

Chapter 15

Digital Transformation and the Romanian Public Sector: Evaluating Engagement Strategies on Facebook

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ABSTRACT

The rapid evolution of technology has introduced an era of unprecedented change in both our personal and professional lives. Traditional methods of communication, service delivery, and governance have been transformed, replaced by digital tools and platforms that promise greater efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. This chapter explores the digital transformation of the Romanian public sector, focusing on how central institutions utilize Facebook for communication. It investigates strategies employed, citizen engagement levels, and factors influencing follower growth. A mixed-methods approach, incorporating content analysis and regression modeling, is used. Preliminary findings reveal differences in engagement across institutions

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and the importance of shareable content. The research underscores the need for a more coordinated and strategic approach to online communication in the Romanian public sector to enhance citizen engagement and service delivery in the digital age.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most important aspects that facilitates efficient functioning of the public institutions in Romania and their interaction with the citizens (Sarjito, 2023). According to Ihlen & Heath (2018, p.3), organizations need to communicate to be able to convey their message and values to their stakeholders. The last decades have been challenging for organizations as they have faced a dynamic environment characterized by specialization of work, outsourcing of various processes, globalization, and more. Technology has been an area of accelerated expansion that organizations have had to keep pace with (Holtz, 2006, Diamandis & Kotler, 2020). Social networks have a positive impact on the work of public institutions, with benefits such as increased citizen engagement, transparent communication and improved communication processes (Kleinmans, Van Ham & Evens-Cowley, 2015).

The rise of social media platforms such as Facebook (Van Dijck, 2013) has forced governments to adapt to changes in the socio-political environment, where both challenges and opportunities have coexisted (Hong, Kim & Kwon, 2022).

In the context of Romania, where digital transformation is actively shaping the public sector, understanding how central institutions are using Facebook for communication is crucial (Farcaș, 2017, Rus, Tasente & Camara, 2021).

This chapter analyzes the impact of the communication strategies of public institutions, implemented by public servants from communication departments and the degree to which they foster citizen engagement, along with the factors influencing their online impact. This research uses a mixed-methods approach to investigate the online communication strategies of Romanian central public institutions on Facebook and their impact on citizen engagement. Data collection involved a quantitative content analysis of Facebook posts from 21 central public institutions (list of ministries and the Romanian government) over a 90-day period. The coding scheme was adapted from Bonsón & Ratkai (2013) (see Table 1) to categorize posts based on communication strategies, engagement techniques and content themes. This made it possible to identify patterns in communication approaches and to assess the frequency of different strategies. Data extraction involved collecting information on different engagement metrics, including likes, shares, comments and number of followers for each institution's Facebook page. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the frequency and distribution of different communication strategies and engagement levels across the selected institutions, and regression analysis was used

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