

How is Social Media Influencing the Way we Communicate?

Diana Gherghita-Mihaila¹

Abstract: Social media has transformed the way we think our campaigns and communicate with our audience, but also it changed the way we get in touch with our target and make it react to what we are saying or doing. The objective of this paper is to emphasize that we not only use social media on a personal level, but we've transformed it in an important marketing tool for our business. Today we live in online almost as much as we live in the real world. A company without a website and social media presence it does not exist. For researchers and headhunters, social media have become an important tool. So we have to be careful with things we post online, because they can say a lot of things about us and can influence our professional development. The fundamentals for this paper are based mainly on the following studies: (1) "Social Media and the Romanian Business Milieu – Impact of Marketing through Social Media on Local Business Environment", published in October 2013, by Ernst & Young, (2) "Social Media Primetime Survey", published by the Romanian consultancy and training company The Connector, (3) "Online Landscape – South-East Europe", published by Gemius Knowledge, in 2014 and (4) "Online Social Networks", by Daedalus MillwardBrown, published in 2011. They all show how social media and online development have impacted on traditional media and how companies cannot ignore these new communication and business channels. Studies on social media also showed that internet and mobile platforms are getting more and more popular, that people and companies are drowned into the digital world, communicating through all types of apps and networks. Used wisely, social media can generate greater and faster results with less money than traditional media (print, television, radio, outdoor). The sources used for this paper say that social media is "the it thing" in the 21st century, when almost every person on the planet has a cell phone or access to one, and more and more people are online daily or have easy access to an internet connection. The value of this paper is given by its impressive numbers. Every day, almost one billion and a half people are active on Facebook, millions and millions are using the internet for information, research, entertainment, and Google become the main source of information globally, with 3 billion queries a day in 2015.

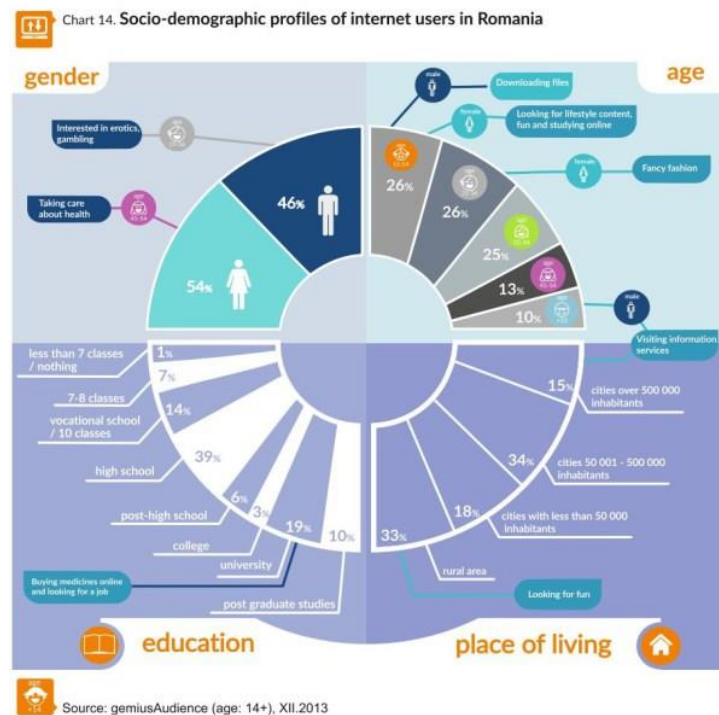
Keywords: new media; internet; communication; online marketing

¹PhD Candidate, Communication Studies – University of Bucharest, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, Romania, Address: District 5, 36-46 Mihail Kogalniceanu Blvd., Bucharest 050107, Romania, Tel.: +40-21-307 73 00, Fax: +40-21-313 17 60, E-mail: diana@proiectemedia.ro.

The 21st century is the century when technology seems to take over, getting more and more into our lives. Today, we have integrated so many devices and platform into our daily experience that we almost forgot how it is to live without them. Are you still opening a dictionary to search for a word or are you using an online source or an app? Are you buying something without searching it online? Or, even more, are still using traditional media to get informed? Probably you said “No” to all of this, because internet is like a second nature to so many people these days. From academic point of view, social media is a new and intriguing tool, which is changing the way we communicate.

Recent studies have showed that we are depending of internet connection and prefer mobile devices that make our lives easier. Almost 60% of Romanians living in the country side have internet connection or access to one, but less have water or sewerage (45%), gas (10%) or toilets in their homes (36%)¹.

WHO ARE ROMANIAN INTERNET USERS?



Source: GemiusAudience (age14+), December 2013.

¹<http://www.brat.ro/brat-in-media/hotnews-ro-brat-internetul-in-mediul-rural-a-atins-nivelul-de-dezvoltare-din-urbanul-anilor-2007-2008.html>.

This is How it Started

5 years ago, hierarchies start changing on the social media market. In 2011, Daedalus MillwardBrown published a paper called “Online Social Network”¹, stating that Facebook is becoming the new leader after Hi5 dramatic traffic loss. At that moment, a person was connected to two social media networks, 4 out of 5 preferring Facebook as main network, spending 66 minutes a day on a login. But they were usually logging on 3.5 times per day, spending almost 4 hours on Facebook. Preferred time: 8 pm - 10 pm.

According to the source, 53.4% of employees were using social media during work hours and almost 60% of students while they were at school. 34.4% were accessing social media through mobile devices, while 21.3% on the way home/to work.

On labor market, social media networks are playing an important role: 22.7% of people have been contacted via their online profile and 17.7% have applied to a job after seeing / reading about it on social media. In 2011, Neogen, Facebook and LinkedIn were the most utilized networks in search of a job. Now figures are even higher.

Quick Overview of B2B Content Marketing

Today, LinkedIn is the most respected online recruiting network for professionals, although Facebook is the leader of all social media market (used mainly for entertainment, information, getting in touch with friends, playing, flirting, etc.), with over one billion and a half active users a month, according to Facebook reports².

We will not go forward without talking a little bit more about LinkedIn and why is it so business effective. Aside of being a great recruitment platform, LinkedIn offers the possibility to present products, brands and services to a dedicated audience, that is focused on content more than on visual. Other platforms, such as Facebook or Youtube, are huge time consumers, because original content has to be created.

According to Content Marketing Institute³, in a survey made for North America on Business to Business (B2B), the commonly used social media platforms are:

LinkedIn;

Twitter;

¹ “Online Social Networks”, by Daedalus MillwardBrown, published in 2011.

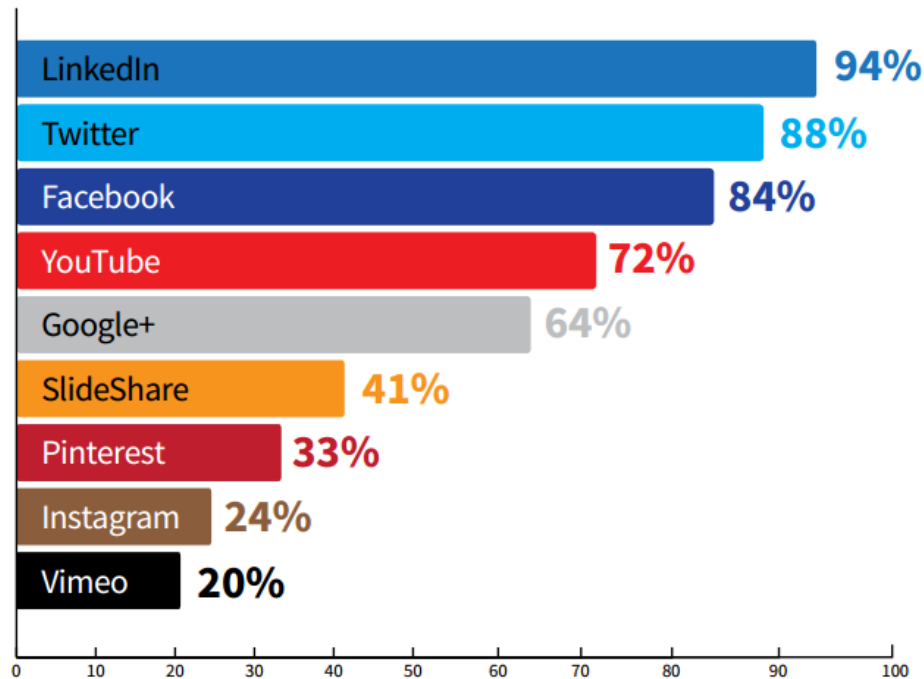
² Facebook.com.

³ 2015 B2Bcontent Marketing Trends – North America, Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProf.

Facebook;
Youtube;
Google+;
SlideShare;
Pinterest;
Instagram;
Vimeo.

Here are the percentages for each and every platform:

B2B Content Marketing Social Media Platform Usage



2015 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Social Media and the Companies

Let's move forward. In 2013, Ernst & Young, published a study after interviewing 173 Romanian professionals, about how companies are active on social media. The study highlighted five things¹:

78% of respondents said they use social media to promote the company. Globally, 97% of companies are present and active in social media.

94% said they use Facebook (92% globally), 43% Youtube (56% globally) and 41% LinkedIn (70% globally).

52% said they use marketing on social media for 1 to 3 years, which indicates a fast guideline for promoting products and services over the internet.

Communication through social media is living its early days when it comes to companies. Only 39% of respondents said that their organization has a special department for online communication.

83% said they use social media as a quick and effective way to present new products and services.

In 2013, Gemius Knowledge has conducted a study analyzing South-Eastern European online market. This is what they concluded: "The countries of South-East Europe constitute one of the smallest CEE markets regarding the size of internet population - 23m internet users in the region in total. There are also the countries where the internet penetration rate is notably varied. Ranging from Slovenia – with internet penetration rate at 73% among users between 18 to 69 years old, to Bosnia & Herzegovina – with almost the lowest percentage of internet users in whole CEE region – 51% of users from 18 to 69 years old.

South-East Europe is among the least developed online markets in the whole CEE region in terms of internet penetration. Online advertising business, with its limits resources, is still in the phase of development, trying to keep track with the global trends and adapt them to local market needs.

The advertising budgets spent on Google and Facebook are indicative of the progressing growth in the region. These global giants consume the majority of online ad spends. For example, in Romania, Google gains more than 50% of all online budgets.

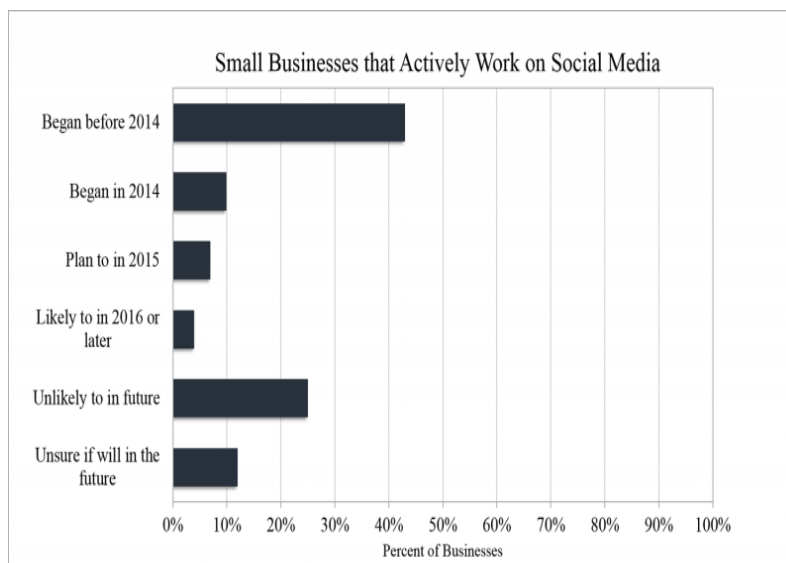
¹"Social Media and the Romanian Business Milieu – Impact of Marketing through Social Media on Local Business Environment", published in October 2013, by Ernst & Young.

The landscape of mobile internet in the region is quite diverse. Croatia and Serbia are among top five countries in CEE with the highest share of mobile page views, 18% and 13%, in March 2014, respectively. Countries such as Romania, Bulgaria or Slovenia note mobile traffic on the level of 7-10%. The least developed state in terms of mobile traffic in whole CEE is Moldova – less than 1%”¹.

Involvement in Social Media

„Social media platforms provide a source of general information and news about a company, a way for businesses to interact with customers and other businesses as well as a way for businesses to improve organic search results”². This is one of the conclusions of a survey conducted by consultancy agency Clutch on small businesses. The survey also showed that 53% of these small businesses are active on social media; this includes constantly maintaining profiles and engaging customers on social platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Google+, and YouTube.

These are the results in a graphic form:



¹ "Online Landscape – South-East Europe", published in 2014, by Gemius Knowledge Study.

² <https://clutch.co/agencies/resources/social-media-2015-small-business-survey>.

Corporate blogging

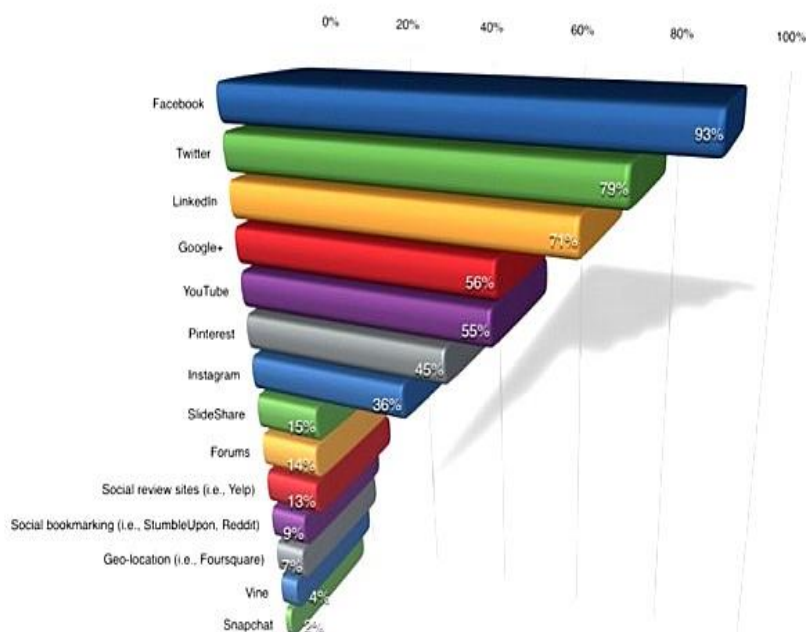
Another online tool for growing business is corporate blogging that is used to translate messages in a way that more people can understand them. Frequently companies use technical language that makes communication difficult. But through the blog, they start telling stories and create a human face and voice, all together with company's social media presence.

According to "Social Media Primetime Survey"¹, people enjoy reading blogs. 75% spend 30 minutes or more on blogs, mainly in the morning or after 6 pm until 10 pm.

Top Social Media Platforms in the World

But let's go back to social media hierarchy. According to Social Media Examiner² this is how it looked in 2015.

Commonly used social media platforms



Source: (c) 2015 SocialMediaExaminer - 2015 Social Media Marketing Industry Report

¹ "Social Media Primetime Survey", published by the Romanian consultancy and training company The Connector

² <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/>.

Why is Facebook such an important tool for marketing and communication?

Today we live in online almost as much as we live in the real world. A company without a website and social media presence it does not exist. And although Facebook represents a huge potential market, it is becoming increasingly difficult to stand out from the crowd. Zephoria.com¹ made in 2015 a list of 20 valuable Facebook statistics for greater marketing success.

Worldwide, there are over 1.55 billion monthly active Facebook users (MAUs) which is a 14 percent increase year over year. (Source: Facebook as of 9/30/15)
So Facebook is too big to be ignored!

4.5 billion likes generated daily as of May 2013 which is a 67 percent increase from August 2012 (Source: Facebook)

1.01 billion people log onto Facebook daily, which represents a 17% increase year over year (Source: Facebook as of 9/30/15) That means that a huge and vastly growing number of Facebook users are active and consistent in their visits to the site, making them a promising audience for marketing efforts.

There are 1.39 billion mobile active users (Source: Facebook as of 9/30/15) an increase of 23 percent year-over-year.

On average, the Like and Share Buttons are viewed across almost 10 million websites daily. (Source: Facebook as of 10/2/2014)

In Europe, over 307 million people are on Facebook. (Source: Search Engine Journal)

Age 25 to 34, at 29.7% of users, is the most common age demographic. (Source: Emarketer 2012) This is the prime target demographic for many businesses' marketing efforts.

Five new profiles are created every second. (Source: ALLFacebook 2012) So potential audience on Facebook is growing exponentially.

Facebook users are 80% female. (Source: Brandwatch)

Highest traffic occurs mid-week between 1 to 3 pm. (Source: Bit.ly blog) On another note, a Facebook post at 7 pm will result in more clicks on average than

¹ <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>

posting at 8pm (Source: Forbes). This statistic may be a factor for planning social communication scheduling.

On Thursdays and Fridays, engagement is 18% higher. (Source: Bit.ly blog)

There are 83 million fake profiles. (Source: CNN) So always remain thoughtful and strategic in your efforts. Also, fake or not, these are still potential consumers. There are various reasons for fake profiles, including professionals doing testing and research, and people who want to segment their Facebook use more than is possible with one account.

Photo uploads total 300 million per day. (Source: Gizmodo) This is an indication of engaged users; also, it is an indication that there are a lot of photos, as well as other information, competing for users' attention, so efforts should be strategically targeted.

The Average American Spends 40 minutes on Facebook (Source: SproutSocial 6/20/15)

Every 60 seconds on Facebook: 510 comments are posted, 293,000 statuses are updated, and 136,000 photos are uploaded. (Source: The Social Skinny)

4.75 billion pieces of content shared daily as of May 2013 which is a 94 percent increase from August 2012. (Source: Facebook)

50% of 18-24 year-olds go on Facebook when they wake up. (Source: The Social Skinny)

One in five page views in the United States occurs on Facebook. (Source: Infodocket 2012)

42% of marketers report that Facebook is critical or important to their business. (Source: State of Inbound Marketing 2012)

16 million local business pages have been created as of May 2013 which is a 100 percent increase from 8 million in June 2012. (Source: Facebook)

Facebook marketing continues to explode and has transformed how business is conducted and it's used by local businesses to extend their markets. So it is obvious that it cannot be ignored in terms of future communication and marketing. We have to keep up with what is new and trending, because this is influencing our results.

The online presence of companies is bigger and bigger, year by year. There are networks that can work for some, but for others won't have any effect. That is why researching and testing new channels is so important before investing.

Studies are indicating that the future will bring even more competition on the online market, so it requires special skills for best results. As for the companies, they will continue to look for new ways and practices to target their specific audience. And online is doing that more accurately day by day.

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