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Facebook's role in online reputation management

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Abstract. Controlling online content with a brand, which performs well in search and social results, is considered a major force when it comes to image analysis in the online environment. Positive reviews, press coverage and other beneficial materials are also considered useful for a brand. In addition, a strong search profile, including links from authoritative sites to positive online content, is a form of advantage. In order to investigate the interaction of Facebook users, a questionnaire was prepared which was distributed and completed by online users. The role of the questionnaire is to capture users' perception of the importance they attach to their image from the perspective of their personal Facebook profile. The objectives of the study were to identify the main reasons why Internet users use the Facebook site, the frequency with which they access the social network, the most used device for logging in and the evaluation of affirmations that confirm or disprove the use of Facebook to promote the personal image. The questionnaire was distributed on the Internet and on several Facebook groups with over 50,000 members, between June 10 and 25, 2019.

Keywords. Facebook; reputation management; personal image; online reputation

Introduction

Establishing authenticity in front of the public is a prerequisite for gaining trust and establishing a trust report offers great credibility for future actions. Moreover, through the values and ideas displayed by individuals or organizations, they become easier to accept by the public with similar values.

Reputation management is about controlling and shaping reputation for a person or organization. It is the process by which the public perception is manipulated through the use of mass communication channels (more recently, Social Media has a major contribution in this regard) and by transmitting information and values that represent what the person or organization wants to know about it. itself.

The benefits of a good reputation are recognized as a very valuable intangible asset that can be a way to successfully achieve the goals pursued. For this reason, reputation management most often refers to suppressing information with negative connotations and highlighting the positive aspects. Hiring specialized personnel for reputation management has become a common practice for both individuals and organizations, be they public or private. A good reputation is sometimes a decisive competitive advantage for individual or organizational success.

If in the past reputation management was served by mass media such as the press, radio and television, in recent years the management of reputation in the online environment has become more and more important due to the spectacular increase in the use of the Internet worldwide. The main advantage offered by the online management is the possibility to create channels that can be fully controlled by the individuals or organizations that want to improve the public image.

Thus, in the last decade, the use of personal blogs, websites for companies and social networks have expanded. Through these channels reputation management is coordinated to obtain a desired public image. Thus, reputation becomes an "essentialized image" that is generalized to the person or organization with which it is associated (Cismaru, 2012). The influence of the classical channels has greatly diminished, but also the influence of journalists and politicians who easily controlled the information that reached the public in the past (Tasente, 2014).

Given the importance of reputation, its management must be regarded as a continuous activity to exist in the public mind as an authentic and credible person. Managing the public image involves knowing the current state of the public image, minimizing the negative aspects, engaging the neutral public in supporting and appreciating the person or organization and presenting a consistent attitude towards the public that already shows their appreciation and support. Controlling online content with a brand, which performs well in search and social results, is considered a major force when it comes to image analysis in the online environment. Positive reviews, press coverage and other beneficial materials are also considered useful for a brand. In addition, a strong search profile, including links from authoritative sites to positive online content, is a form of advantage.

The weaknesses of a brand profile may include negative online content. Wrong comments, negative journalism, positive posts or images on less positive blogs would fall into this category. Opportunities include aspects of an online brand profile, such as gaps in coverage. For example, if most similar brands reflect a certain set of online publications that are missing from the online profile of the brand concerned, this may be considered an opportunity.

This means that search engines and social media, as well as consumers of information, may have to wait for a certain type of content that might work well online. Threats to the online reputation include events and trends that occur across the industry, as well as existing threats to the targeted brand. For example, financial services firms may face reputational threats during an economic downturn. Although it may not yet affect the target brand, it could.

The public image is the consequence of the efforts of acceptance and integration in the society. Offering real or perceived value to the public is reflected by the appreciation received by a person or organization. Solving important issues for a large number of people by providing a service or product with qualities that are appreciated by the public will form a good public image.

The process of forming the public image is a long-term one that is susceptible to dynamic movements. It is the result of information of a person or organization about itself or of third parties about it, combined with the direct experience of the public with actions and services or products. This training process is based on a direct and indirect communication of the values supported by a public or private person, institution or company. The result is always passed through the filter of personal subjectivism and through the psychological component of the established communication relationship.

Viewed from a psychological perspective, Adam O'Sullivan and Zaheer Hussain (2017) showed that "narcissism, stress and self-esteem have significant predictors of Facebook intensity use and that a short Facebook session can increase self-esteem. However, Facebook use does not cause an immediate change in narcissism or stress".

Facebook, used for socializing or building a reputation?

Methodology

In order to investigate the interaction of Facebook users, a questionnaire was prepared which was distributed and completed by online users. The role of the questionnaire is to capture users' perception of the importance they attach to their image from the perspective of their personal Facebook profile.

Currently in Romania, there are approximately 9.6 million people who have a personal profile on Facebook and use this platform in 2019, compared to 2010, when less than 500,000 people were active on Facebook.

The objectives of the study were to identify the main reasons why Internet users use the Facebook site, the frequency with which they access the social network, the most used device for logging in and the evaluation of affirmations that confirm or disprove the use of Facebook to promote the personal image.

The questionnaire was distributed online and was completed by 410 randomly selected people from the online environment. The questionnaire was distributed on the Internet and on several Facebook groups with over 50,000 members, between June 10 and 25, 2019.

Participants in the study had to complete a questionnaire with 9 questions. In point 5 of the questionnaire the agreement was evaluated with 15 statements, by checking the total, partial, neutral agreement and partial or total disagreement. The sample consists of 87.80% women and 12.20% men, being randomly made by those who agreed to answer. The majority of the respondents, 87%, are between the ages of 18-25 years, and the area of origin is roughly divided, with 51.22% of respondents from the rural area and 48.78% from the urban area.

Centralization and data analysis

The data obtained were interpreted by means of individual analysis for each element using the graphical tables associated with the answers to each question.

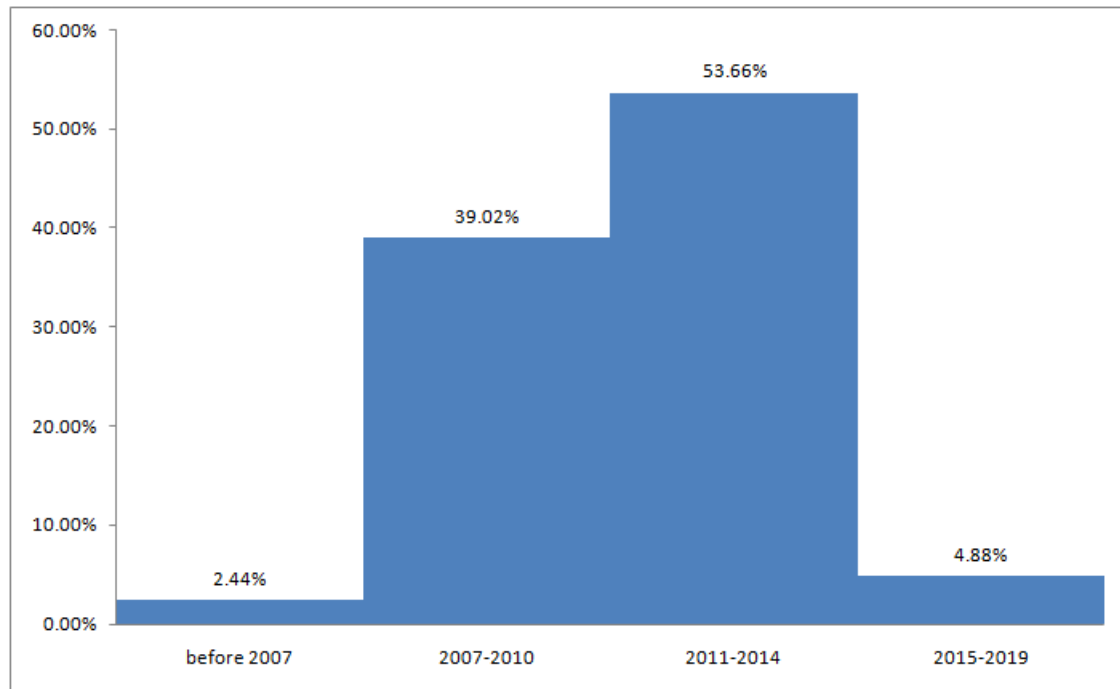


Figure 1 - The period in which the respondents built their Facebook profile

The frequency with which the Facebook site is accessed is several times a day for 97.56% of the respondents. For logging in, 100% of them mentioned that they use their mobile phone most often to access Facebook. This is due to the development of technology for smart phones and the 4G network. At the beginning of Facebook in Romania, its users used in 90% of cases the laptop or PC to access the platform (Tasente, Ciacu, Sandu, 2012).

Most of the respondents (26.8%) mentioned that they have between 501-999 friends on Facebook, and 24.4% mentioned that they have between 1000-2000 friends. Only 20% said they had less than 500 friends on Facebook.

Regarding the addition of friends to the Facebook profile, 29.2% of the respondents said that they completely disagree with the statement: "When I make friends on Facebook I feel an increase in self-esteem". At the same statement, 4.9% stated that they partially disagreed, 39% had a neutral feeling, 19.5% were in partial agreement and only 7% were in total agreement with this statement.

A decrease in self-esteem when losing friends on Facebook was confirmed by only 2.44% of respondents. Most of the respondents (46%) completely disagree with this statement, 9.7% partially disagree, and 41% of them have a neutral attitude towards losing friends on Facebook. So, users of the platform appreciate the new friends linked through the social network, but do not feel like a personal loss when they lose their virtual friends. In the statement "I use Facebook to connect with old friends and to make new friends", 19.5% were in full agreement with it, and 41.4% were in partial agreement. Moreover, only 13% of the respondents use all or part of the Facebook network to promote the business. The intention to become "influencers" on Facebook was confirmed by only about 10% of the survey participants. This statement is in accordance with the respondents' total or partial disagreement with the statement "The number of followers / friends I have on Facebook are important to me", which represented 46% of the answers.

Regarding personal posts on Facebook, 39% of the respondents have a neutral attitude towards the "Like" reaction they receive. For 41% it is not important whether or not

their posts are appreciated, and for about 20% it is important to receive as many likes on Facebook.

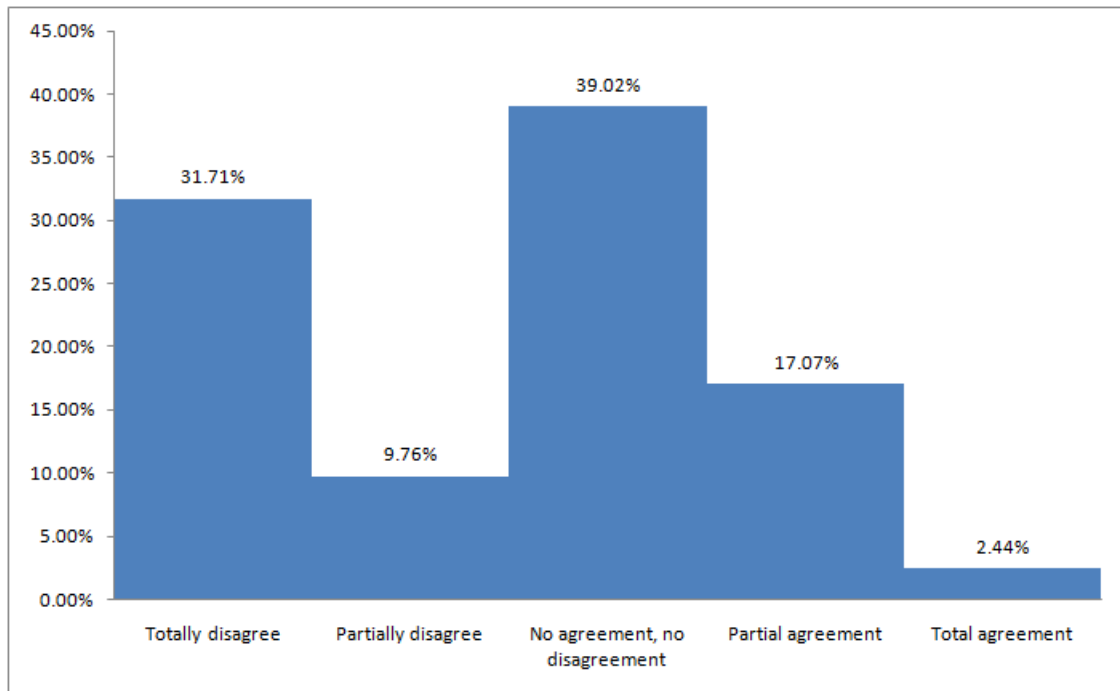


Figure 2 - Do you agree with the statement: "It is important to get lots of likes on Facebook"?

A greater concern of Facebook users is compared to comments on their posts, 37% of them being in full or partial agreement with this statement, and 22% neither agree nor disagree. The rest of about 42% declare not affected by the feedback received. In order to promote a positive image and with many likes on Facebook, most of the people surveyed (over 90%) would not invest funds in promotion campaigns or for the sake of a better reputation.

In the statement "Who I am on Facebook is different from who I am in real life", over 65% of the people surveyed said that this statement does not represent the truth regarding them. 12% are in partial agreement, and 17% cannot decide whether or not the statement is valid for them. Only 4.88% of the people surveyed confirmed that their Facebook profile is an alter-ego in relation to their social status. Most Facebook users consider that there is a concordance between who they really are and how they are perceived on Facebook, but in this case, the aspect of truncation or lying by omission intervenes. It can be seen that the personal image is true, but it is not complete, which can create an idealized image viewed from the perspective of the Facebook profile.

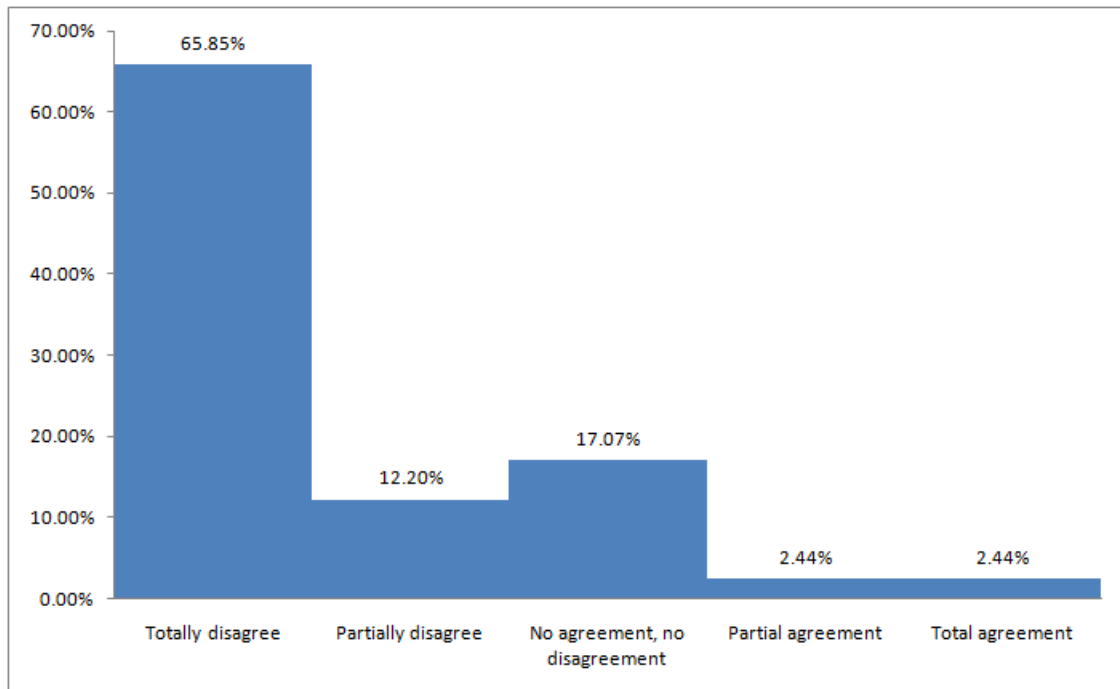


Figure 3 - Do you agree with the statement: "Who on Facebook is different from who I am in real life"?

The premise of happiness exposed by the Facebook posts is rejected by the respondents of the questionnaire, over 58% of them agreeing totally or at least partially that "the pictures on Facebook in which people seem happy do not reflect the reality". A quarter of them think this aspect reflects reality, and almost 27% have a neutral opinion. Social communication is facilitated by the use of this social network for only 19% of the questionnaire respondents. This aspect probably involves multiple communication channels and the storage of information and their accessibility over time as an argument for improving communication. Over 63% mentioned that they have many friends in real life, beyond the friendship relationships intermediated by Facebook.

Conclusions

The use of SNSs has grown enormously in the last decade, especially due to the complete communication possibilities they offer. Public image and online reputation management on Facebook have started to become specializations and even study subjects in universities due to the massive impact that Social Media has on personal or business development. However, the attention they give and receive to the posts of personal information in this social network is undervalued in terms of the importance they attach to negative feedback and overestimated in terms of positive feedback received on Facebook. The manifestation of an attitude of predominantly positive segregation of personal information about the own person that users post on Facebook is in line with the reality outside the network. In general, each user assumes as a public person the emanation of a positive and pleasant social image, appreciated and valued, a confirmation of the higher needs in Maslow's pyramid. The use of Facebook is a digital extension of the personal reputation over which the user has greater control, but to which other users have an assumed response and which they can express lightly to the one who emits information about himself.

According to the opinions acquired over the years, it can be seen that social networks are a precursor to "second life" platforms, sites of virtual worlds of social interaction in which users will choose a less "alter ego" with their reality and more in line with the ideological image that the user will project on him to communicate and to socialize.

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