A G O R A

Particularities of the Social Media Communication for the Theatres in Transylvania

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*"The Internet
(World Wide Web)
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(Tim Berners-Lee)*

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Introduction

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS are an essential component of corporate strategy, comprising a plurality of elements, both classic and new, typical or unconventional. The usefulness of the communications strategy of a company or cultural organization lies in measurable results, on the one hand, and in achieving affective or cognitive goals. Bearing in mind that cultural organizations, theatres in particular, offer cultural services which are exclusively intangible, their communications strategy serves to inform and establish a relationship with customers and stimulate purchases.

Over time, the marketing strategy centered on the 4Ps—Product, Price, Promotion, Placement—has developed considerably (Grönroos 1994) and, as a part of it, the communications strategy has also evolved. If at the beginning of the marketing efforts companies used only one instrument in their promotion campaigns, nowadays, in the context of globalization and increased competition, the communications strategy consists of various tools, but integrated towards the same purpose (Constantinides 2006).

Considering the vast array of new communication tools, customers interact with companies in ways unimaginable even five years ago. The rapid growth of these new communication channels, commonly referred to as Social Media, provides all types of organizations with a great deal of information, as consumers join and create online communities in increasing numbers. There is great potential for improving business performance by monitoring and, most importantly, acting on these findings. This can also lead to actually changing the way products and services are developed and marketed. These new information channels require a rethinking in the definition of customer value for the current top management of companies and suitable methods and tools for evaluating the effectiveness of their marketing efforts through social networks.

More than 82% of the Romanian Internet users own at least one account on a social network, according to socialnetworks.ro, an Evensys initiative (Evensys 2011). Also, Romania is among the top 10 countries worldwide when it comes to the growth in the number of Facebook users. Companies are becoming increasingly interested in communicating with target audiences through social networks, but this approach can be successful only in the context of a coherent strategic approach to marketing through social networks, closely followed by an analysis of the relevant and accurate measurement of the efforts needed and of the results generated in terms of business value for the company.

In the past, companies have been able to actually control the publicly available information about them by strategic press releases and highly skilled public relations employees. Nowadays, however, they are mostly left in the open, as observers, not being able to control or censor what consumers post and discuss online about their brands, products or services. This might seem a natural evolution if we consider that the Internet started out as a giant Bulletin Board System (BBS) that allowed users to exchange software, data, messages, and news with each other (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). The current trend towards Social Media can therefore be seen as an evolution back to the Internet's roots, since it turns the World Wide Web back into what it was initially created for: a platform to facilitate the exchange of information between users. This does not mean that we are back to the same point, because the technological advancements of the last 20 years have fundamentally changed the face of the Web and now

enable a form of virtual content sharing that is not only different but also more powerful than the BBS of the late 1970s.

This article brings forth the challenges and opportunities that emerge from this evolution for the theatres in Transylvania, and provides a framework to better understand the rapidly evolving field of Social Media for cultural organizations. We begin by providing a definition and classification of Social Media by looking at their background, technical specificities, and differences in regard to other concepts such as Web 2.0 and User Generated Content. We then focus on the manner in which five theatres in Transylvania understand and use these instruments in their effort to create a long lasting relationship with the audience and analyze the results of these efforts translated into their actual activity on Facebook over a one-month period. To succeed in this endeavor, the authors conducted a two-stage research. The first stage consisted in a qualitative research among the most notable theatres in Transylvania, by using targeted emails with open-ended questions. It was followed by a desk research on the Facebook activity of five Transylvanian theatres over a one-month period (March 2013). These five theatres are: the National Theatre of Cluj-Napoca (NTC-N), the National Theatre of Târgu-Mureş (NTT-M), Radu Stanca National Theatre of Sibiu (RSNTS), Andrei Mureşanu Theatre of Sfântu Gheorghe (AMTSG), the State Theatre of Oradea (STO). The authors chose these theatres over all the others in Transylvania not only because of their high frequency of Facebook communication (on average, one or more posts per day), but also having in mind the desire to ensure a variety of theatres in terms of national versus municipal theatres.

Based on this analysis, we compile a detailed image on the contribution of Social Media, namely Facebook, in the communication between theatres and their audience, and on the way Social Media are used by theatres for this particular goal. We also derive a set of recommendations theatres should follow when thinking about developing their own Social Media strategy, be it with respect to this aforementioned instrument or to other applications which might emerge in the future.

A Survey of the Literature

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS are a managerial process which enables and facilitates the dialogue with consumers and other stakeholders (Varey 2002). The main target of the communications and general marketing strategy is "the human agent, regarded as an individual with needs and preferences or as a structured community (network) in the organization or even as a society at a global level" (Schebesch, Pop, and Pelău 2010, 39). The

communications strategy is based on the objectives of the company, being one of the essential elements of the overall marketing strategy.

Integrated marketing communications was defined as "a concept of marketing communications planning which recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan which assesses the strategic role of various communication disciplines, for example advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion and public relations—and combines them to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact" (Pelsmacker, Geuens, and Bergh 2001, 8). With the advent and spread of the Internet and the World Wide Web in the mid '90s, other communication channels have made their way into the company's communications strategy. Since then, there has been a new challenge for companies: to understand the needs of online consumers, which are more and more numerous. Thus, the need to expand the four primary components of integrated marketing communications became more acute—advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing and public relations (Schultz 2010).

Arthur Page's Society Report states that marketing communications should be more interactive and collaborative than in the past, creating bidirectional and multidirectional conversation, generating trust and partnership (Charlesworth 2010). From this point of view, one can conclude that the interests of both companies and consumers have to be pursued nowadays, in order to have a successful marketing communications strategy.

The technological advancements of the past twenty years, together with increased supply and competition have facilitated the emergence of new marketing communication tools and components (Kimmel 2005). Kotler identifies the following new promotional tools, without actually proposing a ranking based on their importance: corporate social responsibility (CSR), website, online advertising, viral marketing, web communities and electronic mail (Kotler and Armstrong 2009). The new marketing communication channels bring added value, being granted more attention with the coming of the global economic crisis. During times like these, many managers have turned to them, because they have low costs compared to most traditional marketing communication instruments (Chaffey et al. 2009).

The "newest old" component of the marketing communications strategy is online word-of-mouth (Kimmel 2005), that can sometimes bring excellent results in a very short period of time, depending on the situation. "The adoption of new communication methods—MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Epinions, personal blogs and websites, forums, etc—allowed marketers to reach new markets in very different ways from the traditional channels of promotion" (Owen and Humphrey 2009). Arnott and Bridgewater (2002) suggest that the interactivity provided by the use of online instruments increases companies' capacity of understanding con-

sumer behavior and enables them to offer services matching the consumers' needs and wants. Thus, the use of online marketing communication instruments has a positive impact on the understanding of consumer behavior and on the company-consumer relationship.

"The Internet (World Wide Web) is more a social creation than a purely technical one" said Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the one who introduced the concept on the market, "we created it to have a social effect—to help people work together—not to be a technical toy" (Berners-Lee 2000, 133). Modern communication environments, and not only, are part of an "attention economy" (Jon Peddie Research 2009); each of their products—books, websites, television shows, etc.—competes for consumers' attention and tries to gain material benefits out of this attention, through advertising, subscriptions, increased sales, cross sales or new members. Therefore, users' attention has become a scarce and highly sought after commodity (ibid.). Bruce Sterling describes this trend quite accurately: "in the information economy everything is plentiful, except attention" (ibid.). Social Media dramatically changes the balance of forces involved in this economy: who pays attention to what, who influences such decisions, how they are monitored and measured, the speed of response and a very important element, how they are all monetized (ResearchandMarkets 2011). Including an online component in the marketing communications strategy involves taking into account ten essential elements, generically called "the 10C's of the Internet" (Gay, Charlesworth, and Esen 2007): client, corporate culture, convenience, competition, communication, consistency, creativity of content, customization, coordination and control.

The social component of the Internet is not just a passing fad; it represents a fundamental change in the way people communicate, interact, collaborate, create, inform, prioritize, organize, buy, sell or play. The entire relationship universe of an individual is involved: clients, friends, family, employers, colleagues, shareholders and ultimately even each individual (Jon Peddie Research 2009). Hence, companies and cultural organizations nowadays have to pay special attention to these new instruments, understand them fully and also properly use them in order to reap the greatest possible benefits.

Some scholars identify the beginning of the Social Media era as we understand it today as far as fifty years ago, when "Open Diary" was founded by Bruce and Susan Abelson (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 60). This was an early version of a social networking site that created a community around online diary writers. According to the same source, that was also the time when the term "weblog" was first used and just one year after truncated as "blog" by a member of that community (blogger) after he jokingly transformed the noun "weblog" into the sentence "we blog" (ibid.). The wider availability of high-speed Internet access

made the concept more and more popular, leading to the creation of social networking sites such as MySpace (in 2003) and Facebook (in 2004). These two social networking sites along with Twitter helped coin the term "Social Media" and had a great contribution to the prominence it has today. The most recent additions to this group have been the so-called "virtual worlds": computer-based simulated environments inhabited by three dimensional avatars. Perhaps the best known virtual world is that of Linden Lab's Second Life (Kaplan and Haenlein 2009, 565).

Even though Social Media is currently a widespread term used by all categories of audiences, from consumers to managers and academic researchers, one can still find confusion when it comes to what exactly is represented by this term or how it differs from the related concepts of User Generated Content and Web 2.0. Thus, it is only natural to provide some insight regarding the meaning of Social Media and the related terms.

First officially used in 2004, Web 2.0 represents the collaborative and interactive revolution of the traditional World Wide Web, symbolically named Web 1.0, promoted as such by Tim O'Reilly through the first O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference in late 2004. This way, "the content and information is no longer exclusively offered by mass media, governments and companies to the visitors but also by other users interconnected through informal networks on the Internet, who actively participate in the creation, transmission and sharing of information all over the globe" (O'Reilly 2005). Concrete examples of Web 2.0 usage are: Flickr, YouTube, File sharing sites, Social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, recruiting sites like Ejobs.ro or BestJobs.ro, Blogs and Wikis. For the purpose of our article, we consider Web 2.0 as the platform for the evolution of Social Media.

While Web 2.0 represents the foundation, User Generated Content (UGC) can be viewed as the sum of all the ways in which people make use of Social Media. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2007), UGC needs to fulfill three basic requirements in order to be considered as such: "first, it needs to be published either on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site accessible to a selected group of people; second, it needs to show a certain amount of creative effort; and finally, it needs to have been created outside of professional routines and practices."

Bearing in mind the two concepts clarified above, one can define Social Media as the use of web and mobile technologies to transform conventional communication into an interactive dialogue, or 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 and Haenlein 2010, 61). The majority of articles and books written on this subject

give concrete examples of the elements and groups which make up Social Media (Reuben 2008; Mangold and Faulds 2009; Zarella 2010; Sterne 2010): blogs, collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace), content communities (e.g. YouTube, Flickr), virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft).

Over the last few years the cultural sector in Romania, particularly the theatres, has been challenged by the new Social Media instruments which transform passive consumption into interaction and active participation. While many cultural organizations have experimented with platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, few have developed strategic "cultural communication" programs (Russo 2011). "Cultural Communication is an evolving field which is within and/or in response to cultural activity, is interactive, proactive and offers opportunities for active cultural participation, engagement and co-creation" (Russo and Peacock 2010).

Social Media instruments enable people to create and shape their own experiences and those of others by contributing, commenting, rating or re-mixing or just by using them: searching, subscribing, being counted toward most visited or other recommender systems (Russo and Peacock 2010). In the Social Media world, to use is to contribute—"the act of using the database adds value to it" (Bricklin 2000; Mayfield 2006)—and this is of paramount importance for the theatres' presence in the digital environment.

While there are a rapidly growing number of theatre Social Media initiatives, the benefits of participation have been presented mainly from the institutions' point of view. Seb Chan (2008) discusses four ways in which organizations can measure the success of their Social Media initiatives: self management (the extent to which the community participates in sharing and creating knowledge), ambient presence (the frequency and/or consistency of organizational presence on other social networking sites and the amount of information available on aggregator sites such as Technorati), strategic conversion (mechanisms for tracking the convergence and connection between physical and on-line visitation) and citations (the frequency and quality of citations in sites such as Wikipedia, in academic papers and in commercial settings).

Even though Chan's analysis provides a useful correlation between organizational effort (human resources, budget and timescale) and reward, the user experience is not as important in the overall success measurement as it should be, from a theatre consumer's point of view. Therefore, cultural organizations, and theatres in particular, should consider user experience as essential when it comes to designing activities and measuring success in Social Media, or else run the risk of creating content and infrastructure which does not meet user needs.

Methodology

I N ORDER to attain the aims of this paper, a two-stage research has been con-ducted. In the first stage, a qualitative research has been carried on among the most notable theatres in Transylvania. The objectives of this research regard the following points: exploring the general perceptions over communi-cation on Facebook; identifying the decision-making process that led the theatres towards a Facebook communication, as well as any advantages and disadvantages associated with it; exploring the option for the person responsible for the Facebook communication and the kind of topics posted; identifying any differences between the Facebook and the website communication; exploring the ways of measur-ing the Facebook communication's success used by theatres and the future usage of Social Media in general, Facebook in particular, in the theatres' com-munication with their audience.

The subjects of this research are theatre employees capable of providing answers to such questions, namely, the literary secretary or people from the Marketing/ Communication/PR Department. In terms of the investigation method, the first choice was the in-depth interview. However, because of several constraints, most of them related to the wide geographic distribution of Transylvanian the-atres, the authors opted to send targeted e-mails, with a set of open questions to which the theatres' employees should respond. Such e-mails were sent to 10 Transylvanian theatres involved in Facebook activities, half of them providing detailed answers.

The second stage is represented by the desk research conducted over a one-month period (March 2013). During this period, the authors closely observed and quantified the Facebook communication activity of five Transylvanian the-atres: the National Theatre of Cluj-Napoca, the National Theatre of Târgu-Mureş, Radu Stanca National Theatre of Sibiu, Andrei Mureşanu Theatre of Sfântu Gheorghe, the State Theatre of Oradea. The choice of these five theatres has been determined not only by the frequency of their communication on Facebook (on average at least one post per day), but also by the desire to ensure a cer-tain variety of theatres in terms of national versus municipal theatres.

By the end of the month, the authors had measured the frequency of Facebook communication for each theatre, identified the type of communication the the-atres had opted for in terms of type of post (e.g. image, text, video, etc.) and type of topic, and which were the ones most used in communication, as well as measured and analyzed the theatres' communication in terms of reactions (e.g. likes, comments, shares) provided by the theatres' Facebook users, namely, their audience.

After conducting the two stages of the research, the analysis was expected to provide a detailed outlook on the contribution of Social Media, namely Facebook's, in the existent communication between theatres and their audience and the way Social Media is used by theatres for this particular goal.

Results and Discussion

ACCORDING TO the qualitative research's results, the theatres' option to communicate through Social Media is a relatively recent one, more likely undertaken in the past year. The decision itself has been taken under certain considerations, such as the access to a wide database of potential theatergoers and, also, the lack of limits regarding time and space which facilitates the communication of information in a rapid manner to almost any place where Internet access is available. However, not all Social Media instruments seem to be appreciated by theatres to the same extent. In this respect, Facebook is the one that manages to raise most interest, and the motivation lies in its current omipresence, more and more people becoming Facebook users, thus integrating Facebook communication in their daily routine.

The first step taken towards Facebook is that of creating a profile. However, in terms of communication, the profile is just a passive way of indicating the existence of a theatre on Facebook, failing to reach the ultimate goal, that of interacting with its audience. Only later did theatres opt for a proper Facebook page.

Depending on the size, importance, or type of theatre, the task of communicating on Facebook is attributed to various departments of a theatre. Thus, National Theatres (theatres receiving their budget from the Government) usually possess Marketing, Communication or PR Departments. In this particular case, the employee/s from these departments are automatically dedicated to the Facebook cause, their education/training in this area being a firm recommendation for such a job. However, for Municipal Theatres (theatres receiving their budget from the City Council) the situation is quite different, as such departments are actually inexistent. Therefore, the responsibility for Facebook communication is attributed to the literary secretary among other duties such as keeping in touch with the press and the audience or promoting the theatre's productions/events. For the literary secretary, Facebook communication comes as a natural follow-up of his/her previous duties, only in a different form.

The choice of posted topics lies in the hands of the person responsible for Facebook communication and, to some extent, to the theatre's manager. Usually,

these topics belong to two different categories. On the one hand, there are topics that exclusively refer to the theatre's activity (e.g. productions, staff, program, premieres, road-shows, etc.), having the aim of keeping the audience informed on the theatre's latest news. On the other hand, there are topics that have only a tangential connection with the theatre, providing information referring to the events hosted by the theatre (e.g. concerts, exhibitions, etc.) or the city's cultural events. From this perspective, the theatre ceases to be a self-centered theatrical institution communicating solely about itself, becoming a cultural vector of the city, educating the audience in the spirit of culture, in general, regardless of its form.

Communication through Facebook is quite different from the one through the theatre's website in terms of the type of information conveyed, its form and its freshness. On the theatre's website, information about the theatre's productions, staff and the monthly program may be found, while through Facebook the theatre also communicates about subjects that are not strictly related to this. Nonetheless, the information on the website is more rarely updated (e.g. once a month for the theatre's program or whenever a new production is added to the theatre's repertoire), whereas the communication through Facebook is done on a daily basis and sometimes even several times a day. As regards its form, the information on the website resembles the printed promotional materials ("on the website there are descriptive and exhaustive materials that look like the printed ones; thus, they must be wider and have certain characteristics that may keep its formal feature"), while the information on Facebook is concise and conveyed as small bits that may be easily assimilated by its readers. Overall, on the one hand, the website is a more passive way of informing the audience, with fewer chances of raising their interest, not only because of its lack of interactivity, but also because of certain limits imposed by the quantity and the freshness of the delivered information. On the other hand, Facebook is a livelier alternative, able to build bridges between the audience and the theatre.

As regards the efficiency of communication through Facebook, theatres are more likely to see its benefits in the number of theatergoers attending the theatre's performances (ticket sales), the number of likes per page and the number of likes, comments, shares, viewings per post. In this attempt to understand the success of such a communication, the basic Facebook instruments and reports (e.g. about a post's reach, engaged users, number of people talking about it, virality) seem to be of real help and, possibly, the only viable method of measurement.

Facebook communication is perceived as bringing many advantages for theatres due to the fact that it is a quick and less expensive way of informing and interacting with the audience (e.g. the audience give instant feedback regarding the theatre's productions or ask for productions they long to see again), of promot-

ing theatres' activities, while enhancing the notoriety of the theatre, its staff and productions, and enabling a closer and warmer relationship between the theatre and the audience. Still, several isolated disadvantages have been identified. These disadvantages mainly refer to copyright infringement and the theatre's staff (actors) increased vulnerability before the audience ("it is a pity that there are moments when the personal life of artists may be endangered by the indiscretions or insistence of certain people from the audience who lack common sense"). However, these "minor" inconveniences have not diminished so far, in any way, the importance of Facebook within the theatre's communication strategy.

In conclusion, nowadays Social Media is perceived as being no longer an "experimental area" for theatres, but more like a common means of communication that comes as an addition to traditional marketing activities. For the near future, the role of Social Media in keeping in touch with the audience is deemed likely to remain at least as important as in the present.

Beyond the theatres' declarative opinion regarding their communication through Facebook, the desk research conducted by the authors has managed to reveal both the input (e.g. type of post, topics) and the output of such a communication (e.g. number of likes, shares, comments) and any discrepancies occurring between the two.

At a first glance, the analysis based on the desk research shows that within a one-month period the five theatres involved in the research had a different approach regarding the frequency of communication. Thus, Andrei Mureşanu Theatre of Sfântu Gheorghe and the National Theatre of Târgu-Mureş are the most prolific ones on Facebook, having an average frequency of three to four posts per day, while the least active is the National Theatre of Cluj-Napoca with an average of 1 post per day. The difference in frequency may stem from various reasons. For instance, AMTSG's Facebook page is quite recent, from 17 January 2013, whereas all the other theatres' Facebook pages are at least one year old. Therefore, AMTSG's desire to makeup for "lost time" comes as a natural course of action. However, the reasons may also refer to the communication strategy the theatres opted for. From this perspective, a high frequency may be a sign of a communication mainly based on Facebook and/or actively oriented to a direct interaction with the audience, while a low one may reflect the fact that Facebook is just an addition to the means of communication already employed. To conclude, the frequency of communication reveals the importance of Facebook within the general communication strategy of a theatre, as well as the kind of approach chosen in its relationship with the audience.

Further on, the analysis revealed that the most common type of post is a combination between image and text/share/video, the image and text combination being the most frequent one. The choice of an image type post, either solely or combined, is justified by the number of reactions among the audience. Thus,

Table 1. Number and type of posts per theatre

Type of post (image, text, video)	NTC-N	RSNTS	AMTSG	NTT-M	STO	Grand total
Image	3	1	4	2	–	10
Image and share	–	–	–	1	–	1
Image and text	13	5	62	49	30	159
Image and video	–	–	1	2	–	3
Image, text and share	1	–	3	1	4	9
Share	9	44	13	29	–	95
Text	3	2	19	6	4	34
Text and share	1	15	28	8	19	71
Text and video	–	–	1	2	–	3
Grand total	30	67	131	100	57	385

Source: Authors' own desk research results.

Table 2. Likes, shares and comments per type of post

Type of post (image, text, video)	Likes	Shares	Comments
Image	168	28	10
Image and share	10	–	–
Image and text	4,026	638	240
Image and video	18	2	5
Image, text and share	280	24	15
Share	868	61	17
Text	371	73	17
Text and share	1,352	183	55
Text and video	42	5	3
Grand total	7,135	1,014	362

Source: Authors' own desk research results.

the usage of an image is more likely to generate an action from the audience in terms of like, share or comment than a text type post (table 1 and table 2), as it is perceived as being more engaging and appealing. Moreover, the audience's easiest way of reacting to the theatres' posts is the "Like" button. Although any reaction is welcomed as it is a sign that the theatre's message gets to its audience, giving likes is a rather passive alternative, managing to engage the users only to a certain point, but failing to generate an active behavior and involvement on the audience's side. This means that using an image type post is not enough. The overall message conveyed to the audience has to be engaging, demanding answers from the audience and involving them into the theatre's world, making them feel more than ordinary spectators to a "show" in which they have no role.
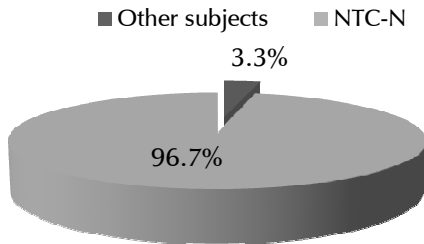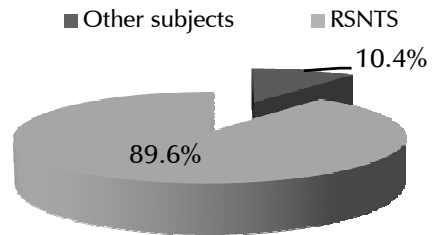
CHART 1. NTC-N POSTED SUBJECTS

■ Other subjects   ■ NTC-N

3.3%

96.7%

CHART 2. RSNTS POSTED SUBJECTS

■ Other subjects   ■ RSNTS

10.4%

89.6%

CHART 3. AMTSG POSTED SUBJECTS

■ Other subjects   ■ AMTSG

20.6%

79.4%
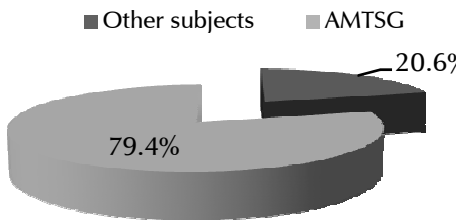
CHART 4. NTT-M POSTED SUBJECTS

■ Other subjects   ■ NTT-M

3.0%

97.0%

CHART 5. STO POSTED SUBJECTS

■ Other subjects   ■ STO

19.3%

80.7%
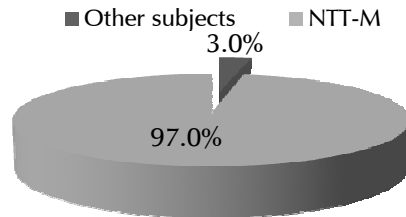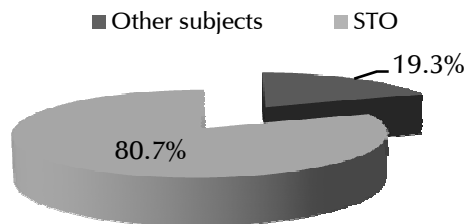
Nonetheless, the posted topics also contribute to the engagement of users. The two main categories of topics the theatres usually communicate about are theatre topics (topics related to the theatre's activity) and other topics (topics not strictly related to the theatre itself). The results of the desk research show that theatres have a clear preference for communicating preponderantly about themselves. With the exception of the AMTSG and the State Theatre of Oradea, which dedicate approximately 20% of their communication to other topics, the other

Table 3. Types of posted subjects on the "theatre topics" category for all theatres

Posted subject	Number of posts
Current productions	79
Program	67
Staff	62
Sales promotions	25
Review	17
On tour	15
Premiere	12
Rehearsals	8
Casting	6
Old productions	5
Upload cover photo	5
News	3
Audience feedback	2
Theatre show poster	1
Total	307

Source: Authors' own desk research results.

theatres involved in this research mainly focus on their own activities (charts 1 to 5). Such a decision is based on the mission assumed by the theatre, namely, as a simple theatrical institution providing services to its audience or as a cultural reference point of the city, managing the city's cultural heritage.

But the preference for topics goes beyond these two categories, as sub-categories begin to emerge. Thus, the theatre topics category mostly stands for those topics related to the theatre's current productions, program, staff, sales promotions, reviews and on tour news (table 3). Communicating about current productions comes as a natural decision since they are the main reason why the audience comes to the theatre. Therefore, creating event pages, posting photo albums and trailers of the production or sharing articles about it, raise and/or maintain the audience's interest in these productions. Posting the monthly/weekly program of the theatre, keeping the audience informed about any changes in the program or in the ways of purchasing tickets, brings closer to the audience the information they need. Communicating about their staff is a way of promoting and ensuring visibility for the people that make the productions happen, and also a way of making more tangible the main service provided to the audience. However, the manner in which the theatres choose to communicate about their staff is quite different. Apart from the AMTSG, which is communicating daily about their staff (e.g. actors, directors, scenographers, etc.), while presenting a short biography and photos from the productions to which they contributed, all the other theatres do this only in exceptional situations (e.g. birthdays, awards received, etc.). Sales promotions is another hot topic, since they usually provide the audi-

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF POSTS ON SALES PROMOTIONS PER THEATRE

Posted subject	Theatre	Number of posts
	NTC-N	11
Sales promotions	RSNTS	13
	NTT-M	1
TOTAL		25

SOURCE: Authors' own desk research results.

ence the opportunity to gain something (e.g. an invitation to a theatre performance, a theatre poster with the actors' autographs, a discounted ticket) while engaging them in activities such as posting on the theatre's page the secret code from the posters, or giving likes to the theatre page or like and share to a certain production. Among the five theatres, the NTC-N and the RSNTS are the ones experimenting more in this area, counting eleven and thirteen posts on the subject, respectively, as opposed to the others that count one/none posts (table 4).

Although the benefits of such activities are well-known, most of them being related to short term financial gains, theatres should pay attention to the potentially negative impact they might have over their image, especially when used intensively. This might be the case of the NTC-N, where 30% of the posts have been dedicated to the sales promotion. In such a situation, the theatre might be perceived as being mainly profit-oriented or having financial problems, making the audience more reticent about attending its productions. Therefore, it would be better to focus more on creating and delivering content through Facebook and use sales promotions only occasionally, so that the audience perceives them more like "gifts" offered under certain circumstances.

Reviews and on tour news about the theatre's productions are that sort of information that brings praise and, what's more, some degree of certainty in the audience's choice of the play they want to see. Thus, apart from informing, they also play the role of assuring the production's quality while reducing the risk associated with the decision-making process.

In terms of reactions such as likes, comments and shares, the topics discussed above manage to be at the top (table 5). However, there are other topics as well (e.g. international festival participation, old productions, premieres or rehearsals) that despite their low usage can raise a great deal of attention from the audience. There are different reasons that may account for such behavior. For instance, in the case of participation in international festivals, the audience may be more prone to react as they are driven by the desire to promote the local heritage, the beneficiary of such an act being neither the theatre nor the audience, but the local community. The old productions that are no longer performed can still stir the audience's emotions through a recourse to memory. Bringing

TABLE 5. LIKES, SHARES AND COMMENTS PER POSTED SUBJECTS
ON THE "THEATRE TOPICS" CATEGORY FOR ALL THEATRES

Posted subject	Likes	Shares	Comments
Current productions	1,219	40	139
On tour	225	10	56
Program	1,264	64	256
Review	337	5	13
Sales promotions	282	10	151
Staff	1,644	125	20
Audience feedback	56	2	3
Casting	28	–	13
News	19	1	3
Old productions	97	4	2
Premiere	371	37	62
Rehearsals	223	10	17
Theatre show poster	38	–	16
Upload cover photo	76	3	6
TOTAL	5,823	309	754

SOURCE: Authors' own desk research results.

such memories to the surface positively impacts the theatre as, on the one hand, the theatre's legacy is cherished and, on the other hand, it strengthens the bond between audience and theatre. Premieres grab the audience's attention through their novelty and the excitement created around them, while the photos from rehearsals are a glimpse into a previously "forbidden world," maintaining the suspense around a new production and, at the same time, showing the actual work of those involved in its creation. Such opportunities should be more valued as, according to the results of this research, they can move the audience and generate real, active reactions among them.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that of a total of seven thousand four hundred and twenty four reactions, the likes count for 84.3%, being followed by shares with 11.4%. Such a statistic underlines the fact that for this topic category a passive and effortless way of responding to the theatres' communication is preponderantly preferred by the audience. Thus, it is necessary to provide a "jolt" to the audience and involve them more in the communication itself, in an attempt to increase the number of comments per post. In the pursuit of such a goal, leveraging the potential of the topics discussed above may be the recommended alternative.

In the case of other categories of topics, there is a clear preference for events (table 6). The events communicated on Facebook by theatres are either related to the theatrical field in particular (e.g. celebration of Theatre Day, participation of Drama students in festivals) or to the cultural field in general (e.g. Days

TABLE 6. TYPES OF POSTED SUBJECTS ON THE "OTHER TOPICS" CATEGORY FOR ALL THEATRES

Posted subject	Number of posts
Events	29
Supported productions	5
Special occasion greetings	3
About Romanian actors	2
CSR	2
UNITER	2
Collaborators	1
Invited productions	1
Romanian music	1
TOTAL	46

SOURCE: Authors' own desk research results.

of Luxembourg Culture, Gopo Awards, the International Fair of Book and Music, the Berlin International Film Festival, the National Salon of the Louvre, etc.). The results of the desk research show that apart from being the topic preferred by theatres, events also get high or even the highest scores in terms of likes, shares and comments. However, this is not the only topic having such a potential. Topics such as "About Romanian Actors" (e.g. the announcement of the death of the actress Irina Petrescu) or "CSR" (e.g. the National Campaign initiated by UNITER— "Artists for Artists," according to which the proceeds of certain productions are given to retired actors) also grab the audience's attention. The reason might be the audience's empathy towards such topics, a sign that audiences still love and care about the great Romanian actors of the past. Thus, it would be advisable to communicate more about such topics and, why not, in a more positive light, underlining the Romanian actors' contribution to the cultural heritage, while celebrating their time of glory.

Similar to the theatre topics category, the statistics regarding the received likes, comments and shares are pretty much the same, meaning that the likes are the preponderant type of reaction (80.1%), followed by shares and comments (table 7). Therefore, in this case it is also recommended to undertake the necessary actions that may involve the audience more, creating a more vivid communication between them and the theatres.

It would also be interesting to make a comparison between the reactions gathered by the two categories: theatre topics versus other topics. The analysis shows that, regardless of the type of reaction (like, comment or share) overall the two categories manage to get the same quantity of reactions, namely approximately twenty two reactions per post (table 8). This means that theatres should not disregard the potential of other topics to engage the audience, but rather value them more and grant them more importance while communicating on Facebook.

Table 7. Likes, shares and comments per posted subjects
on the "other topics" category for all theatres

Posted subject	Likes	Shares	Comments
About Romanian actors	40	5	5
Collaborators	5	–	–
CSR	38	2	–
Events	678	22	146
Invited productions	7	–	1
Romanian music	2	–	–
Special occasion greetings	15	5	–
Supported productions	35	4	3
UNITER	9	–	–
Total	829	38	155

Source: Authors' own desk research results.

Table 8. Likes, shares and comments per posted subject per theatre

Posted subject	Total nos. of posts	Total nos. of reactions (likes, comments, shares)	Average nos. of reactions per post
Other subjects	1	30	30
NTC-N	29	676	23
NTC-N total	30	706	24
Other subjects	7	250	36
RSNTS	60	946	16
RSNTS total	67	1,196	18
Other subjects	27	213	8
AMTSG	104	1,533	15
AMTSG total	131	1,746	13
Other subjects	3	59	20
NTT-M	97	1,535	16
NTT-M total	100	1,594	16
Other subjects	11	535	49
STO	46	2,734	59
STO total	57	3,269	57
Grand total	385	8,511	22

Source: Authors' own desk research results.

Conclusions

I N LIGHT of the above, one of the main conclusions which can be drawn is that for a theatre to stay relevant, fresh, interesting and at the same time connected to its audience, the traditional media are clearly no longer enough, and they have to be utilized together with Social Media instruments. As Facebook is one of the most widely spread and user-friendly Social Media instruments among Romanian theatre consumers, it is only natural that a well-designed and up to date Facebook page that keeps audiences connected, informed and interested, is a must have for any Romanian theatre that wants to be current and relevant.

Another important conclusion drawn from the authors' research involves the choice of posted topics and the persons responsible for these choices. Generally, the person responsible for choosing online posted topics is the literary secretary of the theatre, or the person in charge of the theatre's online communication from the Marketing/PR department, if such a department exists, and to a certain extent the theatre manager can also sometimes be involved. The posted topics can be divided into two large categories: theatre topics, referring to all posts connected directly to the theatre's specific activities (current productions, program, staff, sales promotions, reviews, on tour news), and other topics, comprising topics not strictly related to the theatre itself, but usually to culture in general (events, Romanian actors, CSR, the cultural field in general). The most interesting point on the theatres' posted topics is that both categories raise the interest of the audience, the proof being the similar number of total reactions (likes, shares and comments) per category of posts (theatre topics vs. other topics).

Furthermore, a key finding of the authors' research is the difference in reach and audience impact between a theatre's Facebook page and its website. While the website is a more conventional and passive way of communicating, updated less often and resembling the theatre's printed promotional materials, the Facebook page is a more active and engaging way of staying in touch with the audience, being updated daily or even several times a day with concise and small pieces of information, which are easy to understand, follow and remember by the audience.

The type of post most frequently used by the researched theatres is a combination between image and text, share or video. The explanation for this lies in the reactions of the audience, be that mere likes, shares or comments. Most people react positively to posted images, alone or in different combinations. Hitting the "Like" button is by far the preferred type of reaction by the audience, when interacting with a theatre's Facebook page, followed by shares, and only after that, by comments.

Based on the above conclusions, the authors of this paper would like to formulate several recommendations for the future usage of Facebook in the communication between theatres and their audience, in order to boost the level of such a communication.

The frequency of communication through Facebook must reveal the importance of this instrument within the general communication strategy of the theatre, as well as the kind of approach chosen in its relationship with the audience. If a theatre aims for a more direct and personal approach, then a very active Facebook page and extensive efforts towards engaging audiences is advisable. Conversely, if a theatre wishes a more traditional approach to the relationship with the audience, then a less active Facebook page is the best alternative, using Facebook only as a supporting, secondary instrument for the overall communication strategy, where more traditional instruments of communication prevail.

The use of images should increase whenever posting a topic, as they have been proven to generate more engagement than a preponderantly plain text. Also, the users (the theatre's audience) should be more engaged in the communication, making them pass from the "Like" type audience to the "Comment" one. Such a change may be encouraged by the audience's involvement in the theatre's current activities (e.g. inviting the audience to meet the actors of a production in the theatre's foyer) or by adopting a more direct, personalized manner of communicating, able to incite the audience to dialogue (e.g. ask for the audience's feedback regarding the theatre's production, stir their emotions and memories while asking them to share their theatrical experiences with other people from the audience/other users).

Moreover, it would be recommended to share with the audience that piece of information that it is considered to be "sacred," "secret" or "from the inside" (e.g. information about/photos from rehearsals), as it makes the audience feel valued and part of the theatre's environment. However, revealing such information to the audience should be done only to a certain extent so that the mystery and the suspense surrounding a premiere is kept. Otherwise, there will be no/little interest left for the production to come and the audience will be less eager to discover it. However, one must not fall into the trap of trying to be interesting or engage the audience regardless of the cost. One must always be aware of the less positive aspects of Social Media regarding copyright infringement or their staff's (mainly actors) vulnerability to the curiosity of the audience regarding their private life.

Nonetheless, communicating information such as nominations or the awarding of a prize (for the theatre's production/staff) or the invitations to perform a certain production in other cities or festivals makes the audience take pride in

the theatre's performance and thus, more willing to share such information with others and, why not, even comment on it.

The "Sales Promotions" technique should be used carefully and sparingly, as it might damage the theatre's image. Although Facebook is a quick and less expensive means of communication, it must not be turned into a "sales promotion machine," turning the theatre into a profit-oriented organization overlooking its core value of promoting and supporting culture, regardless of its form, and educating the audience in this spirit. Still, when used, the benefits of this technique should be felt by the audience as a reward given for their outstanding behavior. The idea is that such a technique should encourage the audience to be active rather than indulge in the "Like" kind of behavior. Thus, rewarding the audience for giving a "Like" to the theatre's page/post should be strongly avoided, as the audience must feel that the reward is not granted for nothing.

The key to a successful Facebook page is investing in those activities that actually engage the audience and make them more involved with the theater's online activity beyond the mere "Like" attitude. A theatre's audience must be made part of its communication efforts by encouraging conversations and shares, so that they become an active part in the creation of the theatre's image and awareness. Not all audiences are identical, so the best recipe for such activities is usually found through a combination of thorough research and audience profile knowledge and surveys.

Last but not least, theatres should be encouraged to communicate about topics that are not strictly related to themselves, but also to drama or the cultural area in general, as it has been proven that the audience is equally interested in them. However, this depends directly on the position theatres choose to adopt in regard to their audience.

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Abstract

Particularities of the Social Media Communication for the Theatres in Transylvania

The development of Web 2.0, namely the Social Web, and its impact on society and the way people communicate nowadays has challenged cultural organizations from the very beginning. New media technologies allow the convergence of rich content, multi-modal communication delivery systems and the development of new spatial (interactive and immersive cultural experiences) and textual (digital storytelling) experiences. The web is no longer just about searches, but about social context, hence cultural organizations today can no longer afford to ignore Social Media instruments as the most effective and cost-efficient way to get in touch with their younger consumers. The aim of this article is to reveal Transylvanian theatres' perceptions over Social Media usage in the context of their communication with the audience, as a result of discussions carried out by the authors with the theatres' representatives, as well as to identify the theatres' Social Media communication patterns as a follow-up to an in-depth analysis of their actual communication through Social Media instruments on a daily basis for a one-month period.

Keywords