similar because at least two out of three politicians used anchors in their speech.

In Romania, unlike in other EU countries, it can be observed that political leaders highlight the psychological premises of persuasion, emphasizing in their speeches the main needs of people, which can also

be found in Malsow's pyramid. One of the most common reasons invoked in the speech is the desire for freedom. The personal need for health also plays an important role. In the case of Germany, for example, political leaders rely on cultural premises, appealing to people's patriotic feelings. They choose to foster a sense of pride in a responsible country that is making a major contribution to the fight against the pandemic.

The identification of these techniques will allow the author to further study their applicability in the professional setting. In this way, it will determined whether the managers within the companies use these techniques and whether the employees have noticed them.

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The Importance of Managerial Communication

Oana Aparaschivei

Abstract: *Communication is part of the backbone of every company. All organisational development efforts prioritise the human aspect of its development, and effective and efficient communication is the only way to unite the organisation and its staff. To achieve this, organisations need to invest in the tools and processes necessary to achieve high quality communication, both internally and externally. This starts with defining a vision for communication and working towards it. The ability to communicate effectively and persuasively with other people and organisations, to influence others, to be listened to, to understand and respond to others' communication needs are essential. People in organisational environments need to discover the importance of communication in management and the communication skills managers need to develop to become effective managers.*

Keywords: *organisational communication, managers, employee motivation, employee satisfaction.*

1.   Introduction

The modernisation of the world has also left its mark on firms and companies as they have had to adapt their organisational cultures to their employees' new preferences. They want more openness from their

employers to their needs, and this requires management involvement to communicate and understand each other's needs. Managers carry the responsibility for decision-making, building teams of competent employees, and keeping the team motivated to work towards performance. While it is obvious that most employees will be motivated by financial benefits, effective managerial communication will bring about a positive mental state that will make them feel good about the company's environment and maintain the desire to work within the company (Joshi, M., 2020).

According to the study I have conducted, in which I have interviewed a manager who had almost 1,000 employees under his supervision, I was able to find out that it is very important to understand what the needs of the company you run are, and that when you get involved, you are able to improve aspects both for yourself and for your employees so that you can form a united community, guiding them to have constructive discussions and be productive.

In the second part of the research, I have interviewed the employees of the company in the department where I was also working, and I have noticed that 78% of them have a good opinion about the management policy. I think this is also due to the fact that when applying for employment, people also take into consideration what they see and observe about the company and its environment and accept the job offer also based on this factor. Usually, this opinion only changes if it is influenced by poor management communication.

Therefore, the topic addressed in this paper is a very current one. By integrating managerial communication into their strategy, companies (especially small ones) benefit from the numerous advantages brought on by managing a diverse workforce. This not only improves the company's bottom line, but also improves the perception of the brand and increases the likelihood of retaining valued employees.

2. Research methods

The research instrument is the main tool used by the researcher to obtain data, it is the basis for the design of the study and its outcome. Each

research tool has its advantages and disadvantages, which can be used to generate more reliable research data. Questionnaires are best suited to collect data from participants' self-reports (Vlăsceanu, L., 2008).

In the case of the research conducted for this paper, I have decided to use two research tools, namely the interview guide, which helped me to conduct the interview with the manager of the department where I have done the research, and two questionnaires, which were the basis of the survey for the management team (10 people) and the team of employees 150 people).

As views on communication between managers and employees often differ as far as perception and interpretation are concerned, this interview was conducted to take the manager's perspective into account. The interviews were important to gain new insights into the relationship between managers and employees and into the way communication can positively or negatively affect workplace relationships.

During the interview, the manager answered 9 questions related to the way of communication and the level of interactions with the employees of the department he manages. The management team answered 4 questions related to their interaction with the main manager and the employees answered 5 questions related to their interaction with their direct manager and experiences within the company.

The objectives pursued by this study were to analyse and identify data to show the effectiveness of the managerial communication from the perspectives of all the organisational communication stakeholders within the department and to identify the effects of the managerial communication on all the stakeholders and the impact on the workplace performance and productivity.

3. Results

In what follows, in order to better understand the study, some of the research results will be presented.

It should be noted that from, the interview conducted with the department's senior manager, he believes that his appointment as a manager has had a positive impact on the department's community and

that he has managed to improve communication to make it more constructive, but the process has been hampered by the fact that the need for social distancing due to the pandemic has put a physical barrier on the teams' cooperation. He feels that he would have had a more consultative role in the management team process. The manager's attitude, way of thinking and acting can be found in the laissez-faire management style.

On the other hand, those in the department's management team who interact most often with the senior manager consider that for the smooth running of the department, they would like the manager to be

4. Ați schimba ceva în atitudinea managerială?

1) da, motivarea imbinata cu necesitatea de a urmari un plan
2) Curajul de a lua decizii la momentul oportun
3) da, sa fie mai demanding
4) Uneori mi-ar placea sa fie mai "demanding", mai exigent.
5) Orientarea spre relatiile umane (in contextul pandemic s-a pierdut).
6) DA
7) Da

more autocratic.

Figure 8. Managerial Attitude

Therefore, Fig. 1 shows that, to the question "Would you change anything about the managerial attitude?", all the respondents gave positive answers. They think highly of their manager and most of them feel that they are quite appreciated for their work.

2. Vă simțiti apreciat/ă?

Slab ▬▬▬▬▬ Deosebit

3.86 / 5
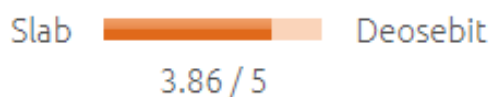
Figure 9 Appreciation

Each team member expressed the level of appreciation they feel they receive, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is very good. The average level of appreciation is 3.86, i.e. over halfway up the scale.

From the employees' perspective, they show a positive opinion about the department's management policy. 31 out of 40 respondents have a positive opinion about it, while the other 9 respondents think that the company has a poor management policy.

Cum percepeți politica de management a companiei în calitate de angajat?
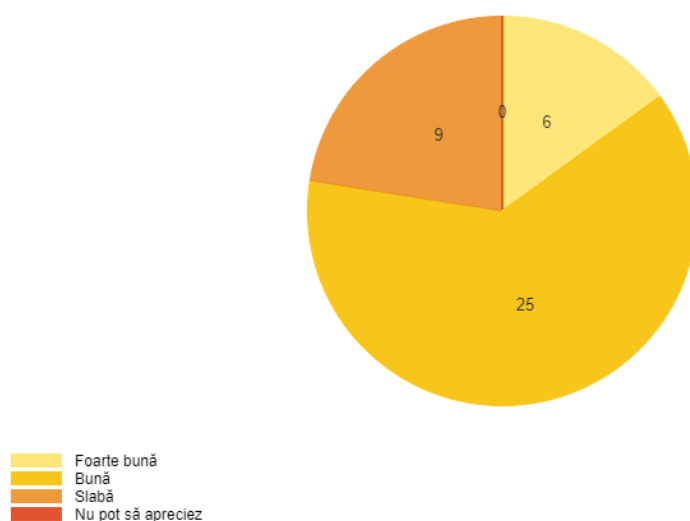
Figure 10 Management Policy

On the importance of the company's managerial communication and on dealing with various crisis situations that may arise or that they have actually experienced, 55% of the respondents gave a positive answer, i.e. there should be managerial involvement and communication in a situation in which negative things happen in the company, while 40% were not able to assess what the implication of managerial communication would be in such a situation.

131

În situația crizei, puteți aprecia daca managementul comunicării a avut rolul de a rezolva situația?

- Da
- Nu
- Nu știu
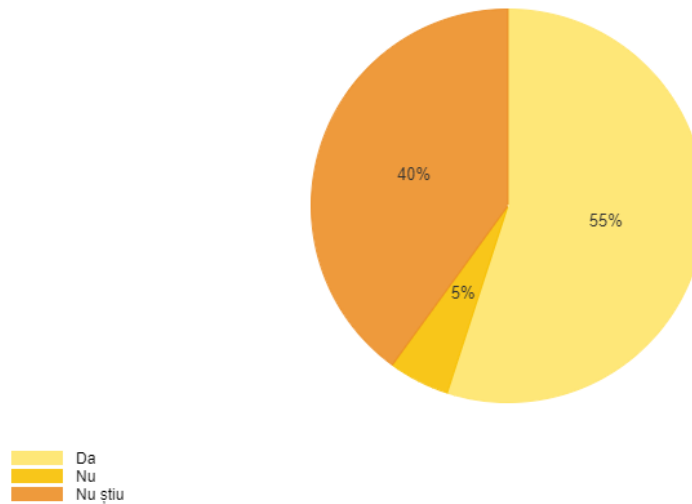
Figure 11 Crisis situation

Conclusion

Managerial communication is the tool through which a manager is able to perform their duties and achieve their objectives. More specifically, they should be able to motivate, organise, control and coordinate, but also to evaluate. The process of managerial communication is based on the communication from the manager to the employee, but also on receiving feedback from the employee to the manager (Cândea, R., Cândea D.,1996).

Companies or organisations operate on the basis of organisational communication. The organisation is a complex of employees, management, material resources and funds that are made to work together to achieve common goals (Vlăsceanu, 1982).

One of the most important aspects of a company's performance is the quality of the managerial communication. When managers communicate clearly, honestly and effectively with their employees, they motivate them to improve their performance and to reach their full potential. This, in turn, improves the company's productivity, which then generates higher revenues and profitability. Clear and effective

communication also helps managers develop a better understanding of their employees, enabling them to provide the best possible service to the customers.

Employee satisfaction is very important to a company's success and knowing how to make employees happy can often make an organization more productive. One way to improve employee satisfaction is to actively listen to employees and get to know them better.

The study showed that there is a discrepancy between what the senior manager believes is conveyed and the overall image seen by other employees, and between the leadership style the senior manager approaches and the leadership style employees believe would make the department work more effectively.

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Increasing Company Performance by Improving Internal Communication. Study based on the Gallup StrengthsFinder test

Laria-Maria Trușculescu

Abstract: *Previous research has shown that holistic wellbeing, defined based on the five essential elements, career, social, financial, community, and physical, as outlined by Gallup in Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements (Rath and Harter, 2010) are of great importance. Higher than initially thought in the results of a business. A global meta-analysis shows that work teams that are heavily involved/engaged in the workplace are four times more likely to succeed than teams that are poorly involved in the workplace. Knowing and using strengths (highlighted by the Gallup StrengthsFinder test) also has a big impact on the wellbeing of all five elements, as well as on-the-job and team involvement. For example, employees who agree strongly that they recognise and use their strengths to achieve excellence have much higher levels of wellbeing and productivity in all the five elements. This paper analyses the impact of using strengths (based on Gallup StrengthsFinder) on the productivity of work teams in a Romanian textile company, using the following steps and study methods: observation (for 8 hours);*

explanatory and educational seminars; testing 121 people; individual interview with each participant and discussion of the test results; analysing and synthesizing the results to suggest improvements to the general manager in the way the teams work and last but not least in the implementation of the changes. The paper aims to highlight the following objectives: improving communication within the organisation; increasing the labour productivity of the teams involved; and increasing the company's profit. The last two were results derived from the first objective. The study concludes that improved internal communication, greater compatibility of people based on strengths (StrengthsFinder) on production lines, have led to an increase in productivity of about 20% for the production line that was initially weaker and 3% for the other line that initially had no problems. Their reorganisation according to the strengths of each person, as well as their compatibility with the team and the teams between them, has led to increased communication, the fluidity with which information flows, and extinguished personal or work conflicts that existed at certain points. Furthermore, due to improved internal communication between people, the weaker team not only showed an increase in productivity, but it is found that employees began to spend part of their free time and weekends together. Therefore, by applying the StrengthsFinder test as a method of personal/team/teams between them assessments, holistic wellbeing was achieved in all the five essential elements. The study aims to observe the improvement of internal and external communication in public administration organisations, which can lead to calmer, more efficient and friendly officials with the public. Any other opportunities to conduct studies to improve internal communication in organisations are also welcome and will be taken as such.

Keywords: *internal communication; holistic wellbeing; Clifton StrengthsFinder; individual interview; individual discussion.*

1.   Introduction

Communication is a crucial and significant element in an organisation and is necessary to create collaboration between employees and allow the organisation to function effectively. The flow of information and communication within an organisation has its own effects on employee performance and management decisions.

In today's corporate world, one of the key factors in achieving high levels of organisational efficiency is good and effective communication.

A major component of communication in any organisation is internal communication, and this is implicitly elucidated by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) in a statement that refers to internal communication as the lifeblood of an organisation. This is in fact a matter of finding it very important for every organisation to have effective internal communication, because it can act as a source of exchange of knowledge and ideas, given that information is the basis of communication.

Internal communication has always been seen as both a formal and informal exchange of information between management and employees within an organisation. Most teams today have realised that internal communication invariably determines and invariably affects the employee's level of performance in the workplace, thus allowing the organisation to achieve its goals as a whole. The concept of communication is immeasurable in modern management and aims to provide a clear understanding between management and employees. It is, in fact, the clear exchange of information and directions between management and employees, in order to make the organisation efficient and stimulate the performance of its employees, ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities.

Through communication, we can better understand each other's feelings, opinions, beliefs, and principles. Although informal communication can be seen as the "middle child" of internal communication in an organisation, it has its role to play and wellbeing. The Five Essential Elements (T. Rath and J. K. Harter, 2010) show exactly that. For the five elements of holistic wellbeing, which are career, social, financial, community and physical, once the balance between them is reached, people are naturally happier, reconciled with themselves, and financially in a comfortable position, so subconsciously they will be the same at work, which influences the quality of their work.

2.   Productivity in five elements: career, social, financial, community, and physical

"Wellbeing means the combination of our love for what we do every day, the quality of our relationships, the security of our finances, the vitality

of our physical health, and the pride we have in what we have contributed to our communities. Most importantly, it is about how these five elements interact" (Rath & Harter, 2010).

Wellbeing is all the things that are important to each of us, what we think and how we live our lives. Living a fulfilling life means something different to each person. Contrary to many people's beliefs, wellbeing does not just mean being happy or physically fit. Gallup Inc. managed to synthesise the common characteristics that people need to thrive in their lives. Gallup Wellbeing 5 is a scientific research tool that measures, tracks and reports on the wellbeing of individuals and organisations. It is a comprehensive source of wellbeing assessment, and they consider it to be made up of five components that are all interconnected and interdependent: *Career* - to enjoy what you do every day and to strive to maximise your goals; *Social* - to have relationships based on love and help in your life; *Financial* - regaining control over personal finances to minimise stress; *Community* - the appreciation you receive in the community in the area / neighbourhood where you live and that makes you feel comfortable and that you belong to it; *Physical* - enough wellbeing and energy to do everyday things, and at the same time for personal development.

However, I argue that (my own hypothesis), this synthesis of human behaviour to achieve holistic wellbeing was based on the Gallup StrengthsFinder test, which has so far "gathered" 27,612,336 respondents.

## 3.	What is Gallup StrengthsFinder

The conceptual foundation of the StrengthsFinder test, developed by Gallup Inc., is based on more than three decades of research on performance in a variety of fields (from business to education and culture). StrengthsFinder assesses the existence of strengths, in 34 domains, which we can also call talents.

Clifton's talents are divided into 4 major areas: Execution, Influencer, Relationship Building and Strategic Thinking.

Executing Domain

"High-performing teams rely on people with strong Executing themes because they make things happen" (Gallup, 2022), which is basically the goal of a team or a company. The following strengths belong to this field: Achiever; Arranger; Belief; Consistency; Deliberative; Disciplines; Focus; Responsibility; Restorative.

Influencing Domain

"They take charge, speak up and make sure others are heard" (Gallup, 2022), they are talents of the leading type, i.e. people who are not ashamed to be in the centre of attention or to control to get what they want or what is good for their team / company. The following strengths belong to this field: Activator, Command, Communication, Competition, Maximizer, Self-Assurance, Significance, Woo.

Relationship Building Domain

"A team's power comes from each person being empowered to use their distinctive talents and appreciate others" (Gallup, 2022). Building relationships ensures that the whole team understands each other, is heard, and the relationship between people is good, so the team is more efficient than the sum of its individual parts. The following strengths belong to this field: Adaptability, Connectedness, Developer, Empathy, Harmony, Includer, Individualisation, Pozitivity, Relator.

Strategic Thinking Domain

"Absorb and analyse information that informs better decisions" (Gallup, 2022), Strategic Thinking talents are innovative and creative talents, they analyse their problems and solutions from all points of view. The following strengths belong to this field: Analytical, Context, Futuristic, Ideation, Input, Intellection, Learner, Strategic.

4. Study Methods and Results Obtained

To achieve the objectives of the study, the research process must be carried out according to certain principles and use appropriate methods,

which are very important in obtaining the desired results. The objectives of the study were from the beginning of the paper well and clearly defined: improving communication within the organisation; increasing the labour productivity of the teams involved and increasing the company's profit. The methods and tools chosen to achieve these objectives are: observation; individual interview; the StrengthsFinder test, based on which 121 people were evaluated; individual discussions with the people tested from the results obtained; synthesis of all results; discussion with the general manager to explain the results and proposals for changes to improve internal communications in the production lines; also suggestions for improving internal communication between various departments (example: accounting and purchasing; CTC and packaging; finished goods warehouse and transport); proposals for people for promotion and people who can be made redundant (due to their incompatibility with the organisation).

The Observation

The first method of research was a qualitative method: Observation. After a certain time, observations from different jobs were noted and some conclusions could be drawn regarding, especially, the communication between different departments. We simply "visited" the factory with its various departments as if we were just visitors. During this time, we noticed various things: attitudes, reactions, and dialogues that we overheard. The observation took place on the first day from 09:00 to 17:00, except for their lunch break, when we were in an office overlooking the dining area, where we were able to see them grouping together to eat (we noticed little groups forming). We were accompanied throughout the day by a person who normally guided visitors, to avoid arousing suspicion.

In conclusion, following the observation, we found that between the financial accounting department and the purchasing department, which were in a large open office, the communication was deficient because any question that was asked from one department to another provoked irritated answers. We asked the person accompanying us if "the workers have a bad day" and the answer came promptly "no, that is just

how they are, they quarrel all day". The two CTC people went to eat in another building during the lunch break, "running away" from work, which led us to think that they did not get along with the packing workers (who were all eating together), which proved to be true after the individual tests and interviews.

Organisation and Testing

Introductory meeting

The introductory meeting took place the next day in the presence of the general manager, the heads of the departments, and other people in the management. The proposed objectives were presented and it was agreed that the groups should be organised as much as possible, so that the production process would not be disrupted. The next day, the deputy manager completed the grouping: 16 groups in total.

Presentation of the test

This was followed by a PowerPoint presentation on the Clifton StrengthsFinder test, which was used as a study method. Each participant received a copy of the presented PPT to read.

The presentation lasted about two hours, including questions during it, for clarification. I have noticed that the questions were generally asked by top management and middle management, only a few of the workers (younger) "dared" to ask something. These reactions raised the following questions, that will need to be clarified later (individual discussion or interview): Were the workers timid in the presence of management? Or maybe they did not fully understand what was presented, but they didn't want to let it be seen? Regarding the management questions, it made us think that they felt threatened by their positions and wanted to know how to influence the answers to the tests. I need to specify that the company that commissioned these tests worked for an international company that values the wellbeing of its employees; and the influence of the test results is impossible, given that many of the questions are sometimes repeated in another way and the time per question is only 30 seconds (as not to have time to think, only to react on instinct).

Employee Training and Testing

Five people were chosen to be trained to help with the tests in the next few days: the general manager's secretaries (2 people), the head of IT and two people from the IT maintenance department. They had the test first, so they will not be able to see the test questions beforehand. These people helped us and all the others tested in the next five days.

Individual Interviews and Discussions

The five days of testing were followed by three days of individual interviews and discussions based on the test results. These were agreed with the general manager, who had doubts about the loyalty of some of the employees (suspecting them of collaborating with the competition); the manager also wanted to know the people who had difficulties in integrating the team, given that due to business expansion more people were hired in a short amount of time).

Individual interviews allowed for the survey of people's attitudes, beliefs, desires, and experiences, in order to gain a deeper understanding of their holistic level of wellbeing as well as their attitude towards the current internal communication in the team and in the company.

Individual interview

1.   Tell me something relevant about you.

The purpose of this question was to see the image that each person has of themselves. In other words, what do they consider important and worth mentioning; or what makes them different from their colleagues in the same position.

2.   What do you think about teamwork?

People answered this question once at the beginning of the interview and once again after having the individual discussion based on the results of the talent test. Interestingly, almost all people have acknowledged that teamwork can really increase productivity and make work easier if roles are well established, communication between people is effective, and teamwork is fair and equal.

3.   What kind of people do you think you cannot work well with?

141

These answers show that people's personal relationships, ethics, and ideas / beliefs affect not only the connections they make but also their desire to work with someone or not. Furthermore, it turns out that many of these problems can be solved by establishing good internal communication and the compatibility of team members with the criteria of complementary talents within the team. The same applies to company departments.

4. *Let us say that a colleague points out your mistakes in front of the whole team, how do you handle this situation?*

This question was an ideal opportunity to understand the minimum level of conflict in order to start a fight and aggravate an already existing situation.

5. *What do you like the most about your job? Why?*

This question helped us to better understand what motivates people to work, to come to work every day. It can be seen that all the answers given to this question reach at least one of the five holistic elements. Furthermore, when several elements were satisfied to some extent, the persons showed a much higher level of positivism than the rest of the interviewees.

6. *Looking at what needs to be done today, what gives you the most energy?*

This question comes in addition to question 5. If there we can see what motivates people to work, here we can see from which part of their work people receive satisfaction (also related to their motivation), i.e. what they do with pleasure and do not see it as work.

7. *Do you spend enough social time with your team members? Do you want more or less time with your team? Why?*

People answered this question once at the beginning of the interview and once again after having the individual discussion based on the results of the talent test. It is interesting to note that all types of responses admit that an improvement in internal communication can certainly solve many of the problems mentioned earlier. Moreover, some of them claim that they want to at least try team building activities, even if it means spending some of their free time with their team members.

In conclusion, the answers we receive to these questions give us much more information about the observations we made on the first day: some positive or negative team relationships, and the main point was the lack of consistent internal communication that creates slow work, mistakes, or even disputes. Moreover, the answers clearly show that the lack, even in a small form, of holistic balance in all five points, can have a negative impact on people's minds, their happiness, their desire to work in a team, as well as their tolerance for mistakes.

5.   Interpretation of Results

Based on the observations and individual interviews, the first map of the existing critical points in the production lines was drawn up and this one was improved / completed following the discussions based on the test and the strengths. I mention that I drew the map after the first day after the observations, made additions during the individual interviews, and then finalised it in the discussions on talents. At the time of observation, on the first day, the first notes about the relationship between departments were made. Also, comments on the packaging part, finished goods, and raw material warehouses, as well as the shipping and transport part, which were outside the production buildings were also made. During the tests and then the individual interviews and discussions after the tests, several areas resulted, which then turned out not to be critical points. Initially, jokes or fights between team members or between those who worked on the machine and those who transported products between phases were also considered to hide potential conflicts. Many of them were eliminated, which proved to be just friendly teasing. A summary table of the talents of the tested persons, as well as the working hypotheses were compiled.

In summarising the talents of the evaluated staff, the following criteria were considered:

1.   According to the specifics of the branch to which the factory belongs and according to the specifics of the work carried out in the two component buildings (textiles for furniture and fashion), the following positive and negative talents were taken into account for:

- Workers

Positive talents: Achiever, Responsability, Arranger, Adaptability, Communication

Negative talents: Ideation, Individualisation, Competition, Input, Woo

- Middle Management

Positive talents: Strategic/ Analytical, Achiever/ Activator, Responsability/ Developer, Maximizer/ Restorative, Positivity/ Empathy

Negative talents: Ideation/ Deliberative, Woo/ Input, Consistency

- Top Management

Positive talents: Comand/ Futuristic, Focus/ Strategic, Learner/ Achiever, Responsability/ Connectedness, Competition/ Self-Assurance

Negative talents: Adaptability, Includer, Maximizer, Consistency, Empathy/ Harmony

2. On the right side of the summary table was the breakdown by criterion 2, which was also considered to be eloquent for management, as it highlights an employee's membership in 1 or 2 types of staff:

- Execution / Implementation
- Influence
- Relationships
- Strategic Thinking

Those who have two of the positive talents, from criterion 1, are a kind of jack of all trades. The evaluation by criteria is represented as a percentage in the following Charts. Chart 1 for workers, Chart 2 for middle management, and Chart 4 for top management. The amounts Σ at the bottom of each chart represent the number of people in each category. The representation of neutral talents was omitted because it was considered that they do not help / prevent a person from carrying out his activity at work but have an influence on the human quality of the individual.

Workers

Workers			
Talents	Positive	Neutrals	Negative
0	14	1	38
1	23	9	26
2	25	13	8
3	7	31	1
4	4	13	0
5	0	6	0
Total	73	73	73

Table 1 - Workers positive & negative talents

Positive talents   Negative talents

∑: 73   ∑: 73
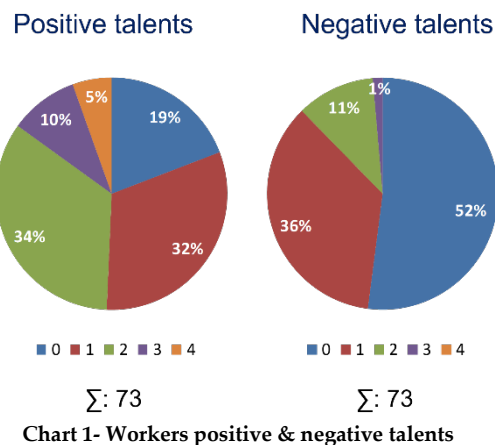
Chart 1- Workers positive & negative talents

Table 1 for Chart 1 shows that 14 workers have no positive talent among the top five talents, i.e. 19% of 73 workers; 23 workers have 1 positive talent among the top five, i.e. 32% of 73 workers; 25 workers have 2 positive talents among the top five, i.e. 34% of the total number of workers evaluated; 7 workers have 3 positive talents, 4 workers have 4 positive talents, and zero workers have 5 positive talents among the top five talents, i.e. 10%, 5% and 0%, respectively, of the total evaluated workers.

Adaptability has also been considered in workers because the specifics of the factory cannot keep a person in a permanent job position and as needed, is moved to various work positions.

Middle Management

MM			
Talents	Positive	Neutrals	Negative
0	4	0	11
1	10	6	25
2	17	18	4
3	10	15	1
4	0	2	0
5	0	0	0
Total	41	41	41

Table 2 - Middle management positive & negative talents

Positive talents   Negative talents

∑: 41   ∑: 41
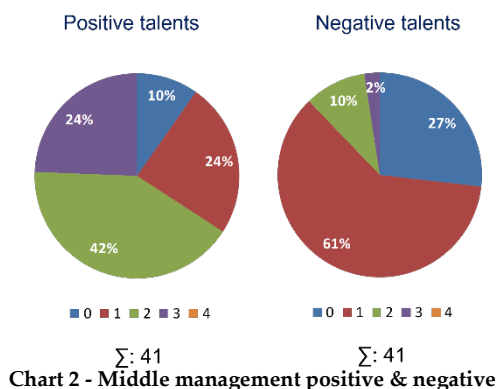
Chart 2 - Middle management positive & negative

Table 2 of Chart 2 shows that 4 middle managers have no positive talent among the top five talents, that is, 10% of 41 middle managers; 10 middle managers have 1 positive talent among the top five, that is, 24% of 41 middle managers; 17 middle managers have 2 positive talents among the top five, that is, 42% of the total number of middle managers evaluated; 10 middle managers have 3 positive talents, zero middle managers have 4 and 5 positive talents among the top five talents, that is, 24%, 0% and 0%, respectively, of the total evaluated middle managers. For a better understanding, I explained the connection between the first column in Table 2 and Chart 2. Because Chart 2 shows that there are 61% middle managers with a negative talent, in the first five, I chose to comment on the negative talent column in the table 3: 11 middle managers have zero negative talent, or 27%; 25 middle managers have a negative talent, i.e. 61%; 4 middle managers have two negative talents, i.e. 10%, and one has three negative talents, i.e. 2%.

	MM			
Positive	Responsibility	19	41	46%
	Developer	12	41	29%
	Empathy	10	41	24%
Negative	Deliberative	10	41	24%
	Ideation	8	41	20%
	Woo	8	41	20%

Table 3 - Percentage of positive & negative talents in middle management
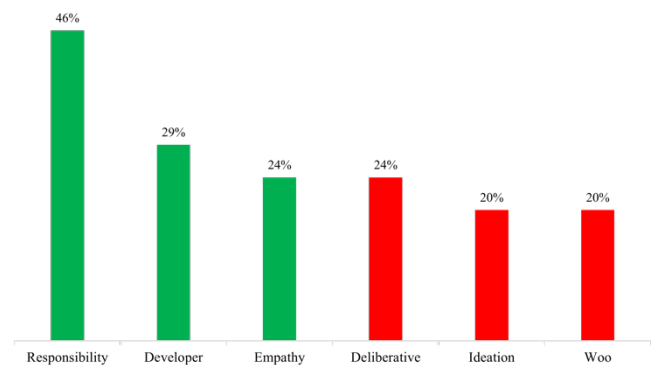
Chart 3 - Percentage of positive & negative talents in middle

In order to give more accurate information to the company's management the situation of the middle management, we decided to Chart the first 3 positive talents and the first 3 negative ones in descending order of the number of middle managers tested, out of a total of 41. The results in Table 3 and Chart 3 note that the top three positive talents, namely Responsibility, Developer, and Empathy, are 19 people - 46%; 12 people - 29% and 10 people - 24%. The negative talents Deliberative, Ideation, and Woo are represented in proportion of: 10 people - 24%; 8 people - 20% and 8 people 20%. We notice that in the case

of middle management, where our selection criteria took into account and analyzed a larger number of talents, the fidelity of the results is higher. Thus, the first 3 positive talents and the first 3 negative talents manifested by middle managers seem to compensate mathematically, but given that Responsibility represents 46% and Developer 29% (see chart 3), middle management does not rise to the level expected by the management, but we cannot say that it is of poor quality, but that it requires various repositioning according to their talents, in order to improve the situation.

TM			
Talents	Positive	Neutrals	Negative
0	0	1	2
1	1	0	2
2	2	2	1
3	0	1	0
4	2	0	0
>4	0	1	0
	5	5	5

Table 4 - Top management positive & negative

Positive talents

Negative talents

0 ■1 ■2 ■3 ■4

0 ■1 ■2 ■3 ■4

∑: 5   ∑: 5
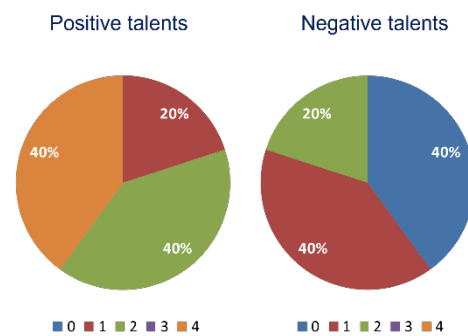
Chart 4 - Top management positive & negative talents

Top Management

In the case of top management, it must be mentioned that in Table 4 one position is higher than four ("> 4") because the general manager decided that for some of the top managers all 34 talents should be considered and discussed, not only the first five. Therefore, it improved the ability of top management to find retrograde talents that need improvement. In the discussion on talents, the focus was on using the first five talents, extending up to 10, and also on the way in which they can help the last five talents not to hinder the performance of top managers.

It is gratifying that none of the top five managers has two negative talents in the top five. But at the same time, a top manager has a positive talent and two negatives in the top five.

Two top managers have two positive talents and one negative talent in the top five (they also have two neutral talents, which in this case can sometimes weigh heavily in decisions). Also, an unpleasant situation is

147

that three top managers have zero positive talents and zero negative talents, in the first five, having only a neutral talent here. In their case, it is recommended to analyse all the 34 talents to see how well they fit the position they hold. Note that four top managers have two positive talents and zero negative talents in the top five.

Chart 4 shows that 40% of top managers have four positive talents in the top five and another 40% have two positive talents in the top five. In addition, 40% of top managers have zero negative talents and another 40% have negative talents in the top five. This was reported to the general manager and I also indicated to the top managers that they needed to discuss the 34 talents.

Comments and suggestions for changes

1.   We agreed with the general manager that for a period of several days, we will make the staff move on the production lines, according to the compatibility of the talents on the production line and in the teams. As this was accepted, the middle management made these changes. After the first day, the situation was not better in line one of the productivity, but the productivity of line two also decreased slightly.

2.   We maintained the changes and after day two line two resumed its productivity at the same value. Conflicts have been eliminated on the production line, which is appreciated by everyone.

3.   I proposed to the general manager the purchase of special cash registers so that everyone's work could be counted more easily, so that there would be no more quarrels between them.

4.   In another two days, the productivity of line one started to increase. 20 days after the implementation of the change, the productivity of the lines was: the first line was 93% and the second line was 96%.

5.   In the accounting service, no person has the Analytical among the first talents, without it, it is difficult for an economist to perform managerial analysis on the basis of which decisions can be made (which the general manager, the owner of the company, complained very often).

6.   Until a person with one the top five talent Analytical is found, the accounting department will be assisted by the IT chief, who

has in the top five talent Analytical and is an economist in addition to the IT university.

7. The good quality of the staff, according to the small number of negative talents, is noticeable from Charts 1 workers, Chart 3 middle management, and Chart 4 top management.

8. The middle management is numerically very high for fashion production; the one for textiles for furniture is appropriate in number.

9. In terms of quality, the fashion purchasing service is better than the textile service. There are valuable people in both fashion and textiles for furniture, signalled to management by the sign "!" on the evaluation sheets.

10. With a view to relocating the fashion factory in the immediate vicinity of the textile furniture factory, the common administrative services should be unified, and the competent persons of both factories should be elected.

11. The purchasing service of the furniture textile factory needs strengthening (there are good people in fashion for this).

12. I have found, for example, that in printing, the company with which the textile factory works has almost double prices and poorer quality than other companies in the city, as well as other products. It is necessary to re-evaluate suppliers and contracts, as savings can be made.

13. The furniture factory team still needs input from the owner because it does not function as a well-established team (probably due to the short time since it was created).

14. The fashion team benefits more from the collaboration with the owner and is more experienced and cohesive, but in the perspective of moving, maybe not all the staff in the middle management fashion category is necessary and could suffer a numerical reduction and an adaptation of people's quality, at the request of the owner.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the hypothesis that holistic wellbeing in all five elements (career, social, financial, community, and physical) is important in

increasing a company's results, obtained based on improved internal communication in the organization and highlighted by the Gallup StrengthsFinder test as a working method, has been confirmed.

Additionally, the Gallup StrengthsFinder test is an excellent tool for improving internal communication in the company and in the team, but also to be able to identify and use the talents of each team member in order to achieve career excellence, without neglecting the five elements.

The study confirms that improvement of internal communication and people's compatibility in production lines leads to an increase in productivity of about 20% for the production line that was initially underperforming and 3% for the other line that initially had no problems.

The study concludes that the organisation of production lines according to the strengths of each person, as well as the compatibility of individuals in teams and teams with each other, has led to increased internal communication and fluidity of information flow, and thus extinguish existing personal or service conflicts at certain points. Moreover, due to these changes and improvements, the weaker team not only ended up with a 20% increase in productivity, but it was found that people began to spend some of their free time and weekends together, thus strengthening more the relations between them, and the teamwork, implicitly.

In order to deepen the understanding of the effect of improving internal communication on human productivity, as well as achieving holistic wellbeing in five elements, we propose future research in public administration organizations. Specifically, an internal communication evaluation study, optimized with the help of the StrengthsFinder test developed by Gallup Inc. and, consequently, the improvement of the external communication of the civil servant with the final beneficiary, the citizen.

Such a study could lead to better public administration, calmer, more efficient, and at the same time more friendly officials and in harmony with the public. Any other opportunities to conduct studies to improve internal communication in organisations are also welcome and will be taken as such.

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Online and Offline Promotion of a Sports Equipment Company. Case Study: Venum Company

George Indru

Abstract: *In an era of digitalisation, online platforms are the main environment on which companies promote themselves. However, in the literature, it has been conditioned that effective promotion includes both online and offline promotion. The main objective of this article is to establish the best strategy for the promotion of Venum Company to make itself known on the market in Timisoara.*

Keywords: *customers, online promotion, offline promotion.*

1. Introduction

This article aims to establish the best promotion strategy for a company like Venum to achieve its desired goal: effective promotion of sports articles. To reach reliable conclusions on the proposed topic, the article

analyses in the first part the literature and the opinions of researchers about the online and offline environment.

According to the literature, the online environment has many advantages (saving time, convenience, etc.). However, the online environment has a big disadvantage for consumers, e.g. digital dementia (Spitzer, 2020). Still, according to Busse (2015), technologies have made buyers hyperconnected and powerful. While other researchers argue that offline advertising is not as popular as online advertising, advertising campaigns need to use mixed advertising channels (Smith and Zook, 2011).

In another sense, the most important element of advertising (online or offline) is the image because "the image presents itself unexpectedly, surprises us and proposes a theme of meditation" (Șoitu, 2014).

In the second part of the paper, the public opinion will be analysed with the help of the opinion poll about Venum company, but interpretations and recommendations will be made for the strategy of promoting Venum in Timisoara. By corroborating the observation with the analysis of the questionnaire, beneficial recommendations will be brought to the company to increase the popularity of the brand. The choice of this topic for research of this paper is due to the popularity of the topic and to the fact that the online marketing industry is currently oversaturated.

This paper aims to provide some pertinent conclusions that can be applied by companies offering sports items by deepening theoretical concepts and through the analysis carried out in the practical part.

2. Research methods

The objective to achieve by writing and developing this paper is to find out the best way to promote an internationally known company, but less known regionally. We also want to find out how traditional advertising still drives consumerism among the public.

The hypothesis to start from is that a company that deals with the sale of sports items can create quality publications both online and offline using the company's specifics. Given that such companies promote sport

and a healthy lifestyle, countless campaigns can be conceived based on these values.

Starting from the aforementioned hypothesis and aiming to achieve the stated objective, a potential business plan was created for the opening of a Venum store in Timisoara. In addition to carrying out the business plan, a quantitative survey was conducted. The research was done only in quantitative terms because this work requires a large sample.

Creating the company's business plan as part of the practical part, a SWOT analysis was conducted in order to establish the company's strengths and weaknesses as seen in Table 1.

The second chosen method of research is the opinion poll. This form of inquiry allows a quantitative analysis to determine whether the public in Timisoara is familiar with Venum and its popularity. The main objective of applying this survey is to highlight the advantages and disadvantages that Venum has in relation to promotion in Timisoara.

The questionnaire was applied exclusively online, using the isondaje.ro platform and the Excel software for analysis being completed by 50 respondents. The questionnaire contains 19 questions, and most of them are closed questions in order not to take too much of the respondents' time. Out of the 20 questions, 4 of them referred to factual data (occupation, age, gender, provenance), and the other questions referred to the topic itself.

The average age of the respondents was 27.5 years, and their occupations are diverse, but mostly respondents who practice sports as a main activity or as a hobby were sought.

(Table.1)

Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Quality products	New company on the market (2006) compared to other well-known brands

Organising their own camps for athletes Great popularity among contact sports A wide range of products Professional leadership that works in the world of sport Attractive design products that provide comfort	It is not popular among those who are not sports professionals High prices There is no store in Timisoara
Opportunities (O) Opening of stores in Romania Customer loyalty programs Organisation of sport workshops Partnerships with various sports halls	**Threats (T)** Old competitors in the market (Nike, Puma) Inflation The economic crisis Many people do not lead a healthy lifestyle in which sport is included

3. Results

In order to outline the results of the research, I have chosen to present in this paper the most relevant questions and answers along with the related graphs.

With the help of the first question related to the topic, it was important to find out the respondents' preferences when they need to purchase clothing. Most respondents (39) prefer to buy clothes in person, directly from the store. This choice may be due to the fact that most consumers want to try on clothes, comparing their prices under the price-quality ratio. The remaining respondents (11) prefer to buy clothes online. This choice can be explained psychologically, given that we are in a post-pandemic period where all activities have been carried out online and consumers have become more comfortable doing that.

This question is meant to know whether, in an era of digitalisation, a sports equipment company is more or less profitable to open physical stores.

(Table 2.)
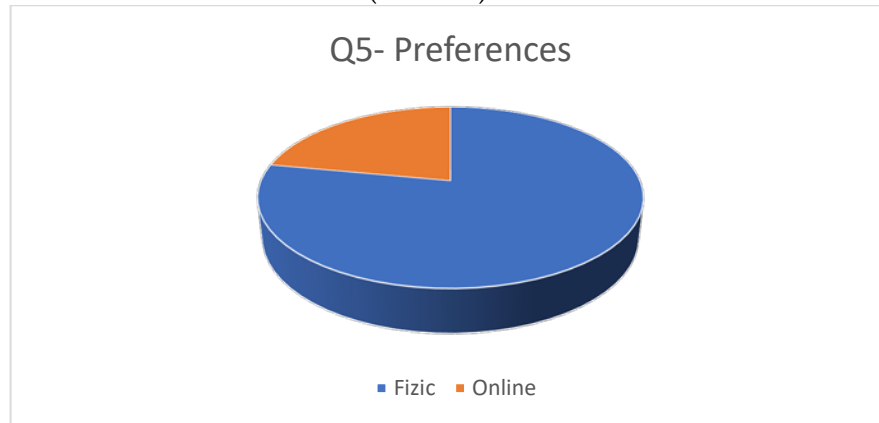
Another relevant question concerns the degree of popularity that Venum enjoys among the respondents. According to figure 3, the majority of the respondents are aware of the existence of this company (27). Also, if we corroborate the answers to this question with the answers to question 1 (the one referring to the occupation), it can be assumed that the 25 athletes know the Venum company, and besides them, 2 respondents know about this company.

The chart in figure 3 shows that 17 of the respondents have not heard about Venum, and 6 of them know the company "vaguely". From the interpretation of the results to this question, it can be said that Venum is popular among athletes, but not so popular among those who do not practice a sport as their main activity.

Figure 4 represents the respondents' responses to how they learnt about Venum. This question was answered only by those who had previously provided the answers of "yes" and "vaguely" to the question "are you familiar with the Venum Company?".

According to the chart above, most respondents (13) learnt about this company through online advertisements, which appear on different platforms. 6 of the subjects found out about Venum when looking for sports items and 4 of them knew about it from their colleagues or friends. As it can be seen from the graph, none of the respondents know about the

Venum company due to the original advertisements (those from the physical environment).

Analysing the answers to this question, several conclusions can be drawn. The Venum company has a strong presence in the online environment because 13 respondents know about this company due to the online environment. Also, these 13 respondents are added to the 6 respondents who found out about this company themselves by searching for sports items. However, Venum has minuses on the offline advertising side in Timisoara.

(Table. 3)

Q6- Popularity

■ Da   ■ Nu   ■ Vag
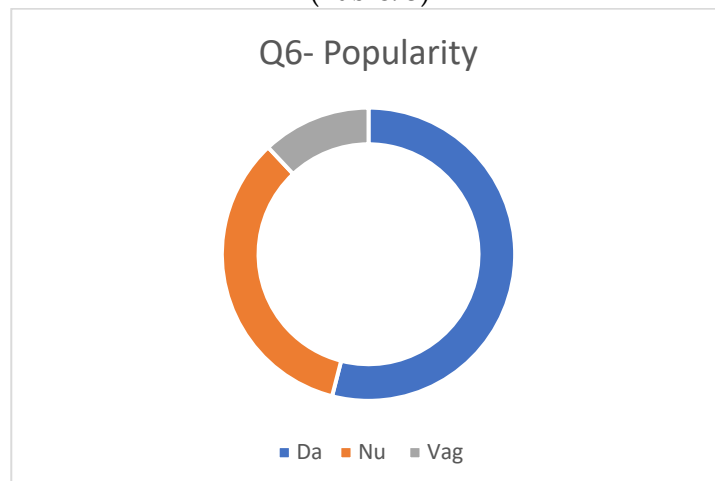
(Table.4)
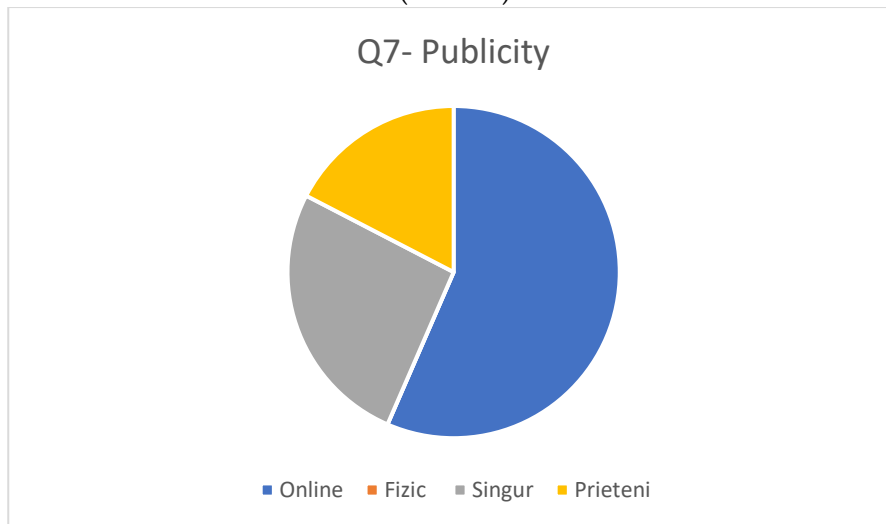
To another question two objectives were taken into account, i.e. whether the arguments of the literature on the importance of the image are proven and how important the image is in a company's advertisement.

Respondents were asked to rank five ad features (image, message, graphics, positioning and accuracy). The ranking is from 1 to 5, with 1 representing the most important feature, and 5 being the least important feature for the respondents.

According to the chart in figure 5, for the respondents, the most important characteristic of an advertisement is the image used in it. Followed by message formation, graphics, positioning and accuracy.

Table 5.
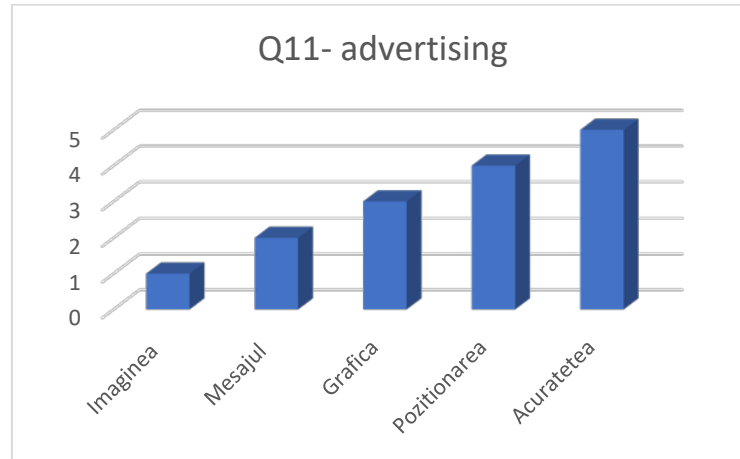
4.   Recommendation

In order to better outline the results obtained, a list of recommendations was made for Venum in the hypothetical situation in which this company would decide to open a store in Timisoara.

The recommendations are:

• Although online promotion exists, it does not reach a significant number of people. The survey found that most respondents spent the most time on Instagram and Facebook, however only half of respondents knew about the existence of Venum.

• The company must conduct mixed advertising both offline and online because the audience is easier to reach in such a way.

• For such a company, the best type of advertising is guerrilla because most companies that have used such campaigns have been successful as shown in the first part of the theoretical work.

• Venum company should partner with different sports halls in Timisoara where sports are practiced by amateurs (SmartFit, GymOne, etc.).

Before opening a physical store in Timisoara, the company should (about 1-2 years before) partner with various sport goods stores to make its presence felt on the market (Decathlon, Hervis, etc.).

• Sports ads should present suggestive images that arouse imagination.

• The company's online advertising should be aggressive at first, and gradually become moderate.

• The opening of the store to be an event, it can create a contest for sports amateurs with prizes. You can also create raffles for discounts or sports items.

5. Conclusions

The main objective of this work was to find out the reputation of Venum for the public in Timisoara. In this respect, in addition to aggregating information from the literature, quantitative research through the opinion survey and its analysis were conducted. At the end of the paper, in order to mark the discoveries made, some recommendations were provided for the Venum company in the hypothetical case in which it would open a store in Timisoara.

In conclusion, it can be said that the promotion of a sport goods company must take into account both the fierce competition and the desire of the public for new. As the paper shows, with the help of an official website containing the price for each product, search settings and descriptive pictures for each product along with offline marketing campaigns, a sports company can easily enter a market.

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Promotion Strategies of Rural Tourism. Case Study: Almăj Valley

Iasmina Iancuța

Abstract: *Tourism is one of the most important branches of the world economy, displaying a steady growth internationally. It is an industry incorporating state and private enterprises that provide economic and social gains, create employment opportunities, and produce revenue. Developing and promoting touristic destinations require investment, thorough professional training, marketing, and collaboration between state institutions, local authorities, enterprises, and communities. Above all, the tourism industry requires a strong involvement and awareness from the institutions and the community. The present paper aims to analyse the current situation of rural tourism in the Almăj Valley, as well as to suggest ways and proposals for its promotion, intended to be a modern approach to regional issues and rural tourism.*

Keywords: *rural tourism, branches, industry, world economy, development, state and private enterprises, investment, marketing, involvement, profit-making resource, promotion.*

1. Introduction

I chose as topic the promotion strategies of rural tourism, with a focus on Almăj Valley due to a personal and spiritual motivation: I was born, I grew up and I live in Almăj, so as the daughter of the place I will be forever bound to the ancestral hearth, and through this work, I hope to create and individualise the image of this destination so that it will bloom in the eyes of others. Rural tourism in the Almăj Valley must be preserved and capitalized on. Therefore, I have engaged in a market analysis, identifying the unique offer of the Almăj Valley, the needs and expectations of tourists, and implicitly the demand-supply ratio, as a significant step towards developing an integrative strategy for promoting this Romanian region.

2. Expert sources consulted

In order to accomplish the work, I have consulted various bibliographical sources: printed and online books, studies, articles on the topic. In order to get a broad overview of the editorial, I have consulted: "Skeletal frameworks: Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks and the issue of climate change, in local environmental sustainability", edited by Susan Buckingham and Kate Theobald (2003); "The relief of Banat – Some Morphometrical Aspects" in Danube-Criș-Mureș-Tisa Euroregion – geometrical space of Sustainable Development (1999), author: P. Gruia, C.; "Traditional form of organizing Geographical Space in Transylvania". The Lands (1991), author: Surd, V.; "Les industries populaire de department de Caraș-Severin" (2008), author: Taban, M.; "Regional Science: From crisis to opportunity, in Regional Systems" (1999), author: Rees, J., "STARS: Space-Time Analysis of Regional Systems in Geographical Analysis (2006), authors: Rey, S. Janikas, M.V.; "O monografie a Văii Almăjului," (2019), author: Negru, P.R.; "Strategia de dezvoltare națională a României" (2018), author: Ministerul Turismului; "Țara Almăjului: Străvechi ținut de continuitate și simțire românească" (2017), author: Panduru, P.; " Țara Almăjului. Monografie" (2001), author: Coșa, Băcilă, S.; " Strategia de dezvoltare durabilă a județului Caraș-Severin 2007-2013" (2007), author: Consiliul Județean Caraș-Severin;

163

"Strategia de dezvoltare durabilă a judeţului Caraş-Severin 2015-2020" (2015), author: Consiliul Judeţean Caraş-Severin, "Regiunea de dezvoltare V Vest: Politică şi administraţie" (2003), author: Mariana Cernicova.

I have also tried to find information on the strategies and ways to promote rural tourism in Romania, more precisely in the Almăj Valley. For this case, I have chosen the following sources: "Statistica în turism-teorie şi aplicaţii" (2000), author: Petcu, N.; "Turism, tipologii şi destinaţii," (2007), author: Soare, I. Furthermore, I have also read "Definitions of Marketing", by the American Marketing Association-AMA and I have found useful information about tourism marketing strategies (https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing); The Chartered Institute of Marketing (https://www.cim.co.uk/) and Commission Européenne (https://ec.europa.eu/info/eu-regional-and-urban development/topics/tourism_fr). I have also consulted "The Business of Tourism. Concepts and Strategies" (2011), author: Bhatia A. K. and "Strategic Management for Tourism, Hospitality and Events" (2015), author: Nigel, E.

3. **Research method**

As Palea and Peev-Otiman show (2021), promotion in tourism goes through a complex process of improvement and adaptation, requiring important investments, due to the extent of markets, the manifestation of an equal competition and the intangible character of the tourist product. After a thorough documentation, I have chosen to analyse and evaluate the complexity of the rural tourism sector by highlighting its main determinants, which can be interpreted as specific motivations for this field and divided into several categories, as follows:
- return to the living and unaltered nature: valid motivation for all age categories, sex, socio-professional, social status, as a result of the need for preservation, health, physical and spiritual comfort;
- temporary membership in rural areas;

- knowledge and understanding, invention and development of unmediated contact with national history, folklore, traditional occupations and folk customs;
- esthetic motivations that arise from the need for beauty, order, purity, harmony, naturalness;
- curiosity satisfied by the accumulation of information on popular hospitality, gastronomic habits, crafts and village rituals;
- rest, air and fruit cures, fresh food and occupational therapy;
- sport, hunting, recreational fishing, climbing and hiking.

Then, I have continued with the content analysis and data interpretation using several sources of information to identify and implement strategies for the development and promotion of tourism products. After this I have focused on the analysis of the concept of rural tourism marketing and its features:
- the complexity of rural tourism services;
- the preponderance of the emotional factor in relation to the rational one in the decision to buy the tourist product;
- the dependence of tourist services on services offered by complementary interns.

I have used bibliographical research in order to develop a model of analysis and a comparative analysis of internal and external marketing. Because the topic of the paper is the promotion strategies of rural tourism, I have analysed sources whose main objective is to promote tourism products both on the internal and on the external market. An example in this case is *"Programul Național de Marketing și Promovare"* that targets a range of promotion activities, such as:
a) the creation and execution, acquisition and distribution of tourism promotion and information materials:
-brochures;
-flyers;
-posters;
- banners;
- promotional movies;
- audio ads;
- photos;

- specific advertising objects.

b) specific tourism promotion activities:

- participation to fairs, national and international events;

- specific public relations activities;

- documentary visits for media representatives, agents, tour operators;

- events to promote the tourist offer;

- road-shows;

c) advertising campaigns:

- advertising in the social media;

- mailings;

- outdoor advertising;

- other specific advertising campaigns.

d) the development, maintenance and upgrade of websites.

Also, in my research, I have established the role of the promotion strategy at the regional and micro level, but also the structure of the promotional activity in the rural tourism.

4. Results

To illustrate the research, I have presented the analysis for the rural tourism, seen as a real development alternative of the Almăj Valley.

On one hand, after having analysed the natural components of the Almăj Valley system, I consider that the physical characteristics (i.e. lithology and topography), climate characteristics, quantity and quality of resources (i.e. tourism, hydrological, biogeography) are very important and necessary elements in the process of developing and promoting the region.

On the other hand, the material values (i.e. the house, technical architecture, folk technique monuments, traditional economic activities) and the spiritual values (i.e. the traditions and the customs, folk costumes, songs and dances) have made a significant contribution in the tourism development and also in shaping the culture and defining the Almăj Valley as a homogeneous region.

Moreover, the rural tourism in the Almăj Valley implies the existence of two poles:

- the area of origin of the tourists - mainly corresponds to the neighboring counties (i.e. Timiș and Mehedinți) and the county which the Almăj Valley is expanding its area to (i.e. Caraș-Severin), while the foreign tourists are few.

- the destination area of the flow of tourists - corresponds to the seven administrative communes that make up the Almăj Valley regional systems.

As far as the tourism infrastructure is concerned, the regional system presents a very poor situation, but the involvement of investors can certainly contribute to the revitalisation of the region and could become the key motivation for promoting tourism.

To base a possible promotion strategy on the data from the region, I have carried out a SWOT analysis of the tourism in the Almăj Valley, similar to the one proposed by the team developing EuropeTour for Romania (2015). The SWOT analysis has an essential role in identifying the positive aspects that could be an alternative for future promotion of the Almăj Valley tourism. Also, the negative aspects and risks can be seen as opportunities that would allow the development of this economic sector.

STRENGTHS:

- the presence and the diversity of the natural and anthropogenic resources that allow the development of several types of tourism, such as religious, rural, cultural, scientific, recreational, summer, sightseeing;

- the presence of the Nera Valley, the Miniș Valley with the Bigăr mixed reservation and the Rudăria Valley;

- the existence of natural mixed reservations and the Nera-Beușnița National Park;

- the presence of the Nera river, allowing rafting;

- the existence of the most important molinological reservation in south-eastern Europe, in Eftimie-Murgu or the Rudăria Valley, where 22 mills are preserved;

- the preservation of an original material and spiritual culture from an ethnographic mental space;

- the diversity of agro-food products;

- telephone and internet coverage;

167

- low pollution.

WEAKNESSES:

- poor infrastructure development;
- the lack of classified tourist households;
- absence of a brand image and promotion of the Almăj Valley as a tourist destination;
- the lack of promotional materials;
- the failure to promote tourism products nationally and internationally;
- the lack of the authorities' interest in the rehabilitation of the existing or non-functional housing units (i.e. the Miniş Hotel in Bozovici, the Bigăr Waterfall in the Miniş Valley);
- the most common form of tourism practiced is the transit tourism;
-unequal competition in tourism.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- the organised tourism can be promoted in the context of the existence of rich resources;
- the priority development of rural tourism through special and unique ethnographic and cultural values in the region;
-promoting the tourism offer of the Almăj Valley;
- the construction of units and transport infrastructure;
- the marking of the mountain trails.

RISKS:

-the economic decline of the Almăj Valley;
- the degradation of the natural environment;
- the lack of real tourism development and promotion strategies;
- the disappearance of customs, traditions.

Taking into account the information obtained from quantitative and qualitative research, and therefore from the SWOT analysis, I believe that an ideal solution in this case would be to implement a public relations campaign.

Practical proposal: promoting the Almăj Valley as a touristic destination

Topic: As a topic, I have chosen the development and promotion of tourism in the marvellous Almăj Valley.

Purpose: The purpose of my campaign is to inform tourists about the Almăj Valley, to keep in contact with loyal customers, to attract new customers and therefore to develop the economy of the area.

Target audience: The target audience is represented by young people looking for fun, middle-aged people, families with children who come to Almăj Valley for rest and recreation, but also pensioners, who come to the area for the spas existing in Baile Herculane, for the fresh air and pilgrimage to the two monasteries (i.e. Almăj-Putna and Țara Almăjului). **The objectives of the promotion campaign** are rendered below, in a synthetic form.

Development of tourist activity

Diversification of local economies through sustainable tourism development

Attracting and retaining as many tourists as possible

Long-term objectives

Improving the tourist image of the Almăj Valley

Development of the copetitivity of the Almăj Valley area
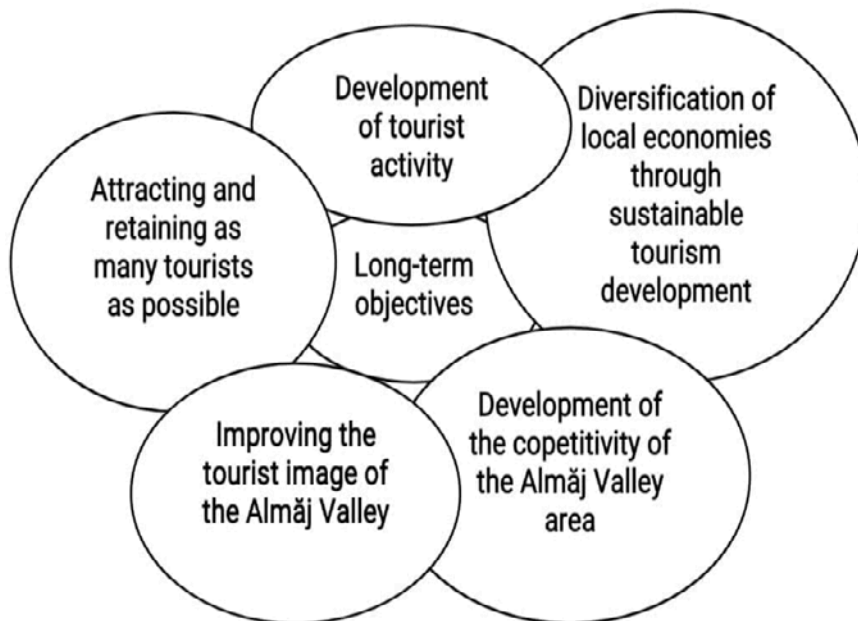
Figure 1: Objectives of the promotional campaign

Promotion campaign axis: Travel and Regional Tourism.

Slogan: For the promotion campaign, I have proposed the following slogan: „Fece mândre ș' fișiori ia veniț ș' pră la noi"

Figure 2. Image of the logo for the proposed campaign

Logo: „Fece mândre ș' fișiori haidaț în Almăj pră la noi să vă bucuraț ș' voi dă nigei ș' sărbători, dă ogină ș' mâncare ș' dă joc în sărbătoare."

In order to achieve the target objectives and maintain an effective communication with the beneficiary, in the benefit of the offer promotion strategy, I have decided to use various communication techniques, such

as media, small advertising and promotional materials. As a promotional strategy, I opted to capture the attention of the target audience. With its help, I have proposed that our future customers be guided and sensitised to discover the Almăj Valley as it is, not just to love what is being promoted. As techniques, I have used the creation and the halo effect, through appropriate design, original content, real images, interaction and credible elements.

5. Conclusion

The Almăj Valley has many possibilities for practicing rural tourism due to its varied relief, historical and archaeological monuments and ethnographic, folk and cultural richnesses. However, as a result of the research undertaken, I have noticed a number of gaps and problems they face, such as poor quality infrastructure, high prices of tourist services, lack of attractiveness of tourism products, lack of interest of local authorities, lack of strategies to promote and develop the area. For a greater efficiency in tourism, I believe that promotion strategies and actions must focus on attracting and retaining customers, on a better capitalisation of the county's image, on knowledge and exploitation of natural and anthropogenic resources and on turning potential buyers into future customers.

To this end, I have thought of some proposals to present both to local authorities and to other decision-makers such as economic agents, pension managers, restaurants, even citizens who want to contribute to the development of the area. They are designed to promote the diversification of mountain and rural tourism, the diversification of tourist offer, the capitalisation of tourist resources, the rehabilitation and exploitation of tourist objectives, the rehabilitation and modernisation of the infrastructure, of access routes and parking lots, the training and qualification of tourism staff, the establishment of a viable system of development and tourism promotion for the Almăj Valley, the development and conservation of protected natural areas to be used as tourist attractions, the implementation of new tourist routes, and the development of speleological tourism potential.

In addition, new attractive opportunities for leisure are needed, such as steam rooms, swimming pools, fitness halls, sports grounds, golf courses, clubs, restaurants with *almăjean* cuisine. Also, traditional customs should be highlighted by organising cultural events, actions and campaigns to promote the local tourism products with the involvement from local authorities to support the participation in this kind of events.

In conclusion, the Almăj Valley is an unforgettable tourist destination being positioned in an area with a highly developed touristic potential, which can be promoted to high standards.

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Online Business Communication. Study on the Employees' Working Environment

Daiana Raluca Ghita

Abstract: *The influence of leaders is the one that leads the team through the process of change. Their influence and example are like a support pillar that guides the team toward accommodation to the new habitsimplemented. For that to be possible, information and trust must come from every party involved. Change happens without necessarily being provoked. Resistance to change is a natural phenomenon that happens to everyone. However, once this resistance is accepted and accommodated with the passage of time,it turns into progress.*
This paper presents ideas such as: work from the office; work from home; hybrid style of working; individualism vs. collectivism between members of a team, integration of new colleagues into the team in the context of work at home; intercultural communication; the impact of leaders in the perception of change;dysfunctional teams.

Keywords: *communication, intercultural communication, digital communication, working environment, management, leadership.*

# 1.	Introduction

It is said that man is the result of genetics, education, and the environment. The average person spends about a third of his life working. From this hypothesis, wecan say that the working environment influences the quality of life for all of us. Idyllically, the working environment should be an opportunity to harness and develop the skills of individuals, but also a way for them to contribute to their community. We all work to ensure a certain standard of living for ourselves and our families.

Moreover, we work to support our dreams and aspirations. Today, the labour market has become volatile. Small and large businesses have adopted work from home as a way to keep employees safe in the pandemic context. Gradually, some of them try to reintegrate work on the ground, or at least a hybrid system between the two.

This paper aims to study and analyse the impact that work style has on employees, and automatically on the Romanian labour market. The study addresses concepts such as on-site work, work from home and hybrid work system; individualism versus collectivism within a team; integrating new colleagues intothe team in the context of work from home; intercultural communication; the impact of leaders in perception of change; dysfunctional teams. The first part of the paper, the first two chapters respectively, analyses and compares some of the already existing studies on topics such as returning employees to the office, advantages and disadvantages of online communication, socialisation and interpersonalrelationships created in the workplace, the influence of leaders on how change is perceived.

# 2.	Research methods

The research has been conducted through three individual interviews with leaders form thethree-working system: work from the office, work from home and the hybrid system of working; and through one survey

that was submitted by 188 people who live and work for companies in Timisoara, Romania.

In this context, the questionnaire is used as a research tool on the topic of Online Business Communication – study on the working environment of employees. The study includes concepts such as work from home, hybrid work, online communication, technical equipment and ergonomic equipment, transport between work and home, resources provided by companies, accidents at work, personal life and spirituality.

The study is aimed at adults who have experienced online communication in the business environment, through a work from home system or a hybrid system. Completion of the questionnaire was made anonymously, the collected data being confidential and serving exclusively for research purposes. The study involved 118 people, both women and men, aged between 20 and 55, from Romania and beyond. Of the respondents, 79 identified themselves as women and 39 identified themselves as men. The average age of participants is 25.6 years, with a minimum of 20 years, and amaximum of 55 years.

3.   Results

The first interview is directed to the work from the office system.As context of the company, W.D.A. – Advertising agency founded in 2000, operating inRomania, having headquarters in Timisoara, is contractually committed to offer promotion services to increase the sales of an international company in the tobacco industry. The pandemic context stopped the work of employees, they went into technicalunemployment. Once the state of emergency in Romania was finished, the employees continued their activity in the field, being in direct contact with the consumers, observing the safety and prevention measures.

Keywords: *Promotion; sales; field work; the possibility of replacing field work with work from home; safety and protection at work; team unification; socializing at work; communication with the public; how a leader can fail.*

The main representative answers of this interview are:

"At the beginning of the pandemic, from March 2020 to June of the same year, the mother company moved all the people who worked on the field to technical unemployment. It was the only tobacco company in the country to make this decision. The others either terminated the employee contracts or sought to implement alternatives to continue the work. One of the ideas implemented by the competition was as follows. It was attempted to move the activity from the physical environment to the audio one. Employees called consumers who were already part of the company's database and offered them various personalised offers. The employees worked as always on target. The target was 10 devicessold per month. If the employee managed to sell 9 devices out of 10, he would not be paid."

"It was not enough to comply with preventive measures, it was necessary for the company to provide results, targets that were outdated or at least achieved; a certain number of consumers approached per hour or per day; a certain number of offers completed per hour or per day; full consumer data; more than 98% of marketing agreements are completed; there is still a great deal of emphasis on the quality of the contact, not just the quantity.

At one point, in the winter of that year, the question was raised whether the tobacco company would extend the contract with the advertising agency, because the staff did notcomply with the safety rules imposed. Obviously, we are still here, but that moment wasvery intense for each of us."

"I really want girls to have opportunities to meet and socialise with each other. It seems to me that it is very important to exchange impressions and ideas with your coworkers, to share the experiences you are going through with people who are going through thesame things.

I strongly insist that now, in the post-pandemic context, we can return to trainings held at the company's Timisoara headquarters, to overcome the online period."

"I'm convinced that interacting with me every day isn't enough for the girls to feel like they're part of the team."

The second interview is directed to the work from home system.

As a context of the company, B.S.S. – Multinational company with approximately 30 years of experience in Romania and approximately 9,000 employees. In Romania it offers products and services in the following sectors: Mobility solutions, Consumer goods, building and Energy Technology and Industrial Technology. The company has continuedits activity completely through work from home from 2020 to the present (2022), giving employees the option to come to the office only if they wanted to.

Keywords: *Employee neglect of work tasks in favor of household tasks; individualism versus collectivism at work; team reunification; integration of a new colleague into the team; team satisfaction; gender equality between team members; how a leader can fail*.

The main representative answers of this interview are:

''People became more individualistic, they didn't ask for help, they didn't communicate,everyone was just doing their job and that's it.

I wanted people to come and tell me when they had too much or too little work to helpeach other.

Being at home, people wanted to make their time at home more efficient – to cook, to tidy up, – prioritised work from home, such as the washing machine and the vacuum cleaner over the job.

All of this happened on a general level among employees.''

"At first, I noticed that collaboration between colleagues was diminishing. I say this in the sense that if there was any kind of impediment, error in the application, heated discussion with a foreign collaborator, unforeseen situation and so on, everyone's tendency was to let me know at first and wait to solve anything without any effort on their part. It was preferable to talk to the people closest to their field, to colleagues who do the same thing, then to call me if they could not find a solution together."

"For me, everyone is equal. At the risk of generalising, women are more meticulous, but they are equally stressed and stressful. I tried to bring guys into the team, they seem more relaxed and resourceful, sometimes even more indifferent. It's just an opinion, maybe a subjective one. As I said, for me everyone is equal, but I want my team to be balanced by the characteristics of the people who are part of it."

"What does failure mean for a leader? If you ask me, failure for a leader would mean that he would be individualistic, he would not care about the team, he would only impose his point of view, he will not listen, he will not try to understand people.

You identify them by what you hear about them, what the people on the team say aboutthem. There are big differences between teams and different leadership styles.

Sometimes people are not necessarily empathetic but have a more authoritarian and difficult to digest style. I noticed that things like this are transmitted.

They came from another company with this style. They practiced it because they learnedit, they didn't create their own style."

The third interview is directed at the hybrid system of work.

As a context of the company, N.N. – multinational company with a considerable experience in the global labour market. Currently, it provides customers with products andservices for telecommunications and information development. For one year, 2020-2021, the company's activity was 90% from home. In the past year, 2022, the company has been trying to bring employees back to the office through a so-called hybrid work regime.

Keywords: *The efficiency of employees working from home compared to the efficiency of employees working from the office; the contexts in which work from home and office are more efficient at the expense of each other; overwork of employees; online communication – effective or not; the recruitment process; team reunification; transactional communication between team members; spontaneous resignations; technical equipment; how a leader can fail.*

The main representative answers of this interview are:

There was a situation at the office a long time ago with one of the colleagues who somehow isolated himself from the rest of the team. We all respected his space and left him alone, in the idea that he was looking for us when he wanted to talk about something,when they were all in the same office. The bottom line was that he worked on somethingfor a month, got stuck, somehow got to the bottom of it, then found out that everything was unnecessary and that there was no need for the material he worked on.

We started using an app that allows us to keep track of our tasks and somehow recordour progress. It operates on the principle of a list of tasks, also has an organizational role.

It was a tumultuous road, the team lost old and valuable members. We notice that theyare initially lost in terms of interaction with the rest of the team, the communication between us has become transactional, we limit ourselves to discussions strictly about theobject of work.

The fact that employees felt they were making more effort from home to perform their tasks led them to ask for salary increases that I could not further justify, since the results were the same. Moreover, over time, because the interaction within the team became almost non-existent and because the work proved that it can be done from the comfort ofthe home, it seemed natural to former colleagues to go where they received more money for the same work done from home. People went to competing firms, it was an incredible hunt, people were going from one corporation to another.''

"Communication between people became transactional, and everyone came to me to vent all sorts of discontent. They were looking for me to discuss, but the discussions werenot productive in any way, there was a lot of victimisation and too little results.

When the pandemic context allowed us, I was the first to return to the office. I have urged others to come when they need support. I didn't do it to set an example, I did it because I personally needed it.

Some of the people coming to the office, we had to become more flexible. The hybrid system requires a minimum of two days a week spent at the office. I don't monitor anyone, I come as often as I can, and I trust that everyone has chosen what is best for him.I believe it is the duty of those who have chosen to stay at home, to show their results when needed, to preserve the transparency created in the pandemic."

"I have already said that it is becoming more difficult to communicate effectively. There are all kinds of unknowns. Somehow, we concluded that office days are good when we have certain meetings or when we implement new processes, and home office days are useful when the person needs to focus in his environment, without distractions

from colleagues. Of course, this is what happens if home is such an environment. After days like this, there should be some results."

"I tend to think that in the pandemic, or rather in that social isolation, people's self- perception has suffered. It's more of a piece of information I've read somewhere, but I agree with it. The point is that with limited social contact at all, people were content withexactly what was left in their minds, without having the opportunity to adjust to others.I mean, there was no one to tell them when they were wrong and no one to take them outof self-sufficiency."

"I am focused on the results, but I support the man. The point is that in terms of results,we justify the object of our work, and that's where we all get our money from. I'm interested inwhat you want to do and how I can help you, I'm involved in the man's process. I am aware that once I have hired someone, I am responsible for the career and evolution of the man."

Results of the survey

Certain companies have shown interest in the safe conduct of work from home, offering solutions for the ergonomic aspect, namely they have provided furniture in custody to employees or provided the settlement of the necessary amounts for employees to buy their own furniture, necessary for carrying out the work activity in optimal conditions.

All companies that have used the work from home system, or the hybrid work system, have provided technical equipment to the employees. In some cases, employees have hadto declare and prove that they have optimal conditions for using the equipment at homeso that it does not risk being damaged or destroyed. Optimal conditions meant stable internet connection, and a genuine electrical circuit installation without improvisation.

Using online communication in the business environment, in the work from home system, people declare that they are making their time more efficient by paying attentionto household tasks during work hours. At the same time, working from home, people give more care and understanding to family members.

The average age of the participants in the study being 25.6 years old, it is found, following the answers, that the general priority of the individuals, at this stage of life, is their own person and individual development, and on the second place is the career, immediately followed by the couple /family relationship.

In the event of an accident at home, but during working hours, the mitigating circumstances are what they devote themselves to if it is considered an accident at work, and if the employee receives compensation from the company. However, for such situations, a commission meets and analyses all the factors of the accident, the situation being particular.

If the hiring company required a full return to the office, a third of employees would be willing to look for a new job where they could work from home.

Moreover, in the complete context of work from home, people found it very easy to consider the idea of changing the employer company, not being involved in the team. Especially if they were going to a competing company in the same field of activity, they were motivated by the idea that they are doing the same thing from the comfort of their home, but most likely for more money.

Among the current reasons why people avoid returning to the office are listed, in descending order, the following:

• Transport, whether it is the increased cost of fuel; the time lost in traffic; the lack of parking spaces and the costs of private parking; about the costs of using a taxi, bolt or uber; about buses and buses that do not comply with the schedule; difficulties in using abicycle or electric scooter; large distances between company headquarters and employees' homes; situation where the company's headquarters is in another city from the employees' homes.

• The comfort of your own home; whether it is an arrangement and an environment of your own; or whether it is the climate problem in office buildings; whether it's lunch, thecost of eating at the restaurant, the physical fatigue of cooking every day after a day's work; the desire to spend time with family.

Physical fatigue, being the time and energy needed to prepare for a day's work at the office and considering that there is too little time left for each person's personal needs.

• The need to be available in other circumstances during working hours, such as a visit to the doctor, the need to care for sick parents or children, to attend training courses in a course or in postgraduate studies.

• The anxiety that comes with the situation of returning to an already formed collective, spending a third of the daily time with people who are or are not necessarily a team, leaving the house, being present in crowded spaces, to interact with strangers.

• The costs of living and living in the city where the company is based, whether it is employees of a company located abroad, or people who would need a relocation package,if in the context of the pandemic they chose to live closer to the family.

• The desire to be close to the family (parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents)

Interaction with colleagues (personal problems, anxiety, introversion) can be about the difficulty of being back in a collective where everyone has his or her own needs and limitations, in addition to desires and expectations.

The presence of the superior (relationship with authority, misunderstandings), if the relationship between superior and subordinate is not exactly ideal, transactional communication through the online environment is much more tolerable compared to daily face-to-face interaction.

• Fear of viruses/germs, in case this was the original reason for implementing the work from home system for the vast majority of people, namely the hybrid work system.

Summary of study

James Humes said in his article named "Leading Thoughts: Quotes on Communication", published in the "Leadership Now" blog, that the art of communication is the language of leadership. Starting from this idea,

the evolution of communication in Digital Era will be followed, seeing how it evolved and helped the communication in business environment to develop.

"Business communities give little importance to social abilities, as they were named Carnegie's principles, and consider them at least complementary despite technical abilities. In fact, the reality is completely opposite with these thoughts. So, if you want to have the best results, you must make a change.

Social abilities such as compassion and empathy cause a rarely seen efficiency in the using of technical abilities such as programming, operating, and designing. How? Social abilities connect the technical abilities and operational efficiency, organizational synergy, and commercial profit, because all of this demand a high level of human involvement. Has the technical manager who stay in his office, writing reports, any advantage in front of the manager who is walking among his employees, is known, seen, and respected by them? Even if the first one might succeed for a while, his influence will disappear after a while, because his power is not believed by the people. His influence is fragile and available only for a short period of time" (Carnegie, 2013).

Indeed, this is something that should always be reminded. We are human beings, we are working to maintain a lifestyle for ourselves and for our families. Our purpose is human, so why our work environment should not be the same? As we know that we are not our mistakes, we should also know that we are not our results. Even if, indeed, our results at work are a good item to guide for, to see how productive we are and in which fields we are more passionate. As we all should know until this moment, communication is mostly about listening, and especially about listening to others.

A few years ago, New York Telephone Company established a study about the most used word in communication. The word "I" appeared for 3,900 times in 500 phone communications. Alfred Adler said that "The person who is not interested in the people next to him is the one who has the greatest difficulties in life and who causes the most suffering to others". This is still true and available in any kind of communication, even if is face to face or online. All of us want to be listened to, to be

accepted and to feel important for the people around us, even if is in our personal or in our professional life.

Doc Searls' blog writes the following: "The first step is to listen. Once you found out what matters for others, you can involve them, by placing their needs in the first plan of your dialog. In business, this means restoring the client's place in customer relationship management – a task that relates more to management than to the client" (Maltoni, 2005).

In the book *Leadership is an Art*, the author Max DePree wrote that "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last, is to say thank you. Between these two, the leader is a servant of the people". This being said, we should agree that great power comes with great responsibilities, and the leader is not a boss, but a coordinator of the people who are choosing to follow him.

"In a state of conflict, it is preferable to not start the conversation or the negotiation into a negative note. We risk creating a gloomy and unpleasant environment, as in a theatre scene. People will become tense and stressed. Imagine if this will become the whole atmosphere of a company. People would be forced to fight against a wave of negative emotions, and there will be no place for accommodation or for solutions" (Carnegie, 2013).

It is preferable to start a conversation with a very sincerely appreciation or with a positive line, to relieve tension and to have a productive act of communications. In digital communication it is very important to try to keep it as efficient as possible. Alot of the signs from the non-verbal communication are getting lost, as the mimic, the gestures and sometimes even the tone of voice. The sense of the sentences can be easily misunderstood, so a lot of things can be interpreted in the incorrect way.

To maintain the communication effective via any kind of digital communication channels, it is recommended to:

• Keep it as simple as possible. There is no need to use complicated terms.

• Always be polite.

• Keep the communication friendly, but professional.

• Make your presence as visible as possible. Even if you are in a

185

call, a videoconference, or if you are writing an email, try to be present and involved in the act of communication.

• When expressing a concern, a situation, or a task, try to give as much context as possible, so your correspondent to understand exactly the purpose of it.

• Write short sentences. Your correspondent might get confused if you use too manywords.

• Always explain the abbreviation you are using. Sometimes, you and your correspondent might have different meanings for the same acronyms.

• Avoid using jargon, cliches, or buzzwords.

• Avoid excessive punctuation.

• Make sure you have no language gap or communication barrier.

• Communicate a deadline to your correspondent for the maximum time when youneed a response.

• Don't get stuck into mistakes or any kind of errors.

• Use your resources to overcome and to resolve situations, not to blame anyone forthem.

The leader of a team has the responsibility to lead the people by showing them how to accept the change, how to embrace it, and even how to question it. Because people arechoosing who to follow, the leader should be a representative of them, and has the possibility to guide them to success. Human relationships and interactions in business environment comes both ways, as it is important from the leader to communicate with his team, as important is from the team to provide feedback to the leader.

"There are two types of people: the one who see the computer/ the internet/ the keyboardsas being connected to other human beings, and the ones who consider them completely separated online elements" (Brogan, 2012).

Conclusions

So far, there is a higher tolerance on the part of most employees for partial return to theoffice, compared to the preference for full return to the office,

or for full work from home.This preference remains constant whether it is large and very large companies, medium-sized companies, and small and very small companies in terms of number of employees.

Among the industries with a high preference for work from home are theTelecommunications and IT Services industries.

However, there are hypotheses about how these styles of work are suitable in differentcontexts, to people who are in different stages of life. For example, it is considered that people who have already reached a career level, from the perspective of experience, and who have also started a family, would be more productive and efficient working from home, precisely because they have already learned to organize their time and recognize their priorities. Moreover, it is assumed that these people have already laid the foundations of their career, already having a stable foundation on which they can build at their own pace.

Also, in terms of rapid job change, there was a poor communication between managersand the rest of the teams through the prism of working from home. Managers no longer knew if employees were still satisfied with the job, or if they were looking for somethingnew. Thus, a multitude of resignations appeared to be spontaneous, without managers having the opportunity to discuss complaints and try a counter offer.

Communication became transactional between team members; it took study and new information to be accumulated for managers to manage to retain or implement the idea of teamwork again. The results of teamwork are also influenced by team synergy,communication, and appreciation among team members.

It is the influence of leaders that leads the team through the process of change. Their influence and example are like a support pillar that guides the team toward accommodation to the new habits implemented. For that to be possible, information andtrust must come from every party involved.

Change happens without necessarily being provoked. Resistance to change is a natural phenomenon that happens to everyone. However, once this resistance is accepted and accommodated with the passage of time, it turns into progress.

However, society is constantly developing, and man, being made up of living cells, can adapt to environmental as well as geographical conditions.

Living together, in a society of small and large groups and collectives, sometimes even living alone, people adjust to each other according to the needs and desires that prevail for them. Moreover, the need for survival and belonging to the group pushes them to accept compromises and integrate each other's needs.

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Nonverbal Communication in Human Resources

Camelia Mădălina Farkaș

Abstract: *Nonverbal communication has gained more and more definitions throughout the time, but it has also been given increasing importance in various fields. This type of communication plays a very important role in face-to-face interaction, and in the world of human resources, especially the recruitment interview. Therefore, the analysis of the various nonverbal elements that appear in an interview can help to better understand the interlocutor and the message conveyed by him/her. The purpose of this paper is to come to the aid of a non-verbal communication guide in interviews, because in my opinion this is not a sufficient approach to human resources and I believe that we should make a change. An objective of this paper is to identify people's behavior during a recruitment interview, taking into account their social position and the position they are interviewed for, with emphasis on nonverbal elements. This objective is achieved by applying an observation sheet in workplace interviews. Another objective of this study is to illustrate, with the help of an opinion poll, whether recruiters in different fields of activity consider nonverbal communication to be a significant element in the interviews they conduct. This paper contains at the end some tips for a good conduct of a recruitment interview, addressed especially to candidates, but also to novice recruiters who are curious how the first interview should be approached from a nonverbal point of view.*

1.   Introduction

Nonverbal communication has been spoken of since ancient times, but emphasis was placed on this term only in the 17th century, when researchers began to show interest in the subject. Even today, the term communication itself has various definitions and no consensus has been reached on it. Without the process of communication, the human being, who is a potentially social being, could say that s/he exists, but his/her existence would be anonymous or useless. Without the communication process, the individual would not be part of a community, but would be lonely, because the relationships we create each day of our lives are created only through the process of communication, whether verbal or nonverbal.

I.   Communication

What are the components of communication, both verbal and nonverbal? Three very important elements could be discussed: the sender, the message and the receiver. The sender is the one who creates the content of the message transmitted through a certain channel to the receiver or receivers, more specifically, it is s/he who initiates communication. The message that the transmitter creates is composed by a specific code and is transmitted in order to inform and obtain a result, a reaction from the receiver. The receiver is the person receiving the message, who will react as such after deciphering what the transmitter wants to transmit. In the communication process, the following could be found: Coding / decoding, channel, feedback, technical jamming, semantic jamming, context.

If we talk about the most popular classifications when it comes to communication, we can notice the following: verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal communication, intrapersonal, interpersonal, group and mass communication, or formal, informal communication. Regarding

nonverbal communication, the exact term was used in the title of a paper only in 1956 in Jurgen Ruesch and Weldon Kees's *Nonverbal Communication: Notes on the Usual Perception of Human Relations*. From the perspective of the two authors, five out of seven systems involved in the communication process are nonverbal, the seven systems being: physical presence and clothing, voluntary gestures or movements, random actions, traces of actions, vocal sounds, spoken words, written words. A definition attributed to nonverbal communication comes from Jacques Corraze in his 1980's *Les Communications nonverbales*, where he says: "Non-verbal communication is the means of communication between living beings who do not use human language or its non-sound derivatives (writing, deaf-mute language, etc.). This is done through exclusion and inclusion at the same time. Human-machine communication is not retained, but the concept of 'nonverbal communication'" includes communication between animals (Corruses, 1980, p. 189).

There are various behavioral indicators that help us to analyse in more detail the messages sent by our discussion partner or partners, such as: dominance indicators (territorial indicators, postural indicators, seated position indicators), indicators of obedience (head position, eyes, face redness), handshake (vise method, dead hand, firm hand, strengthening, dominant greeting).

II.   **Human resources**

Human resources are those that help an organisation to function properly and to carry out its activities in the most efficient way possible, these representing a major organisational advantage. The human resources team is responsible for significant processes, such as: recruiting and selecting staff, training employees, motivating staff, assessing individual and collective performance, health and safety of staff, etc. When it comes to human resource management functions, four very important ones can be noted: staff recruitment, development, motivation, maintenance.

What does the human resources team need to do to have a successful recruitment process? The team can take into account a strategy consisting of three fundamental decisions: determining the target

audience, determining the sources of recruitment, identifying appropriate methods to attract the candidate to the organisation. The stages of the selection process are the following: the preliminary interview, the analysis of the applications, the administration of the selection tests. As for the interview part, this is the most used method in organisations when trying to evaluate candidates for open positions. This is represented by a purpose-oriented discussion between the recruiter, or the people present at the interview, and the candidate. During the interview, it is determined whether the interviewee is really suitable for the open position, as it seemed after the previous stages of selection. Regarding the types of interview, we can refer to the following: unstructured interview and structured interview.

2.   Research methods and results

The research methods and tools used are: an observation sheet applied during the interviews I have conducted with various candidates for the job, at the recruitment agency Lifein Job, in which I approached elements of nonverbal communication, such as: gestures, facial expression, body position, voice quality; and a survey conducted on a certain segment of the public, consisting only of specialists in recruitment and selection, aged between 22-29 years, working in various fields.

After having applied the observation sheet in ten interviews for different positions (recruitment and selection specialist, SHEQ manager, goods handler, maintenance technician, sales agent, fundamental buyer, forklift, unskilled worker, electrician), I was able to identify various nonverbal elements which helped me to understand much better the message sent by the sender, to identify its condition and, at the same time, to be able, after analysing the file, to come up with strengths, weaknesses and improvements. Thus, following these observation sheets, applied to a different segment of the public, the most common nonverbal elements present in a job interview can be noticed, depending on the position for which people are applying, more precisely: the way to shake hands. , the presence or absence of eye contact, the movement of the pen or playing with the fingers, the high or low tone of voice, the rhythm of speech, all

of which can be analysed and interpreted to evaluate a candidate. For example, a firm handshake illustrates the candidate's self-confidence, avoiding eye contact can mean avoiding the truth or the presence of too strong emotions, as in the case of playing with an object or with your own fingers.

Regarding the results of the survey applied to the 10 recruitment and selection specialists, several important conclusions can be pinpointed for the study. For example, when recruiters were asked if they emphasised nonverbal elements during the recruitment interview, 70% of them answered in the affirmative, 20% answered in the negative, and 10% were unsure of the answer.
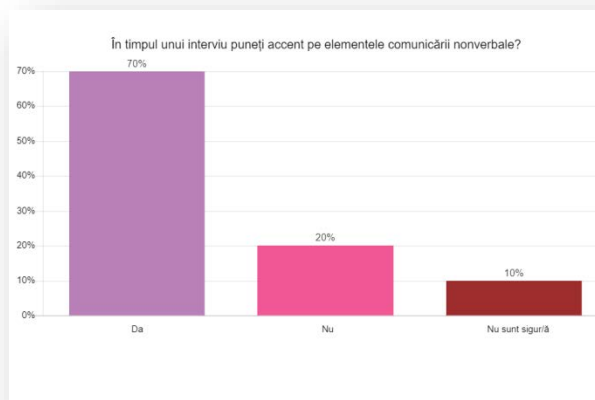
When it comes to the most significant element of nonverbal communication in interviews, 6 out of 10 recruiters answered that "facial expression" is the most important one, followed by appearance / performance and voice quality and vocal characteristics (laughter, crying), shrill / tickling voice).

Care este cel mai important element al comunicării nonverbale, în domeniul de activitate pentru care recrutați, de care țineți cont?
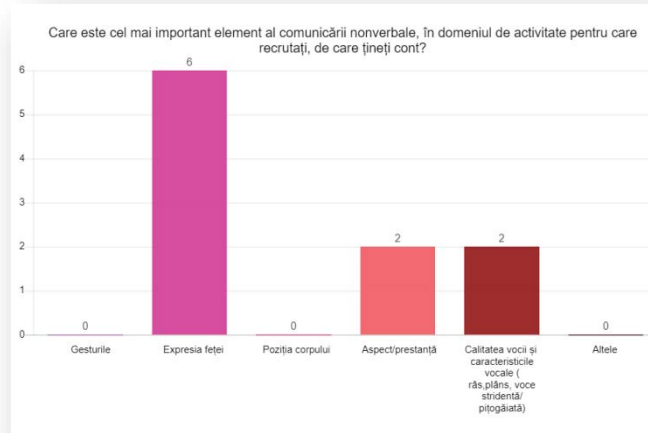
If we consider the importance of gestures, voice, attire and other nonverbal elements in a recruitment interview on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1- not at all important and 10- very important, it turned out an average of 8.2. Where 40% of respondents chose 8 out of 10, 20% chose 9 out of 10, 10% chose 5 out of 10, 10% chose 7 out of 10 and 20% of respondents chose even 10 out of 10.

Pe o scală de la 1 la 10 cât de importante sunt gesturile, vocea , ținuta și celelalte elemente nonverbale într-un interviu de recrutare ?
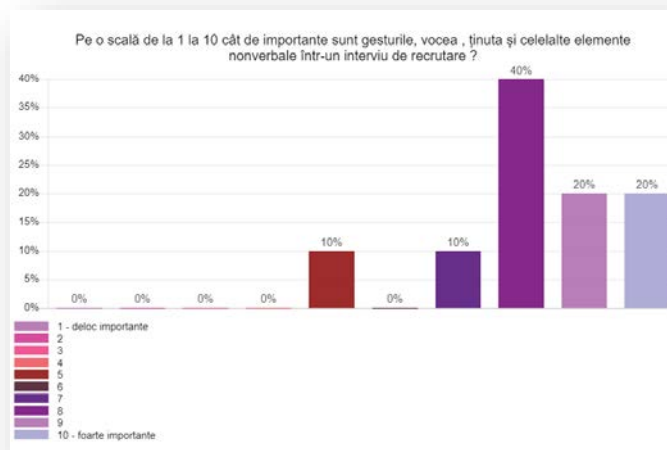
At the end of the paper, you will find a communication guide in an interview, which is meant to help both candidates and newcomers to the world of recruitment.

Among the most significant tips are: 1. *Prepare for the interview!* It is advisable to find out before reaching an interview, both about the company, in the case of the candidate, and about the profile of the candidate, if we speak from the perspective of a recruiter. You can even train in front of a mirror, so that you can observe your facial expressions and gestures when you answer a supposed question and thus observe what is wrong and correct it. This would have indicated, as it has been shown above, that facial expression comes first when it comes to the nonverbal elements analysed during an interview; 2. *Maintain eye contact!* Eye contact can be seen as a strategy to create a good impression, more precisely of an interpersonal relationship. That is why, without making eye contact with the other person and without using a smile, it is very possible not to get "under his skin" and not to create a connection through which the receiver understands the message sent by the sender. Do not forget to look elsewhere, because otherwise the eye contact can turn into staring and you will leave an unpleasant impression; 3. *Be careful what outfit you choose!* Depending on the position you are applying for or recruiting, you need to choose the right outfit very carefully, as this helps to create a first impression in your favor. As a candidate, it is good to keep a note of simplicity, not to be exaggerated, you could opt for a simple shirt and a pair of trousers, avoiding extravagance. And, as a recruiter, you have to illustrate seriousness and keep in mind that you are the first contact of potential employees with the company, so you represent it; 4. *Anticipate possible questions!* This advice is intended especially for candidates for interviews. It is good to do some research before an interview and see what are the most frequently asked questions used by recruiters. Try to formulate your answers already, or at least create a vague idea of what you might answer in each case.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, I consider the interview to be a very important element in the recruitment and selection process, being the first direct contact between the employer and the candidate. Therefore, much more

emphasis should be placed on the idea of preparing for the job interview, but especially on understanding the importance of nonverbal communication in it. Nonverbal communication is what can help you express an idea the way you want, if you take into account the nonverbal elements you use for this purpose. It is also important to consider which nonverbal elements you are unconsciously approaching and which could affect your image in front of your interlocutor, such as tics or certain gestures due to emotions. Thus, the communication guide in an interview comes with tips that can help you conduct a successful interview, both from the point of view of the specialist in recruitment and selection, and from the point of view of the candidate.

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Communication Strategies in the Development of MLM Business

Denisia Dumitrășcuță

Abstract: *In this paper I will present in more detail the idea of MLM business, considering that it is essential to understand the whole process of its operation. Moreover, I will highlight some aspects that simplify the methods of integration into such a business. In other words, MLM networks are the ones that want to outsource their entire business through successful managers, allowing them to pinpoint any difficulties with the entire process. In other words, the MLM business has, in addition to professional life, which includes certain responsibilities and concerns, its personal life by meeting other people who are communicative and open to any subject. Regarding this type of network, socialisation and link building is the most important strategy in business development, through the process of extension and promotion of products. In other words, the notion of MLM in this article will highlight both the operation of networks and the presentation of Calivita, Forever Living Produts and Amway products, as well as the results of their market analysis through the questionnaire. To conclude, the main objective of this article is to identify the market leader among the three MLM businesses listed above.*

Keywords: *MLM, networking, goal, process, business, methods, activity, business.*

1. Introduction

The MLM business considers a strategy to sell certain goods directly to consumers through a network developed by independent distributors and the revenues are those that are achieved through the profit of retail sales (Horațiu, 2002,
p. 47). Looking at it from a different perspective, Multilevel Marketing systems were first introduced in the US by exposing new marketing methods, and the first company to allow its employees to interact with other distributors in this regard was California Vitamins, in 1940, following the official registration of such businesses in Romania in 1994 (Horațiu, 2003, p. 37). The main feature of this system in the area of direct sales is the appearance of professional activities called "networking" and the mastering of a lot of technical knowledge, skills and professional motivations (Horațiu, 2002, p. 40).

With reference to the study of network marketing systems, a hierarchical structure is identified, consisting of subsystems, whose elements define their orientation, being open systems, which lead to a holistic policy of survival and success. In other words, the abovementioned theory is a very powerful means of marketing, which is why various possible variants have been found.

In this paper, MLM-type networks, which refer to the appropriate strategies and techniques for carrying out the entire activity, will be presented. Regarding the content of this paper, the first chapter will discuss some details related to the content of a business plan that will continue with the defining characteristics of the MLM network through the advantages and disadvantages exposed in a classic business versus an MLM business. Through this information, the foundations of each concept will be better understood, trying to make a selective differentiation between the two types of business.

Regarding the next chapter of this paper, a case study that focuses on a promotion campaign with related research tools, the implementation of the main online promotion strategies and joint activities and the presentation of related results will be presented.

Therefore, this is the plan of this paper, which will take into account the most important existential aspects of the MLM concept and its related elements.

2. Research methods

Expert sources consulted

The purpose of this research is to identify the students' perceptions of MLM networks. The first objective of this research is aimed at the degree of spread of MLMproducts / services among students, and the second objective will be defined by the level of notoriety following their promotion.

Through the questionnaire, the research hypotheses are related to students' perceptions regarding MLM products / services; the degree of knowledge and action on them and the reasons why they want to move towards a future collaboration.

The first objective of this paper is to identify students' perceptions of services / products, and the second objective is related to the level of notoriety following their promotion.

The first research tool that was used to find out the students' perceptions of MLM products is the questionnaire. Through this research method, the students' behavior regarding the degree of notoriety and use of their services was researched.

This was done on the Isondaje platform, distributed in electronic format between 19.05.2020 - 24.05.2020, the duration of the questionnaire being of approximately 5 minutes. Before starting the research, a sample of 100 respondents was collected. The questionnaire was completed by 120 subjects, their participationbeing voluntary.

The questionnaire consists of 21 questions, the first 3 questions being general; the next 4 questions are related to the reasons / situations for which they would use psychological services, the next 10 are related to potential benefits, selection criteria and opinions about them, and the last 5 comprise general data.

Figure 1. Degree of notoriety for FLP
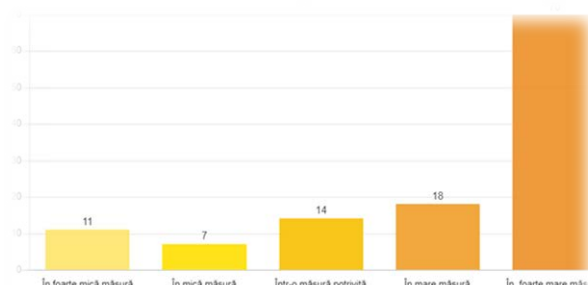
In order to better understand the research that was carried out, somesignificant results will be presented in what follows.

Through the questionnaire, the necessary results were collected in order to be analysed.

The sample was made up of 120 students whose perception of MLM networks was further investigated.

The second answer is represented by the Calivita company. With the help of thegraph, it was observed that 44 respondents knew about the market activity of this MLM network. The last answer to the first question is the Amway company, and the graph shows that 50 respondents know about its activity.

After having analysed each of the options in the first question, the result was that Forever Living Products (102) is the best-known MLM network, followed by Amway (50) and Calivita (44).
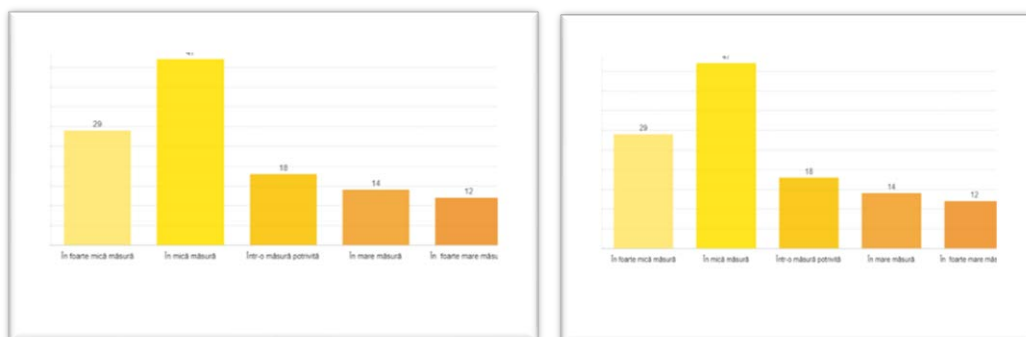
Figure 2. Calivita   Figure 3. Amway

Question number 14 seeks to identify whether the target audience will be an MLM system in the future. According to the chart, it can be seen that 92 respondents, out of a total of 120, would like to join an MLM business.

Only 28 of the respondents do not want to be part of such a network, due to the fact that they are currently part of a classic activity.

This question shows that, following the documentation, the respondents would have the desire to integrate into such an MLM activity.

Figure 4. Degree of involvement for MLM business
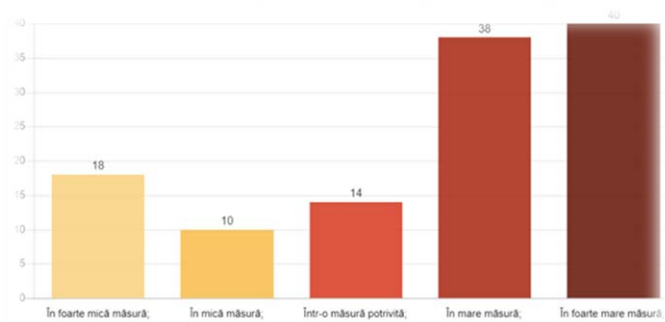
Conclusion

As for the conclusion, it can be said that I have managed to meet my goals before drafting the ideas. In other words, due to my passion for this field, I was able to conclude with unexpected results in a relatively short time. Going to this topic, I realized that I want to identify the perceptions of students about MLM business, and through the two research tools established for this paper, I have also received the anticipated result.

Following the research, I was surprised that stereotypes continue to appear today, and they are related to certain misconceptions that are consistent with the minimal interest in MLM networks. Many times,

people around you are of the opinion that if you start your own business you can become rich without any other risks or clauses, but that is very far from the truth. These stereotypes are formed only in our minds, because we do not have the determination and openness to discover the mainobjectives of an MLM business. Another very important aspect is related to the determination to act, removing these elements that can prevent the desire to withdrawthrough other helpful means.

Following the discussions with the specialists who are part of this field, I have observed that students are receptive to any idea, trying to combine certain related elements byforming links that lead to positive results. Of course, there are also students who comefrom a more religious background, who tend to focus on the rules implemented by thefamily since childhood, but there are also some errors in this regard, as they may deviate from the framework in which they have lived so far, trying to find other helpful directions during their development.

In other words, I can say that MLM businesses need more promotion in the online environment, both to become known through its services and its existence on the market, and to urge the target audience to act regardless of the situations encountered.

In conclusion, through this paper, I have managed to achieve my proposed objectives, both for the theoretical and the practical part, trying to include the essentialelements related to the chosen topic.

Expert sources consulted

When the idea of the business plan is discusses, the rigorous and professional planning that sets out certain well-established directions from the beginning must be followed. This is a written document that details how a start-up business defines its goals for operational management. In other words, it presents a roadmap written for the business that takes into account the movements in the area of marketing, finance and operations (Kiyasaki, 2002, p.105).

These are important documents used by both the external and internal public of the company, representing a good way for their executive teams to be on the same level regarding the strategic elements

of action and to maintain the set objectives. Ideally, the plan is regularly reviewed and updated to see if the objectives have been met or need some further adjustments to achieve the proposed target. At the same time, the projected costs and possible pitfalls of every decision a company makes should be highlighted, including at least two overviews of the industry the business will be part of and how it will differentiate itself from its potential competitors (Porojan,2002, p.35).

It also helps companies to identify their goals and stay on track, developing gradually but surely. Moreover, the business plan acts as a means of getting people to work and invest in the company. Although there are no right or wrong business plans,they must be well documented, even anticipating certain risks to which the business may be subject at any time.

As with any plan, the vast majority of information relates to the future with the idea that the multitude of questions we will have to answer will make us more familiar with the business. This way, the chances of the unexpected catching us in it will be greatly reduced (Ghenea, 2011, p. 67).

Certainly, there is no single business plan model, because it can design its structure in relation to the specifics of the field, with the particularities of the business with the purpose for which it is elaborated and, last but not least, correlated with its personality.

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Electromobility - the New Challenge for Communicators in the Automotive Industry in Romania

Vintilă-Eugen Cocea

Abstract: *Europe-wide electromobility is presented as a solution for a cleaner, green solution to ensure modern transportation, while curving the pollution threat to environment. Counter-arguments point at the numerous disadvantages that this type of engine suffers from, at least in the initial phase, mentioning the relatively short range of autonomy, the high price, the underdeveloped charging infrastructure, and the time needed for recharging the cars. An important role in breaking the field is played by the communication strategies adopted by the market players. The paper analyses the challenges of electromobility for Romanian communicators, in the context of an increased interest in the ecological solutions proposed by the European Union, that set as a target 2035 as a replacement of traditional cars with electric ones.*

Keywords: *electromobility, PEST(E) analysis, communication strategy, electric cars.*

1. Introduction

The topic of this research is rooted in my interest for the automobile world. I have worked in this field for more than two decades, and I am also a regular contributor of automotive news articles. Therefore, personally, the automotive industry is both my professional environment and the field for which I have developed a great passion. Apart from this, the automotive industry is one of the most dynamic, innovative and integrating industries of our century, that finds economic, technological and communicative solutions that inspire and set the trend for other industries as well (Cernicova & Cocea, 2021).

By far the biggest challenge of the moment is the transition from the thermal to the electric car, where industry players have to answer a number of questions arising from the specifics of the new technology. European Union documents and analyses indicate that cars are responsible for 12% of all greenhouse gas emissions in Europe and switching sales from polluting engines to fully electric represents a crucial step to reaching net-zero emissions by mid-century. The analysis is followed by the proposed target: to sell 100% emissions-free cars in 2035. The political will and the legislative measures are not enough to convert the intention into action. In this context, an efficient, trustworthy communication between manufacturers and their customers and the spread of new information to consumer communities are part of the recipe for success in implementing and, above all, using new technologies correctly and efficiently.

Data reveal that the general public is not ready for the transition to electric propulsion. For example, more than half of the European respondents to a survey conducted in 2020 (Continental Mobility Study 2020) said they did not want to buy an electric car. The study also shows that there is still a huge gap between the publicity surrounding electric cars and the actual purchase intentions of most motorists. Arguments against electric mobility differ by country and region, but in Europe the main problems are the lack of charging stations, limited range, and the high price of electric cars. These were also raised by the initiator of the Electric Mobility Project, Eng. Dan Boboescu, when we asked him to

specify the main fears of Romanian consumers upon considering an electric car. In addition, my interlocutor talked about the misleading information, misinformation or half-truths that are spread on social networks or in the specialised media.
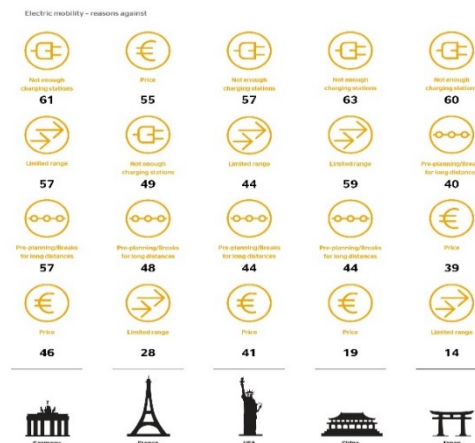
Figure 1. Continental Mobility Study 2020 - reasons against e-mobility

In fact, the target of the "Fit for 55" Masterplan, set at the European Union level, includes, among others, the installation of up to 14,000 charging points per week by 2030 (compared to only 2,000 per week today), so that there will be an average of 184 charging points for every 100 km of road. This requires up to €280 billion to be invested by 2030 in installing public and private charging points, upgrading the electricity grid, and building capacity for renewable energy generation, according to data published by the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA).

In this paper I will analyse the way in which the industry is entering the era of electric mobility and I set forth to identify the main challenges for communication specialists from this perspective.

2. Research method

For this paper I have selected the PEST(E) analysis, achieved through the content analysis of relevant communication platforms and an expert

interview. I have consulted various communication platforms in the automotive and electromobility field to discover the status and trends of car electrification at European and national level.

I have selected reference sources in the field - communication platforms of pan-European and national associations, authorities, and major industry players. As this is an extremely dynamic field, in order to have up-to-date conclusions, I have tried to limit the research to the last two to three years.

Regarding the interview, I had the privilege to discuss the topic with the initiator of the Electromobility Project, Eng. Dan Boboescu, who shared with me his experience of the last years. My interviewer is a thermal engine engineer, graduate of Politehnica University of Timisoara, with a 20-year career in the American and global automotive industry, specialising in requirements and knowledge management.

PEST analysis is currently used by management teams and boards in their strategic planning processes, replacing SWOT analysis, which seems more tedious in handling wide range, transformational marketing campaigns (Yılmaz & Ustaoğlu, 2013). It is also a very popular tool among management consultants to help their clients develop innovative product and market initiatives, as well as within the financial analyst community, where factors may influence model assumptions and financing decisions. PEST is a mnemonic which in its expanded form denotes P for Political, E for Economic, S for Social, T for Technological. There are versions of the method that also attach L for Legal, and E for Environmental/Ethical. It gives a bird's eye view of the whole environment from many different angles that one wants to check and keep a track of while contemplating a certain idea/plan.

Figure 2. PEST(LE) analysis, source https://www.stratechi.com/pestle-analysis/

Joe Newsum, the creator of Stratechi.com and a seasoned McKinsey veteran, recommends prioritising the top trends within each PESTLE category, and reflecting upon the implications to a specific business and strategy. He also indicates that some trends may represent threats, while others may constitute opportunities (www.stratechi.com).

3. Results

The current scenario for the car market in Romania is largely the same as the European one, where battery electric vehicles could account for 100% of new car sales by 2035, according to a BNEF study commissioned by the European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E). These optimistic forecasts will only become reality if CO2 emission standards imposed on car manufacturers are toughened even more, according to T&E.

E-mobility in Romania - PEST(E) analysis

I have conducted the PEST(E) analysis on the data relating to the Romanian automotive industry in the third decade of the 21st century, focusing on the political, economic, technological, socio-cultural, and environmental trends that influence the rise of electromobility within this macroeconomic sector. This analysis is useful to a

communication/marketing strategist, to plan a successful advocacy campaign favoring e-mobility accordingly.

Political

In Romania, as across the European community, the transition to electric mobility is being increasingly encouraged. This support has been translated into a series of related regulations and legislation which, on the one hand, encourage the production and purchase of electric cars. For example, the Rabla programme currently offers the highest purchase incentives of the 27 EU countries, with a registration premium of over €10,000 for a 100% battery electric car (BEV). On the other hand, the purchase of cars with internal combustion engines is increasingly discouraged. To this end, the European Commission has announced that it is already working on the European Green Pact, which will set stricter emission standards (Euro 7) for all petrol and diesel cars, vans, trucks, and buses. The proposed standards will take account of new car technologies and ensure that emissions are measured in real time. The initiative is part of the European Union's commitment to accelerate the shift to sustainable and intelligent mobility.

Economical

Electric car production has been growing at a steady pace in recent years. It has now reached a point where the supply on the market can no longer meet demand. In 2021, for example, although the European car market fell by 1.7% compared to the previous year, this did not affect electric cars, which, on the contrary, grew by 19%.

In Romania, according to data published by the Association of Romanian Automobile Manufacturers and Importers (APIA), electrified cars (100% electric and hybrid) had a market share of 15.5% in 2021, which is 2.2 times higher than in 2020 (7.1%). As in 2020, although there was a decrease in car purchases in general, green cars sold twice as well (+109.0%) compared to the previous year.

Social

Invented more than 100 years ago, the car is now the number one mobility solution in Europe, with an average mileage of almost 12,000 kilometers per year. More than 70% of EU journeys are made by car - whether by private car, taxi or carsharing. Without individual mobility, adequate participation in social activities and economic life would not be possible in many cases, especially for people living in remote or isolated areas, the elderly and the disabled.

EU Member States' budgets receive €398.4 billion a year from the sale and use of cars. Despite their higher purchase price, electric cars are becoming increasingly attractive to consumers, who are finding that over time they cost less to run than conventional cars. As the drawbacks of cost, range, duration and charging infrastructure are resolved, the public will no longer have major reasons to doubt this mobility solution. Romania has a lot of catching up to do, as it has one of the most outdated car fleets on the continent. While the average life of cars on the road in the EU is now 11.8 years, Lithuania and Romania have the oldest fleets, with an average of 17 and 16.9 years, respectively.

Technological

As the technology improves, electric cars will improve their performance and their costs will come down, making them increasingly affordable. It is mainly the battery - by far the most expensive sub-assembly. But auto industry analysts are optimistic that the price of batteries is expected to fall by 58% over the next decade, bringing down the cost of electric vehicles. Furthermore, according to a Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) study, starting from 2027, electric cars in Europe will be even cheaper than those with internal combustion engines.

Unfortunately, Romania is one of the least prepared European countries to adopt electromobility. In the 2022 edition of the EV Readiness Index, an analysis of 22 European countries and their readiness to switch to electric mobility by fleet management company LeasePlan, Romania ranks 18th out of 21. The ranking is based on several criteria such as market and charging infrastructure maturity, total cost of ownership and

government financial incentives. In Romania's case, the lowest score is for charging infrastructure.

#	Country	Total score	1. EV maturity	2. Charging maturity	3. Total cost of ownership	Position in 2021	Points in 2021
1	Norway	42	18	8	16	1	→ 42
2	Netherlands	37	15	10	12	2	↓ 38
3	United Kingdom	35	13	6	16	3	↑ 33
3	Austria	35	13	8	14	5	↑ 29
5	Sweden	34	15	7	12	6	↑ 29
6	Belgium	31	12	6	13	8	↑ 27
7	Finland	30	12	6	12	9	↑ 27
8	Germany	29	13	3	13	7	↑ 28
8	Luxembourg	29	13	5	11	4	↓ 31
10	Ireland	28	13	2	13	10	↑ 26
11	Denmark	27	12	5	10	13	↑ 23
11	France	27	10	4	13	11	↑ 26
11	Portugal	27	10	2	15	12	↑ 26
13	Switzerland	25	10	7	8	14	↑ 23
14	Greece	23	7	1	15	17	↑ 16
14	Italy	23	9	3	11	15	↑ 21
16	Hungary	20	5	4	11	16	→ 20
17	Spain	19	7	3	9	18	↑ 15
18	Romania	18	4	3	11	20	↑ 13
19	Slovakia	14	4	4	6	21	↑ 13
20	Czech Republic	13	4	5	4	22	↑ 12
20	Poland	13	3	3	7	19	↓ 15

Fig. 2. 2022 LeasePlan EV Readiness Index

In the context of the European Union's "Fit for 55" objective, a plan that makes the transition to climate neutrality by 2050, Romania could make a spectacular leap forward in the next 4-5 years. The national target for this period is to reach a total number of 18,000 charging stations for electric cars, of which 15,000 new stations will be set up through the

National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) with the help of the Environment Fund Administration.

Ecological

Concern for the environment is particularly visible among younger generations of consumers. Discouraged by the increasingly prohibitive taxes and rapidly rising operating costs of using fossil fuel vehicles, customers are more and more interested in the new mobility solution, which is promoted as less polluting compared to thermal vehicles.

As it is well-known, the European Climate Act introduces the goal of climate neutrality by 2050 into legislation. From this point of view, Romania has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 55% between 1990 and 2019, with an 89% increase in economic activity over the same period, according to data published by the European Commission Representation in this country, which also states: "According to the Eurobarometer 94 survey (May 2021), Romanians support the development of energy from renewable sources as a priority objective within the European Green Pact (36%). As for the level of individual involvement in actions and causes aimed at protecting the environment, the IRES survey (May 2021) shows that it is still quite low". The data also show that "64% of the Romanians admit that in the last 5 years they have not been involved in any action to protect nature and the environment and 55% of the Romanians admit that they have never participated in greening or afforestation actions. 56% of the Romanians say they are rather uninformed or poorly informed about the work of environmental protection organisations".

4. Conclusion

In my research, I have frequently come across arguments against electric mobility, also revealed by studies of big players in the industry such as Continental and LeasePlan, mainly pointing at the lack of charging stations, limited range and high price of electric cars. These issues were also raised by the initiator of the Electric Mobility Project, Eng. Dan

Boboescu, when asked to specify the main fears of the Romanian consumers in buying an electric car.

Automotive communicators need, therefore, to address these big challenges in converging messages from manufacturers, distributors or service providers engaged in promoting electric vehicles. Apart from encouraging the adoption of technical solutions, leading to creating the charging stations infrastructure and increasing the range of e-cars, the industry urgently needs to unfold a data-based communication campaign to counter the consumers' fears. An increased demand in e-cars would lead to a price decrease and an extensive adoption of this type of mobility may have beneficial effects on multiple layers of the socio-economic life. At the national level, the Romanian automotive industry should show a greater openness to the new, including the field of communication, through transparency and sustained involvement, given that most PEST(E) indicators place Romania below the European average.

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Study on the Possibility of Opening a Night Centre for Homeless People in Timisoara

Roberta-Andra Calmuțchi

Abstract: *In this study a theoretical part and a practical part were included, where an important tool in the life of any entrepreneur, the business plan, was discussed. In the theoretical part some details about the approved legislation for opening a night centre, the statistics of homeless people and the need for a business plan were added. In the theoretical part, i.e. the business plan, the business idea, the organisation of the management and staff, the risks we are exposed to, the financial analysis and strategic ideas for the future were presented.*

Keywords: *homeless people, shelter, vocational training courses, business plan, night center.*

1. Introduction

The topic chosen to be discussed is called the *Study on the possibility of opening a night centre for homeless people in Timisoara*. Why this topic? Because I have long wanted to work on such a project, and the dissertation is the right time to start researching and documenting this topic. Homelessness is a problem all over the world. In the last ten years, the percentage of homeless people in America, Europe and Romania has increased considerably. In order to reduce this rate, especially Romania, which also has a bad reputation in this area, must come up with as many innovative ideas as possible. I have chosen to research the opening of a night centre for these people. In addition to this, I want to help them reintegrate into the society; therefore, I have introduced vocational training courses that they can attend free of charge.

Any person/individual who does not have a place to sleep is deprived of many other fundamental human rights. This is what the Romanian government says:

"Not having access to adequate housing is perhaps the most serious manifestation of exclusion. Not having a home is synonymous with extreme poverty; in fact, it is more than a living contingency; even the extreme form of a lack of means and opportunities" (Romanian Government, 2002).

Adrian N Dan says in an article about the legislation in Romania on the right to housing:

"The right to housing is provided by Romanian legislation in the housing law L.114/1996, as well as and in the law for preventing and combating social marginalization L.116/2002. The Housing Law also provides the minimum standard of comfort for an acceptable dwelling; the obligations of the landlord in the case of renting the dwelling (including ensuring a minimum standard of comfort, according to the law), the obligations of tenants, which makes eviction possible in case of failure to comply with, the social housing regime." (Dan, 2003, p.3).

Some of the rules required by law for opening a night shelter for homeless people are:

217

- The night shelter/its provider informs potential beneficiaries and the public about its purpose/functions and services offered.

- The night shelter provides a space for accommodation in a dormitory for each beneficiary.

- The night shelter has sufficient and suitable common areas to fulfill its purpose/functions.

- The night shelter has sufficient and functional sanitary facilities.

- The night shelter promotes the social integration/reintegration of the beneficiaries.

- The night shelter respects the rights of the beneficiaries as laid down by the law.

2. Research methods

The business plan is the research method I have used to see the possibility of opening a night center for homeless people in Timisoara.

The business plan was comprised of eight main chapters, each with several sub-chapters relevant to my plan. I have started with chapter five which is the "Business Plan Summary". Here I have talked at length about everything I aim to achieve in this plan. I have started with the objectives and the role of this business plan which are to open a night centre in Timisoara, but also to implement some vocational training courses for homeless people.

The next chapter is about the business overview. The location is specified here. But the desire for development was also taken into account. "Presentation of the service offered" discusses the needs that the night centre for homeless people meets and about each individual qualification course.

Under the chapter "Management of the company", the organisation chart of the company can be found. Also in this chapter the trends of increasing or decreasing staff are presented.

In the chapter "Market analysis", I have focused on the market segmentation, the beneficiaries of the business and I have added some strengths but also some weaknesses of the plan.

Under "Defining the marketing strategy", I have highlighted that we will promote ourselves, what strategic alliances we will make in the future because our competitors can also be partners.

The penultimate chapter deals with the risks we expose ourselves to. I have delved into risks in the industry, risks in the achievement of targets, problems with supply but also the lack of labour force. And in the last chapter, I have presented the financial analysis in full as an income and expenditure table.

Results

The results of each chapter will be analysed as follows. The aim of writing the plan was to open a night centre for homeless people in Timisoara and to decrease the homeless rate. The location of the company will be in a deprived area of the city where these homeless people are more commonly found.

The aim is to expand in the future, in the next five years to reach a double number of people accommodated per night and therefore a double number of containers. In addition to this, I would also like to expand the training courses and, at the request of the beneficiaries, bring in people from areas of interest to them.

What do we offer to the beneficiaries? We offer them a night's accommodation in a container with all the conditions, we provide them with breakfast and dinner, we provide them with perfectly functional and properly cleaned bathrooms. In addition to these, we provide them with professional qualification courses in six well-known fields, but we also want to put them in touch with an employer once they have graduated from the course. The six areas are:
- constructions
- tailoring
- nursing
- plumbing

- welding
- hospitality

In the company's organisation chart, it can be seen that there is only one manager who is in charge of all employees and subcontractors, this being a small business. A staff increase was also taken into account, which is obvious because we want to expand and we will need to double the number of staff, but we will also need a person in charge of some of the manager's duties.

Who are the people we do these for? They are people in Timisoara over 18, both male and female, who have nowhere to sleep.

Strengths:
- The need for night shelters in the Timis County for homeless people;
- Compared to other organisations of this type, we also offer a future to the beneficiaries thanks to the qualification courses;
- The spaces in which we accommodate the beneficiaries are containers;

Weaknesses:
- Young team without experience;
- Homeless people without documents;
- Lack of funds;
- Reduced number of places available for accommodation

We will promote ourselves with a stand in the city-centre, flyers and through the website. But we also want to organise projects together with the other centres in Timisoara for strategic alliances in the future.

Even though we are a young team, all employees have a university degree and at least one year of experience in this field. Our subcontractors are of the highest quality in the execution of the services that were offered.

Financial analysis

Expenditure		Income	
Initial expenditure	Monthly expenditure	Donations	Sponsorships

Land: 10,500 €	Wages: 5,717 €	100,000 €	
17 containers: 68,600 €	Consumables for courses: 300 €	20,000 €	
26 bunk beds: 6,303 €	Cleaning company: 186.66 €	30,000 €	
Canteen furniture: 545 €	Company for courses: 500 €	5,000 €	
Rooms furniture: 2,200 €	Food: 104 €		
	Utilities: 430 €		
88,148 €	7,237 €	155,000 €	
95,385 €		155,000 €	

In addition to the cash donations, we have also received three containers for free and a sponsorship from the company that holds the training courses for three people per month for free.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to say that I am satisfied and happy because this work has been a success for me as it has helped me to start my research regarding a night centre in Timisoara. This way I have managed to lay the foundations of a business plan for opening a night centre for homeless people in the future.

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Selling Based on Emotions vs Selling Based on Numbers

Romina-Maria Crăciun

Abstract: *The ongoing debate about the best strategies in sales is a topic of interest lately. The changes experienced by customers and salespeople in recent years have challenged many sales-based companies. This paper aims to observe the difference between sales techniques based on numbers and those based on emotions. The hypothesis is that emotions are more effective in the sales process than exact numbers. Thus, by analysing the experiment, it will be seen if this hypothesis is confirmed.*

Keywords: *Sales, emotions, argumentation, persuasion, figures, promotion.*

1.   Introduction

Every day we come across situations where we have to sell or sell ourselves to obtain a benefit, whether material or not.

In my experience, every interaction with a person is "selling". Whether we are trying to sell them a physical product, ideas, or arguments, every individual is practicing their salesmanship skills at every point in life.

But what matters most to an individual? We are forced to choose between logical arguments and emotions. Each person has their conceptions of what a sale should look like.

I believe that selling based on emotions is more effective because, in general, people rely on the mood of the soul or, why not, even on the mood that the salesperson conveys. But a concrete answer to the previous question will be provided when the analysis on which this paper is based is finalised.

In this paper, the buying and selling process and the buyer's decision based on either exact figures or emotions will be detailed.

Thus, this paper is structured into two main chapters:

1. Marketing communication;

2. Selling based on numbers vs. selling based on emotions;

The two main chapters represent the theoretical and practical parts of the paper.

The first chapter of the paper focuses on outlining the theoretical aspects of the topic including selling, discourse, emotion, language, negotiation, influence, argumentation, and persuasion.

The second chapter deals with the practical part of the paper. The methodological approach adopted in this study is a mixed methodology based on observation and analysis. The data for this study were collected using an experiment.

After applying the experiment, the obtained results will be analysed.

The paper aims to observe the difference between sales techniques based on exact figures and sales techniques based on emotions.

The ongoing debate about the best sales strategies is a topic of interest lately. The changes experienced by customers and salespeople in recent years have challenged many sales-based companies. Therefore, this research is designed to find out what the most effective promotional technique for selling a product or service is.

The paper hypothesises that emotions are more effective in the sales process than hard numbers. The aim will be to find out whether or not this hypothesis holds true and which sales technique is more effective

in dealing with the customer as well as to come up with a new model of sales approach after the analysis.

In the practical part, communication in the sales process through an experiment will be investigated.

2.   Research methods

In the first stage of the applicative part, the development of interaction in the sales process by using the emotion-based method will be observed while in the second stage, the unfolding of interaction in the selling process based on the numbers method will be taken into account. Then the results will be analysed and it will be decided which method is more effective.

The ongoing debate about the best sales strategies was the stimulus for this paper where two of the most important strategies were looked at. The topic was then tackled with a different approach.

My interest in this area developed once I started interacting with customers for sales purposes. The question was simple: How can I sell better? What are the most effective strategies?

Based on those two questions, I have decided it was important to research these things. Therefore, this research topic highlights the best technique used in sales.

The study was based on qualitative research to find out the most effective sales technique. In the research, external and internal factors that influence the sales process between the seller and the buyer were also highlighted. The study was based on an experiment carried out on customers of the company where the research was conducted. The experiment was used as a measurement method.

"The experiment is that type of research where we apply a stimulus or treatment and try to measure the response. After a certain number of repetitions of the experiment at different values of the stimulus we will be able to find out the effect" (Șandor, 2013).

Using this method in the social sciences, two issues might raise concerns:

225

1. "the subject of an experiment may respond differently to the same stimulus;
2. two subjects, regardless of their degree of similarity, may respond differently to the same stimulus" (Șandor, 2013).

This paper aims to investigate communication in the sales process. To achieve this aim, an experiment based on the method of participatory observation will be carried out. An observation sheet containing the following parameters (audience, context, labguage and reaction of the interlocutors) will be also created.

In the first stage of the research, the development of the interaction in the sales process using the emotion-based method will be observed. And in the second stage, the development of the interaction in the selling process based on the numbers method will be investigated. The first stage of observation in the research takes place from 26.04.2022 to 26.05.2022. In this stage of the research, the experiment will be conducted, also divided into two parts: emotion-based interaction and figure-based interaction. After this phase, the results, but also other factors that could influence the communication between the sales agent and the interlocutor will be analysed.

To analyse communication in the sales process, participatory observation was used. In this way, any changes in the customer's behavior will be observed.

"Participatory observation is a method that involves inserting the researcher into the group or situation being studied. This method gradually became the main method of cultural anthropology, and with time it began to become a method of sociology and later of political science" (Butaru, 2015, p 12)

By inserting the researcher into the studied situation, every factor that can influence the process, and also our experiment will be taken into account.

"The notion of objectivity is very present in the positivist paradigm. It constitutes one of its essential characteristics. This paradigm considers that facts deriving exclusively from observation and experiment can be analyzed neutrally and objectively and that no

knowledge is valid unless it is based on the systematic and objective observation of the fact" (Mucchielli, 2002, p 268).

Analysis was chosen as a research method because it is a good opportunity to analyse the interactions between the agent and the interlocutor. By participating in the experiment, the effects of an action can be observed. Thus, the results will be more accurate.

"We can only study people by communicating with them, which involves

sharing existence with them in a lasting (Griaule, Leenhardt) or transient (Levi-Strauss) way.

Participatory observation consists in participating in a real way in the life and activities of the subjects observed, according to the age, sex, or status category in which the researcher manages to place himself by negotiating with his hosts according to his desires or to the place the latter agrees to give him" (Laburthe-Tolra apud Mucchielli A., 2002, p. 269).

Starting from the observation sheets, the analysis will include:
- Description of the context;
- Audience analysis;
- Language;
- The interlocutor's reaction;

3.   **Results**

To compare the difference between emotion-based and exact numbers-based techniques, the salesperson has applied the two techniques in the experiment.

The salesperson interacted with a total of 240 customers from 26.04.2022 to 11.05.2022.

He initiated the interaction using questions that elicit emotions from the customers. Addressing a familiar behavior with the individuals in front of him. I believe that the salesperson's approach to a particular behavior influenced the interlocutors. It could be observed that non-verbal language was of some importance, as customers were more open when the salesperson was more empathetic with them, using facial experiences, mimic, and gestures.

The interlocutors, although at first glance they seemed nervous or nervous, changed their attitude during the interaction and became interested in the discussion.

With the help of the feedback application, an increase in positive feedback was noticed.

People with whom the salesperson communicated during the period when the emotion-based method was tested were very satisfied with the agent and the company's services and reported that they would recommend the services to their friends.

Following the analysis of the interactions, it can be said that the emotion-based method was successful, with a total of 59 sales. These include the following products: contract energy, gas, vas, and hard-vas (climate + homix).

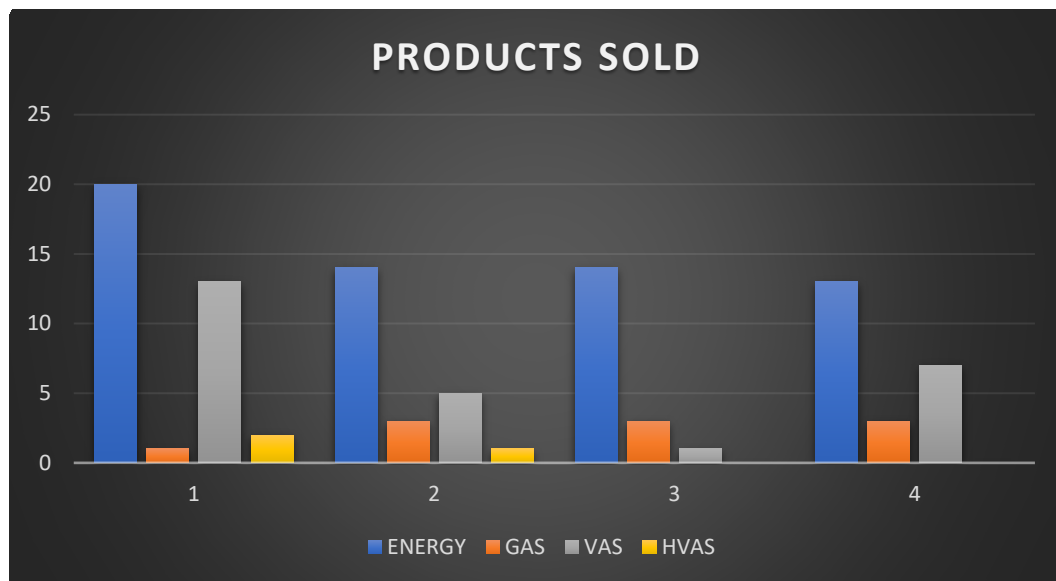The yield of the method can be seen in the graph below:

Figure 12 SALES CHART

The sales agent interacted with a total of 188 customers during the period 12.05.2022 - 26.05.2022. It can be seen that the number of interactions decreased drastically during this period due to influencing

factors. Thus, sudden price increases, product changes and negative reviews in the last period became an obstacle for this experiment.

During this period, the seller used promotion based on exact figures, without caring about the customer's situation. He presented the interlocutor with the offers and explained the material benefits, without appealing to his emotion. The agent did not use mimicry and gestures, remaining impassive to whatever the customer in front of him said. The salesman used specialist terms in communicating with customers, so he presented and promoted the products without any emotion being discernible in his language.

Given this situation, a change in the customers' behavior can be noticed. They became more restrained to communicate with the agent, answering his questions briefly and to the point. Of course, there were cases where the interlocutors refused to engage in a dialogue that could refer to the product promotion with the agent.

The most striking observation that emerged from the second part of the experiment was that the numbers-based method worked for the better-off. This type of customer was more interested in the figures that were presented than in the way they were presented.

For this reason, it can be said that people with a better financial situation cannot be persuaded by persuasion as well as those with a more unstable financial situation.

It can be posited that the method based on exact figures had a slightly lower sales rate, but people who bought a product were more convinced that they had made a logical choice. The lower figures may also be due to fewer interactions.

In terms of feedback (reviews), customers were more reluctant to recommend services or their quality. Therefore, although customers feel that they made a logical choice, they do not consider it to be the seller's merit.

According to the results of the research, the most important factor taken into account by customers in the sales process is the seller's behavior and attitude.

Customers were more open to purchasing a product if the salesperson was empathetic and familiarly approached them. Another

important factor in the sales process was the salesperson's non-verbal language. He used body language to convey emotion.

Of course, some factors intervened in this experiment. They included the buyers' reluctance to the company's products, as they had a negative history created by other sellers, the hectic environment, rising prices, and lack of trust in the company.

However, although many factors negatively influenced the sales process, the emotion-based method was more effective than the exact numbers-based method.

The analysis shows that emotions are a dominant contributor to the sales process. Therefore, the research hypothesis is confirmed.

4.   **Conclusion**

From the analysis, it can be seen that the emotion-based sales technique is more effective than the numbers-based sales technique. Customers are much more conversationally open to the salesperson.

It was possible to observe the change in the customers' behavior when interacting with the agent. In cases where the salesperson used the emotion-based method and was empathetic with the customer, the customer was open to active communication and was also satisfied with the product promotion process. Not only did this method bring in sales, but the customers' opinion was also improved. They reported that they felt more comfortable talking to a "more human" or empathetic person because they felt their problems were solved and they had someone to turn to.

People generally feel that when they are sat in front of an operator or civil servant they are not respected and listened to. Many complain about bureaucracy and the way operators work. They claim that people have become robotic, and are delighted when they can talk to a person who is also interested in what the others feel.

Some customers were reluctant to answer the salesperson's questions. They felt that they should not be asked for more personal information, claiming it was not the operator's problem.

In cases where the sales assistant used the exact figures method, customers behaved irritably. It can be assumed that this behavior is caused by the situation they are put in. Most of the population does not know the specific terms in the energy field. Another reason for customer irritability may be a lack of self-confidence. It can be inferred that they feel they cannot perceive and understand the seller's information.

In conclusion, the production of this paper has had a strong impact on the way we work. It posited that by doing the theoretical part the knowledge about marketing communication, language, emotion, and persuasion was deepened.

Executing the practical part meant a challenge, given the limitations of the aforementioned research.

However, carrying out the practical part helped me to develop my research skills, and through the results, I was able to improve the promotion and sales process.

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