# CSR as Corporate Power. A Communication View Facebook Approach: An Exploratory Study

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**Abstract.** *This article aims to operationalize and measure the power of corporate communication and the main strategies that Romanian companies use to communicate their CSR campaigns on Facebook. The study conducts an extensive survey designed to emphasize the corporate communication indicators of power within CSR communication on Facebook and their correlation with the CSR communication strategy used by the first 100 biggest companies in Romania according to their turnover. The most important findings refer to the practice of Romanian companies of using their Facebook pages, primarily in order to expand their market, and less for reaching the confidence of their stakeholders. Thus, they profess their preference for visibility against trust. Romanian companies mainly use the self-centered strategy to communicate their CSR actions on Facebook, which means that the indicatives „relationship" and „co-creation" are very weak from the company's point of view. The resistance to power is strong on the stakeholders' side. As a result, it can be observed that there is a big pressure from the stakeholders' point of view concerning the CSR communication on Facebook, in Romania. While companies try to sell their products or services through Facebook, stakeholders try to establish a relationship and consolidate a trust liaison with the companies they choose to buy from. In this context, it can be acknowledged that companies would rather respond to stakeholders' questions or inquiries, than be proactive and anticipate some of their needs or complaints.*

**Keywords:** *CSR, corporate power, corporate communication, Facebook, network society.*

## Introduction

Nowadays, most of the corporate communication process is carried out in the network society. Due to this developmental change of paradigm it is important to understand how this process has changed and how does it work.

Now, there is a significant lack of specific relationships to be called „social". They could be grouped into a new social area, which could act as a new society (Latour, 2005). The word "social" has lost its homogeneity and nowadays it mostly defines an association between multiple heterogeneous

elements, thus this word goes to designate a connection between more things that do not have a social origin (Latour, 2005).

Corporate communication is mostly associated with *mass communication*. Before discussing about the development stages of corporate communication I would like to stress the importance of mass communication and its relationship with technology. With the development of technology, the boundaries of the mass communication concept have grown so much that it has become difficult to control the information (Arsenault & Castells, 2008; Bennet, 2003). That is the very reason for which the concept of „mediated communication" was created (Cardoso, 2008, p.587), a new process that divides both society and the media system. The new media system is functional only within the network itself because any kind of information can be accessed only through an Internet network, or through a network connection to a database with content such as video, music or images.

The network is an interconnection of components whose functions depend on how it was programmed to operate. The nodes of the network may become important centers if they absorb and process information efficiently (Castells, 2009). The network society, that was called at the end of the XX century the „economy of the future" (Achrol & Kotler, 1999) is formed around several networks through which information is transmitted (Castells, 2009), and in its turn the information conveying the meaning that creates the connection between two communicators (Castells, 2009).

As far as the evolution of the technology information is concerned, there is the „network economy" (Shapiro & Varian, 1998) that has a major role. One of its main pillars is the information defined as an „experience good" (Shapiro & Varian, 1998) which means that interaction is essential in the purchasing process, between the product and the client, but also between the company and its stakeholders. Nonetheless, the information cannot be accessed without the proper technology that allows users to take only what they need (Shapiro & Varian, 1998). There must be mentioned the „competition system" (Shapiro & Varian, 1998) as another important pillar of the network economy that integrates companies in an interconnected system of needs, which means that the products have to be compatible with the rest of the products and services on the market in order to be part of the system.

*The network economy* is based on *knowledge organizations* (Achrol & Kotler, 1999) that develop more on the horizontal level and less on the vertical one and have strong connections with the social environment. There are also

three types of economic interactions such as autarkic self-provision, bilateral interaction and multilateral collaboration through provided platforms, which means that groups of economic agents require a special environment through which they can interact (Gilles, Lazarova & Ruys, 2015). When interaction is brought into discussion, there is another concept that requires attention: *the sharing economy* (Schor, Fitzmaurice, Carfagna & Attwood-Charles, 2015) that emphasizes the paradox of openness and distinction of the purchasing activity within the online platform, because even if most claim a great openness and egalitarism there are also platforms that inhibit the formation of matches. Very close to sharing economy there can be noticed the *hybrid economy* (Scaraboto, 2015) that refers to the logic of buying and selling products: if the non-market economy was based on mutuality and interdependence, the marked based exchange would be based on self-interest and profit maximization, while the hybrid economy would be based on diverse logics that combine the previous ones (Scaraboto, 2015).

In the context of network economy, the development of the technology leads us toward a new communication model that is specific to networks and replaces mass communication. This change was also generated by the way in which stakeholders used their own media channels, either for personal purposes or professional ones (Cardoso, 2008). The network society generated *the networked communication*, which precedes the ancient communication paradigms and produces new ways of communication that empower the individuals (Cardoso, 2008).

The networked communication's characteristics are the use of creative images, accessibility of information, innovation in communication, innovation of news. The network itself creates the new media system. According to this paradigm, media are no longer represented by channels of communication but by the message itself (Cardoso, 2008).

The networked communication generates „hypermedia campaigns" that Howard describes in a political context as the kind of campaigns where the electors do not choose the candidate to follow, but the candidate chooses its followers (Howard, 2006).

When considering communication power it is comprehensible that we cannot take a step forward unless we firstly define the term power in the network society. Power is one of the society's fundamental organization processes and it may be exercised either by coercion or by creating meanings in the minds of people through speeches. Manuel Castells (2009, p.29) records that power is not an attribute of the network but a kind of

*relationship* between the various actors in society. This is the relationship between two individuals who, based on productivity and experience, could impose the will of some subjects upon others through violence, psychological pressure or symbolic communication (Castells, 2010).

## The concept of power in corporate communication within the network society

*Defining corporate communication*
In order to define corporate communication, we have to recall the way it initially developed within companies. Before the conceptualization of the network society (Castells, 2000) one of the first understandings of corporate communication was the *lobby* activity. Besides corporate communication, the lobby activity also represented one of the first conceptualizations of the corporate power through which companies could influence the social policies (Miller & Mooney, 2010). Thus, it can be clearly understood that during those times the concept of power was associated mainly with the company than to the communication process itself.

After the lobby period, practitioners started to use the term of *public relations* in order to define corporate communication as the sole representation of the relationship between the company and the press. Throughout time, relations of power influenced the evolution of public relations towards corporate communications. The *Power* exercised by governments, trade unions, investors or stakeholders against companies generated new areas of expertise that had implications in public affairs, marketing and internal communication (Cornelissen, van Bekkum, van Ruler & Betteke, 2006).

The scientific literature reveals that one of the main characteristics of corporate communication results from public relations: „the focus on the organization as a whole" and on its representation to its stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2011; Cornelissen et al., 2006). Thus, nowadays, the term of „corporate communication" covers many of the corporate functions from marketing to public relations, from intern to external stakeholders through a communication process developed via specific channels of communication (Argenti, 2006).

One of the most recent and comprehensive definitions of corporate communication in scientific literature is the one provided by Joep Cornelissen (2011, p.5): „Corporate communication is a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal

and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favorable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent". It can be acknowledged that nowadays-corporate communication is directly linked to reputation. This means that the communication of Corporate Social Responsibility activities consists in a natural development of corporate communication practices.

*Corporate communication on social media*
For the analysis of corporate communication in social media it is strongly required the definition of social media. The scientific literature defines social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61), the ubiquitous conversation and permanent dialogue between an infinite number of users (Carim & Warwick, 2013).

Scholars have recently featured the importance of social media in communicating brands in general, that is, based on two fundamental approaches: *interactivity* and *openness* (Simmons, Thomas & Truong, 2010; Vernuccio, 2014).

As far as *interactivity is concerned,* social media allowed companies to interact with their stakeholders, and the stakeholders to interact between them for the first time. That is why social media is also called „*consumer-generated media*" describing infinite sources of online information that are created and re-created by the consumers (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006).

Interactivity changes its form in the transition from mass communication to network communication. Approached from the point of view of the classical model of communication, interactivity represents the relationship between communicators through which they exchange messages among themselves, while in communication within networks any of communicators can intervene and change messages in real time. Thus, in order to create *interactivity* in a networked communication it is required the existence of *real-time communication* (Cardoso, 2008).

Interactivity is also important from the point of view of the things that people do when interacting. In this type of interaction people exchange more than information, they bring with them other commitments that they have in other types of networks and advocate for them (De Bakker, 2012).

In addition to this, *interactivity* is the main indicator of trust in social media because it links brands directly with their customer's perceptions and brands cannot control this type of communication (Simmons et al., 2010).

On the other hand, the concept of *openness* is directly linked to concepts like *web 2.0* and *open source brands* that allow companies to involve actively consumers in co-creation of brands and products (Mairinger, 2008). When contributing to an open source brand the customer is involved in one of the following dimensions: physical, experience, code (text) and meaning, creating benefit for the consumers and for the brand itself (Pitt, Watson, Berthon, Wynn & Zinkhan, 2006). Taking this perspective into consideration it can be understood that the sources of corporate brands are open and that those brands are no longer the result of a unique vision, but the result of a group of managers and consumers' work (Pitt *et al.*, 2006).

Corporate communication can use social media in three ways: to reach leaders with new perspectives, to listen to stakeholders, or to initiate interactive ways of communication with stakeholders (Vernuccio, 2014).

*Operationalizing power in corporate communication within the network society*
*~The relationship*
Many scholars had studied the concept of power in communication before conceptualizing corporate communication. One of the first concepts associated with power in the communication process was the „***common will***" (Habermas, 1977). When considering Hannah Arendt's study about the concept of power in the communication process, Jürgen Habermas makes references to the concept of power whose existence is being made possible on one condition, that of a *group* (Habermas, 1977), thus power being born of *common will*. Analyzing this concept in terms of political communication, we can note a very important distinction that might be very useful in other types of communication, apart from the political one, namely that the agent of communication is not meant to obey the common will but to create it in order to meet common objectives (Habermas, 1977).

*Common will*, together with the media, will thus transform into „*common sense*" (Castells, 2000). In the information age the channel of communication are no longer represented by the media, but by common sense. In the scientific literature, the common sense is directly linked to a network, being a specific concept of the network society. Thus, the common sense is the operationalization of power in the process of communication specific to the network society (Castells, 2000).

When drawing a parallel between the vision of Habermas on the concept of power and that of Catells' it can be acknowledged the fact that with the evolution of technology and the removal of communication in cyberspace, common will was transformed into *common sense* or *common meaning*, the latter being the generator of information networks (Castells, 2000).

Recent research emphasizes the fact that the success of a company is dependent on the way in which its stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2011) perceive it. From this point of view, the scientific literature reveals a new operationalization of power in corporate communication *the relationship*.

The information age had created a new communication landscape that regards communication channels, the methods for the identification of the audience, the form and content of messages and feedback (Ihator, 2001). The issue arising from it is the alteration of the power structure of the company and of the relationship between the company and its stakeholders (Ihator, 2001). All structural compounds of the communication process are now reconfigured: agenda setting, structure of the message, the message itself and feedback (Ihator, 2001). Through the new media, the corporate power is now more visible. If radio empowered corporations and helped them to better the communication of their messages, new media helps them share their power with their stakeholders. The scientific literature reveals that the corporate power exerted trough communication in the information age consists in the relationship between the corporation and its stakeholders (Ihator, 2001). This means that the power is no longer inside the message, but inside the network built around the message.

The relationship built around corporate communication preserves the *common sense,* but not the *common will*. In regards to the actual construction of power, specialized literature points out that that is possible solely by creating meaning in the human mind through communication. The way people think about the society they live in reveals the communication power and the way in which it can be exercised (Castells, 2011). The construction of meaning is taking place primarily in a cultural context that is both local and global, and is characterized by a tremendous diversity. The *power of the network* is reflected in the fact that it cancels any other form of control over the message sent to the network (Castells, 2009).

*~The co-creation*
Power in corporate communication also belongs to the stakeholders. One of the first conceptualizations of this kind of power in the network society was called „mass-self communication" (Castells, 2007). This space was formed after the infinite possibilities of communication via the Internet. Manuel

Castells associates this type of communication with the "electronic autism" (Castells, 2007, 2009) which refers to the power of individuals to interpret and redistribute infinitely their messages in cyberspace, independent of the will of the author. With the conceptualization of the „mass self-communication", the power is no longer the attribute of an individual or a group, but the attribute of the network (Uysal & Yang, 2013). Reconsidering the corporate communication, it can be stated that the power of this type of communication lies in the network around the company, namely in the relationship that the company has developed with its stakeholders.

Emphasizing the above-mentioned *relationship,* the scientific literature reveals another characteristic of the corporate communication through the new media: „*networked co-creation*" of communication (Hearn, Foth & Gray, 2009). It means that in the information age the stakeholders of the company have the power to create the corporate communication on their own, the so-called *user generated content* through which each interaction generates more meaningful content for the network. Involving new media in corporate communication allows companies to strengthen their relationship with the existing stakeholders and create new ones with potential stakeholders (Hearn et al., 2009).

*~The resistance to power*
The co-creation of communication within the network also has consequences that were conceptualized as „*the counter-power*". Scholars define this new phenomena as "the capacity of social actors to problematize and change power relations within society" (Beck, 2005, p.6; Castells, 2007, p.248).

The counter-power is developed by the mass-self communication. In this sense, in a study of Catalan society, it is revealed that individuals who have autonomous projects tend to use the Internet more and as they do, they become independent regarding social rules (Castells, 2007).

Manuel Castells shows that the power is exercised in the networked society through the network. The exercise of power can be carried out in several ways: *networking power*, the power of individuals and organizations that are part of the core network on communities and individuals who are not part of this network; *Network Power* is the power generated by the criteria that can perform network interaction; networked power represents power generated randomly in which social actors can interact within the network; *network-making power*, the power to generate some networks based on interests and values of the programmer and the power to connect different

networks through strategic alliances between dominant players and some networks (Catells, 2009, 2011).

Inside the network, there are some power holders that the scientific literature calls the *gatekeepers* (Nahon, 2007). *The gatekeeping theory* makes clear distinctions between the *gatekeepers* and the *gated*, which are dynamic roles and reveal that the gatekeeper's role depends on the stakeholders they interact with and the context in which they function, becoming gated in their turn (Nahon, 2007).

## CSR and corporate communication

Corporate reputation is closely linked to *corporate identity,* which can be built only through corporate communication (Argenti & Forman, 2002). Fukukawa, Balmer and Gray (2007, p.2) indicate a corelation between corporate identity, CSR and ethics resulting in ethical identity or "ethicalization" that is initiated by three forces: "(1) the altruistic beliefs of a leader, (2) strategic alternatives in order to gain competitive advantages against global competition, (3) external forces such as changes in legislation/ social norms". Corporate identity, as Argenty and Forman (2002) mention, is the only concept that can be held under control by the corporation during the corporate communication process.

Corporate Social Responsibility is a very complex concept that embodies the implication of companies in different types of community issues concerning environment, welfare or social issues (Blombäck & Scandelius, 2013). In order to establish the guiding principles of CSR I have chosen the European Commission's definition which defines CSR as "[...] a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p.6). Beyond the voluntary aspect, CSR is already defined as a competitive advantage among companies' "consideration of multiple stakeholders and global impact" (Smith, 2007, p.187). If traditional consumers were interested in product quality or financial performances of the companies, nowadays their most common concerns would be related to CSR activities linked to employees, environment or community involvement (Dawkins & Lewis, 2003). So far CSR represents the link between business and society as a whole emphasizing sustainable development as a must (Crişan & Zbuchea, 2015).

Communicating CSR is also a many-sided work, as scholars featured in recent scientific papers, and the effort can generate limited effects if it is not

communicated to the relevant stakeholders (Schmetz, 2012) or if it is not communicated in order to spread the public cynism toward companies (Dawkins, 2004). Due to the development of the society and new media, nowadays consumers take transparency for granted and expect corporations to respond immediately to public demands (Dawkins, 2004). They are also expected to act like regular *citizens*, working for the general wealth of the society. In order to achieve this identity corporations have to transfer their values to the stakeholders through communication. Scientific literature emphasizes the complexity of this kind of communication, which should consider society as a whole (Colleoni, 2013). Last but not least, as far as values are concerned, a recent research emphasized the role of personal values of the CSR managers in managing their CSR campaigns that influence them in choosing the social cause that the company will associate with, making the ratio between the organizational authority and the personal authority higher on the managers' side (Şerban, 2015).

Considering these arguments scholars have constructed a communication view on CSR that define it "as a communication form and as a forum for debates on social norms and expectations attached to corporate responsibilities" (Schultz, Castello & Morsing, 2013, p.682).

## CSR communication on social media

As far as social media is concerned, one very important aspect of corporate communication in general is *legitimacy*. The scientific literature defines this concept (legitimacy) related to CSR as an increasing demand of citizens, that corporations explain not only in their economic activities but also in the environment and social implications of the business (Colleoni, 2013; Johansen & Nielsen, 2012). Scholars linked corporate communication legitimacy to perceptions of the public when it came about actions of a company that has to act in agreement with the society's expectations (Dawkins, 2004; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Suchman, 1995). Beyond technical aspects, legitimacy is closely linked to „cultural norms, symbols, beliefs, and rituals" (Suchman, 1995, p.571). This is the reason why nowadays corporate communication needs to look at the company as a whole.

Another concept that is closely linked to legitimacy is the *institutionalization* of CSR that occurs due to four external triggers such as competition, regulative norms, professional norms and public pressure (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). Those triggers generate the CSR strategy of communication: Symbolic communication („CSR is seen as a practice

invented by a corporation and imitated by competitors"), defaulted communication ("if there are internal or external rules that enforce strong self-regulation") and dialogic communication ("if watchdog organizations or mass media play a vital role in the public sphere") (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010, p.15).

When considering the importance of social media, it is believed that the power of interconnection and that of creating the best context for word of mouth is one of the main reasons, thus explaining why people tend to trust social media more than the traditional one (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2015). On the other hand, social media are the public space where people can have a connection with their favorite companies (Jeong, 2011) or the agora of discussions about CSR activities (Crişan & Zbuchea, 2015).

As I was already showing in the first part of this paper, stakeholders are no longer passive receivers of the company's messages within social media, but they are actively involved in the communication process (Dellarocas, 2003). This lack of boundaries in the development of the corporate message reconfigures the communication models of CSR activities in social media.

If we focus on the company, the scientific literature reveals three types of communication strategies based on Mette and Schultz CSR strategy models of communication (Mette & Schultz, 2006): *self-centered*, *mediated* and *dialogical strategy* (Colleoni, 2013). The companies oriented through the self-centered strategy define their CSR agenda internally. The mediated strategy means that the company uses an expert that endorses it and communicates it to the stakeholders. The dialogical strategy defines the stakeholders as the main actors that interact directly with the company and co-create the strategy (Colleoni, 2013).

If we focus on the stakeholders, there are also three types of CSR communication strategies: *the stakeholder information strategy* (one-way communication from the company to the stakeholders), *the stakeholder response strategy* (two-way asymmetric communication model) and the *stakeholder involvement strategy* (the company assumes a dialogue with its stakeholders) (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

After defining the CSR strategies of communication in social media, Colleoni (2013) identifies the characteristics of CSR communication in social media: companies do not share common public, they rather tend to have their own audience that is interested in specific companies, than in CSR as a whole. Concerning the CSR strategy of communication, no company, within the

selected ones, interacts with experts, which means they mostly use the self-centered and the dialogical strategy of CSR communication.

In regards to CSR communication new media represent a *moderation space* used by companies to improve their reputation and their relations with stakeholders, as well as with the financial performances of the organization (Capriotti, 2011). Therefore, Schultz et al (2013) define the construction of CSR in the network society as a "communicative event" and "symbolic resource" and define CSR from a communication point of view as "symbolically mediated interaction".

When discussing about CSR communication on social media there are a number of differences between different types of social media channels. As it was observed, the CSR messages published on the general Facebook page of the company increase the reputation of that particular company in comparison to those published on a CSR dedicated Facebook page. In addition to this, it has been noticed that the CSR messages that are published on the general Twitter account of a company decrease the reputation of the company as compared to the messages published on a CSR oriented Twitter account (Lee, 2015). The CSR communication receives feedback from stakeholders that encourage companies to be responsible, declaring that they would rather buy from responsible companies and not from irresponsible ones (Zbuchea, 2013). Social media also allows companies to target more advantageously their stakeholders and to send the right message to the right public (Ros-Diego & Castelló-Martínez, 2012) by involving social concerns within its business practices.

**Research questions**

This article aims to identify the most valuable indicator of corporate communication power (the relationship, the co-creation, and the resistance to power) by communicating CSR initiatives on Facebook in Romania, as well as the main strategy used by the top 100 companies in Romania in order to communicate their CSR campaigns on Facebook.

On that account the research questions are:

Q1: Which is the main CSR strategy used in Romania within communicating CSR campaigns on Facebook?

Q2: Which of the three indicators of corporate communication power (the relationship, the co-creation, the resistance to power) emerges primarily from CSR communication on Facebook?

## Methodology

I have chosen to analyze CSR communication on Facebook because it is the greatest social networking application in the world with over 800 mil. active users ( Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Marichal, 2012). Moreover, it is one of the most successful user-generated content networks alongside YouTube.com, Google.com and MySpace.com (Mairinger, 2008). Finally yet importantly, it is the most valuable social tool used to drive engagement with customers (Kesavan, Bernacchi & Mascarenhas, 2013).

In order to reach the purposes of this paper a quantitative research was conducted on fifty corporate Facebook pages in the top 100 companies in Romania by turnover according to the latest ratings published by the Financial Newspaper in 2014. Random sampling was applied, each second company in the list being chosen. The research method was chosen in accordance with the research objectives and with the specialized literature, because many studies of this kind were conducted through quantitative methods (Bansón & Ratkai, 2012; Birth & Illia, 2007; Colleoni, 2013; Kazaka, 2011; Schmeltz, 2011; Verunccio, 2014).

The main operationalized indicators in this research are *relationship, co-creation* and *resistance to power* in the context of communication of CSR campaigns on Facebook. The units of the analysis in this research are the Facebook posts. The research was conducted between September 1 and October 1, 2015.

*Measurement and coding*

The coding scheme was conducted based on previous studies of Bansón and Ratkai (2012) and Verunccio (2014) with adapted categories.

In order to answer the first question of the research (Q1: Which is the main CSR strategy used in Romania within communicating CSR campaigns on Facebook?) I have used the following measurement: the main area of the *self-centered strategy* is represented by the company-oriented posts that do not involve the users in any way; for the *mediated strategy* I have identified two main directions: the posts within the company are endorsed by experts and the posts within the company refer to experts that endorsed its activity;

*the dialogical strategy* refers to the interaction between the company and its stakeholders through questions such as „What do you think about…?".

**Table 1. Measurement of Self-centered, Mediated and Dialogical strategy of CSR communication on Facebook page of the company**

| Name | Sign | Formula |
|---|---|---|
| Self–centered strategy | Scs | Company-oriented posts (that do not involve stakeholders) |
| Mediated strategy | Ms1 | The company is endorsed by experts |
| | Ms2 | The company refers to experts that endorsed its activity |
| Dialogical strategy | Ds | The company interacts with stakeholders through questions such as „What do you think about…?" |

To answer the second question of the research (Q2: Which of the three indicators of corporate communication power (the relationship, the co-creation, the resistance to power) emerges primarily from CSR communication on Facebook?) I have measured the concept of *power* through its three main indicators: the *relationship* (the number of likes of that specific Facebook page, the number of likes of a post, the company's Facebook pages dedicated entirely to CSR projects), the *co-creation* (user's posts on the company's Facebook page related to its CSR activity, tags of the company related to its CSR activity) and the *resistance to power* (comments from users related to CSR posts on the company's Facebook page).

**Table 2. Measurement of power indicators within communicating CSR activities on the company's Facebook page**

| Name | Sign | Formula |
|---|---|---|
| Relationship | R1 | Facebook pages dedicated entirely to CSR projects |
| | R2 | Number of likes of a post |
| Co-creation | Cc1 | User's posts on the company's Facebook page related to its CSR activity |
| | Cc2 | Tags of the company related to its CSR activity |
| Resistance to power | Rp1 | Negative comments from users related to the CSR activities of the company. |
| | Rp2 | Questions from users related to the CSR activities of the company |

## Research results

As it can be seen below in Table 3, from the total of the analyzed posts there are very few that refer to the CSR campaign (8.6%), to the campaign's endorsers (1.4%), or to the campaign's stakeholders (1.4%). Most of them refer to the company's products or services (61.7%), followed by posts that

refer to other subjects (20.2%). The least number of posts refer to social causes that are not part of the company CSR campaign (0.7%).

*Table 3. What does the content of the posts refers to?*

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | no case | 25 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 |
|  | To the CSR campaign | 36 | 8.6 | 8.6 | 14.5 |
|  | To the campaign's endorsers | 6 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 16.0 |
|  | To the campaign's stakeholders | 6 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 17.4 |
|  | To social causes that are not part of the company CSR campaign | 3 | .7 | .7 | 18.1 |
|  | To the company's products/services | 259 | 61.7 | 61.7 | 79.8 |
|  | To other subjects | 85 | 20.2 | 20.2 | 100.0 |
|  | Total | 420 | 100.0 | 100.0 |  |

*Q1: Which is the main CSR strategy used in Romania within communicating CSR campaigns on Facebook?*

In order to answer this first question of the research I have used the following measurement: the main area of the *self-centered strategy* represented by the company-oriented posts that do not involve users in any way; for the *mediated strategy* I have identified two main directions: the posts within the company are endorsed by experts and the posts within the company refer to experts that endorsed its activity; *the dialogical strategy* refers to the interaction between the company and its stakeholders through questions such as „What do you think about...?".

The author of most of the posts that refer to CSR is the company (90.2%) followed by the posts of endorsers/experts (7.8%) and the ones of stakeholders (2%). What we can observe in Table 5 is that most of the posts posted by the endorsers were shared on the company's Facebook page by its admin and were not posted by the endorser himself directly on the Facebook page of the company.

Consequently, we can conclude that Romanian companies mainly use the **self-centered strategy** to communicate their CSR initiatives and do involve neither their endorsers, nor their stakeholders in this process. The fact that the company on its Facebook page shares most of the endorsers' posts

reveals that there is a weak relationship between companies and their endorsers in the CSR campaigns.

*Table 4. Who is the author of the post?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | The company | 46 | 90.2 | 90.2 | 90.2 |
| | The endorser/expert | 4 | 7.8 | 7.8 | 98.0 |
| | The public of the Facebook page | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 51 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

*Table 5. Where is the post published?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | On the Facebook page of the company – posted by the page admin | 46 | 90.2 | 90.2 | 90.2 |
| | On the Facebook page of the company – shared by the page admin | 3 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 96.1 |
| | On the Facebook page of the company – posted by endorser | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 98.0 |
| | On the Facebook page of the company, posted by stakeholders | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 51 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

*Q2: Which of the three indicators of corporate communication power (the relationship, the co-creation, the resistance to power) emerges primarily from CSR communication on Facebook?*

To answer to the second question of the research I have measured the concept of *power* through its three main indicators: the *relationship* (the number of likes for a post, company's Facebook pages entirely dedicated to CSR projects), the *co-creation* (user's posts on the company's Facebook page related to its CSR activity, tags of the company related to its CSR activity) and the *resistance to power* (comments from users related to CSR posts on the company's Facebook page).

The Relationship: In order to determine the relationship I have measured the number of likes posts which, as it can be seen in Table 6, varies between 2 and 4.258 like with an average of 41 likes per post. In regards to their specific activity of CSR I have observed that companies lack the tendency to

establish a strong relationship with their stakeholders on Facebook, given the fact that only 0.26% of companies that communicate regularly their CSR activities on their corporate Facebook pages have a dedicated Facebook page only for their CSR activities. Additionally, as we can observe in Table 8, very few of the CSR related posts contain tags/#tags/links to companies' CSR projects.

*Table 6. How many likes has the post?*

| N | Valid | 51 |
|---|---|---|
| | Missing | 0 |
| Average | | 155.65 |
| Median | | 41.00 |
| Mode | | 5[a] |
| Range | | 4256 |
| Minimum | | 2 |
| Maximum | | 4258 |

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

*Table 7. Does the company have a Facebook page dedicated to its CSR activities?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Yes | 4 | 7.8 | 7.8 | 7.8 |
| | No | 47 | 92.2 | 92.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 51 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

*Table 8. Does the post contain tags/#tags/links to companies' CSR projects?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Yes | 8 | 15.7 | 15.7 | 15.7 |
| | No | 43 | 84.3 | 84.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 51 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The co-creation: One very important indicator of power in corporate communication on social media is the co-creation of information, which I have measured especially assessing user's posts on the company's Facebook page related to its CSR activity and the tags of the company related to its CSR activity. As it can be seen in Table 4, its stakeholders post only 2% from the total amount of the analyzed posts related to CSR on the company's Facebook page. In regards to the tags related to the CSR activity of the company, only 15.7% of the CSR related posts embody such a tag, whereas 84,3% of the CSR related posts that have been analyzed do not have a tag of the CSR campaign that it refers to.

*Table 9. Does the post contain tags/#tags/links to companies' CSR projects?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Yes | 8 | 15.7 | 15.7 | 15.7 |
| | No | 43 | 84.3 | 84.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 51 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The resistance to power: In order to measure this concept I have taken into account the comments made by the users regarding the CSR posts on the company's Facebook page. As it can be observed in Table 11 the average for the comments to the CSR related posts is 8,20, while the maximum number of comments on the CSR related posts analyzed was 54. On the other hand, in Table 10 it was noticed that even if the average of comments is low, 58,8% of the CSR related posts do have comments. I have also observed that there is a slight difference between the total number of comments and the visible ones. Therefore, if the average of comments for CSR related posts is 8,20, the average of the visible comments for the same sample of posts is 7,65, which means that some of the comments were deleted either by the company, or by the author of the comment.

In Table 12, it can be observed that most stakeholders do not try to interact with the company through comments, but rather choose to express their opinion pertinently, on the subject of the post. Therefore, 52,9% of the comments are statements, while 5.9 are questions, and 2% are statements and questions. 39,2% of the comments for the CSR related posts do not have any text: 5.9% contains images, 3,9%, movies and 3,9%, links. The rest of 25.5% are comments containing emoticons.

Additionally, it was observed that the resistance to power could be also delivered through the positive or negative tone of the comments. Therefore, 3,9% of the comments were negative, 25,5% were positive, 3,9% were mixt answers, which means that they were both positive and negative, while most of them (27,5%) were neutral comments, which means they were neither positive, nor negative.

*Table 10. Does the post have comments?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Yes | 30 | 58.8 | 58.8 | 58.8 |
| | No | 21 | 41.2 | 41.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 51 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

*Table 11. How many comments does the post have?*

| N | Valid | 51 |
|---|---|---|
|  | Missing | 0 |
| Average |  | 8.20 |
| Median |  | 1.00 |
| Mode |  | 0 |
| Range |  | 54 |
| Minimum |  | 0 |
| Maximum |  | 54 |

*Table 12. How many visible comments does the post have?*

| N | Valid | 51 |
|---|---|---|
|  | Missing | 0 |
| Average |  | 7.65 |
| Median |  | 1.00 |
| Mode |  | 0 |
| Range |  | 54 |
| Minimum |  | 0 |
| Maximum |  | 54 |

*Table 13. What is the type of the comments?*

|  |  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No text | 20 | 39.2 | 39.2 | 39.2 |
|  | Statement | 27 | 52.9 | 52.9 | 92.2 |
|  | Question | 3 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 98.0 |
|  | Statement & Question | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
|  | Total | 51 | 100.0 | 100.0 |  |

*Table 14. Does the comment contain multimedia elements?*

|  |  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 44 | 86.3 | 86.3 | 86.3 |
|  | Image | 3 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 92.2 |
|  | Movie | 2 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 96.1 |
|  | Link | 2 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 100.0 |
|  | Total | 51 | 100.0 | 100.0 |  |

*Table 15. Is the comment a negative one or a positive one?*

|  |  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No case | 20 | 39.2 | 39.2 | 39.2 |
|  | Negative comment | 2 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 43.1 |
|  | Positive comment | 13 | 25.5 | 25.5 | 68.6 |
|  | Mixt answer | 2 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 72.5 |

| | Neutral answer | 14 | 27.5 | 27.5 | 100.0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | 51 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Research limitations

This study has an exploratory character and opens new lines of research regarding the ascent of power within the CSR communication on Facebook. As the power belongs mainly to the company (even if from a technical point of view), future research should focus on the analysis of the comments and replies to comments on CSR related posts and also on the analysis of the stakeholder's reactions on social media considering whether they reflect in a way or another further CSR activities of the company.

## Conclusions

This research was based on the analysis of 420 posts on fifty corporate Facebook pages, conducted between September 1 and 1st of October 2015. As it was argued in the Research Results category, more than 50% of them (61.7%) refer to the company products or services, followed by posts that refer to other subjects (20,2%). Very few of them refer to the CSR campaign (8.6%), to the campaign's endorsers (1.4%) or to the campaign's stakeholders (1.4%). The least number of posts refer to social causes that are not part of the companies' CSR campaign (0.7%).

One of the first conclusions that I have drawn is that Romanian companies use their Facebook pages primarily for the increase of their market more, and less for the attainment of their stakeholders' confidence. Thus, one might say that they prefer visibility against trust.

The first question of the research aimed to determine the main strategy of CSR communication on Facebook in Romania. Romanian companies use the self-centered strategy to communicate their CSR actions on Facebook since the author of most of the analyzed posts (90.2%) was the company itself. The mediated and dialogical strategy are very scarcely represented as 7.8% of the posts belong to endorsers/experts and 2% to the stakeholders of the Facebook page.

Apart from the self-centered strategy, I have also noticed that most of the endorsers' posts are shared by the company on its Facebook page, which reveals that there is a weak relationship between companies and their endorsers in the CSR campaigns.

The second question of the research referred to the concept of power within the CSR communication process on Facebook. As it was argued, considering the self-centered strategy that was mainly used, it is everybody's grasp that companies want to hold the power against their stakeholders. In order to understand the concept of power in this context, one should not question about the company's actions, but analyze the answers it gets from its stakeholders and the result of the CSR communication on Facebook. On this account, I have taken into consideration three concepts when talking about power: the relationship, the co-creation of content and the resistance to power.

The Relationship: In the process of CSR communication on Facebook the relationship between companies and their stakeholders is very weak from the company's point of view. Only 11.4% of the sample of posts referred to the companies' CSR activity. Even with a limited number of posts, there was still an average of 41 likes per post with a minimum number of two likes/post and a maximum number of 4.258 likes/post. This can be regarded as an acute need of information from the stakeholders' point of view and as an encouragement to establish a stronger relationship with their favorite companies. The weakness of the relationship, from the companies' point of view, is also demonstrated by the small number of Facebook pages dedicated entirely to CSR activities (0.26%) and by the paucity of posts that contain tags/#tags/links to companies' CSR projects.

The co-creation: One very important indicator of power in corporate communication on social media is the co-creation of information, which I have measured mainly through user's posts on the company's Facebook page related to its CSR activity and tags of the company related to its CSR activity. As it was shown in Table 4, only 2% from the total amount of the analyzed posts related to CSR are posted on the company's Facebook page by its stakeholders. Concerning the tags related to the CSR activity of the company, only 15.7% of the posts related to CSR embody such a tag, while 84,3% of the analyzed post related to CSR do not have the tag of the CSR campaign they refer to. On this wise, the co-creation of information is also a very weak indicator of power as far as the CSR communication on Facebook is concerned.

The resistance to power: In order to measure this concept I have taken into account user's comments related to CSR posts on the company's Facebook page. As it can be observed in Table 11 the average of comments for the CSR related posts is 8.20, while the maximum number of comments on the analyzed CSR related posts was 54. Nevertheless, in Table 10 it could be observed that despite the low average of comments, 58.8% of the CSR

related posts do have comments. I have also observed that there is a slight difference between the total number of comments and the visible ones. Therefore, if the average of comments for CSR related posts is 8.20, the average of the visible comments for the same sample of posts is 7.65, which means that some of the comments were deleted either by the company, or by the author of the comment.

In Table 13, it was established that most stakeholders of a company do not try to interact with the company through comments, but rather choose to express their opinion pertinently, on the subject of the post. Therefore 52.9% of the comments are statements, while 5.9% are questions, and 2% are statements and questions. 39.2% of the comments for the CSR related posts do not have any text: 5.9% contain images, 3.9%, movies and 3.9%, links. The rest of 25.5% are comments containing emoticons.

Apart from this information, I have observed that the resistance to power can be also delivered through the positive or negative tone of the comments. Therefore 3.9% of the comments were negative, while 25.5% were positive, and 3.9% were mixt answers, which means they were both positive and negative, while most of them (27.5%) were neutral comments, which means they were neither positive, nor negative.

In conclusion, it can be asserted that there is a big pressure from the stakeholders' point of view, in regards to the CSR communication on Facebook, in Romania. While companies try to sell their products or services through Facebook, stakeholders try to establish a relationship and consolidate a trust liaison with the companies they choose to buy from. In this context, it can be acknowledged that companies would rather respond to stakeholders' questions or inquiries, than be proactive and anticipate some of their needs or complaints.

Finally yet importantly, it can be professed that the stronger the communication power of the company, the stronger the resistance of the stakeholders against power becomes. This means that the shift to the dialogical strategy of communication could strike balance in the process of CSR communication on Facebook.

This process could be associated with a snowball and we could call it the snowball metaphor as it has been represented it below.

*Figure 1. The snowball metaphor*

As it has been depicted, one could see two snowballs: a smaller one standing for the present moment (t0) and a larger one standing for the future (t10). This means that when we start a communication process we have a weak relationship with our stakeholders, and we expect the relation to get stronger during the process, which logically requires time and trust.

Related to corporate communication, in order to move the snowball from t0 to t10, the company needs power, but as it has been argued in this article, the stronger the communication power on the company's side is, the stronger the stakeholders' resistance to power becomes. To move the snowball one needs a good force (Gf) to move it forward, but at the same time a bad force (Bf) is activated, which consequently represents the resistance to power. To move the snowball one needs to transform the bad forces in good forces, as we it is depicted in the image above, so that it helps it move forward. As a result, this means that through the dialogical strategy of communication the company transforms the stakeholder's resistance to power into a good force that empowers their relationship. That means that the power is not on the company side, nor on the stakeholders' side, but inside the relation (network) between them.

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## Coding Scheme

| Measuring CSR communication strategy&power on the Facebook page of the company |
| --- |
| Unit of analysis: the post on the Facebook page |

**I1 – Which is the name of the company?**
1 – Romgaz
2 - Hidroelectrica
3 – Automobile Dacia
4 - RCS&RDS
5 – Telekom Romania Communications
6 – GDF Suez Energy Romania
7 – Electrica S.A
8 - Aeroporturi Bucharest

9 – Continental Automotive Products
10 – Transgaz
11 – Telekom Romania Mobile Communications
12 – Nuclearelectrica
13 – Holzindustry Schwighofer
14 - Oltenia Energy Complex
15 – Carrefour Romania
16 - Romanian Lottery
17 – Rompetrol distillation
18 - Mega Image
19 – E.ON Moldavia Distribution
20 - P&G Distribution
21 – Holcim
22 - E.ON Gaz Distribution
23 – Coca Cola HBC Romania
24 - Heinken Romania
25 – Electrica Distribution North Transylvania
26 - Schaeffler Romania
27 – Selgros Cash & Carry
28 - Apa Nova Bucharest
29 – Eximbank
30 - Michelin Romania
31 – Lafarge Ciment
32 – Terapia
33 – MOL Romania
34 - Alpha Bank
35 – Pirelli Tyres Romania
36 - SIF Moldova
37 – Mediplus Exim
38 - Ursus Breweries
39 – Samsung Electronics
40 - Dante International
41 – J.T International
42 – Rewe
43 – Romania Hypermarche
44 - SIF Muntenia
45 – SIF Banat Crişana
46 – Farmexpert
47 – Damen Shipyard Galaţi
48 – Romatsa
49 – Hella Romania SRL
50 – Sensiblu

**I2 – Does the company have a Facebook page?**
>  1- Yes
>  2- No

*If the answer is "Yes" then answer the following questions. If it is "No" then fill with 0:*

**I3 – Does the company have a Facebook page dedicated to its CSR activities?**
>  1- Yes
>  2 – No

**I4 – Who is the author of the post?**
>  0 – No case
>  1 – The company
>  2 – The endorser/expert
>  3 – The public of the Facebook page

**I5 – Where is the post published?**
>  0 – No case
>  1 – On the Facebook page of the company – posted by the page admin
>  2 - On the Facebook page of the company – shared by the page admin
>  3 – On the Facebook page of the company – posted by endorser/public
>  4 - On the Facebook page of the company - the company was tagged
>  5 - On the Facebook page of the company, posted by stakeholders
>  6 - On the Facebook page of the company, shared by stakeholders
>  7 - Other

**I6 – What is the type of the post?**
>  0 - no text
>  1- Statement
>  2- Endorsers' quotes
>  3- Question
>  4- Statement&Question
>  5- check-in
>  6- statement&check-in
>  7- Stakeholders' quotes

**I7 – How many likes does the post have?**

**I8 – How many shares does the post have?**

**I9 – Does the post contain tags/#tags/links to companies' products or services?**
   0 – No case
   1 – Yes
   2 – No

**I10 - Does the post contain tags/#tags/links to companies' CSR projects?**
   0 – No case
   1 – Yes
   2 – No

**I11 – Does the post contain tags of endorsers?**
   0 – No case
   1 – Yes
   2 – No

**I12 - Does the post contain tags of stakeholders?**
   0 – No case
   1 – Yes
   2 – No

**I13 - Does posts have comments?**
   0 – No case
   1 – Yes
   2 – No

*If the answer is "Yes" then answer the following questions. If it is "No" then fill with 0:*

**I14 – How many comments does the post have?**

**I15 - How many visible comments does the post have?**

**I16 – Is the comment a negative one or a positive one?**
   0 – No case
   1 - Negative comment
   2 – Positive comment
   3 – Mixt answer
   4 – Neutral answer

**I17 – Does the comment contain multimedia elements?**
   0 - No

1 – Image
2 – Movie
3 – Link
4 – Tag
5 – Mixt composition

## I18 – Did the company answer comments?

0 – No case
1 – Yes
2 – No

## I19 – What does the content of the post refer to?

1 – To the CSR campaign
2 – To the campaign's endorsers
3 – To the campaign's stakeholders
4 – To social causes that are not part of the company CSR campaign
5 – To the company's products or services
6 – To other services