

Facebook Usage as Social Screening. Exploring the Approach of Admissions Officers from Management Colleges

Elena – Mădălina VĂTĂMĂNESCU

College of Management

National University of Political Studies and Public Administration

30 A Expoziției Blvd., Sector 1, Bucharest, Romania, 012104

madalina.vatamanescu@facultateademangement.ro

Ioana – Felicia CONSTANTIN

Bucharest University of Economic Studies

41 Dacia Blvd., Bucharest, Romania, 010404

ioanafeliciaconstantin@gmail.com

Abstract. *The online social networks allow individuals to continuously create and model their self-presentations and representations. Facebook stands for a relevant example as people are given the uncensored opportunity to unfold their online selves according to their interests, preferences, goals and expectations. As a social networking site, Facebook is particularly used for reasons related to social documentation (social searching) and maintaining preexisting close relationships (bonding social capital) that imply knowledge of new information about persons met offline, and less for social exploration (social browsing) that refers to using Facebook to initiate new contacts. The extant recent literature often approach the usage of Facebook as a pre-employment screening tool with a view to select the fittest candidates for the job. Still, there are few studies which address the professors' endeavor to use social media, in general and Facebook, in particular, as a complementary criterion when selecting future students. At this level, Facebook profiles are liable to stand for cogent indicators for the prospects' personalities and potential, for their predispositions and professional perspectives. Starting from this point, the current research aims at investigating the approaches on the aforementioned issue of several professors from Management colleges in Romania who are in charge of settling the evaluation reference points of the college admissions procedure. The research is the more relevant so as the future graduate managers should possess some key characteristics which may be anticipated or pre-assessed based on their Facebook profile cues. In order to test the subjects' openness to consider the implications of Facebook usage as a thorough social documentation tool, nineteen in-depth interviews were conducted. The findings show that there is a high degree of skepticism towards using Facebook as a source of reliable information.*

Keywords: *Facebook, social screening, Management colleges.*

Introduction

Due to their increasing importance for hundreds of millions users, Social Networking Sites (SNSs) have consistently set themselves up as a research problem for many authors. In this respect, Castells concluded that “the culture of networked individualism can find its best form of expression in a communication system characterized by autonomy, horizontal networking, interactivity, and the recombination of content under the initiative of the individual and his/her networks.” (Castells, 2009, p.125). This particular system enables the individuals’ interaction and communication, the formation of new bonds or the underpinning of offline friendships in the online environment (Lewis & West, 2009; Vătămănescu, Andrei, Leovaridis & Dumitriu, 2015), the self-presentation of the individual according to his/her preferences and expectations (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Kramer & Winter, 2008; De Luna, 2011; Michikyan, Subrahmanyam & Dennis, 2014; Gil-Or, Levi-Belz & Turel, 2015), the self-presentation of firms in the online environment (Qualmann, 2009; Bloomberg, 2010; Andrei & Zaiț, 2014) and so on.

At this level, the self-presentational behaviors stand for a key issue among the varied psychological phenomena that SNS bring to the fore. The users of SNS have almost full control over data disclosure, and subsequently they can manage considerably their self-presentation, as compared to traditional face-to-face interactions (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Kramer & Winter, 2008). Furthermore, given the social exposure that SNS allows, the enhancement of self-image is expected with it comes to online self-presentation (Walther, 2007). Self-presentation in virtual social networks through profile pictures, uploaded albums and wall content that can be viewed practically by everybody and any- body online is one of the multiple expressions of this need. To present oneself in the offline world is quite challenging because most of the physical and material characteristics and objects seem to be difficult to manipulate according to our own satisfaction (De Luna, 2011), as both *emotional* and *psychical* coordinates of our experiences have become subject to a continuous process of reconfiguration (Dumitriu, 2014, p.36).

From this point of view, Facebook profiles are liable to stand for cogent indicators for the prospects’ personalities and potential, for their predispositions and professional perspectives. This is why the current research aims at investigating the approaches on the aforementioned issue of several professors from Management colleges who are in charge of settling

the evaluation reference points of the college admissions procedures. The research is the more relevant so as the future graduate managers should possess some key characteristics which may be anticipated or pre-assessed based on their Facebook profile cues. Hereby, the study is intended to provide pertinent answers to two research questions: 1) Is Facebook a reliable tool for assessing prospective candidates for Management colleges? and 2) What is the most suitable way of integrating Facebook scrutiny into the college admissions procedures?. In order to test the subjects' openness to consider the implications of Facebook usage as a thorough social documentation tool, nineteen in-depth interviews were conducted.

From a bird's eye view, the paper adds up to the extant studies in two ways. First, it is a path breaker among the researches conducted in Romania which concern with using Facebook for social screening. Second, it explores the opinions of admissions officers working in Management colleges and advances new perspectives on improving the criteria for candidates selection.

Literature review

An insight into Facebook self-(re)presentation patterns

The advent of social networking sites brought about various opportunities in terms of online self-presentation. The absence of the physical body provides the freedom of choosing how we want to be seen and understood by the audience all the more so as social networks as Facebook encourage their users to entirely personalize their profiles. Either we refer to the content provided by the user himself or herself- pictures, videos, or to the content provided by friends or by the system – wall-posts, technical limitations, the profile owner has a myriad of possibilities to administrate his/her Facebook account. At this level, one of the most frequent exploited opportunity is uploading desirable pictures, presenting the individual in a positive light from his/her standpoint(Strano, 2008; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Siibak, 2009). An example advanced by Ong et al. (2011) in this respect mentions that uploading attractive photos on Facebook reflects the individual's intention to promote a better image of his/her physical appearance.

In most cases, Facebook users thoroughly select the pictures to be posted on their profiles, the main criterion residing in sharing a specific image with the audience. In other words, the community created around the user is of great

importance in his/her perception and, consequently, choices are crucially influenced by the anticipated reaction of the other users (De Luna, 2011). With a view to enhance a positive self-presentation, Facebook pictures in general and Facebook profile pictures in particular often imply suitable social cues which settle the others' frameworks of understanding. This intention leads to the temptation of creating idealized images, projections of desirable social images (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008; Underwood, Kerlin & Farrington-Flint, 2011; Seto, 2012). For example, Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008) urged that Facebook identities are the result of the users' projects in terms of their expectations from the offline environments – participants are willing to build and maintain a well-rounded image in the eyes of the targeted audience. Here, Underwood, Kerlin, and Farrington-Flint (2011) argue that basically there are two types of Facebook users: the ones who engage in self-promoting behaviors (i.e. broadcasters) and the ones who aim to maintain relationships (i.e. communicators).

The proliferation of the technology-driven interaction and communication, has dramatically influenced the patterns of creating desirable image of individuals, from both physical and social angles. The online tools which may be employed in order to articulate a convenient self-presentation are varied and still increasing in number. Discussing the issue in the context of college students intentions, Dawson (2011) posit that they often promote an online image based on their peers' expectations, and not on their true selves while Calvert, Pempeki and Yermolayen (2009) consider that pictures are among the best ways of expressing and promoting themselves on Facebook. In this respect, they deploy all the relevant resources, that is a wide array of symbolic and digital stimuli. Building an online (re)presentation of self by exploiting the advantages of linguistic and imagery content and associations entails an intricate online profile liable to indicate "our mental conception of whom we are" (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2007, p.54).

Still, recent studies have insisted on approaching the false Facebook-self with greater attention as "the use of social networking sites has become the main rather than secondary means of social interaction for many people" (Gil-Or, Levi-Belz & Turel, 2015, p.10). The authors highlight that there is a significant accrual in the number of false self-presentations on Facebook, the deviation from the person's true image being associated with a low self-esteem and low trait authenticity (Gil-Or, Levi-Belz & Turel, 2015). Similarly, Michikyan, Subrahmanyam and Dennis (2014, p.179) conclude that "young adults who are experiencing emotional instability may be strategic in their online self-

presentation perhaps to seek reassurance, and those who have self-doubt further explore their self online”.

Facebook as a social documentation tool: from job recruitment to college admissions

Over the past years, a new recruitment practice has emerged among employers from large and small companies at the same time. The human resources departments often engage in searching for further information about job applicants on social networking sites, considering them as a relevant data well (Smith & Kidder, 2010; Lory, 2011; Carson, 2012). Additionally, the monitoring and evaluation of the social cues provided by specialized networks and professional communities are treated as a fruitful endeavor in their own right, as these platforms encourage self-expression and bring to the fore potential talents (Mihalcea & Săvulescu, 2013, p.50).

There are several reasons for employers to resort to this kind of enterprise (Lory, 2011). Firstly, in most cases, there is a high number of applicants and the reliability of resumes or of interviews assessment is not always beyond the shadow of a doubt. Secondly, the complexity and high expectations associated with specific jobs call for a higher level of attention in selecting future employees. This is why employers look for relevant information elsewhere, turning to social media and to the pertinent social indices it may provide. “Employers are turning to social media because they ‘are under pressure to hire carefully’ in an economy where there are plenty of job seekers and few jobs” (Lory, 2011, p.10). In this respect, Facebook profiles are liable to reveal a wide spectrum of personal details which are very likely neglected in a resume or during a formal interview.

At this level, a survey conducted by Harris Interactive for CareerBuilder.com in 2012 questioned more than 7,000 employers and revealed that two out of five companies are using social networking sites to make hiring decisions. 49% stated that an applicant’s “provocative or inappropriate” pictures or information had a great influence on the decision to deny the candidate a job offer, and 33% mentioned that posts about former employers or co-workers were main factors. Additionally, 29% said they hired a candidate based on social networking research taking into account indicators such as a “good personality,” a conveyed “professional image” or “great communication skills.” (Carson, 2012). Still, this practice may be risky as an applicant’s Facebook profile may contain false or embellished information liable to misguide the employer in his screening evaluations (Brandenburg, 2008).

Furthermore, not all the job candidates considered by the employer have Facebook profiles. If an employer examines just some of the applicants' profiles, they are being assessed unfairly (Smith & Kidder, 2010).

Gaining access to the prospective candidates' Facebook accounts may be performed by different means (Carson, 2012). On the one hand, the applicants' profile can be viewed by simply signing up for an account. This endeavor is prone to fail in many cases as an increasing number of Facebook users resort to privacy levels. Nevertheless, losing the opportunity to put Facebook profiles under scrutiny is not an option for the recruiting staff and, as a consequence, they go further and make use of the current employees' Facebook accounts to examine prospective candidates' personal pages.

Approaching the opinions of young adults in United States (N= 2200, 18 years and older) about using Facebook content for job selection, a study conducted by the Pew Center for Research (2009) pointed out that 81% of the subjects disapprove of this practice (Madden & Smith, 2010, p.43). They urge that judging prospective candidates based on their Facebook profiles information is not fair as the context of communication and representation is totally different. Consequently, they are not disposed to modify their online self-presentations to meet the employers' expectations. These conclusions were supported by a recent study conducted by Vătămănescu and Mănuș (2013, p.253) which highlighted "that students' self-presentation through their Facebook profiles follows the offline personal data and is not influenced by potential employers' assessments. According to the findings, the patterns of self-(re)presentation through pictures and content do not count the implications of having a profile deemed unacceptable by employers". On the contrary, Peluchette and Karl (2010) found that college students are responsive to the employers' recruitment practices and are willing to avoid unsuitable pictures on purpose to project a positive social image (e.g. images which describe them as hardworking and serious).

Moving the frame of analysis towards colleges' "recruitment practice", a 2012-survey conducted by the Test Prep company Kaplan (a unit of Washington Post Co.) reported that college admissions directors are very much interested in browsing and searching candidates on Facebook and Google in order to thoroughly assess them. 350 admissions officers were polled (from 500 top colleges and universities) and the findings showed that there was an increasing trend among admissions practices to check the applicants' profiles on Facebook, from 12% in 2011 to 35% in 2012. The

accrual of Facebook examinations is more obvious when linking the 2012 results to the ones from 2008 when 10% of the admissions officers acknowledged Facebook screening as an admissions practice (Forbes.com, 2012). Moreover, the Kaplan study highlighted the fact that only 15% of universities have a written policy in this respect while the actual figures are totally different. The focus on looking into the prospective students' profiles includes detecting vulgarities in blogs, essay plagiarism, potential illegal activities, alcohol or drug consumption in photos, bullying behavior, anti-social behaviors, etc. (Forbes.com, 2012).

Furthermore, an UMass Amherst study in 2011 indicated that 100% of colleges regard social media as an effective tool on purpose to recruit suitable students, a fact which supports the importance and relevance of online image management and control (Grove, 2012). Consistent with the results of the Kaplan Test Prep survey, the National Scholarship Providers Association survey reported that almost 25% of private scholarship organizations use to search their applicants online, but admissions officers were not very explicit about how they assess social feeds (Luckerson, 2012). For example, a 30 year-old former interviewer for Harvard University admits that googling prospective candidates has been embraced as a regular practice years ago with a view to make high stakes decisions. As an acknowledgement of this practice, many students have chosen a full social media lockdown before submitting their applications (Luckerson, 2012).

Materials and Methods

Participants

19 professors from Management colleges in Romania answered to an interview-based survey. The participants were selected using a snowball sampling. Also, the participants were chosen taking into account their positions in the college admissions procedures. Two main criteria of selection were followed: (1) the respondents were directly involved in settling the college admissions procedure and (2) the respondents performed as admissions officers. The sample comprised individuals whose seniority within the college ranged between 4 and 20 years.

Procedure

In order to generate detailed and in-depth descriptions of the participants' experiences we chose to use phenomenological interviews. The interviewees' observations, perceptions and understandings were investigated by employing a semi-structured in-depth interview based on open-ended questions. This option catalyzed the opportunity to discuss some topics in a more detailed manner and the descriptions were further explored through 'probes'. We considered individual interviews more valuable to provide detailed information about the meaning of the situations and of the social contexts to each participant in the setting.

The interviews were conducted during October 11 and October 25, 2014. Questions were posed in a relaxed informal manner so that the interview appeared more like a discussion or conversation. The respondents were explained the purpose of the interview and were encouraged to co-operate. Still, they were not given too much detail that would have biased their responses. The objective was to uncover the widest range of meanings held by the participants in the setting. The respondents were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity in the aggregated findings.

The structure of the interview followed Seidman's (1998) three-phase qualitative interview: focused life history (the respondents' experiences were put in context, by asking them to provide as much information as possible about themselves, in relation to the topic of the study); the details of experience (concrete details of their present experience in the research topic area); reflection on the meaning (reflection on the meaning of their experience, how they make intellectual and emotional connections with the experiences that are the subject of the research topic). The answers to the interviews were categorized by carrying out a thematic analysis as a systematic way of identifying all the main concepts which arose in the interviews, and of developing them into common themes.

Measures

The analysis was focused on several key issues: 1) the admissions officers' approach on Facebook profiles, 2) the appropriateness of using Facebook as a social documentation tool, 3) the pertinence of discriminating between prospective candidates based on Facebook profiles scrutiny and 4) the prerequisites of introducing Facebook profiles examination in the college admissions procedure.

Findings and discussion

As we have previously mentioned, the participants to the interview were professors from Management colleges in Romania who were directly involved in settling the college admissions procedure and performed as admissions officers in the past years.

First, the interview approached general issues, the participants being asked to describe Facebook profiles in a few words. Although responses featured a wide range of standpoints, several common elements were distinguished. Facebook profiles are seen as “rather artificial creations based upon what their owners believe they should look like” (Andreea, 26 y.o.), “concise and funny” (Anda, 45 y.o.) or as “very synthetic presentations of the owners of the accounts, based on the guidelines provided by Facebook” (Alexandra, 41 y.o.). Also, other respondents consider that Facebook profiles are based on “an image you want to promote” and “full with personal information and true images of the person’s personality” (Ramona, 28 y.o.). From a bird’s eye view, Facebook profiles are simultaneously perceived as artificial and true, as plausible information providers and as fictitious images promoters.

These starting points were entirely supported by the responses to the second item “Do you think Facebook reveals the users’ true selves or desirable images?”. Almost all the respondents consider that the great majority of Facebook users advance a desirable image. For instance, according to Andreea (26 y.o.), “most people present their desirable image and are eager to get their friends’ approval for all their actions on Facebook: profile picture changes, status updates, shared materials”. Likewise, Mădălina (31 y.o.) believes that “the Facebook profile is like a painting – the artist chooses the colors, the shapes, the framework, the message. Even though the message is part of the artist, the final piece of art may embody a wide spectrum of suggestions and metaphorical anchors”. Conversely, Vlad (24 y.o.) considers that Facebook reveals “true selves for the majority of the users. Even the ones who want to create a desirable image still influence their profiles with excerpts from their true personality”.

At this point, the answers show that the admissions officers’ representations on Facebook profiles encompass both desirable images of self and projections of true personalities. The findings support the theories previously advanced, namely Facebook identities are anchored in the offline environments, but they are reshaped in the online environment, a space where creating an idealized image in order to increase popularity and win the competition between users is at their disposal. In other words, Facebook

profiles help users become competitive figures in the “who does the coolest things” group.

The third question revealed interesting opinions about youngsters’ self-presentations on Facebook. For example, Laurențiu (47 y.o.) considers the teenagers’ Facebook presentations as “fancy, cool, and funny”. For Anda (45 y.o.), the users’ self-presentations on Facebook are seen as “very diverse and focused on generating a good image in the reference groups”. Other respondents find the self-presentations as an important source of personal data as young people “open up and share all the personal, daily information, plus their approach or opinion on different public remarks” (Vlad, 24 y.o.). Additionally, Mădălina (31 y.o.) is confident that teenagers provide varied hints and indicators about their emotional worlds - “they are devoted to their presumed mission to conquer their publics showing the best of them, leaving interesting tracks about their true nature”. On the contrary, some participants consider youngsters’ self-presentations on social networks as „immature”. For example, Ramona (28 y.o.) considers that young people “have an increased necessity of being likeable and therefore they include in their presentations all the aspects that they believe will make them look smarter, wiser, cool, even though they are not as such”.

As far as social browsing on Facebook is concerned, respondents deem that it can be useful sometimes if you are searching for socio-demographical information, for older friends, for persons with common interests, hobbies or preferences. But most of the participants in our research answered that social browsing do not replace the need to discover similar people in the offline environment, to network with peers, to enjoy the pleasure of directly unveiling personalities and attitudes.

The aforementioned item was meant to examine the respondents’ approaches on using Facebook as a trustworthiness means for settling new relationships based on the available socio-demographic data and on the personality clues. Moving forward, the idea of using Facebook as a recruiting tool for employers made things more clear. The interviewed subjects believe that “since Facebook is offering mainly desirable images, it will be wrong to label people based on their profiles” (Ramona, 28 y.o.). Additionally, Laurențiu (47 y.o.) deems that it could be only used “to avoid hiring a totally undesirable person for the job”. On the contrary, some respondents see Facebook as a compelling recruiting tool “because it makes the decision easier, cheaper and based on more personal information” (Vlad, 24 y.o.). In this respect, Mihaela (29 y.o.) stresses the idea that “employers should exploit the online-displayed psychological and social indicators of a

Facebook user. It is like having a full-option package of information and dumping it.”

Focusing on the college admissions procedures, the participants reported that their institutions resort to written and/or oral exams as admissions criteria. As far as using Facebook profile examination as a college admissions criterion for prospective candidates, the great majority of the respondents (14 out of 19) consider it as an “inefficient”, “ambiguous” and “strange” tool. Vlad (24 y.o.) posits that “Facebook should not be used as an admissions criterion because we all have a personal space which must not be criticized unless it affects the public/working environment”. He underscores some important ethical issues, such as “invading private life”, “judging appearances”, “favoring recruiters’ stereotypes” etc. Likewise, Ioana (25 y.o.) insists on the lack of trustworthiness of the disclosed information and thinks that “advancing objective judgments based on fictitious presentations stands for an unprofessional conduct”. Also, Andreia (40 y.o.) assumes that “using Facebook profiles as a wellhead of pertinent personality clues is misleading and deceiving for the admissions officer because of the cleavage between the prospective students’ values and the examiners’ characteristics. As objective as we may be as admissions officers, we are subjective individuals with likes and dislikes, with biases and moods”.

Nonetheless, some of the respondents (5 out of 19) argue that using Facebook profile information as an admissions criterion may entail positive effects. For instance, Bogdan (52 y.o.) believes that “they offer a cogent hint on individuals self-confidence and attitude towards performance and effectiveness” and Alexandra (41 y.o.) considers that “the college admissions officers would benefit from an alternative filter - dynamic students may be identified and students with previous legal problems or with unethical behavior may be avoided”. Moreover, Mădălina (31 y.o.) considers that “there are multiple indices which should be taken into account when screening a Facebook profile. Firstly, pictures tell you more than a thousand words – one can find out numerous things about the user’s personality, daily routine, activities, hobbies, interests. Secondly, by analyzing the user’s network, one can go further, unveiling leadership skills, degrees of influence in the network, node centrality, etc. Unfortunately, these aspects cannot be traced at a first glance. Proper attention should be attached to the latent information, but time is of the essence and admissions officers are always under pressure... ”. Consistent with this perspective, Laurențiu (47 y.o.) stresses on the language importance as a “major field of the personality research. Teenagers and young adults reveal themselves through the language used on the Facebook walls and personal profiles. Therefore, we

may discover a myriad of personality traits very much connected to the college field”.

Discussing the details to which the admissions officers would pay attention, respondents adopted different positions and focuses: “personality traits” (Andreea, 26 y.o.), “profile photos, comments, interests” (Vlad, 24 y.o.), “activities and events in which he/she is involved” (Ramona, 28 y.o.), “the level of general culture” (Anda, 45 y.o.), “the network structure” (Alexandra, 41 y.o.), “the message of the pictures” (Mădălina, 31 y.o.).

The question “What would you expect from a prospective management student’s profile?” triggered multiple standpoints. Respondents have mentioned personality features such as: “to be witty, to be interested in improving his/her life’s condition through his/her work, to be willing to learn” (Andreea, 26 y.o.), “to be dynamic, preoccupied with social and economic evolutions, to disclose the traits of an enquiring person” (Alexandra, 41 y.o.), “to show creativity, entrepreneurial appetite, ability to cooperate with other people, risk appetite” (Anda, 45 y.o.). The respondents highlighted that these traits would be supported by the profile pictures, the photo albums which embody the main volunteering activities, hobbies, social events, groups of interest, etc.).

Different approaches emerged regarding the specific information which would convince the admissions officers how suitable a Management college candidate is. For example, Alexandra (41 y.o.) considers that some specific information could include “thematic contests” and “proofs of entrepreneurial behavior”. Others focus on clear leadership skills and endeavors like “previous experience in volunteering projects as group coordinators” (Anda, 45 y.o.). Mihaela (29 y.o.) reiterates the fact that “any examiner who pays attention to a certain profile should identify a main trend or a primary key to decipher the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities or the constraints to personally and professionally evolve”. In contrast, Andreea (26 y.o.) insists on the idea that “Facebook profile is not a good predictor for assessing whether a candidate is eligible for a Management college”. A moderate position was embraced by Ramona (28 y.o.) and Ioana (25 y.o.) who heed the fact that “by exploring the user’s profile, admissions officers may dispose of extra-information about a certain candidate, but the information should not be consider as sufficient for an objective scrutiny”. Additionally, Andreea (26 y.o.) considers that relevant information could refer to “severe personality disorders” and for Laurențiu (47 y.o.) “to consistent references to anti-social behaviors and ideological fundamentalism”.

As far as the last item is concerned “In which phase of the admission procedure would you include Facebook profiles examination?”, almost all the respondents assess that it must be placed at the end of the admissions process, “in a phase where extracting improper candidates becomes mandatory” (Laurențiu, 47 y.o.). Still, as the answers show, Facebook usage as an admissions criterion is not well-placed in the examiners’ preferences, mostly because it is considered an ambiguous social documentation tool based on “judging appearances”, “false information or idealized social images”, “the examiner’s stereotypes”. Yet, some of the respondents agree that using Facebook as an admissions screening tool can improve the selection process, provided it is exploited as “a final test”.

Conclusion

The approach on Facebook as a social documentation tool within the college admissions procedure has brought about a twofold perspective.

On the one hand, most of the respondents argued that the examination of Facebook profiles can be misleading and tendentious as many self-(re)presentations are built on desirability grounds. Moreover, these assessments entail the subjectivity of the examiners, their stereotypes and personal biases. By corroborating these views, Facebook profiles are not perceived as credible sources of information or as an objective basis for the admissions officers’ appraisal.

On the other hand, several respondents mentioned that Facebook profiles should be deemed as relevant indicators of the users’ personalities and conducts. There are many clues and hints about the way prospective students think and act on a common basis. The language used on the walls, the messages of the uploaded pictures, the social network structure, the characteristics of their groups of interest are all indicative of the users’ emotions and behaviors. Still, the sole information disclosed on the public profiles cannot be taken into account as a primary college admissions criterion, as reported by all the interviewed subjects. It may be used as an additional screening tool, along with written or oral exams.

As the findings show, the interviewed college admissions officers are not ready to include Facebook social documentation tool into their assessment criteria, and they have never resorted to this practice. This situation is very different from the one reported by other studies (e.g. Test Prep company Kaplan, UMass Amherst, National Scholarship Providers Association) conducted in the western countries and in the United States of America. Here,

college admissions directors are very much interested in browsing and searching candidates on Facebook and, which is more, there are numerous universities with a written policy in this respect.

All things considered, from a generic standpoint, using online social networks like Facebook with a view to select prospective candidates for Management colleges is yet to be considered in Romania. Although a regular practice – written or tacit – in other developed countries, in Romania, Facebook screening as an alternative criterion within the admissions procedure is perceived with skepticism and reticence at present.

Acknowledgements: A previous version of this paper was presented at the international conference „SMART 2014 - Social Media in Academia: Research and Teaching”, organized by West University of Timișoara, September 18 – 21, 2014.

References

- Andrei, A.G., and Zaiț, A. (2014). Perceptions of Warmth & Competence in Online Networking: An Experimental Analysis of a Company Launch. *Review of Economic and Business Studies*, 7(1), 11-29.
- Bloomberg, T. (2010). Social Media Marketing GPS – Interviews with 40 marketing Leaders. Retrieved from <http://www.box.net/shared/0n18eeycl4>.
- Brandenburg, C. (2008). The newest way to screen job applicants: A social networker's nightmare. *Federal Communications Law Journal*, 60(3), 597-626.
- Buffardi, L.E., and Campbell, W.K. (2008). Narcissism and social networking web sites. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(10), 1303-1314.
- Calvert, S., Pempeki, T., and Yermolayen, Y. (2009). College students' social networking experiences on Facebook. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30(1), 227– 238.
- Carson, A. (2012). Employers are making good use of applicants' social network profiles, but should they?. In K.J. Nahra (Ed.), *The Privacy Advisor*, 12(4). Retrieved from http://www.hunton.com/files/News/968fa869-9e5e-402c-9c9f-2389fb008525/Presentation/NewsAttachment/f8227e2f-f27b-4183-8c4f24d1d873ce6e/Employers_applicants_profiles.pdf.
- Castells, M. (2009). *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dawson, E. (2011). Facebook Profiles and Usage as Indicators of Personality. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.bryant.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=honors_appliedpsycholog.

- De Luna, T.P.(2011). Performing the Face. A look at the embodied sexuality in the profile photos of selected Facebook users. 2011 International Conference on Social Science and Humanity. IPEDR, vol. 5, Singapore: IACSIT Press.
- Dumitriu, D.L. (2014). The mediated live experience and the spatial reconfiguration of the sport act. *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 16(3), 35-45.
- Forbes.com (2012). What College Admissions Officers Don't Like Seeing On Facebook: Vulgarity, Drinking Photos & 'Illegal Activities'. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kashmirhill/2012/10/12/what-college-admissions-officers-dont-like-seeing-on-facebook-profiles-vulgarity-drinking-photos-and-illegal-activities/>.
- Gil-Or, O., Levi-Belz, Y., and Turel, O. (2015). The "Facebook-self": characteristics and psychological predictors of false self-presentation on Facebook. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6(Article 99), 1-10.
- Grove, A. (2012). Facebook, Google and College Admissions. Retrieved from <http://collegeapps.about.com/od/theartofgettingaccepted/a/Facebook.htm>.
- Hoyer, W., and MacInnis, D. (2007). *Consumer Behavior*. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Kramer, N.C., and Winter, S. (2008). Impression management 2.0: The relationship of self-esteem, extraversion, self-efficacy, and self-presentation within social networking sites. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 20(3), 106-116.
- Lewis, J., and West, A. (2009). 'Friending': London-based undergraduates' experience of Facebook. *New Media & Society*, 11(7), 1209 – 1229.
- Lory, B.E.H. (2011). Employer Use of Facebook as a Tool in Pre-Employment Screening of Applicants: Benefits and Ethical, Legal, and Privacy Implications. Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership Theses. Paper 7.
- Luckerson, V. (2012). When Colleges Look Up Applicants on Facebook: The Unspoken New Admissions Test. Retrieved from <http://nation.time.com/2012/11/15/when-colleges-look-up-applicants-on-facebook-the-unspoken-new-admissions-test/>.
- Madden, M., and Smith, A. (2010). Reputation management and social media. How people monitor their identity and search for others online. Retrieved from the Pew Internet & American Life Project Web site: <http://pewinternet.org/>.
- Michikyan, M., Subrahmanyam, K., and Dennis, J. (2014). Can you tell who I am? Neuroticism, extraversion, and online self-presentation among young adults. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33(2014), 179–183.
- Mihalcea, A.D., and Săvulescu R.M. (2013). Social Networking Sites: Guidelines for Creating New Business Opportunities through Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. *Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy*, 1(1), 39-53.
- Ong et al. (2011). Narcissism, extraversion, and adolescents' self-presentation on Facebook. *Personality and Individual Differences*. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191886910004654>.
- Peluchette, J., and Karl, K. (2010). Examining students' intended image on Facebook: 'What were they thinking?!'. *Journal of Education for Business*, 85(1), 30-37.

- Qualmann, E. (2009). *Socialnomics: How Social Media Transforms the Way We Live and Do Business*. New Jersey: Wiley.
- Schau, H.J., and Gilly, M. (2003). We Are What We Post? Self-Presentation in Personal Web Space, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30 (December), 385-404.
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Seto, E. (2012). Associations between Self-Reported Narcissism, Self-Esteem, and Social-Emotional Functions of Facebook. A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Baylor University, Retrieved from http://beardocs.baylor.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2104/8322/elizabeth_seto_honorsthesis.pdf?sequence=3.
- Siibak, A. (2009). Constructing the self through the photo selection - Visual impression management on social networking websites. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 3(1). Retrieved from www.cyberpsychology.eu/view.php?cisloclanku=2009061501&article=1.
- Strano, M.M. (2008). User descriptions and interpretations of self-presentation through Facebook profile images. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 2(2). Retrieved from <http://www.cyberpsychology.eu/view.php?cisloclanku=2008110402>.
- Smith, W.P., and Kidder, D.L. (2010). You've been tagged! (Then again, maybe not): Employers and Facebook, *Business Horizons*, 53(5), 491-499.
- Underwood, J.D., Kerlin, L., and Farrington-Flint, L. (2011). The lies we tell and what they say about us: Using behavioural characteristics to explain Facebook activity. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(5), 1621-1626.
- Vătămănescu, E.-M., and Mănuș, D. (2013). Facebook Self-(Re)Presentation and the Employers' Practice of Using It as a Recruitment Tool. *Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy*, 1(2), 241-257.
- Vătămănescu, E.-M., Andrei, A.G., Leovaridis, C., and Dumitriu, L.-D. (2015). Exploring network-based intellectual capital as a competitive advantage. An insight into European universities from developing economies. In J.G. Cegarra Navarro (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 7th European Conference on Intellectual Capital ECIC 2015* (pp.350-358). Reading, UK: Academic Conferences and Publishing International Limited.
- Walther, J.B. (2007). Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition, *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23(5), 2538-2557.
- Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., and Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(5), 1816-1836.

Appendix

Interview guide

1. How would you describe Facebook profiles in a few words?
2. Do you think Facebook reveals the users' true selves or desirable images?
3. How would you describe the youngsters' self-presentations on Facebook?
4. How do you feel about social browsing on Facebook (finding out information about an unknown person you are interested in)?
5. Would you rely on Facebook profiles in labelling people? If yes, why? If not, why?
6. What do you feel about using Facebook as a recruiting tool by employers?
7. What admissions criteria does your college employ at present?
8. What do you think about using Facebook as a college admissions criterion (among others) for prospective candidates? Please specify at least three pros and cons.
9. To what details would you pay attention if you were a college admissions officer?
10. What would you expect from a prospective Management student's profile?
11. How would you proceed if the candidate's Facebook profile is private or partially public and your job is to study Facebook profiles?
12. What specific information would definitely convince you that she/he is the right candidate in relation to a Management college?
13. What specific information would definitely convince you that she/he is an inadequate candidate in relation to a Management college?
14. In which phase of the admissions procedure would you include Facebook profiles examination?
15. Socio-demographic information
 1. Academic title (Ph.D., Ph.D. candidate, Postdoctoral researcher, etc.)
 2. Academic position (Assistant professor / Lecturer / Associate professor / Professor, etc.)
 3. Age