

The Use of Social Networking Websites in Romanian Public Administration

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Abstract. *Social media have proven to be a valuable new environment for communication, in such a measure that even public institutions have adopted them to engage with their various audiences. As of 2012, Romania is part of the international agreement named Partnership for an open government, whose key purposes include increasing transparency, encouraging civic participation in public life, and the use of new technologies in administration. Social media have both the potential and the necessary tools to ensure an increased level of quality interaction between public administration and its users. However, statistics on the use of social networks in Romanian public organizations are scarce. Considering Facebook as the main network having both the capacity and the efficiency needed to increase participation, this study is envisaged to review how social networks have been adopted by Romanian public administration, with a close look at the engagement received from the online interaction with the citizens. We aim to address the currently existing knowledge gap in the field of public communication through social media networks. For this study's purpose, several Romanian public institution's Facebook pages will be analyzed, aiming to conclude into a comprehensive image of the level and quality of public engagement with the respective public institutions and the Romanian public administration as a whole. We found out that photo and video were the most frequently used and had the most scores in engagement*

than other media types. Regarding citizen engagement, the Like button is the most frequent way for citizens to interact with public institutions. Social media provide a space for common communication between public administrations and stakeholders and have the effect of increasing transparency, collaboration and participation if are used properly.

Keywords: Social media; Facebook; Public sector; Public administration; Engagement.

1. Introduction

The *Open Government Partnership* has been the trigger for Government agencies to start using social media channels for developing and enhancing communication with their various audiences. A key point in the adoption process is set in 2009, when the former president of the USA, Barack Obama, transmitted the federal institutions the order to adopt new technologies to increase their participation (including public input for decision-making purposes), transparency (public access to information regarding Government work), and collaboration (partnership and cooperation with citizens and private organizations given attracting input and engaging in conversation) (Mergel, 2012). As Mergel points out “this mandate has started a new wave of use of social technologies on the federal government level” (Mergel, 2012, 10). The concept was spread at a global level, from the 15 countries have joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2011. As of 2012, Romania is part of the international agreement *Partnership for an open government* (Opengovpartnership.org, Romania, 2021), and public institutions are beginning to adopt the tools offered by Web 2.0 in their interaction with citizens. In 2021, records show over 100 participating countries, as well as an extension of the process at the local administration level (Opengovpartnership, members, 2021).

To join OGP, a state must sign and adopt the *Open Government Declaration*, through which they commit to, among others, using digital technology to improve governance: “We commit to developing accessible and secure online spaces as platforms for delivering services, engaging the public, and sharing information and ideas” (Open Government Declaration, 2021). OGP membership can be regarded as a platform for advancing digital transformation (Edelmann & Francoli, 2020).

Several researchers mention that the open government agenda has enjoyed broad global support and, despite minor differences, the main focus of the institutions has been transparency, participation, and collaboration. (Clarke & Francoli, 2014; De Blasio & Selva 2016). Throughout this process, the technological component has played a significant role, and transparency, participation, and collaboration have found fertile soil in social media (De Blasio & Selva, 2018; Criado, Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2013; Mergel, 2012) and many governments per-

ceived the phenomenon of open government as an opportunity to use new technologies to communicate with citizens (De Blasio & Selva, 2016). The association between technology developments and open government has the potential to strengthen the exercise of civil rights and freedoms (Schnell, 2020). Moreover, “by fostering more open and resilient societies, these principles can help ensure that new technologies support knowledge and progress over distrust and polarization” (Matasick *et al.*, 2020, 7).

Ignacio Criado and Julian Villodre (2020) argue that the communicative and interactive potential of social media has aroused academic interest in the impact of Web 2.0 on government administrations in recent years. Thus, the adoption of social networks by the public administration is a process similar to previous waves of e-government applications, regarded as market-oriented and citizen-centered. Initially, in the case of the US administration, the decision to adopt one platform or another did not cross a bureaucratic process, nor did it depend on negotiations with the owners of the platforms: the main criteria in selecting a platform was its popularity. (Mergel, 2012, 15).

Establishing the objectives related to the use of social networks in institutional communication is a key issue. Communication plans and guidelines on the use of social networks urge policymakers to identify the objectives to be achieved by implementing social networks. The range of these objectives is quite wide and is related to categories such as accountability, transparency, citizen engagement, policy effectiveness, managerial performance, cost savings, good governance, and citizen satisfaction. (Hrdinová *et al.*, 2010).

In this regard, social media have both the potential and the necessary tools to ensure an increased level of quality interaction between public administration and its users. At the same time, social networks are perceived as a source of innovation in the relationship between citizens and authorities, due to “the level of these distribution technologies and the high visibility in public administrations” (Criado *et al.*, 2013, 320). Social media have become a common way of communicating with citizens for local governments in Western Europe (Bonsón *et al.*, 2016) and the widespread use of Facebook by public institutions is related to the possibility offered by these networks to interact effectively with citizens (Haro-De-Rosario *et al.*, 2017).

Even if the communication of public institutions in Romania through social networks has become a common practice, little is known in the literature about how these institutions use these channels to communicate. Moreover, as shown above, this type of communication has the potential to transform the relationship between authorities and citizens, but such details in what regard Romania are not available. In this study, we aim to identify the aspects regarding institutional communication through social networks, which can be part of a new and relevant approach for academia. Moreover, the study proposes an interdisciplinary perspective regarding the impact that digital technologies can have on today’s society.

2. Literature review, theory, and factors influencing engagement

2.1 The use of social networks in government communication

Social networks provide a communication space for both individuals and government organizations, and from the perspective of democratic functions, literature recalls the use of these networks to increase transparency, collaboration, and citizen participation (DePaula *et al.*, 2018; Picazo-Vela *et al.*, 2016; Criado *et al.*, 2013; Mergel, 2012). Social networks are increasingly seen as new ways for citizens to be directly involved in policymaking (Park *et al.*, 2015, 629) and the decision-making process (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014, 365). It is also mentioned that the implementation of the new internet-based communication technologies has triggered cost and time savings in terms of access to government information. Last but not least, the use of social networks in combination with open data is perceived as a new manner to increase transparency (Bertot, Jaeger & Grimes, 2010, 264, 268). Moreover, social networks have the potential to directly and swiftly connect citizens with decision-makers (Mergel, 2016).

Several authors have shown that social networks have the advantage of being widely used and, therefore, are useful for disseminating information related to government actions (Bertot *et al.*, 2010; Linders, 2012). At the same time, these networks have been used by public institutions in their communication with citizens (Bonsón *et al.*, 2012), but also for promoting public services (Chatfield & Reddick, 2018; Rodríguez-Bolivar 2015; Khan, 2013; Mergel, 2012). Criado and Villodre, in their research on European local governments using Twitter to provide information, interact with citizens, and deliver public services, found that social media was availed to provide institutional information or foster citizen interactions. This may result useful, the authors stated, in emergencies and can be seen as a way to provide further transparency for citizens. Additionally, the authors found that public service is delivered through social media by the European local governments: “All of the abovementioned supports our suggestions to reformulate the existent frameworks on social media adoption to include public service delivery, at least at the local level of government” (Criado & Villodre, 2020, 19).

Mergel (2013) argues that public institutions make use of social network technologies to promote their institutional goals, involve the public, or to engage in discussions with partners. For instance, in the US, social media is widely used by federal agencies and has become a communication mechanism used with citizens, between agencies, and within institutions (Mergel, 2016). Social media presence, argues Nicolae Urs, is due to the fact that “by not participating in the discussion, public institutions would lose the possibility of setting or influencing the public agenda and would always need to play the role of a *firefighter*, trying to extinguish the flames of controversy after they had turned into fires. This communication through social networks is part of e-government, which is increasingly seen not only as of

involving the provision of services but also as the supply of means of engagement and collaboration” (Urs, 2015, 127).

2.2 Facebook, a legitimate place to debate public interest issues

Facebook is the most popular social network worldwide. Increasing from over 800 million users in 2011 and exceeding one billion users in 2012, Facebook is the first social network to achieve such a performance. In 2020, records show over 2.7 billion users (Statista.com, 2021).

Scientific research shows that Facebook is a legitimate place to debate issues of public interest, and public institutions strive to calibrate their communication on such channels and to provide appropriate services to citizens (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012, 1281). For example, the Pew Research Center report shows that 68% of US adults get information from social networks, with Facebook being the most important information channel (Pew Research Center, 2018). Citizens also perceive Facebook as a real opportunity to interact with public authorities, “thus becoming the most common communication channel used by authorities” (Bonsón *et al.*, 2014, 52).

Bonson and his collaborators (2015) states that the use of social networks like Facebook is a form of the electronic participation. An increase in public engagement can be remarked as public authorities promote citizen-sourced posts. Higher electronic participation can be achieved through social networks by using crowd-sourcing platforms (Charalabidis *et al.*, 2014).

However, the use of social media, Facebook in our case, can trigger several risks. First of all, Picazo-Vela *et al.* (2012) identify the inappropriate use of social media by the employees of a public institution. The employees’ limited knowledge and expertise and the institution’s lack of established guidelines and policies may affect the interaction with stakeholders. Additionally, Facebook is seen as a public space, so that a public institution can be harmed by disappointed citizens expressing their opinions on the administration’s performance (Lappas *et al.*, 2018).

In Romania, Facebook is the main social communication network for public institutions (Urs, 2019; Mucundorfeanu & Balaban, 2018; Gherheș & Cismariu, 2017; Urs, 2015). An explanation in this respect consists in the potential reach of Facebook communication. As Figure 1 below shows, Facebook has a 95.62% penetration degree among the population in Romania, at a major difference from the other social networks (Statcounter.com, 2021). This is also confirmed by the research conducted by Camelia Cmeciu and Ioana Coman related to Twitter communication on the tragic event that occurred in the Colectiv nightclub (October 2015) in which they state that “Twitter is not as popular as Facebook in Romania” (2018, 8).

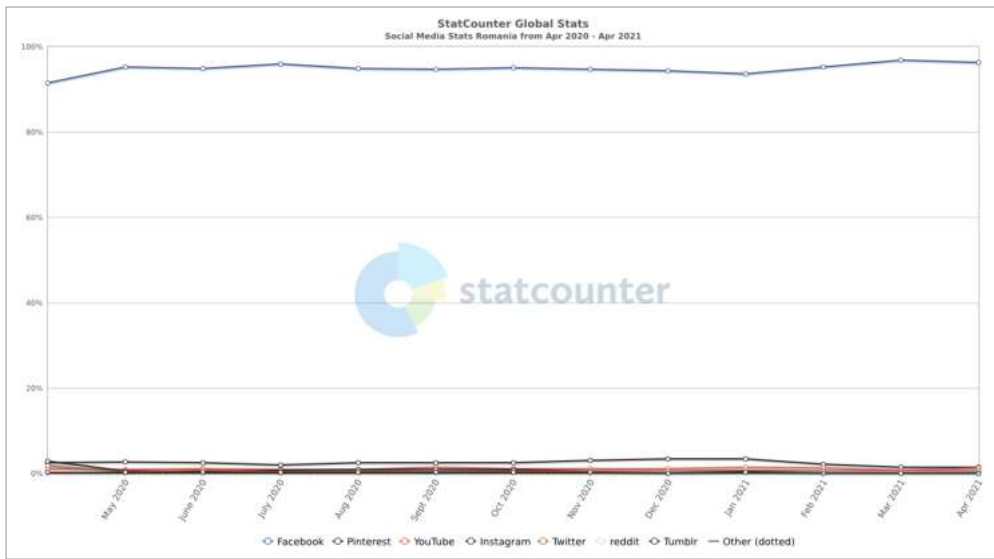


Figure 1. Social Media Stats Romania, 2021

2.3 Engagement

Some researchers have argued that social networks can help improve citizen engagement with the community, while others believe that these technologies can bring image benefits to public institutions. (Carlisle & Patton, 2013). Another relevant aspect in what regards the relationship between social networks and public institutions is revealed by the study conducted by Sharif *et al.* (2016, 16), where it is stated that the benefits perceived have a positive and significant impact on organizations that adopt new technologies, this being also the case of social networking technologies adopted by public institutions

Mergel and Bretschneider (2013) argue that social networks represent the opportunity for citizens to interact directly with the public authorities and that they have the tools to disseminate information, innovate in communication and educate, which a static website cannot include. “Social media interactions are bidirectional, allowing direct communication between agency representatives and the public” (Mergel & Bretschneider, 2013, 393). Furthermore, public institutions can use social networks to increase transparency and highlight information that citizens are not aware exist or that is normally difficult to find (Mergel, 2016).

Bertot and his collaborators (2010) review the opportunities arising from the implementation of social media tools by public authorities: engagement and direct participation (social networks are used to involve citizens in decision-making, to generate dialogue and engagement), co-production (method consisting in the simultaneous involvement of authorities and citizens), *crowdsourcing* (users use their skills and experience to find solutions to government challenges), transparency and

accountability (institutions are open and transparent about their activities, leading to building the confidence of citizens). Collaboration, participation, *empowerment*, and real-time publishing are the strengths of social media. Collaboration and participation allow users to connect and form communities, exchange information, or contribute to the achievement of common goals. *Empowerment* refers to social networks being able to offer users the opportunity to express their uncensored thoughts in real-time (Bertot *et al.*, 2010). At this point, enough scientific proofs are available (Picazo-Vela *et al.*, 2016; Bertot *et al.*, 2010) to show that social networks can increase transparency, encourage citizen participation, and enhance collaboration between government and public administrations with other actors. However, as new research emerges, it becomes more explicit that social networks can be used to provide public services, either as part of a co-production strategy or to allow for partial public service transactions.

Moreover, public involvement in authorities' decision-making process offers several practical benefits: it legitimizes public policies, generates empathy between the authorities' representatives and citizens, increases trust (Zavattaro & Sementelli, 2014), in the context in which the need to involve citizens in the activity of public institutions has become all the more necessary as their level of participation is increasingly lower. Finally, online communication channels allow authorities to extract information about users' preferences, which is useful for both partners to be better informed and adopt decisions responsibly (Bonsón *et al.*, 2015). In this sense, social networks produce significant changes in the services and processes of public organizations as well as in the relationship between public institutions, citizens, and the media, and this impact is visible in administrative procedures, data storage, and management, public services provision, communicating with citizens (Mergel, 2015).

Paradoxically, claim Lovari and Valentini (2020, 2), "the dialogical nature of social networks, which allow public sector organizations to stimulate civic participation, creates important political and communication challenges". The authors also claim that as new forms of social networks emerge, opportunities for interactivity, flexibility, and collaboration will increase, leading to changes in government communication.

Statistics on the use of social networks in public organizations in Romania are scarce. This study aims to examine how social websites have been adopted by the Romanian public administration and the level and actual approach used to fill the currently existing knowledge. The focus will be on Facebook, as being the most popular social networking website among central administration organizations in Romania. In this regard, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ 1: What was the frequency and form in which the central public administration communicated through Facebook?

RQ 2: How are citizens engaging with their public institutions by using Facebook?

3. Research design

3.1 Sampling and data collection

The sample for this study comprises the Facebook pages belonging to the central public administration. Thus, a total of 15 pages have been analyzed (see Appendix A).

The next step was the selection of the pages and the criteria considered as the number of appreciations (likes). Thus, for the study to be relevant, the pages with over 50,000 appreciations were selected. The Government of Romania, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Education and Research, and Ministry of Health have checked this criterion. Despite counting approximately 38,600 appreciations, the page of the Ministry of Health was introduced in the study considering the social importance of this field. Finally, a number of five pages were selected for the analysis.

Data collection took place between 4 November 2019 and 5 February 2020, representing the period in which the Government was ruled by Ludovic Orban, the leader of the National Liberal Party (PNL) in Romania. For a better understanding of the context, it is worth mentioning that PNL commenced governing after passing in the Romanian Parliament a motion of censure against the Social Democratic Party (PSD), which was governing since 2016. Hence, the majority was volatile, a fact emphasized on February 5, 2020, when Orban's cabinet was dismissed by PSD through another motion of censure.

For the period under analysis, data were extracted from the Facebook pages belonging to the five authorities. These data were extracted through a specialized online program, Socialinsider.io (G2.com, 2021). We note that the program has been used for the same purpose in other scientific papers (Smith & Wanless, 2020).

3.2 Research Design and Methods

Data extracted targeted the analysis unit, the post, as being the main undertaking in which a Facebook page can interact with users. In this manner, we have selected data on the number of posts, the message of all posts, the type (e.g., video, photo, text, link), the publishing date, as well as the number of reactions, comments, distributions, which will result useful in answering RQ1.

To answer RQ2, we used Bonsón and Ratkai (2013) Facebook metrics, which were successfully used by other researchers (Agostino & Arnaboldi, 2016; Bonsón *et al.*, 2015; Bonsón *et al.*, 2019; Sáez-Martín *et al.*, 2018). Interaction between citizens and authorities is an essential part of the success of an online community. Several authors define the term of Engagement as an individual or collective behavior that has the role of solving the problems faced by a community (Bonson *et al.*, 2019; Warren *et al.*, 2014). Its essence lies in the interaction between citizens and authorities and, given its importance to the public system, it is necessary to identify the

elements (e.g., types of media content) which may lead to an increase in engagement (Bonsón *et al.*, 2014).

Figure 2 below presents the matrix thought by Bonsón and Ratkai. Thus, the authors define the Popularity (P) as being the user acceptance of the government message posted on the Facebook page and it is computed by measuring the number of likes generated by each post. The Commitment (C) refers to the degree of engagement and interaction with government messages and it is measured through the number of comments per post, while Virality (V) considers the distribution component, also measured, and refers to the dissemination and extension obtained by government messages posted on the Facebook. The resulting sum represents the Engagement (E).

Popularity	P1	Number of posts liked/total posts	Percentage of posts that have been liked
	P2	Total likes/total number of posts	Average number of likes per post
	P3	$(P2/\text{number of fans}) \times 1,000$	Average number of likes per post per 1,000 fans
Commitment	C1	Number of posts commented/total posts	Percentage of posts that have been commented
	C2	Total comments/total posts	Average number of comments per post
	C3	$(C2/\text{number of fans}) \times 1,000$	Average number of comments per post per 1,000 fans
Virality	V1	Number of posts shared/total posts	Percentage of posts that have been shared
	V2	Total shares/total posts	Average number of shares per post
	V3	$(V2/\text{number of fans}) \times 1,000$	Average number of shares per post per 1,000 fans
Engagement	E	$P3 + C3 + V3$	Stakeholder engagement index

Figure 2. Interaction Matrix (engagement) (Bonsón & Ratkai, 2013, 4)

4. Analysis and results

The five Facebook pages subject to this analysis indicate 743 posts, most of which were made by the Government of Romania page, as shown in Table 1. The Government of Romania and the Ministry of National Defense have the greatest number of posts per day. We select posts per day and not working days because we found activity in the not working days.

Table 2 below presents a distribution of each institution's posts according to the number of reactions, comments, and shares. In this case, their median is relevant, indicating what values most posts are at. Ministry of Internal Affairs presents the highest values on all three types of reactions. In second place is the Ministry of National Defense. Even though the Government of Romania has the most posts, in terms of types of reactions it ranks in one of the last places.

Table 1. Facebook pages belonging to the central authorities
 –data on the number of posts, reactions, comments, and distributions

Institution name	Page likes	Posts				
		Number	Per day	Likes	Comments	Shares
Government of Romania	80,306	368	3,91	50,048	15,955	6,865
Ministry of Internal Affairs	397,291	41	0,44	655,404	71,101	76,725
Ministry of National Defense	449,154	209	2,22	362,844	27,170	37,595
Ministry of Education	51,252	76	0,81	10,355	1,463	1,954
Ministry of Health	38,619	49	0,52	5,677	2,442	1,405
Total	1,016,622	743	7,9	1,084,328	118,131	124,544

Table 2. Distribution of institutions posts according to the number
 of reactions, comments, and shares

Institution Name	Activity	Shares	Comments	Reactions
Government of Romania	N	368	368	368
	Mean	18.13	43.97	133.98
	Median	6.00	24.00	108.00
Ministry of Education	N	76	76	76
	Mean	25.71	19.25	136.25
	Median	9.00	13.00	91.00
Ministry of Health	N	49	49	49
	Mean	28.67	49.84	115.86
	Median	18.00	22.00	76.00
Ministry of Internal Affairs	N	41	41	41
	Mean	1,871.34	1,734.17	15,985.46
	Median	416.00	349.00	6,631.00
Ministry of National Defense	N	209	209	209
	Mean	179.88	130.00	1,736.10
	Median	55.00	55.00	1,149.00
Total	N	743	743	743
	Mean	167.36	159.29	1,458.39
	Median	17.00	30.00	163.00

Table 3 below shows that the most frequently used media type was a photo (67.8%), followed by video content (26.9%). The link and text contents were less used by these institutions. As Bonson *et al.* found, “photos or videos lead to higher levels of engagement than other media types” (2019, 485). This aspect can also be seen as a sign of professionalism in public institutions’ communication through social networks.

Table 3. Distribution of institutions posts according to data on the media type

Institution Name	Link	Photo	Text	Video	Total
Government of Romania	26	201	2	139	368
	7.1%	54.6%	0.5%	37.8%	100.0%
Ministry of Education	1	60	0	15	76
	1.3%	78.9%	0.0%	19.7%	100.0%
Ministry of Health	3	44	2	0	49
	6.1%	89.8%	4.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Ministry of Internal Affairs	0	39	0	2	41
	0.0%	95.1%	0.0%	4.9%	100.0%
Ministry of National Defense	5	160	0	44	209
	2.4%	76.6%	0.0%	21.1%	100.0%
Total	35	504	4	200	743
	4.7%	67.8%	0.5%	26.9%	100.0%

To examine citizen engagement, Bonsón and Ratkai (2013) metrics were used, and the results are detailed in Table 4 below. Ministry of Internal Affairs presents the highest values. In this case, it is important to note the large distance from the rest of the analyzed pages. On each indicator, the Ministry of Internal Affairs shows significant differences. The Ministry of Health ranks second, followed by the Ministry of National Defense. In the last place is the Government of Romania. This may indicate that the high number of posts is not necessarily a determining factor for increasing the number of reactions.

Table 4. Metrics for stakeholder engagement

Institution Name	Popularity	Commitment	Virality	Engagement
Government of Romania	1.704035343	0.543311179	0.233566989	2.480913511
Ministry of Education	2.658432842	0.375595099	0.50164923	3.53567717
Ministry of National Defense	3.865257114	0.289433023	0.4004871	4.555177237
Ministry of Internal Affairs	40.23615792	4.364988715	4.710253853	49.31140048
Ministry of Health	3.000003699	1.29047191	0.74247053	5.032946139

To better understand the relation between media type and citizen reactions, we summarize the statistics in table 5, where we can see that citizens vary according to the different media types. The main media type which generates engagement is photo and video. The result must be seen in the context in which most posts had photo content (67.8%) and video content (26.9%). In this regard, it is recommended to extend the analysis period to obtain a more accurate picture.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of media type and citizens engagement

	Type	Popularity	Commitment	Virality	Engagement
Link	Mean	1.6102	.1234	.2557	1.9906
	SD	1.81965	.09489	.17642	1.89136
	Minimum	.57	.00	.08	.91
	Maximum	4.33	.22	.43	4.82
Photo	Mean	10.4331	1.3764	1.3058	13.1143
	SD	17.31489	1.83711	1.95182	21.04754
	Minimum	1.48	.21	.13	1.94
	Maximum	41.38	4.56	4.76	50.70
Video	Mean	7.1033	.6038	1.3147	9.0224
	SD	7.69400	.26723	1.59476	9.29044
	Minimum	1.13	.27	.21	1.60
	Maximum	17.91	.92	3.65	22.15
Text	Mean	1.0831	.7700	.1292	1.9824
	SD	.75694	.83359	.16514	1.75567
	Minimum	.55	.18	.01	.74
	Maximum	1.62	1.36	.25	3.22
Total	Mean	5.9457	.7554	.8713	7.5726
	SD	10.74323	1.13559	1.39736	13.07627
	Minimum	.55	.00	.01	.74
	Maximum	41.38	4.56	4.76	50.70

5. Discussion

Our findings show that the accounts differ in terms of their activity and audience. Ministry of Internal Affairs presents the highest values on engagement even if it has the lowest number of posts, being at a very large difference from the next institution. At the same time, the Government of Romania has the highest number of posts and the lowest engagement. A large number of posts is not a success in terms of engagement. Content analysis is needed to highlight the issues that underpin this high level of engagement.

Regarding media type, our findings show that photos (67.8%) were the most frequently used. Video content came in second (26.9%). This finding came to confirm previous research that found that the use of images and videos favors higher interaction (Hofmann *et al.*, 2013; Bonsón *et al.*, 2019). Also, the video content is constantly growing, as revealed by an extensive study conducted on 10.5 million posts with video content, out of a total of 119,032 business pages. If in 2014 this type of content represents 5.47%, in 2020 it constitutes 15% of Facebook content (Jipa, 2020). The explanation may reside in a practical aspect, namely that for photo and

video content, specialized staff in the field of photography and video is required, triggering an additional budget allocation. This aspect must be supported by qualitative research.

Another finding that emerged from this study is that citizens tend to interact with public authorities through the *Like* button. This type of interaction can be interpreted as limited levels of engagement among citizens. *Comment* and *Share* are other ways of interactions that imply a greater effort. In our research, we can see that Popularity, which implies the *Like* button, has the biggest scores compare with Commitment (implies the *Comment* button) and Virality (implies the *Share* button). These correlations that can be seen in Table 4 are consistent with Bonson, Ratkai, and Royo's paper (2016). Another interesting finding is that shares are more widely used than comments for the Ministry of Education, Ministry of National Defense, and Ministry of Internal Affairs. It seems that citizens tend to share relevant content published by these three institutions.

Previous research indicating that active presence on Facebook depends on the special circumstances of each institution (Bonsón *et al.*, 2016; Bonsón *et al.*, 2012;) and this seems to be the case in this research. Further investigations are needed to see the nature of the relationship between institutions and citizens.

The study has several limitations. First of all, this paper is based on the analysis of five institutions and future studies should broaden on a larger number of public institutions and in different periods to see if that exists substantial differences. Another important aspect concerns that this study has not investigated the content of the posts and their impact on engagement. For example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has only 41 posts and the highest levels of engagement (49.31 vs 5.03, the score for the second place institutions). Most likely, some aspects generate higher engagement levels and content analysis can offer some answers. Also, in terms of content analysis, it is important to identify the type of relationship between authorities and citizens. Ines Mergel (2013), Enrique Bonson (2019), and other researchers have shown that the relationship is maintained at the primary level so that the authorities use social networks only as a mean to transmit information and less to engage in a real dialogue with citizens to ask for feedback and involve them into collaborative activities.

6. Conclusion

The use of Facebook by Romania public institutions has become commonplace and, as we know, this study, which explores how the Romanian public administration uses Facebook as a means of communication, has never been done in Romania. Social media provide a common communication space for public administrations and stakeholders and have the potential to increase transparency, collaboration, and citizen participation. In this way, public administration can interact direct-

ly with stakeholders, can gain trust by showing transparency, and can get support from citizens by involving them in the process of public policy. Regarding Facebook, it can be seen as a legitimate place to debate issues of public interest and for the public institutions to calibrate their communication and provide appropriate services to citizens.

In this matter, we aimed to investigate what was the frequency and form in which the central public administration communicated through Facebook and how citizens are engaging with their public institutions by using Facebook. We found out that the public institution had a sum of almost 8 posts per day, with the Government of Romania (3,91) and the Ministry of National Defense (2,22) having the greatest number of posts per day. Regarding the content types, we found that photo and video were the most frequently used and had the most scores in engagement than other media types. Regarding citizen engagement, the *Like* button is the most frequent way for citizens to interact with public institutions.

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Appendix A.

List of Facebook pages of the central public administration in Romania

Institution name	Link	Page likes
Government of Romania	www.facebook.com/guv.ro	80306
Ministry of National Defense	www.facebook.com/mapn.ro/	449154
Ministry of Internal Affairs	www.facebook.com/ministeruldeinterne/	397291
Ministry of Education	www.facebook.com/www.edu.ro/	51252
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	www.facebook.com/madr.ro/	46296
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	www.facebook.com/mae.romania/	40781
Ministry of Health	www.facebook.com/MinisterulSanatatii/	38619
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection	www.facebook.com/Ministerul.Muncii.Romania/	22232
Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests	www.facebook.com/Mediu.Romania/	21370
Ministry of Culture	www.facebook.com/MinisterulCulturiiRomania/	17683
Ministry of Youth and Sport	www.facebook.com/MinisterulTineretuluiSiSportuluiOficial/	17609
Ministry of Finance	www.facebook.com/mfpromania/	17380
Ministry of Justice	www.facebook.com/ministeruljustitieiromania/	16558
Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism	www.facebook.com/Economie.gov.ro/	7087
Ministry of Communications and Information Society	www.facebook.com/Ministerul.Comunicatiilor/	4971

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