

# ROMANIAN LIBRARIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA: USES AND GRATIFICATIONS – CASE STUDY: LBUS LIBRARY

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## **Abstract**

Due to the continuous rising of social media and their implications in everyday life, it is difficult to ignore their role in the life of communities. New media is important for every day communication, but has also an important role in PR strategies. PR campaigns in politics and advertising have to be presented on Facebook or other social networks. Romanian libraries have registered an important growth in promoting themselves in online communities. The aim of this paper is to analyze the importance of this new method among other classical types of PR for libraries, especially for the LBUS Library..

*Keywords:* social media, PR strategies, Romanian libraries

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## **1. Premises**

The specialists agree upon the fact that nowadays the number of internet users is exponentially growing, determining its development from a *one to many* media into a *many to many* media, then to a change in the consumer behavior of users. It is shown that all of this implied transformations of strategy and communication instruments in the last years for most of international brands[1].

## **2. Definitions and delimitations**

In the book named after the literary translation of *Facebook* network, *The Book of Faces*, the author, Alexandru-Brăduț Ulmanu, shows that under the term social media one can understand “everything that allows the active consume of interactive and amusement content, the interaction and collaboration between the users”[4]. Ulmanu enumerates as being part of this concept the programs that allow the users to work together, from different computers, at the same time, in the same document, such as *Google Docs*, *wiki* sites as Wikipedia, which facilitates collective contributions to various projects, blogs and platforms as *WordPress* or *Drupal*, social networks as *Facebook*, microblogging services as *Twitter*, video sites as *YouTube* or *Trilulilu*, photography sites as *Flickr*, but also many other sites

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where users share their personal experiences and opinions about the services and commercial products, including virtual games where hundreds of thousand people interact simultaneously[4].

He shows that on the Internet one can find everywhere examples of socialization of services, and any site becomes social because “it incorporates the connection with a social network”.[4]

### 3. Typology

The researchers classify *social media* into six categories [4]: collaboration projects, blogs, content production communities, social networks, virtual worlds and virtual societies.

*Collaboration projects* are about platforms that allow users to intervene on a web page and to change it as they wish, the so-called *wiki*'s. The most known is Wikipedia, popular encyclopedia, that reached 18 million articles and 365 million users in 2011 [4]. Another popular example is WikiLeaks, a platform originally created to allow anonymous publication of secret documents, the aim being to increase the transparency of governments and organizations.

Another category is represented by blogs, which can be the author or collective, generalist or specialized (journalists or politicians blogs, blogs of companies, blogs integrated into news sites, blogs dedicated to events).

Examples for dedicated community content production are those sites where users can produce and distribute various types of media as Flickr, *YouTube*.

Among the most popular social networking sites is the one created by Mark Zuckerberg - Facebook. In Romania, the 2011 data show that there are more than 3.1 million accounts, representing nearly half of Internet users and 14% of the population. Brăduț Ulmeanu believes that this type of service is remarkable that “many of them encourage users to go online with real names and identity”[4] which marks a paradigm shift, given that the Internet is a place where anyone can be anything. The last two types of *social media* are virtual worlds (games) and virtual societies, in which users can borrow identities, avatars that interact with other users in order to build a virtual character with which to live in a fictional manner.

In addition, in the social media category, we can also integrate the *Yahoo Messenger* service that enables even faster service exchange of information between colleagues, chatroom services, very popular in the 90s, and even the email itself. An information technology expert, Paul Jones told the author of the book cited above that “it sounds strange, but the email is still on of the online communications medium most commonly used “. [4]

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#### **4. Internet communication features**

Anne Gregory, referring to communication on the Internet, specifies the unique characteristics of the Internet [3]:

- First, once the message is sent, the transmitter loses control, considering that there is not a neutral communication channel;
- It is interesting that it is so transitory, because some things can be erased immediately (the reply to an email, etc.) and permanently virtual (web pages that can remain unchanged for years);
- It is not bound by time, the response to a message can be sent / received anytime;
- The author believes that the Internet provides a unique environment where communities and community groups can form, reform, transform and dissolve;
- It is not tied to a specific space, access being as easy for anyone in close proximity, but also at hundreds and thousands of miles away;
- It requires no costs once it has been installed;
- Enables communication from one individual to another, but also from one group to another, respectively of all the combinations, all at the same time;
- The speed and amount of information that can be accessed are without precedent;
- One last feature mentioned by the author is interesting and important. She notes that Internet users have different views they hold the power, because that can group and regroup in different communities with high speed.

#### **5. Internet use in public relations**

Experts find that among Internet implications in communication we can include the fact that in a positive way public relations are a source of information that provides transparent access[3]. A change is that the audiences should be seen as a collection of "problems" rather than as uniform blocks as the customers.

Anne Gregory shows that problems remain on the website, and the timing for reaction is up to the audience that can occur at any time even years later, when different groups of people gather around a problem and form a "new" public. The Internet is considered ideal for active publics and approved for public who searches for information.

Potentially, the members of this public are the best friends of an organization, but also they represent the biggest "problems". Experts warn that the idea of getting a continuum of actions required of those who communicate within the organization can be strengthened or destroyed by users accessing alternative information sources, many of which may be unknown to the organization, and this number will be determined continuously time.

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A serious potential problem is the lack of information from organizations as alternative sources that can be accessed are available, but not all provide support. Anne Gregory [3] underlines that the Internet changes the power relations between networks of audiences involved, as lower interest groups present their case as well as larger organizations and interact directly with other stakeholders. Therefore, individual opinions have equal weight, no more or less important and traditional opinion trainers, for example outside the Internet media are less influential. Communication is more direct, without the mediation of journalists and forced transmission opportunities (ads) are limited.

## 6. Promotion through social networks

The principle that makes *Facebook* work is simple [1]: each user has a profile page where he can upload photos and videos. You can view the recent activities of the user that can be commented on by his friends. Each network user can make friends with other users, with more or less access to their data

The network offers other facilities such as games, contests, chat, possibility of becoming a member of various groups, send messages etc. *Facebook* can be used in marketing, and the company has the opportunity to reach their target audience.

Researchers [1] show that the four elements can be used:

1. Profile: Each user shapes a profile which "is a page that is designed to convert visitors into friends. They would inquire into certain areas of the identity of the person concerned.
2. Groups: these offer the possibility to create a community around a brand, it creates a space for customers, colleagues and friends, so that they can participate in discussions about trademark. There is a possibility for discussion forums, uploading photos, videos and links, and news and updates can be sent to group members.
3. Facebook Pages: researchers show that differs from groups that are more easily adapted than groups
4. Events on Facebook: through this possibility, marketing events may be promoted, the emergence on the market of products or any events of interest to the company.

It is believed that Facebook is currently the world's largest online social network that allows forms of promotion (some brands like Nuella, Pizza, Coca Cola, and personalities like Barack Obama or Mr. Bean). Experts believe that Facebook remains a platform for the presentation of self and own PR, but there is controversy regarding the effectiveness of marketing on Facebook. It is considered that in terms of share of accesses, corporate investment in Facebook is not profitable, much less on brand positioning. [1]

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## 7. The Uses and Gratification (UGT) theory

UGT discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion, or escape.

UGT focuses on the consumer rather than focusing on the message, is about “what people do with media?” [5] rather than “what media does for people?”. Gratifications are sources of pleasure or satisfaction . UGT holds that audiences are responsible for choosing media to meet their desires and needs to achieve gratification.

*Facebook* rewards engaging content. In the study “How to Connect and Communicate with Customers” [6], David Lee King proposes ten tips for turning the library social media in something appealing for users:

1. be relevant
2. be consistent
3. pay attention to different tools and different rules
4. share your library’s story
5. be human
6. type like you talk
7. be helpful
8. think short
9. be visual
10. encourage audience participation.

## 8. Romanian Libraries and *Facebook*

Romanian libraries have registered an important growth in promoting themselves in online communities. Next, we analyze the impact and specific online communication for several major libraries in Romania.

There are an increasing number of institutions that have developed in recent years pages in the Facebook network to promote and achieve a measurable impact from users.

Besides the most popular promotion method of websites, we encounter the official page of the institution which is used for personalized communication.

In postings we meet promotion of events, status updates, photo sharing. Also, creating groups on professional affiliations is another component of communication on *Facebook* (ABR group, ANPBR).

Administrators of the pages may see a number of important statistics such as the number of users who viewed a post, number of likes, number of distributions, audiences accessing a post etc.

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Of the number of pages analyzed, only part of them have links from the website on the *Facebook* page, which shows that they function as independent means of promotion:

The Library	Web site	Facebook page	Fb button on site
"Lucian Blaga" Central University Library Cluj -Napoca	yes	yes	yes
National Library of Romania	yes	yes	no
Metropolitan Library Bucharest	yes	yes	no
Central University Library "Carol I" Bucharest	yes	yes	yes
UMF - Carol Davila Library Bucharest	yes	yes	no
UPB Central Library Bucharest	yes	yes	no
University Library of Craiova	yes	yes	no
"Mihai Eminescu" Central University Library Iasi	yes	yes	yes
UP Timișoara University Library	yes	yes	yes
University Library Danubius Constanta	yes	yes	no
University Library of Oradea	yes	yes	no
University Library "Dunarea de Jos" of Galati	yes	yes	no
University Library "1 Decembrie 1918" of Alba Iulia	yes	yes	no
University Library "Lucian Blaga" of Sibiu	yes	yes	no
Romanian Academy Library of Bucharest	yes	yes	no

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University Library "Lucian Blaga" of Sibiu has its own Facebook page since 2011. The number of likes increased at 513 in 2015.

The page is used for promoting library events, projects and communicating with users. Judging by the impact of the posts, the most accessed are the cultural and artistic events as the *Cultural Café* and *The Night of the Library*, Inauguration of Spanish Corner.

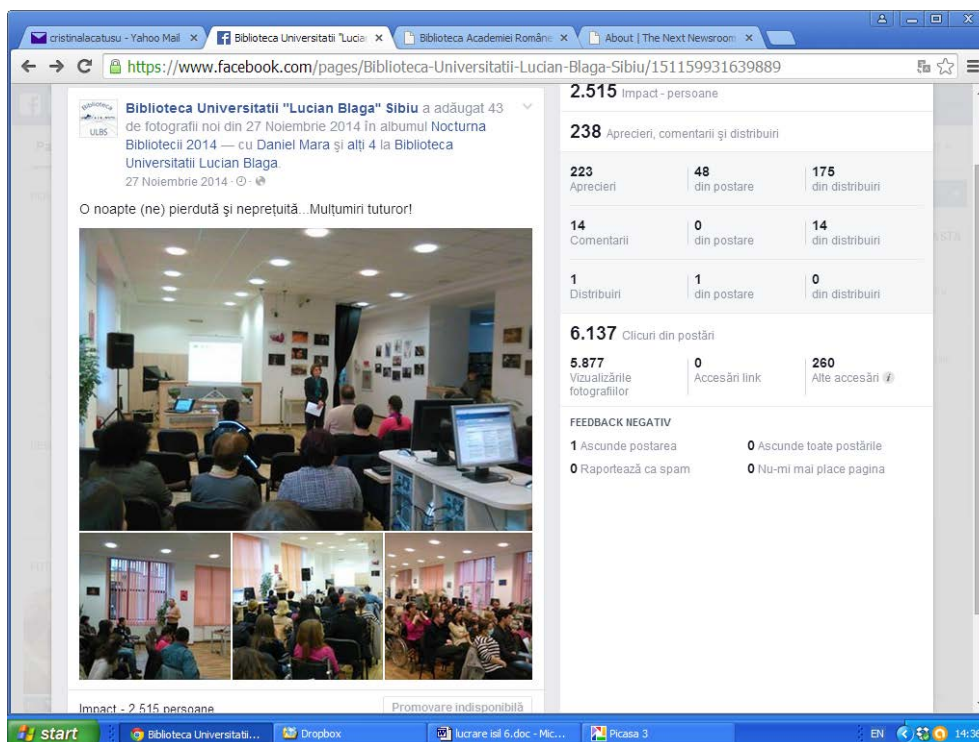


Fig.1. LBUS Facebook page [7]

## 9. Conclusions

Tyler Cowen believes that "the Internet encourages us to seek identities and alliances based on specific and definite extreme interest" [2]. We could say that choosing the best PR strategy remains in the area of communication, because "the way in which you decide how to communicate is a fundamental choice in creating the most prosperous economy that life can give you." [2]

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