SOCIAL RESEARCH REPORTS

ISSN: 2066-6861 (print), ISSN: 2067-5941 (electronic)

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Social Research Reports, 2019, Vol. 11, Issue 3, pp. 182-192

The online version of this article can be found at:

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<https://doi.org/10.33788/srr11.3.13>

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THE EXCESSIVE USE OF FACEBOOK AND THE ADULT SELF-PRESENTATION IN ROMANIA

Ramona RADUCAN¹, Mihaela VADEANU²

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the association between self-presentation and the excessive use of Facebook social media by adults in Romania. Two hypotheses were formulated to achieve these objectives: (1) There is a statistically significant correlation between the age of Facebook social network users and their self-presentation; (2) There are statistically significant differences in the self-representation of Facebook social network users by gender. The study population is made up of all adults in Romania who use the Facebook platform more than 4 hours each day. The sample consists of 151 people (43 men and 108 women), aged 18 to 72, and the average age being 34.92 years. In order to measure study variables, the Self-Presentation Scale (AC01 Questionnaire) realized by R.D. Lennox and R.N. Wolfe (1984), was used. The quasi-experimental research was conducted in May 2018 by completing online questionnaires via the Facebook platform. The application of questionnaires was done online by creating a Google Drive form. According to the results obtained the negative correlation established between the subjects' age and the self-presentation doesn't reach the statistical significance threshold ($p = 0,603$). Thus, hypothesis H1 is not confirmed. According to the results, the differences observed between men and women don't reach the statistical significance threshold ($p = 0,608$), thus hypothesis H2 is not confirmed.

Keywords: self-presentation of adults, the excessive use of Facebook social media.

¹ Universitatea "1 Decembrie 1918" din Alba Iulia, Alba Iulia. ROMANIA. E-mail: ramona.lungu@yahoo.com

² Universitatea „Tibiscus” din Timisoara, ROMANIA. E-mail: mishavadeanu@yahoo.com

Introduction

Boncu (2004) notes that people transform the environment they live in order to make it less threatening and look for social circumstances favourable to the achievement of personal, professional, social goals. In this process, individuals are based on social intelligence and on trying to inflate the attitudes and behaviours of people they come into contact with. Therefore, controlling information about the identity of social actors, their activities and their social relationships acquires a special importance in managing the impression on others. Cooley and Mead (apud Boncu, 2004) show that self-regulation implies the anticipation of others' reactions to different behaviours and the selection of the most appropriate conduct according to their supposed reaction. Moreover, it seems that the social actor will offer the most flattering variant to others, in order to fulfil one's goals and interests, as an essential condition of social interaction (Goffman, 1959, apud Boncu, 2004). If self-identification is the process by which the identity of an individual is determined for him/herself and for others (Schlenker, 1985, apud Boncu, 2004), self-representation is the activity of identifying others.

Boncu (2004) mentions that self-presentation depends not only on the actor's goals, but also on the characteristics of the situation. Self-presentation also varies depending on: the individual's cognitive effort in presenting the information, the actor's degree of awareness on the fact that s/he is trying to create a certain impression, the degree to which the behaviour is perceived to be authentic or false, and to the audience to which the information is presented. In fact, the reasons for regulating information about one's self (self-presentation) are multiple, the most important being: self-glorification (the maintaining and strengthening of one's self-esteem), self-consistency (self-validation by self-confirming beliefs) and self-authentication (trying to find the truth about my own self based on diagnostic information). It is very important to note that the audience has a significant influence on self-presentation, having the capacity to shape the individuals' beliefs and behaviours as targets of communication and as indices for identity information. When the audience is a target of communication, the transmitter organizes the information to fit the receiver's knowledge and values; s/he takes the receiver's imaginary role to adjust the message and achieve the desired effect with a lot of skill. Audiences can consciously or unconsciously activate certain information about the actor's identity, such as: self-schemas, roles, elements that actors use in self-presentation.

The Facebook social network

Facebook is a social media social networking site managed by Facebook.inc. with headquarters in Menlo Park, California. This social network was launched on February 4, 2004, initially under the name "The Facebook", by Mark Zuckerberg along with several college students at Harvard. Facebook.inc. is listed on the stock market, since February 2012, when it was worth \$ 104 billion; on June 26, 2018 the market value was of 569, 26 million dollars.

Network access can be realized from computers, tablets and smart phones. After registration, users can customize their profiles (a page dedicated to each user) indicating the name, where they live, occupation etc. Sharing personal profile data can be personalized, with the user having the option of keeping private data, sharing them with friends, or creating a public profile. One can add other users as “friends”, with whom they can exchange messages, update one’s status, share pictures, videos, or links (links). In addition, one can categorize their friends as “close friends” or “friends from work”, and if they have common interests, they can create groups on various topics. The “like” button was first activated in February 2009 for users to easily interact with status updates, comments, photos, videos, shared links, and commercials. In February 2016, the function “Reaction” appeared which allows the use of five predefined emotions in comments: “Love”, “Ha-ha”, “Wow”, “Sad” and „Furious”. Starting with March 2018, Facebook has more than 1.45 billion active users per day and 2.20 billion active users per month (source: <https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>). Worldwide, the influence of national cultures makes it the most popular social networking site in several countries speaking English (The United States of America, Canada, and UK). In the regional Internet markets, Facebook has the highest insertion in North America (69%), Middle East - Africa (67%), Latin America (58%), Europe (57%) and Pacific Asia (17%).

Internet users and mainly social media one are an important information resource for the social environment, organizations and corporations. There are numerous reports and statistics on the evolution of these service markets. We Are Social and Hootsuite (source: <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>) produced a global digital report in 2018 that provides statistics on: Internet users, active social media users, and internet / social media users on mobile devices. The report contains global, regional and at country level data. According to the data collected, there are currently over 4 billion people using the Internet, a quarter of a billion people have become new users in 2017. According to the same report, Facebook still dominates the social networking market. According to the same study, in Romania there are 10 million Facebook users, increasing since 2017, with an equal gender distribution and an overwhelming preference (89%) to access the network on a mobile device. The report provides a distribution of users by age and gender (in thousands), with most users in the 25-34 age groups (1.287.000 women and 1.351.000 men) (Source: <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>). Facebook had such a great impact due to its structured manner, because through the wealth of information provided, it has managed to create a neighbourhood atmosphere specific to small towns.

Previous studies

What determines people to use social networks and Facebook in particular in such an extent? How different do individuals present themselves in the virtual reality in comparison to the reality self-representation? These are just a few questions that have been the basis of several studies, which tried to explain the social media phenomenon.

One of the first studies that attempted to explain the motivation of Facebook users was that of Nadkarni and Hofmann (2011). The authors found that the use of social networks is primarily determined by two basic human needs: the need to belong and the need of self-presentation. These can act independently, although both are influenced by a number of factors such as: culture, socio-demographic variables and personality traits (introversion, extraversion, shyness, narcissism, neuroticism, self-esteem and self-value).

Utz, Tanis and Vermeulen (2012) have questioned the predictors of using social networking sites, focusing primarily on the Big Five features, narcissism and self-esteem. They found that the need for popularity would be a better predictor for behaviours such as: caring, strategic self-presentation, profile improvement, revealing of feelings, routine use of social networking and the number of friends. This is because social networks are ideal locations for people in need of high popularity. Just as narcissistic people use the Facebook network for self-glorification, as people with low self-esteem use it to interact with others and feel better, so do materialists use it to acquire and promote their possessions (Ozimek, Baer, Förster, 2017).

Seidman (2013) analyzed the relationship between the personality dimensions investigated with the Big Five questionnaire and the fulfilling of the needs of self-image and self-presentation by using Facebook on a sample of 184 students (51 men and 133 women). Research done until the time of the study on the relation between Facebook, self-disclosure and extraversion was inconclusive. Ryan and Xenos (2011) found that extraversion was associated to greater self-disclosure on Facebook, while Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky (2010) found extraverts to reveal less personal information in their profiles. The explanation would be that, although extraverts change more often profile photos and post photos more often, have fewer photos alone and update their profile text less frequently (Gosling et al., 2011). These contradictory findings suggest that in order to understand the extraverts' self-presentation, it is better to consider motivation rather than specific activities. Extraverts use the same strategies of self-presentation online and offline. On the other hand, introverts feel freer to express hidden aspects of the online self (Amichai-Hamburger, Wainapel & Fox, 2002).

Seidman (2013) assumed that agreeability will positively correlate with the search for information, with the search for acceptance and linking, as agreeable people are popular on Facebook, they have a large number of online friends (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; White et al., 2004, apud Seidman, 2013), they are person-oriented, and the use of Facebook is a way to fulfil the need for belonging. The individuals' online self-portraits, with high open scores have a pronounced self-revealing character. These people are more likely to create and post on a personal blog (Guadagno, Okdie & Eno, 2008, apud Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010), but also reveal personal information on their Facebook profiles (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010).

Seidman (2013) considered neuroticism to be positively associated with communication, with the search for information and the search for acceptance, because neurotic persons are less satisfied with romantic partners and more sensitive to rejection (White et al., 2004; Downey & Feldman, 1996 and Malone et al., 2012, apud Seidman, 2013). Thus, neurotic people can compensate for the

lack of feeling in real life through acceptance and virtual social contact. Research suggests that neurotic people are concerned with the aspect of self-presentation because neurosis is related to social anxiety and public consciousness (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999, apud Seidman, 2013). Neurotic individuals tend to have large discrepancies between the real and the ideal self (Watson & Watts, 2001, apud Seidman, 2013) and present themselves in a way that differs from their own perception (Leary & Allen, 2011, apud Seidman), thus resulting that they can present an idealized online self.

Neurosis is correlated with both social anxiety and self-presentation of hidden online aspects (McKenna et al. 2002, apud Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2002). The low self-esteem of neurotic people is associated with the tendency to see Facebook as a safe ground for self-expression (Forest & al., 2012) and therefore use Facebook to self-present hidden issues (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2002).

Conscientiousness seems to be related to caution and to an authentic self-presentation. Leary and Allen (2011, apud Westerbeek, J. et al., 2014) found that participants with high scores on conscientiousness presented themselves in a manner consistent with group rules, congruent with self-perceptions. Moore and McElroy (2012, Westerbeek, J. Et al., 2014) supported the idea that conscientious individuals present themselves with caution online and found that conscientiousness was associated with a higher rate of regret on Facebook posts considered to be inappropriate.

Self-presentation and motivation to use Facebook were best predicted by low conscientiousness and high neuroticism. Results suggest that conscious individuals are cautious about presenting themselves online. Neuroticism, agreeability and extraversion were positively associated with the tendency to express the real self. Neuroticism has been positively associated with the expression of the ideal self and some hidden aspects of the self.

Strano (2008) conducted a qualitative self-presentation study, focusing on people's choices on profile images used on Facebook. The results show that women tend to change their profile more often and to emphasize friendship in the images they choose to display. Although men and women have equal chances to show images showing family and romantic relationships, interpretations of such images may vary by gender. In addition, being among the first research on Facebook, which included users over the age of 22, this study provides comparative data demonstrating that elder users are less likely to change their profile images frequently.

Bareket-Bojmel et al. (2016) conducted a study that analyzed the correlations between the reasons for self-presentation, online behaviour on Facebook, and feedback: the members of the social network ("like", comments). By using the modelling of structural equations, the authors of the study found that performance targets predict an increase in motivation to feel good about their own person on Facebook, and increased levels of social feedback – "like" and comments of others.

Another study aimed to identify gender differences in self-presentation on Facebook by evaluating the components of profile photos and covers. The study highlighted the fact that men's photos have accentuated the status (using objects or formal clothing) and risk taking (outdoor settings), while feminine images have accentuated family relationships and emotional expression (eye contact, smile

intensity and lack of sunglasses). However, cover photos did not show the majority of these gender differences, probably because they only serve as a supplement to self-presentation in profile photos (Tifferet, Vilnai-Yavetz, 2014).

Feldman et al. (2002) focused on certain “techniques” used in self-presentation, such as “lie”. Not surprisingly, when users want to be liked or seem more competent, they tend to lie more in their self-presentation. The content of lies varies according to the purpose established. People who want to appear competent lie more about their own person, achievements and results; while those who want to be pleasant, exaggerate more and lie about feelings.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyze the association between self-presentation and the excessive use of Facebook social media by adults in Romania. This goal has been operationalized into two objectives: (1) The study of age association and the ability to model one’s behaviour according to the environment and context (self-presentation) of Facebook social network users; (2) The study of differences between Facebook social network users by gender, in terms of self-presentation.

Two hypotheses were formulated to achieve these objectives:

H1. There is a statistically significant correlation between the age of Facebook social network users and their self-presentation.

H2. There are statistically significant differences in the self-representation of Facebook social network users by gender.

Population and Sample

The study population is made up of all adults in Romania who use the Facebook platform more than 4 hours each day. The sample consists of 151 people (43 men and 108 women), aged 18 to 72, and the average age being 34.92 years. Regarding the level of training of the respondents, we mention that 13 of the subjects have completed high school studies, 47 have completed university studies and 91 have graduated postgraduate studies. Participation in the study was improbable, based on volunteering. Two selection criteria were met: Study participants have a Facebook account and are over 18 years of age.

The Research Tool

In order to measure study variables, the Self-Presentation Scale (AC01 Questionnaire) realized by R.D. Lennox and R.N. Wolfe (1984), was used. The concept of self-presentation that underpins the construction of this tool refers to a person’s ability to shape one’s behaviour by taking into account the external environment and the context in which one is located. Thus, the scale aims at three distinct major tendencies: the desire to be at the centre of attention, the sensitivity

to the reactions of others, and the ability to change behaviour to induce others positive reactions on one's own person.

The questionnaire consists of 13 items, each of them with six variants of answers, namely: „Always true”, „Generally true”, and „Somewhat true”, „Somewhat false”, „Totally false” and „Always false”. The calculation of scores is done by adding the scores obtained for each answer, being noted on a Lickert scale from 5 points for the „Always true” response to 0 points for „Always False”. The exception is represented by items 9 and 12 where the scoring is reversed. It is compulsory to respond to all items, there is no time limit. Interpretation of scores is based on one of the three groups: 0-22: low, 23-44: medium, 45-65: high.

The quasi-experimental research was conducted in May 2018 by completing online questionnaires via the Facebook platform. The application of questionnaires was done online by creating a Google Drive form. The form presented at the beginning the purpose of the survey presented briefly, the name of the questionnaire to be filled in, the two conditions for completing the questionnaire (the condition to have a Facebook account and the condition to be over 18 years old), clarifications regarding the confidentiality of data and the purpose of their use. The form was subsequently structured into two parts: the first part contained personal data, users being required to fill in socio-demographic data. The second section contained the Self-Presentation Scale (AC01 Questionnaire) consisting of 13 items, subjects being trained to tick one of six possible responses.

In order to process the raw statistical data, the program was used: SPSS.20. For the verification of the H1 hypothesis, the calculation of the Bravais-Pearson correlation coefficient r was used as a statistical procedure, and for the hypothesis H2, the student t test for the average comparison was used.

Results

H1. There is a statistically significant correlation between the age of Facebook social network users and their self-presentation.

Table 1. Presentation of the r coefficient correlation for the association between age and self-presentation

Variable		Self-presentation
Age	XXXr	-0,043
	XXXp	0,603
	XXXN	151

According to the results obtained (*Table 1*), the negative correlation established between the subjects' age and the self-presentation doesn't reach the statistical significance threshold ($p = 0,603$). Thus, hypothesis H1 is not confirmed.

H2. There are statistically significant differences in the self-representation of Facebook social network users by gender.

Table 2. t test for the comparison of self-presentation averages between men and women Facebook users

	Levene for equality of differences		t	Freedom degree	p	Averages differences	Trust interval for averages differences	
Self-presentation	F	P	0,514	149	0,608	-0,639	Inf.	Sup.
	0,033	0,856					-3.097	1,818

According to the results presented (*Table 2*), the differences observed between men and women don't reach the statistical significance threshold ($p = 0,608$), thus hypothesis H2 is not confirmed.

Discussion

For most Romanian adults, Facebook is an event that dates back to 10 years. Thus, the adults in the study had contact with it mainly during a period of their life, after their adolescence and its challenges. With aging, people tend to use their own values and motivations to guide their behaviour; they know better themselves (unlike teenagers) and look for fewer clues in the environment to guide themselves. Probably, this is the reason why no significant associations between the age ranges of the adults in the study and the ways of self-presentation in the online social space represented by Facebook have been established.

When they present themselves online, adults use strategies to influence preferences, “mirrors” and the respect they receive from the audience. This goal is pursued by both sexes, both men and women look for indexes in the environment to adapt to, they are sensitive to external factors, only the strategies used are different. Men emphasize self-presentation on status and risk taking, and women on family relationships and emotional expression (Tifferet, Vilnai-Yavetz, 2014).

According to a study realized on Facebook users, men use social networking sites to built new relationships, while women use them to maintain existing relationships (Muscanell and Guadagno, 2012). This suggests the existence of self-presentation of gender stereotypes, deeply rooted, universal, which are always

reconfirmed, men present themselves as active, self-confident, independent, holding control (initiates new relationships), while women subject to a passive pattern, are empathetic, concerned about the wellbeing of others (maintain relationships).

However, it seems that things are a little different in Romania. Since 60.26% of respondents of both sexes have graduated from post-graduate studies, they have a common higher educational level; one can conclude that this is the element that uniforms self-presentation on Facebook. In other words, highly educated people gave up the presentation of gender and gender characteristics in favour of professional and / or educational ones. For the Romanian graduate of post-university studies, it is more important to show, to present professional achievements than those resulting from biological gender.

Even though Romanian men have the same motivation as men from English-speaking environments, to initiate new Facebook relationships, Romanians do it differently from their counterparts. For the Romanian man, the social status derived from the training level is more important than being active, self-confident, independent, or controlling. This is probably because the basis for initiating new relationships with other social actors is different from these characteristics. Perhaps it is easier for Romanian Facebook user men to initiate a virtual relationship with another user, starting from education and profession, from social identity, rather than interests and other characteristics related to personal identity. It may be the formalism of a society that has not yet moved from traditionalism to modernism, from the individual's social value to personal value, from collectivism to individualism.

On the other hand, Romanian women with postgraduate studies using Facebook have given up gender stereotype, the image of a passive, empathetic person, especially concerned with the wellbeing of others, in the desire to overcome somewhat the condition of women in a predominantly traditionalist society. We believe with conviction that in Romania, the engines of a transition to modernism and the main supporters of the equality of chances between women and men are women, not men. Even a higher level of education is a women's statement in relation to their role in the Romanian contemporary society. Thus, the role and social status of Romanian-speaking Facebook users are the basis for the maintenance of their social relationships, including in the virtual space.

Conclusion

Because there are studies showing that the use of the Facebook network also has negative effects on self-esteem (by exposing the feelings of envy / jealousy generated by the pictures of others with friends and happy families, physical beauty and successful holidays), this research proposed to analyze the relationship between excessive use of Facebook and the ability to model behaviour according to the environment and the context. Knowing that resentment feelings towards wellbeing and happiness displayed on Facebook make some people feel lonely and unsatisfied with their own lives, this research has the merit of showing that Romanian adults use excessive Facebook less to obtain validation from others,

less for distorted presentation of one's life, and more for receiving and offering entertainment as one of the main sources of daily stress reduction.

The Limits of the Work

The questionnaire used, even if it provides objective data, is limited in comparison to qualitative methods. The questionnaires ask the subjects for a sufficient level of self-knowledge, so the answers may be influenced by the subjectivity of the participants in the study in self-evaluation. Another limitation is the fact that the influences of other socio-demographic variables were not analyzed: the environment of origin, civil status, etc.

In the evaluation of self-presentation, only the subjects' perspective, not that of some external observers, was taken into account. Self-presentation involves changing behaviour to fulfil an objective (e.g. being at the centre of attention), voluntarily but also involuntarily, by providing information of psychological significance. For their assessment, external observers could provide a more objective view of data reception from subjects' profiles.

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