

## **Facebook – Public Communication Media for the Romanian Institutions**

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**Abstract:** For the public institutions, social networks represent a communication channel completing what represents the professional public communication, so the role of the professional communicator does not end or diminish and neither does the role of traditional mass-media. It is about an evolution, a modification, an adaptation of public communication and not a replacement of the way of achieving such communication. By this study, I proposed myself to identify the way in which the public institutions in Romania have adapted to the new trends imposed to public communication. To this end, I conducted an analysis of the structure, content, presentation and visibility in the online media of the Facebook pages of the 21 ministries composing the Romanian Government. I chose ministries as a subject of this study because, as institutions representing the central public administration of Romania, they exercise their competence at the level of the entire national territory and, generating public policies, have a major impact on the socio-economic environment, addressing a large number of beneficiaries. I noticed that all the ministries have an official Facebook page, these pages are updated and, by the published information, they are constituted as key elements in all representation media for these institutions.

**Keywords:** communication; institutional identity; public relations; public institution; Facebook

### **1. Introduction**

The objective of public relations is represented by an efficient communication with the target public, the change of the public opinion, the formation of an opinion where there isn't any or the consolidation of an already existing opinion, as well as

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the influencing of the public behaviour, with the purpose of forming a positive image of the organization in public.

The technological development and the appearance of the new communication media in the Internet era “communication technologies facilitated the bypassing of traditional media by political actors allowing them to communicate directly to, and in the web.2.0 era with, citizens” (Koc-Michalska et al., 2016, p.332), imposing a radical transformation of the way organizations relate with their public, that being underlined by Rodica Săvulescu and Alexandra Vițelar (2012): “With the introduction of new media – and particularly social networks, information consumption has changed its patterns in the sense that nowadays people require more than traditional media were able to offer: accessible information, instantaneous news delivery, discourse authenticity and personalisation, interaction and feedback possibilities.” (p.9). Georgeta Drulă (2014) offers also another explanation of the transformation of the way of communication in this context: “Social media change the paradigms of communication ..., because new actors are involved in the production process, and the communication is directed towards connection.” (p. 92). Yet, Antonio Momoc (2014), underlines the fact that the *transformation of the communication* way does not mean *replacing* the traditional way of communicating, but *completing* it: “The expressive online participation has not annihilated the traditional offline activities... expressive online participation can show a different manner of participating, considering it does not involve big costs or efforts from the citizens.” (p. 437)

We witness an ample revolution in communication, a transformation affecting companies, organisations but, at the same time, public institutions: the consumer/citizen has become the communicator. Each citizen holding a Facebook or Twitter account can interpellate an institution or a company, publicly, by addressing it questions, formulating critics or requesting for explanations, imposing a radical transformation of the way of communicating of organisations: “Unidirectional approaches like we talk, and you, the consumer, listen do not work anymore” (Scott, 2010, p. 9). A new approach on communication is necessary, based on interactivity elements, i.e. those elements “which allow visitors to interact in some way with the host or other visitors” (Lilleker et al., 2011, p. 199).

More and more organisations have become aware of the fact that social networks represent a very important communication channel, which is even about to become essential.

A study conducted by Alexandra-Petronela Grigore (Isbășoiu) (2015) revealed the fact that "...over 60% of the online presence is dedicated to the social network. Moreover, there is a segment for which the online time is synonymous with the time spent on Facebook" (p. 81). Facebrands.ro and Facebrands PRO, monitoring and analysis services for the activities on Facebook in Romania, recorded 8,2 million Facebook accounts in Romania, at the middle of November 2015. At the end of August 2016 the same services recorded a number of 36.955 Facebook pages.

## **2. Institutional Public Communication in the Specialty Literature**

"Public communication refers, in general, to the desire of the state or of different public institutions, ministries, autonomous administrations or national companies to implement a public relations system and to provide citizens with public interest information, such as environment, health, prevention of accidents, citizen safety, etc." (Rus, 2002, p. 38) (our translation)

Vasile Tran and Irina Stănciugelu (2007-2008) assert that the fundamental feature of public communication is to act at the level of social representations and to allow a quick modification of public speeches. The authors mention four categories of effects aimed by public communication:

1. the modernisation of the functioning of administrations (that is mostly the case of public relations devices or information presentation and transmission systems)
2. some campaigns aim at producing behaviour changes
3. for some public administrations and enterprises, the main concern is to provide, by communication, a modern image
4. the search for the adhesion of citizens to a certain issue, by awareness actions (p.11-12). (our translation)

In the opinion of the same authors, "Public communication must not be assimilated to institutional communication. .... Governmental communication, for example, includes public communication with regards to public interest subjects, such as accident and disease prevention, the fight against unemployment and inflation, the promotion of cultural, social and patrimony values" (p. 11) (our translation). On the other hand, Antonio Sandu (2016), connects the purposes of public communication to public institutions, considering that these are "equally oriented to the information

and valorisation of public policies and to obtaining a feedback to the expectations of citizens, with the final purpose of building a consensus over general interest problems based on public debate.” (p.94) (our translation), revealing thus the need of a bidirectional character, public communication and institutional communication.

By following-up the creation of their own identity, the institutions provide the public with information related to their own organisation, services offered, activities performed, etc., information which is regularly communicated to the target public, with the purpose of creating a favourable institutional image in their conscience.

The main communication services of public institutions, according to the specific and nature of services, include (Zémor, 2003, p. 45):

- the provision of public data;
- the relation of public services with the users;
- the promotion of public offered services;
- information campaigns of general interest;
- valorisation of the public institution.

In order to achieve these activities, it is necessary to collect and process information. The reaction is the attitude manifested following the reception of the message by the receiver, and when we speak about institutions, “the lack of reaction from the organisation can have not only economic, image consequences, but also juridical consequences” (Chiciudean & David, 2011, p. 82) (our translation).

Any communication errors, treated superficially or identified with delay, can have serious effects.

### **3. Public Relations, Communication with the Press**

“The researches dedicated during the last decays to public relations systems have led to the proliferation of the modalities of conceiving and defining this field” (Coman, 1999, p. 17) (our translation). The author quotes the definition proposed by R.F. Harlow: “Public Relations is distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; ...” (Harlow, 1976), definition elaborated following the synthesis of over 472 such modalities of conceiving and definition (Coman, 1999, p. 17).

The management function of public relations is also expressed by the definition proposed by Scott M. Cutlip and his collaborators (2010), who asserts that “Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (p. 5).

Concluding these definitions, Cristina Coman (2004) asserts that “Public Relations appears as a modality of communication between an organisation and its publics; they help managers know the attitudes of the public and make the right decisions; they also help the public know the specific of the organisation and trust it” (p. 11) (our translation), conferring thus a communicational perspective to public relations.

In his course entitled *Strategic Management*, Constantin Brătianu (2004) highlights the “structural and functional rigidity” as well as the “static and conservatory institutional culture” as specific to the public administration segment (p.70) (our translation). Thus, the main weak points of public relations become, firstly, the choice of techniques and instruments appropriate for the transmission of the message and the detailed control even over reactions caused by the transmitted messages (Zbucea, 2005, p. 52).

#### **4. Public Relations in Online Media**

*“Public relations in online media are usually known as ePR. ...ePR is considered one of the most modern tools of the communication policy meeting veritable promotional attributes. ePR is used to positively influence a various public, to create a climate of trust, sympathy and mutual understanding between an organisation and its environment. Internet proves to be thus one of the most efficient media to offer the newly formed audience the information it needs, the PR campaigns having an impact over the consumer stronger and more sustained than publicity.”* (Orzan & Orzan, 2007, pp. 4-5) (our translation)

Camelia Cmeciu (2013) differentiates the strategies used by public relations in the online media:

- *information strategies*, which suppose the use of the website as a channel for unilateral supply of information, its posting conferring visibility and transparency to the organisation, with the obligation to observe the basic condition of permanent update of the website, “for the information to be persuasive, despite the lack of the virtual feedback from the participants” (p.136) (our translation). An example in this

sense is constituted by the publication on the website of information regarding the organisation management, financial information (budgets) and press releases.

○ *interactivity strategies*, specific to Web 2.0, by posting on the social networks (Facebook, Twitter), blogs, YouTube, etc. “The premise for an efficient interactivity is the existence of a symmetrical bilateral communication: the moderator of the platform or the discussion must give answers to the participants. The visitors of the online platform of the organisation can interact with the moderator as well as with other visitors.” (p.136) (our translation). The posting, on Facebook pages, of information referring to the promotion of certain activities carried out by an organisation constitutes an example in this regard.

Also, the author mentions the existence of two types of interactions in the virtual environment:

- “interaction as a product (a reduced degree of interaction, specific to Web 1.0, by e-mail and the FAQ section – frequently asked questions and answers);
- interaction as process (topic driven conversations between the users on the network)”(Cmeciu, 2013, p.136) (our translation).

## **5. Facebook – a Media for Public Communication and a Support for the Creation and Consolidation of the Identity of Public Institutions in Romania**

“In the PC Era, anyone could become a producer. In the Internet era, anyone could become a publisher. In the early days, publishers used the Internet solely as a one-to-many channel to broadcast media” (Shih, 2009, p. 26), and, in this context, D.E. Wittkower (2010) underlines the transformation imposed to the way of communication by the appearance of the social network Facebook: “Facebook has radically reconstituted the ability for expression and access to information and other people” (p. 235).

Until recently, public communication represented an activity almost exclusively carried out by journalists, PR and marketing people, the only ones who had the possibility to provide information and impose it to the public opinion. But, with the explosive evolution of social network (blogs, forums, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, etc.), any person who has the possibility of accessing the Internet can launch opinions and messages in the online environment, which is also underlined by Philip Kotler, Hermawan Kartajaya, and Iwan Setiawan: “In the participation era,

people do not just consume news, ideas and entertainment, they also create all these things. The new technological wave gives people the chance to transform from consumers to prosumers” (p. 21).

Assuming the risk to be exposed to critics, institutions are forced to build an official presence in the social networks, benefiting thus from the advantages conferred by their presence in this environment: the possibility to influence conversations in which these institutions are the subject, feedback collection, direct information of citizens, without intermediates, the creation of an image capital, the possibility to create and stabilise the institutional identity in the online environment. In addition, as revealed by a study conducted by Kim Strandberg (2012), “The newest types of SN sites (i.e. Facebook and Twitter) have a greater mobilizing effect than the other sites – websites included” (p. 12).

“Web 2.0 offers new internal and external communication opportunities to organizations but also new costs and social pressure to utilize it in an appropriate way” (Nitschke, 2016, p.744-745). The maintenance of communication tools offered by social networks supposes not only more work but also more attention to avoid certain mistakes which may affect the reputation of the company/ public institution, such as, for example, ignoring the Facebook page or neglecting the feedback. Fans on Facebook, if ignored, can turn from potential promoters into the worst enemies. Giving a feedback to fans, answering both contents and discontents, is a proof of respect and appreciation of the fact that they gave a part of their time to the respective company/ public institution.

“Communication on Facebook turns, more and more, into a face-to-face communication, by interactivity and interpersonal messages. ... A closer relation to citizens is achieved through Facebook and social networks” (Toader, Grigorași & Frunză, 2011, p.143) (our translation), requiring a change of approach with regards to the realisation of public communication through this social network. As recommended by David M. Scott (2010), on Facebook, “Talk to your public as you would talk to a relative that you don’t see too often – be friendly and familiar, but also respectful” (p. 263).

The **aim** of this study is to identify how the Romanian public institutions have adapted to the new trends imposed in public communication by the use of the official Facebook page as a support for public communication as well as for the creation and consolidation of the institutional identity.

For this undertaking, we have to answer the following **questions**:

Q1: What are the modalities of building the image of a public institution through the official Facebook page?

Q2: What are the information and communication practices of public institutions through the official Facebook page?

Q3: What is the efficiency of information and communication achieved by public institutions through the official Facebook page?

Following the above mentioned objective, I proposed the following **hypothesis** for testing:

I: The official Facebook page of the institution represents a communication tool integrated into its communication strategy (from Q1+Q2+Q3).

#### Methodology

To answer these questions, I used the content analysis method.

In the specialty literature there are several definitions of the content analysis, that of Bernard Berelson (1952), which is a committed one: "Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 220). "Initially, researchers used content analysis as either a qualitative or quantitative method in their studies. Later, content analysis was used primarily as a quantitative research method, with text data coded into explicit categories and then described using statistics. This approach is sometimes referred to as quantitative analysis of qualitative data (Morgan, 1993)" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Septimiu Chelcea integrates concepts, characterizing this research method as "a quantitative-qualitative modality of studying communication, but not only its manifest content, but also its latent one" (p. 217) (our translation)

The content analysis does not apply only to texts, any symbolic communication being subject to such an analysis.

The working technique used within this study is the analysis of the presence frequencies of the analysed indicators and the research tool is represented by data collection, encoding category diagram and quantitative processing of collected data. The information needed for the study were obtained from accessing and studying the official Facebook pages of the ministries within the Romanian Government. I chose the ministries as the subject of my study because, as institutions representing the central public administration in Romania, they exercise their competence at the level of the whole national territory. Also, these



institutions, generating public policies have a major influence on the socio-economic environment and address a very large number of beneficiaries. Therefore, it is very important to establish how they communicate with the citizens, and, implicitly, how they create their public image and institutional identity.

In order to identify the way in which the official Facebook page of each ministry responds to the needs of the public institution to create its identity and a favourable public image, I have studied each Facebook page individually. All ministries have official Facebook pages, and they are functional. Considering the fact that certain categories of information published on Facebook are dynamic elements, with a short life, being characterised by spontaneous changes, without keeping historical records, for the identification and quantification of certain indicators (e.g.: *Reviews*, *Page likes*, *Profile photo*, *Cover photo*), all the Facebook pages of the 21 ministries were accessed and analysed on the same date (15 August 2016).

#### **A. Visual identity elements present on the Facebook pages of ministries**

The author Bernard Dagenais (2003), approaches the image of an organisation from two different angles: the material image and the symbolic image (p. 54). The material image is, practically, the visual image, that is the image built by identification elements such as emblem, logo, colours or header. The symbolic image of the organisation is composed of its “speech”, that is behaviour, attitude, text elements which represent the personality of the institution (Dagenais, 2003, p. 54)

In order to highlight the modality by which ministries define their visual identity, I analysed, for each Facebook page of each ministry, the indicators within the main component *Visual identity elements*, as resulting from Table 1. These indicators are ranked, from left to right, in the ascending order of their presence frequency.

Starting from the assertion that the indicator *Profile photo* is composed of the sum of indicators *Logo* and *Emblem*, we can notice that all the Facebook pages of ministries have all the visual identity elements analysed present, each of them having a presence frequency of 100%. The *Profile photo* is represented by the *Logo* for a number of 20 ministries out of the 21 (presence frequency of the indicator 90.95%), as follows: for 5 ministries, the logo is the institution own logo (presence frequency 23.81%), while, for 20 ministries, their logo is the logo of the Romanian Government (presence frequency 71.42%). An exception is the Ministry of Youth and Sports, for which the *Profile photo* is represented by the *Emblem* (presence frequency 4.76%).

We also need to mention the fact that, on the date of accessing the Facebook pages with the purpose of recording the indicators (15 August 2016), the *Cover photo* on the pages of 20 ministries, with the exception of the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forestry, was represented by the promotion photo of the public subscription campaign for the purchase, by the Romanian state, of the sculpture of Constantin Brâncuși, “Cumințenia pământului” (*Wisdom of the Earth*).



Figure 1. The cover photo present on the Facebook pages of the ministries

Table 1. Presence frequency and ranking of indicators specific to the category *Visual identity elements*

No.	Institution	Visual identity elements					
		Indicators					
		Institution's name	Profile photo	Cover photo	Phot archive	Logo	Emblem
1	Ministry of European Funds	E	E	E	E	P	I
2	Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research	E	E	E	E	G	I
3	Ministry of National Defence	E	E	E	E	P	I
4	Ministry of Youth and Sports	E	E	E	E	I	E
5	Ministry of Internal Affairs	E	E	E	E	P	I
6	Ministry of Culture	E	E	E	E	P	I
7	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	E	E	E	E	G	I
8	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	E	E	E	E	G	I
9	Ministry of Health	E	E	E	E	G	I
10	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection	E	E	E	E	G	I

	and Elderly						
11	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration	E	E	E	E	G	I
12	Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forestry	E	E	E	E	G	I
13	Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Relations with the Business Environment	E	E	E	E	G	I
14	Ministry of Justice	E	E	E	E	G	I
15	Ministry of Communications and for Informational Society	E	E	E	E	G	I
16	Department on Policies for Relationship with Romanians Abroad	E	E	E	E	G	I
17	Ministry of Public Finances	E	E	E	E	P	I
18	Ministry for Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue	E	E	E	E	G	I
19	Ministry of Transports	E	E	E	E	G	I
20	Ministry of Energy	E	E	E	E	G	I
21	Department for the relation with the Parliament	E	E	E	E	G	I
	<b>Presence frequency</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>95,24%</b>	<b>4.76%</b>
	<b>Ranking</b>	<b>1</b>				<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

E= indicator's presence; I = indicator's absence; P= own logo of the institution; G= Government logo

We can conclude that the visual identity elements are present on the official Facebook pages of the ministries even in the absence of customised logos, the presence of the government logo satisfying this requirement, if we consider that ministries are integral parts of the government.

**B. Information and communication of public institutions through their official Facebook pages**

In order to highlight the way of communicating, I analysed, for the Facebook page of each ministry, the main component *Information and Communication*. Within this component, the indicators reflecting the way of achieving the information are distributed within two secondary components, as resulting from Table 2, and the indicators reflecting the communication modality of the institution through the Facebook page are distributed within two secondary components, as resulting from Table 3.

**Table 2. Indicators specific to secondary components within the main component *Information and communication*, which reflect the achievement of information**

<b>Institution presentation</b>	Institution presentation (About)
<b>Contact information</b>	Institution location map
	Institution address
	Contact details
	Telephone numbers
	E-mail addresses

**Table 3. Indicators specific to secondary components within the main component *Information and communication*, which reflect the way of achieving the communication**

<b>Communication</b>	Posts
	Posts sharing
	Posts likes
	Comments to posts
	Replies to comments-offered by the institution
	Photos posted
	Video clips posted
<b>Communication feedback</b>	Friends
	Page likes
	Reviews
	Review result (stars)
<b>Interactivity</b>	Connection to the website of the institution
	Connection to other social networks (Twitter)

Table 4 presents the situation of the presence of the indicator (secondary component) *Institution presentation*. We can notice that this indicator can be found on the Facebook pages of 15 ministries out of the 21, recording a presence frequency of 71,42%.

**Table 4. Presence frequency of the indicator specific to the secondary category *Institution presentation***

No.	Institution	Institution presentation (About)
1	Ministry of European Funds	E
2	Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research	I
3	Ministry of National Defence	E
4	Ministry of Youth and Sports	I
5	Ministry of Internal Affairs	E
6	Ministry of Culture	I
7	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	E
8	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	E
9	Ministry of Health	E
10	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly	E

11	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration	E
12	Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forestry	I
13	Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Relations with the Business Environment	I
14	Ministry of Justice	E
15	Ministry of Communications and for Informational Society	E
16	Department on Policies for Relationship with Romanians Abroad	E
17	Ministry of Public Finances	E
18	Ministry for Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue	E
19	Ministry of Transports	E
20	Ministry of Energy	I
21	Department for the relation with the Parliament	E
<b>Presence frequency</b>		<b>71.42%</b>

E=indicator’s presence; I=indicator’s absence

In Table 5, the indicators specific to the secondary component *Contact information* are ranked, from left to right, in the ascending order of their presence frequency. We can find that only one indicator, i.e. *Website address* is represented on all the 21 official Facebook pages studied (presence frequency 100%), 2 of the indicators, *Institution address* and *Telephone numbers*, are present on the Facebook pages of 19 ministries (presence frequency 90.48%), the indicator *E-mail addresses* is present on 16 of the Facebook pages studied (presence frequency 76.19%) and the indicator *Institution location map* is present on the site of only 7 ministries (presence frequency 33.33%). On the Facebook pages of 5 ministries all the 5 indicators analysed are present, 4 of the 5 indicators are present on the pages of 11 ministries, the pages of 4 ministries are characterised by the presence of 3 indicators of the 5 subject to the analysis, while we can notice the presence of only 2 of the 5 specific indicators on the Facebook page of one ministry (Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

**Table 5. Presence frequency and Ranking of the indicators regarding the secondary category *Contact information***

N o.	Institution	Contact information				
		Indicators				
		Website address	Institution address	Telephone numbers	E-mail addresses	Institution location map
1	Ministry of European Funds	E	E	E	E	I
2	Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research	E	E	E	I	E
3	Ministry of National Defence	E	E	I	E	I
4	Ministry of Youth and Sports	E	E	E	I	I
5	Ministry of Internal Affairs	E	E	E	E	E
6	Ministry of Culture	E	E	E	E	I

7	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	E	I	E	I	I
8	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	E	E	E	E	I
9	Ministry of Health	E	I	E	E	I
10	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly	E	E	E	I	E
11	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration	E	E	E	E	I
12	Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forestry	E	E	E	E	E
13	Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Relations with the Business Environment	E	E	E	E	I
14	Ministry of Justice	E	E	E	E	E
15	Ministry of Communications and for Informational Society	E	E	E	E	E
16	Department on Policies for Relationship with Romanians Abroad	E	E	E	E	I
17	Ministry of Public Finances	E	E	E	E	I
18	Ministry for Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue	E	E	E	E	E
19	Ministry of Transports	E	E	E	E	I
20	Ministry of Energy	E	E	E	I	I
21	Department for the relation with the Parliament	E	E	E	E	I
<b>Presence frequency</b>		<b>100.00 %</b>	<b>90.48%</b>	<b>90.48%</b>	<b>76.19 %</b>	<b>33.33%</b>
<b>Ranking</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	

E=indicator's presence; I=indicator's absence

The high values of the presence frequency of 4 of the 5 indicators analysed (values ranging between 76.19% and 100% allow us to conclude (even with low values, of only 33.33% of the presence frequency of the indicator *Institution location map*) that, through their official Facebook pages, the ministries achieve information on the component *Contact information*.

With the purpose of analysing the way of fulfilling the function *Communication* by the official Facebook pages of the public institutions studied, I entered, in Table 6, the indicators specific to this component.

Table 6 presents the values obtained following the analysis of the activity recorded over one month, namely during the period 1-31 July 2016, on the Facebook page of the 21 ministries. We can notice that the indicator *Posts* is present on the pages of all the public institutions, recoding values between 4 (Department for the relation with the Parliament) and 101 (Ministry of National Defence). These posts were, at their turn, shared by the

visitors of the Facebook pages, the indicator *Post sharing* recording values between 0 (Department for the relation with the Parliament) and 25584 (Ministry of National Defence). Also, the posts from the reference period recorded reactions from the visitors, this being reflected in the values recorded by the indicator *Post likes* (Like), with values between 32 (Department for the relation with the Parliament) and 196792 (Ministry of National Defence). The reactions of visitors to the posts are also highlighted by the values recorded for the indicator *Comments*, ranging between 0 (Department for the relation with the Parliament) and 5593 (Ministry of National Defence).

In the analysed period, 11 ministries (representing 52.38%) offered answers to the comments or questions posted by the visitors of the Facebook pages, the indicator *Replies to comments – given by the institution*, recording values between 1 and 19 (Ministry for Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue). I only mentioned the values of the indicator recorded for the 11 ministries which gave answers.

**Table 6. Values of indicators specific to the secondary category *Communication***

No	Institution	Posts	Posts sharing	Post likes	Comments	Replies to comments given by the institution
1	Ministry of European Funds	21	916	881	35	2
2	Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research	35	664 2	7482	4244	0
3	Ministry of National Defence	10 1	255 84	196792	5593	5
4	Ministry of Youth and Sports	45	687	1151	59	1
5	Ministry of Internal Affairs	70	474 7	25084	714	4
6	Ministry of Culture	12	303	678	44	0
7	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	42	255 5	2763	95	3
8	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	61	120 1	4993	150	0
9	Ministry of Health	5	693	1101	67	0
10	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly	34	294	1115	103	2
11	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration	71	243	1265	20	5
12	Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forestry	13	940 3	18715	1009	0
13	Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Relations with the Business Environment	22	39	263	6	0
14	Ministry of Justice	13	23	254	44	0
15	Ministry of Communications and for Informational Society	20	325	562	23	2
16	Department on Policies for Relationship with	32	58	592	7	0

	Romanians Abroad					
17	Ministry of Public Finances	76	695	797	55	5
18	Ministry for Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue	72	584	1303	77	19
19	Ministry of Transports	61	721	5006	120	1
20	Ministry of Energy	12	54	289	15	0
21	Department for the relation with the Parliament	4	0	32	0	0

Table 7 presents the values of the indicators specific to the secondary component *Communication Feedback*, obtained following the accessing and analysis of the official Facebook pages of the 21 ministries, the data being updated on 15 August 2016.

We can notice that the indicator *Friends* is present on the pages of all the public institutions, recording values between 17 (Department for the relation with the Parliament and Ministry of Communications and for Informational Society) and 71871 (Ministry of National Defence).

The indicator *Page likes* (Like) is present on the pages of all ministries, recording values between 1360 (Department for the relation with the Parliament) and 243005 (Ministry of National Defence).

The indicator *No. of reviews* is present on the pages of 6 ministries, recording a presence frequency of 28,57% and values between 32 (Ministry of Communications and for Informational Society) and 85 Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forestry. The indicator *Review results (no. of stars)* represents the qualitative expression of the quantitative indicator *No. of reviews*, being in a close correlation with it, its presence on the pages of the same 6 ministries recording the same presence frequency, (28.57%), with values between 2.1 (Ministry of Health) and 4.4 (Ministry for Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue).

We have to mention that this indicator can take up values between 0 and 5.



**Table 7. Values of indicators specific to the secondary category *Communication Feedback***

No.	Institution	Communication Feedback			
		Friends	Page likes	No of Reviews	Review result (no of stars)
1	Ministry of National Defence	71871	243005	0	0
2	Ministry of Internal Affairs	10019	87451	0	0
3	Ministry of Health	2880	3440	53	2.1
4	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2693	21247	0	0
5	Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research	2392	16488	0	0
6	Ministry of Youth and Sports	2301	9963	0	0
7	Ministry of Transports	1855	6756	0	0
8	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly	1402	7224	56	2.7
9	Ministry for Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue	1083	8161	58	4,2
10	Ministry of Public Finances	881	7578	0	0
11	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	649	28998	0	0
12	Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forestry	607	9607	85	2.3
13	Ministry of Culture	556	8227	0	0
14	Ministry of European Funds	428	15621	0	0
15	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration	335	9299	0	0
16	Ministry of Justice	264	3455	34	3.5
17	Ministry of Energy	119	2101	0	0
18	Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Relations with the Business Environment	100	19111	0	0

19	Department on Policies for Relationship with Romanians Abroad	80	6649	0	0
20	Ministry of Communications and for Informational Society	17	2468	32	4.4
21	Department for the relation with the Parliament	17	1360	0	0

In Table 8, the indicators specific to the secondary component *Page interactivity* are ranked, from left to right, in the descending order of their presence frequency. We can find the presence of both indicators on the Facebook pages only for a number of 3 ministries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transports and Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration).

The indicator *Connection to the website of the institution* is present on the Facebook pages of all 21 ministries, recording a presence frequency of 100%, while the indicator *Connection to other social networks* is very weakly represented, being present only on the pages belonging to a number of 3 ministries (presence frequency 14.29%). A possible explanation of the weak representation of the second indicator is that not all ministries have pages created on other social networks (Twitter, Instagram), following the fact that, considering the specific of the activity field, the presence of the institutions studied on these social networks does not serve to communication and information purposes. Nevertheless, the presence frequency of the indicator *Connection to the website of the institution* proves that the ministries, through Facebook pages, facilitate the access of visitors to a more complex source of information, represented by the website.

**Table 8. Presence frequency and ranking of indicators specific to the secondary category**  
**Page interactivity**

No.	Institution	Page interactivity	
		Indicators	
		Connection to the website of the institution	Connection to other social networks
1	Ministry of National Defence	E	I
2	Ministry of Internal Affairs	E	I
3	Ministry of Health	E	I
4	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	E	E
5	Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research	E	I
6	Ministry of Youth and Sports	E	I
7	Ministry of Transports	E	E
8	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly	E	I
9	Ministry for Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue	E	I
10	Ministry of Public Finances	E	I
11	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	E	I
12	Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forestry	E	I
13	Ministry of Culture	E	I
14	Ministry of European Funds	E	I
15	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration	E	E
16	Ministry of Justice	E	I
17	Ministry of Energy	E	I
18	Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Relations with the Business Environment	E	I
19	Department on Policies for Relationship with Romanians Abroad	E	I
20	Ministry of Communications and for Informational Society	E	I
21	Department for the relation with the Parliament	E	I
<b>Presence frequency</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>14.29%</b>
<b>Ranking</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

E=indicator's presence; I =indicator's absence

## 6. Results

By this study I tried to answer these three questions:

Q1: What are the modalities of building the image of the public institution through the official Facebook page?

Q2: What are the information and communication practices of public institutions through the official Facebook page?

Q3: What is the efficiency of information and communication realised by public institutions through the official Facebook page?

In direct correlation with these questions, I proposed for testing the following **hypothesis**:

**I:** The official Facebook page of the institution represents a communication tool integrated in its communication strategy. (from Q1+Q2+Q3).

**R1:** From the analysis and interpretation of the study data, I have noticed that the modalities of building the public image through Facebook pages are represented by visual identity elements (institution name, logo or emblem, which constitute the profile photo of the institution, cover photo which, upon the analysis of the pages represented a means of promotion for a governmental campaign, photo archive, constituted following the fact that most of the press releases posted by the public institutions analysed are accompanied by a photo representative for their activity field), which is confirmed by the presence frequency of these indicators, with values of 100%, the indicator *Profile photo* being composed of the sum of indicators *Logo* and *Emblem*. Even in the absence of customized logos, the presence of the government logo constitutes a visual identity element, considering the fact that ministries are an integral part of the government. We notice a very weak representation of the emblem as a visual identity element used on the Facebook pages of the ministries.

**R2:** To provide an answer to the second question, I analysed the indicators specific to the component *Information and communication*. From the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained, I have noticed that the presence frequency of specific indicators indicate the fact that, through the Facebook pages, most of

ministries (71.42%) provide information about the objectives of the institution, by a short presentation, adapted to the format specific to these pages.

With the same information purpose, the Facebook pages contain contact information (address, telephone numbers, the own website of the institution and e-mail addresses, the map with the location of the institution, recording a lower presence frequency, of 33.33%, as compared to the other indicators, whose presence frequency is between 76.19% and 100%).

The Facebook pages of ministries facilitate the access of the visitors to their own websites, which can provide a wider range of information to people interested in it.

All the Facebook pages of the public institutions which made the object of this study contain press release posts, accompanied by photos relevant for their activity field. We notice the presence of dialogic elements, which are represented by comments of visitors and likes given to the posts of the ministries on their Facebook pages, as well as answers offered by the respective public institutions to the comments or questions posted by visitors.

**R3:** In order to give an answer to the third question, I analysed the indicators specific to the component *Communication Feedback*, which may be considered a measure of visibility in the online media of the Facebook pages of ministries. The data provided by the analysis of the indicators *Friends* and *Page likes*, supported also by the data obtained following the analysis of the indicators *Post sharing*, *Comments* and *Post likes*, indicators specific to the secondary component *Communication*, highlight the fact that the Facebook pages of the public institutions studied have a “visibility on the network”, they are searched and accessed by online users, the press releases posted generate reactions from visitors, therefore the information and communication realised by ministries by using the pages on the social network is efficient, the information published on it reaching the target-public.

The answers offered by the study to the questions Q1, Q2 and Q3, allow us to conclude that the Facebook pages of the public institutions subject to the analysis fulfil their function of information and communication support in the online media, this communication presenting dialogic elements, being active, bidirectional, therefore we can consider the hypothesis proposed for testing as confirmed.

## 7. Conclusions

Following the content analysis performed within this study, I have found the presence of visual identity elements on the Facebook pages of the ministries. The number of posts identified in the reference period analysed reveals the fact that they are active, the feedback elements of the current communication (page likes or likes given to releases posted, reviews, comments) prove that the Facebook pages of ministries are accessed and the information reaches the target-public. We can conclude that the Facebook page of a public institution is a tool for presentation, communication and increase of popularity of that institution with the purpose of creating an institutional identity.

Considering the opinion of José van Dijck (2012), with regards to the continuous evolution of social networks -“Far from being finished products, these platforms are social-technical engines of communication trends which, just like fashion, do not have an end, being thus in a continuous evolution.” (p.161), we can assert that the communication modality through such tools must also adapt, evaluating permanently.

The study perform opens the way to possible subsequent researches with regards to the way of communicating of public institutions in the online environment, to respond to the requirements imposed by the alert evolution rhythm of communication tools and devices in the digital era.

The research could be extended over the public institutions in the local public administration, aiming at their presence in communication media offered by Internet (website, social networks, etc.) to highlight their communication modality and their relation with the citizens they represent, the way of building an institutional identity and creating a favourable public image, reflected in trust, needed by institutions to carry out activities at a local level.

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**Annex: Encoding diagram of indicators studied within the research theme – Facebook**

Main components	Secondary components	Indicators	Encoding system	
			Existence	Quantity
Visual identity elements		Public institution name	Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
		Logo	Own	P
			Government	G
			Inexistent	I
		Emblem	Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
		Profile photo	Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
		Cover photo	Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
		Photo archive	Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
		Information and communication	Institution presentation	Institution presentation (About)
Inexistent	I			
Contact details	Institution location map		Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
	Institution address		Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
	Telephone number		Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
	Website address		Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
	E-mail addresses		Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
Communication	Posts		Existent	no.
			Inexistent	0
	Post sharing		Existent	no.
			Inexistent	0
	Post likes		Existent	no.
			Inexistent	0
	Comments to posts		Existent	no.
			Inexistent	0
	Replies to comments – given by the institution		Existent	no.
			Inexistent	0
Communication Feedback	Friends		Existent	no.
			Inexistent	0
	Page likes	Existent	no.	
		Inexistent	0	
Reviews	Existent	no.		

			Inexistent	0
		Review results (stars)	Existent	no.
			Inexistent	0
	Page interactivity	Connection to the website of the institution	Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
		Connection to other social networks	Existent	E
			Inexistent	I
Page accessibility		Technical functionality	The page can be accessed	E
			The page cannot be accessed	I