

**Managing marketing strategies and Public
Relations in public universities. Study of the
new communication techniques**

**Gestionando estrategias de marketing y
relaciones públicas en universidades públicas.
Estudio de las nuevas técnicas de
comunicación**

**Author:
Leila Lunguleac Bardasuc**



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**Director/es:
Dr. Miguel De Aguilera Moyano
Dr. David Selva Ruiz**



UNIVERSIDAD
DE MÁLAGA

AUTOR: Leila Lunguleac Bardasuc

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1020-4464>

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« Managing marketing strategies and Public Relations in public universities. Study of the new communication techniques

Gestionando estrategias de marketing y relaciones públicas en universidades públicas. Estudio de las nuevas técnicas de comunicación »



Programa de Doctorado Interuniversitario en Comunicación

Doctoranda

Leila Lunguleac Bardasuc



Universidad de Málaga

Director/es:

Dr. Miguel De Aguilera Moyano
Dr. David Selva Ruiz



DEDICATED TO

*To my parents, for being an endless source of support and inspiration.
You showed me what immense things you can achieve and how you can
grow if you never stop learning.*

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To my family, Adela, Ilie, Mihai and Oby, for the constant support and motivation to succeed and especially for never doubting that I will achieve my dream. All the hard work has been eased by your presence and encouragement.

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To the friends and colleagues who are always there, beyond time and distance. Life is about building trustworthy relationships and about helping each other grow.

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Dña. Leila Bardasuc, estudiante del Programa de Doctorado Interuniversitario en Comunicación de la Universidad de Málaga, autora de la tesis presentada para la obtención del título de doctor por la Universidad de Málaga, titulada “Gestionando estrategias de marketing y relaciones públicas en universidades públicas. Estudio de las nuevas técnicas de comunicación”, realizada bajo la tutorización del Dr. Miguel de Aguilera Moyano y Dr. David Selva Ruiz.

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Que han dirigido la tesis doctoral “Managing marketing strategies and Public Relations in public universities. Study of the new communication techniques”, realizada por Dña. Leila Bardasuc.

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la presentación y defensa de la tesis por considerar que reúne los requisitos formales, científicos y de originalidad para ser presentada y defendida ante el tribunal que se constituya a tal efecto para obtener el grado de Doctora en Comunicación.

Y para que conste firman el presente informe en Málaga y Cádiz, a 26 de marzo de 2021.



Miguel de Aguilera Moyano.

David Selva Ruiz.



Table of content

I. Introduction	7
1.1 Object of the studied theme (<i>in English and Spanish</i>)	7
1.2 The importance of the new means of communication and ways of introducing them in the marketing campaign	21
II. Status of the investigation	31
2.1 What it means to establish an efficient communication process via social media	31
2.2 Description of the current context: Digital transformation and the ways it affects social media communication	40
2.3 Institutional context - The development of the public university in Europe	44
2.3.1 Organization of Seville University	49
2.3.2 Organization of Malaga University	56
2.3.3 Organization of Transilvania University	61
2.3.4 Organization of Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu	64
2.4 New developments in the current context	68
III. Objectives and Methodology	85
3.1 Objectives	85
3.1.1 Main objectives	85
3.1.2 Hypothesis	86
3.2 Methodology of the qualitative analysis and digital ethnography	87
3.2.1 Method and participant selection	87
3.2.2 The interview guide	91
3.2.2.1 Block I - Introductory Questions	92

3.2.2.2 Block II – the communication policy of the analysed University.....	92
3.2.2.3 Block III – Assessing the use of digital media in the communication departments of public universities analysed ...	93
3.2.2.4 Block IV – creating a marketing campaign in public universities and ways to assess its success	94

IV. Study and results: Analysis of the use of new technologies in marketing strategies, communication and Public Relations processes in public universities in Spain and Romania

4.1 Communication using the new technologies in public universities: the process, barriers and improvement	95
4.2 SWOT analysis of the superior education department of communication in the mark of digital transformation in Spain and Romania	105
4.3 Investigation results overview: the importance of asking the right Questions	110
4.3.1 Results from the interviews	111
4.3.1.1 Block I of introductory questions	112
4.3.1.2. Block II - the communication policy of the university	114
4.3.1.3 Block III of questions	116
4.3.1.4 Block IV - creating a marketing campaign in public universities and ways to evaluate its success	123
4.4 Communication trends for 2020 and how will they influence the communication process inside universities, in connection with the result obtained from the analyzed universities in Spain and Romania	126
V. General conclusions and after-words (<i>in English and Spanish</i>)	132
VI. References	147

I. Introduction

1.1 Object of the studied theme

In recent years, marketing and communication strategy in higher education has been growing, gaining a strategic nature, one of promoting the university as a brand. Therefore, the importance of analysing the strategy of communication and its potential to increase the efficiency, especially in social media arose. Also, the pandemic increased the use of social media and digital transformation in all sectors, directly affecting the way universities communicate. I strongly believe that a new business model emerged, during the lockdown or maybe the lockdown helped shape it, a model where the emphasize is on trust and reliable relationships, where the way we work, we network and add value to our activity has changed.

And we need more innovative tools to help us better adapt, to be able to survive in crisis and emerge from critical situations. We need to introduce tech in order for us to better adapt to change and to not be disrupted. But we also need empathy, to be able to build those strong, long lasting business relationships and trust that will help us thrive. This is what motivated me in researching the way public universities use new tools and social media, the type of campaigns they conduct and how directives of these universities see the impact on the marketing strategies.

This thesis sets to analyse the communication and marketing processes in higher educational public institutes, the peculiarities and effectiveness of the marketing process regarding the use of new technologies and ways to improve it.

The research conducted will try to bring forward ways of improving communication and PR skills for public universities and also to better understand the particularities of the newest communication forms in the educational system. Precisely, the research conducted intends to offer some reflections that contribute to better understand these new techniques which are already adopted in the communication process of universities which highlights strategic and tactical aspects of marketing and social media that make it easier to deploy the new ways of communicating. The public universities chosen for the study and upon which the work is being conducted, are all based in Andalucía region, Spain and for the comparison, similar size public universities from Romania have also been selected, all from touristic area of Transylvania in the country. The method chosen for the research is ethnography. The interview is the main technique within the framework of a general ethnographic approach, but other techniques, especially the consultation of documentary sources as well as the web pages of the universities and other documentation provided by the selected universities have been used.

The thesis sets to analyse the current communication environment between students and public universities and how it has changed and evolved during a period of 3 and half years, from 2018 to 2021, including the changes caused by the pandemic of COVID-19. First interviews have been programmed with the Spanish universities and then the process of finding similar universities, in similar touristic regions in Romania has started. After conducting the interviews with the Spanish universities, the process of finding and contacting the Romanian universities has moved to 2020 and the interviews had to be taken during the lockdowns and so the impact of the pandemic has been included in the analysis. It would be interesting to expand the research and conduct follow up interviews with the Spanish universities in the future, to see the before and after the pandemic effects. It starts by stating the new means of communication, social media, its impact on the general communication and marketing process, online marketing in particular and how the

stage is set at a local level. Also, a more in-depth incursion into the literature of social media communication and online marketing is done, searching for points that establish and define a successful campaign, new tool that are used and how it can be measured.

In the first and second chapters, the accent is put on changes in the external environment, on the transformation of the communication models and new techniques and upon the description of the current context. The way social media is affected is also one of the tackled points and the impact of digital transformation. The transition is then made towards the development of the public universities in Europe.

After stating the objectives and the methodology of the thesis, the results of the interviewed are being analysed. An important part of the chapter is seeing the process, barriers and improvement in the public universities and new technologies. Also, a SWOT analysis of the superior education department of communication in the mark of digital transformation in Spain and Romania is conducted, so that the external and internal environments can be included. Before the conclusions, a part with communication trends for 2020 is making the transition, in connection with the result obtained from the analyzed universities in Spain and Romania. Next, every chapter is described in more detail and how it was designed and conceived.

The transition between the first and second chapter is done with an analysis of the current context of digital transformation and its impact. Because the phenomenon of digital transformation is a global one, international researches have been included. Guided by the butterfly effect theory in economics, where something happens in one part of the globe and is then replicated with a fast speed and spreads at a global scale, social media and digital transformation has been analysed from a global perspective. But from a more global perspective, the analysis moves

then towards the public universities in Europe and centres is core upon public universities in Spain, Andalusia. A comparison with similar universities from Romania, Transylvania is added to see the impact of new communication tools, if there are differences, similarities between public superior educational systems within the EU.

The impact of the new developments in online marketing is also being analysed, a chapter being dedicated to these, such as SEO (search engine optimization) strategy, video content, social media platforms and other 2020 communication trends that settled. The research is using the interview as a method.

In order to examine the most relevant trends and practices of public universities' communication, these processes will be analysed from the universities' management point of view, by observation and comparison of data from selected public universities in Spain, of large scale and with a history of communication with its public and afterwards by in-depth interviews with communication responsible. The object of the observation is to explore how public institutions are using the new technologies and resources such as social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networking sites) and other channels of Communication on the Web (YouTube), in order to communicate with the target public.

The object of the in-depth interview is to further analyse the topic by seeing how these are integrated into the communication strategies that each public university establishes, how its usefulness and effectiveness is evaluated.

Selection of universities for the study (public, large scale, from Spain, with a history in communication): University of Malaga, University of Sevilla. Foreign universities, of similar scale and also public will be chosen for a comparison,

analysing similarities and differences in the use of new technologies in communication, University Lucian Blaga of Sibiu, Romania and Transilvania University from Brasov, Romania.

Method of study: case studies via interviews taken with the persons responsible for communication at the selected universities mentioned above (face-to-face interviews and via video calls).

The persons included in the interviews will be selected from both parts of the communication department (politic responsible in charge of strategic management of the department and technical responsible), in order to obtain valid information from all types of different profiles.

These universities have been chosen due to their similar organization and type (public universities), number of students (35.354 students enrolled at University of Malaga via University of Malaga website (2020) and 49.217 students enrolled at own centres at University of Seville via University of Seville website (2020)), target (mainly oriented towards students of Spanish nationality, from surrounding areas) and geographic area (touristic area of Andalucía, Spain).

The two universities chosen for the study in Romania, are Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu and Transilvania University in Brasov. Both are public, situated in a geographic area oriented on tourism, which attracts mainly students from surroundings.

With 14.467 enrolled students via Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu website (2019), making it a scale 2nd university in Romania as importance and size.

In the case of Transilvania university, situated in Brasov, one of the largest cities in Romania and also in the most important touristic region in the mountains from the country, has currently about 19.500 enrolled students (Transilvania University of Brasov, 2019, in Wikipedia).

The interviews taken to the directives of the two universities in Romania have reflected the impact of the pandemic, being undertaken in 2020, during the crisis. But they also contain reflections and statements of comparison with how the situation was before, so a comparison between the two systems of the two countries, Spain and Romania has been realized. It is interesting to see how the impact influenced their activity and how it speeded up the process of digital transformation, online communication and marketing. The results and analysis included both sides of the environment, pre COVID-19 and post COVID-19 in the case of the Romanian universities and for the Spanish ones, pre-pandemic.

In the research of the bibliography, both stages have been included, pre- and post-pandemic, the increase in the use of online communication and marketing tools have been reflected and taken into consideration, also all the changes and effects have been included in the analysis.

When we compare these university to a total of enrolled students in Spain during history, we can see that the competition has augmented because the number of students' overall decreases from one year to another. If we take a look at the study conducted by Ana Castillo Díaz and Javier Trabadela Robles in 2007, since the 1999-2000 academic year, there has been an annual decline of 1.5% in enrolment:

Figure 1. International projection of Spanish university brands through the World

Wide Web

	1995-96	2000-01	2005-06	2006-07
Total	1.508.842	1.555.750	1.443.811	1.423.396
Ciclo corto	993.727	975.862	874.139	857.627
Ciclo largo	515.115	579.888	569.672	565.769
Rama de enseñanza				
Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas	799.002	765.620	711.788	709.747
Enseñanzas Técnicas	332.574	390.803	380.042	367.782
Humanidades	142.708	155.768	132.563	129.892
Ciencias de la Salud	108.564	116.465	118.166	118.584
Ciencias Experimentales	125.994	127.094	101.252	97.391

Note. From “Proyección internacional de las marcas universitarias españolas a través de la World Wide Web” [International projection of Spanish university brands through the World Wide], by A. Castillo Díaz and J. Trabadelo Robles, 2007, *Comunicação e Cidadania - Actas do 5º Congresso da Associação Portuguesa de Ciências da Comunicação, Braga: Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade (Universidade do Minho)*, ISBN 978-989-95500-1-8, p. 294.

In recent years, marketing and communication strategy in higher education has been growing, gaining a strategic nature, one of promoting the university as a brand. Therefore, the importance of analyzing the strategy of communication and its potential to increase the economic, commercial value is mandatory. A university is no longer just an institution of higher learning and education, with the increase in competition on the market and globalization, the university has also become a business.

To better sum up the importance in marketing strategy and branding for the universities, I quote an article written by David Bunzel ten years ago: “While some universities are very proactive about retaining or enhancing their image and brand, some universities could be viewed as complacent. Whether it is lack of interest or the belief that a university should not be in the business of marketing, the reality is

the consumers are not only aware of brands, but also focus their attention (applications) on the better brands established by these rankings. The better brands gain in quality of student and raise the overall academic standing of a university.” (Bunzel, 2007)

1.1 Objeto del tema estudiado

En los últimos años, la estrategia de marketing y comunicación en la educación superior ha ido creciendo, adquiriendo un carácter estratégico, de promoción de la universidad como marca. Por tanto, surgió la importancia de analizar la estrategia de comunicación y su potencial para incrementar la eficiencia, especialmente en las redes sociales. Además, la pandemia incrementó el uso de las redes sociales y la transformación digital en todos los sectores, afectando directamente la forma en que las universidades se comunican. Creo firmemente que surgió un nuevo modelo de negocio, durante el cierre o tal vez el cierre ayudó a darle forma, un modelo de negocio donde el énfasis está en la confianza y las relaciones confiables, donde la forma en que trabajamos, nos relacionamos y agregamos valor a nuestro negocio, a nuestro trabajo y formación ha cambiado. Y necesitamos herramientas más innovadoras para ayudarnos a adaptarnos mejor, para poder sobrevivir en crisis y salir de situaciones críticas.

Necesitamos introducir tecnología para adaptarnos mejor al cambio y que nuestras actividades no se vean interrumpidas. Pero también necesitamos empatía para poder construir esas relaciones sólidas y duraderas y la confianza que nos ayudarán a prosperar. Esto es lo que me motivó a investigar la forma en que las universidades públicas utilizan las nuevas herramientas y las redes sociales, el tipo de campañas que realizan y cómo l@s directiv@s de estas universidades ven el impacto en las estrategias de marketing.

Esta tesis se propone analizar los procesos de comunicación y marketing en los institutos públicos de educación superior, las peculiaridades y efectividad del proceso de marketing en cuanto al uso de las nuevas tecnologías y las formas de mejorarlo.

La investigación realizada tratará de presentar formas de mejorar las habilidades de comunicación y relaciones públicas para las universidades públicas y también para comprender mejor las particularidades de las formas de comunicación más nuevas en el sistema educativo. Precisamente, la investigación realizada pretende ofrecer algunas reflexiones que contribuyan a comprender mejor estas nuevas técnicas que ya se adoptan en el proceso de comunicación de las universidades donde se destacan aspectos estratégicos y tácticos del marketing y las redes sociales que facilitan el despliegue de las nuevas formas de comunicación. Las universidades públicas elegidas para el estudio y sobre las que se está llevando a cabo el trabajo, tienen su sede en la región de Andalucía, España y para la comparación, también se han seleccionado universidades públicas de tamaño similar de Rumanía, todas de la zona turística de Transilvania en el país. El método elegido para la investigación es la etnografía. La entrevista es la técnica principal en el marco de un enfoque etnográfico general, pero se han utilizado otras técnicas, especialmente la consulta de fuentes documentales así como las páginas web de las universidades y otra documentación proporcionada por las universidades seleccionadas.

La tesis pretende analizar el entorno comunicativo actual entre estudiantes y universidades públicas y cómo ha cambiado y evolucionado durante un período de 3 años y medio, de 2018 a 2021, incluyendo los cambios provocados por la pandemia de COVID-19. Se han programado las primeras entrevistas con las universidades españolas y luego se ha iniciado el proceso de búsqueda de universidades del mismo tamaño, en regiones turísticas similares de Rumanía. Tras

realizar las entrevistas con las universidades españolas, el proceso de búsqueda y contacto con las universidades rumanas se ha trasladado a 2020 y las entrevistas debían realizarse durante los periodos de confinamiento, por lo que se ha incluido en el análisis el impacto de la pandemia. Sería interesante ampliar la investigación y realizar entrevistas de seguimiento con las universidades españolas en el futuro, para ver el antes y el después de los efectos de la pandemia de COVID-19. Comienza exponiendo los nuevos medios de comunicación, las redes sociales, su impacto en el proceso general de comunicación y marketing, el marketing online en particular y cómo se establece el escenario a nivel local. Asimismo, se realiza una incursión más profunda en la literatura de comunicación vía social media y marketing online, buscando puntos que establezcan y definan una campaña exitosa, nueva herramienta que se utiliza y cómo se puede medir el proceso.

En el primer y segundo capítulos, se hace hincapié en los cambios en el entorno externo, en la transformación de los modelos de comunicación y nuevas técnicas y en la descripción del contexto actual. La forma en que se ven afectadas las redes sociales es también uno de los puntos abordados y el impacto de la transformación digital. Luego se hace la transición hacia el desarrollo de las universidades públicas en Europa.

Luego, después de plantear los objetivos y la metodología de la tesis, se están analizando los resultados de los entrevistados. Una parte importante del capítulo es ver el proceso, las barreras y la mejora en las universidades públicas y las nuevas tecnologías. Asimismo, se realiza un análisis DAFO del departamento de comunicación de educación superior en el marco de la transformación digital en España y Rumanía, de forma que se puedan incluir los entornos externos e internos. Antes de las conclusiones, una parte con las tendencias de la comunicación para 2020 está haciendo la transición, en relación con el resultado obtenido de las

universidades analizadas en España y Rumanía. A continuación, se destaca en más detalle cada capítulo.

La transición entre el primer y segundo capítulo se realiza con un análisis del contexto actual de la transformación digital y su impacto. Debido a que el fenómeno de la transformación digital es global, se han incluido investigaciones internacionales. Guiado por la teoría del efecto mariposa en economía, donde algo sucede en una parte del mundo y luego se replica a gran velocidad y se propaga a escala global, las redes sociales y la transformación digital han sido analizadas desde una perspectiva global. Pero desde una perspectiva más global, el análisis se mueve hacia las universidades públicas en Europa y luego se centra sobre las universidades públicas en España, Andalucía. Se agrega una comparación con universidades similares de Rumania, Transilvania para ver el impacto de las nuevas herramientas de comunicación, si hay diferencias, similitudes entre los sistemas educativos públicos superiores dentro de la UE.

También se está analizando el impacto de los nuevos desarrollos en marketing online, dedicando un capítulo a estos, como la estrategia SEO (Search Engine Optimization), contenidos de vídeo, plataformas de redes sociales y otras tendencias de comunicación que se asentaron en 2020. La investigación utiliza la entrevista como método.

Con el fin de examinar las tendencias y prácticas más relevantes de la comunicación de las universidades públicas, estos procesos serán analizados desde el punto de vista de la gestión de las universidades, mediante la observación y comparación de datos de universidades públicas seleccionadas en España, de gran envergadura y con trayectoria, la comunicación con su público y posteriormente mediante entrevistas en profundidad con el responsable de comunicación. El objeto de la observación es de explorar cómo las instituciones públicas están utilizando

las nuevas tecnologías y recursos como las redes sociales (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn y otras redes sociales) y otros canales de comunicación en la Web (YouTube), para comunicarse con el público objetivo.

El objeto de la entrevista en profundidad es profundizar en el análisis del tema viendo cómo estos se integran en las estrategias de comunicación que establece cada universidad pública, cómo se evalúa su utilidad y efectividad.

Selección de universidades para el estudio (públicas, gran escala, de España, con trayectoria en comunicación): Universidad de Málaga, Universidad de Sevilla. Para una comparación, se han elegido universidades extranjeras, de similar escala y también públicas, analizando similitudes y diferencias en el uso de las nuevas tecnologías en la comunicación: la Universidad Lucian Blaga de Sibiu, Rumanía y la Universidad Transilvania de Brasov, Rumanía.

Método de estudio empleado: estudios de caso a través de entrevistas realizadas a los responsables de comunicación de las universidades seleccionadas mencionadas anteriormente (entrevistas presenciales y videollamadas).

Las personas incluidas en las entrevistas serán seleccionadas de ambas partes del departamento de comunicación (responsable político encargado de la gestión estratégica del departamento y responsable técnico), con el fin de obtener información válida de todo tipo de perfiles diferentes.

Estas universidades han sido elegidas por su similar organización y tipología (universidades públicas), número de estudiantes (35.354 estudiantes matriculados en la Universidad de Málaga a través de la web de la Universidad de Málaga (2020) y 49.217 estudiantes matriculados en centros propios de la Universidad de Sevilla a través de la Universidad de Málaga. Web de Sevilla

(2020)), target (orientado principalmente a estudiantes de nacionalidad española, de los alrededores) y zona geográfica (zona turística de Andalucía, España).

Las dos universidades elegidas para el estudio en Rumania son la Universidad Lucian Blaga de Sibiu y la Universidad Transilvania en Brasov. Ambos son públicos, situados en un área geográfica orientada al turismo, que atrae principalmente a estudiantes del entorno.

Con 14.467 estudiantes matriculados a través del sitio web de la Universidad Lucian Blaga de Sibiu (2019), lo que la convierte en una segunda universidad de escala en Rumania en importancia y tamaño.

En el caso de la universidad Transilvania, ubicada en Brasov, una de las ciudades más grandes de Rumanía y también en la región turística más importante de las montañas del país, cuenta actualmente con unos 19.500 estudiantes matriculados (Universidad Transilvania de Brasov, 2019, en Wikipedia).

Las entrevistas llevadas a l@s directiv@s de las dos universidades de Rumanía han reflejado el impacto de la pandemia, que se está llevando a cabo en 2020, durante la crisis. Pero también contienen reflexiones y declaraciones de comparación con cómo era la situación antes, por lo que se ha realizado una comparación entre los dos sistemas de los dos países, España y Rumanía. Es interesante ver cómo el impacto influyó en su actividad y cómo aceleró el proceso de transformación digital, comunicación online y marketing. Los resultados y análisis incluyeron ambos lados del entorno, pre COVID-19 y post COVID-19 en el caso de las universidades rumanas. Para las españolas, el análisis es pre pandemia.

En la búsqueda de la bibliografía se han incluido ambas etapas, pre y post pandémica, se ha reflejado y tenido en cuenta el incremento en el uso de herramientas de comunicación y marketing online, además se han incluido todos los cambios y efectos en el análisis.

Cuando comparamos estas universidades con un total de estudiantes matriculados en España durante la historia, podemos ver que la competencia ha aumentado porque el número de estudiantes en general disminuye de un año a otro. Si echamos un vistazo al estudio realizado por Ana Castillo Díaz y Javier Trabadelo Robles en 2007, desde el curso 1999-2000 se ha producido un descenso anual de la matrícula del 1,5%:

Figura 1. Proyección internacional de las marcas universitarias españolas a través de la World Wide Web

	1995-96	2000-01	2005-06	2006-07
Total	1.508.842	1.555.750	1.443.811	1.423.396
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Ciclo largo	515.115	579.888	569.672	565.769
Rama de enseñanza				
Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas	799.002	765.620	711.788	709.747
Enseñanzas Técnicas	332.574	390.803	380.042	367.782
Humanidades	142.708	155.768	132.563	129.892
Ciencias de la Salud	108.564	116.465	118.166	118.584
Ciencias Experimentales	125.994	127.094	101.252	97.391

Nota. De “Proyección internacional de las marcas universitarias españolas a través de la World Wide Web”, de A. Castillo Díaz y J. Trabadelo Robles, 2007, Comunicação e Cidadania - Actas do 5º Congresso da Associação Portuguesa de Ciências da Comunicação, Braga: Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade (Universidade do Minho), ISBN 978-989-95500-1-8, p. 294.

En los últimos años, la estrategia de marketing y comunicación en la educación superior ha ido creciendo, adquiriendo un carácter estratégico, de

promoción de la universidad como marca. Por tanto, la importancia de analizar la estrategia de comunicación y su potencial para incrementar el valor económico, comercial es muy importante. Una universidad ya no es solo una institución de educación superior y educación, con el aumento de la competencia en el mercado y la globalización, la universidad también se ha convertido en una marca.

Para resumir mejor la importancia de la estrategia de marketing y la marca para las universidades, cito un artículo escrito por David Bunzel hace diez años: “Si bien algunas universidades son muy proactivas a la hora de retener o mejorar su imagen y marca, algunas universidades podrían considerarse complacientes. Ya sea por falta de interés o por la creencia de que una universidad no debería estar en el negocio del marketing, la realidad es que los consumidores no solo son conscientes de las marcas, sino que también centran su atención (aplicaciones) en las mejores marcas que establecen estos rankings. Las mejores marcas ganan en calidad de estudiante y elevan la posición académica general de una universidad ". (Bunzel, 2007)

1.2 The importance of the new means of communication and ways of introducing them in the marketing campaign

We live in a knowledge-based economy, where information is one of the main sources of competitive advantage, a society of information, where communication technologies have become an integral part of our lives. Therefore, knowing the market, knowing how to communicate, to respond quickly to customer needs, makes the difference between failure and success.

Companies are beginning to understand how important it is to integrate marketing communications in systems called integrated marketing communications, integrated direct marketing and direct marketing. Internet works today as a source of information as a source of entertainment as a communication channel, a trading channel and even as a distribution channel (Kotler, 2006).

Information technology is also a key factor, especially in the educational process. The ways in which a university chose to address itself to its students and to attract new ones becomes imperative in order to obtain competitive advantage. It is therefore necessary to have a functional and effective communication process in order to establish an overall effective organization, communication being one of the forces that drives organizational success. Most universities recognize the importance and benefits of communicating through social media.

In recent years, social media has become a powerful tool through which a university may spread relevant information to the community, launch marketing and communication campaigns and connect with audiences online (Harvard University, Harvard Human Resources, Guidelines for using social media, 2014).

Most universities in Europe and in Spain, area upon which the research is centred, are public. Hence, in general, the university as an institution can be characterized as a special one, which deals with a singular matter (knowledge: teaching, dissemination, creation and application of new knowledge that allows us to interpret and transform life) and whose actions involve in different ways social actors, both internal (members of the "University community" and grouped under the categories "students", "Teaching and research staff" and "personal of administration and services ") as well as external to the institution (other public administrations, economic, educational and cultural environment, old and future students, etc.) (De Aguilera, 2010).

In an interconnected world, where the need for communication is well noted and its effects spread throughout the economic, political, cultural and social environment of each country, several questions motivated me when choosing the research topic:

- Are the new ways of communication (internet, social media) truly effective when it comes to superior public education?
- What is an effective communication campaign via social media in the eyes of the communication and PR management of public universities?
- What routes do students use (social networks, social media) when they search information about a certain university?
- Which are the key factors when it comes to a successful marketing and communication campaign via social media in the superior public education system and how these processes are evaluated by the communication responsible of each analysed university?

Trying to find answers to these questions can bring forward relevant aspects, aspects which allow us to know the factors that must be taken into account in order to understand the phenomena of communication in superior public education and ways to create a successful marketing campaign using the new techniques (portals, social networks and other online platforms).

In the past years, a more active participation in the Network, on the web has been registered; the tendency is to encourage the information society, to awaken interest in the use of Information and Communication Technologies. The platforms

that universities use is extremely important, also the media tool to promote their academic offer and to communicate to students. Students become less restricted by borders and tend to choose universities in different countries.

Language is not a problem anymore, as the international student is gaining advantage. The relationship with entrepreneurs is also a game-changer. “Today universities are expected to impart entrepreneurial skills to students, to support the formation of start-up companies and to work productively with entrepreneurs to commercialize technologies.” (Sá and Kretz, 2015). This has pushed the integration of new technologies and digitalization of the modern university even further. Internet communication has gained more and more importance in the communication mix / communication policy. Communication policy / communication mix is composed of: advertising, public relations, personal selling, publicity, sponsoring, product placement, event marketing, trade fairs and exhibitions, internet communication and internal communication. (Busch, Seidenspinner and Unger, 2006)

Institutional communications on the web are actions listed in public relations manuals, and taught in the communication faculties themselves. It is defined by Pascale Weil like “a discourse that is not necessarily dedicated to selling a product, opposite to the publicity communication of products and brands”. (Weil, 1992)

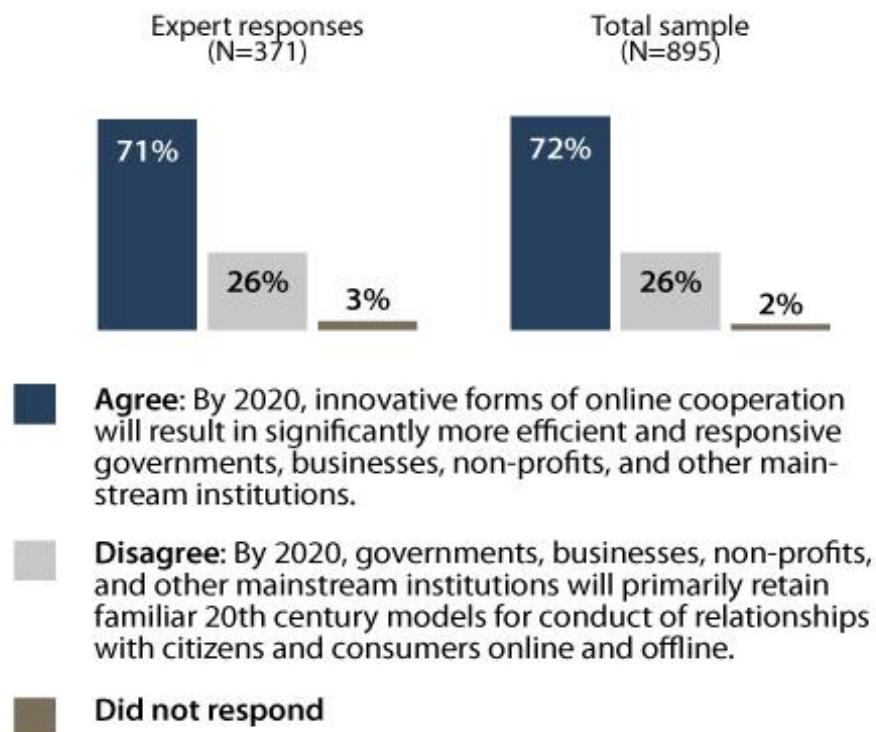
What is distinctive is that these public relations are not those of a commercial company in charge of managing the communication of a company. These public relations have a comparative differential value: they are the opinions of a social entity of knowledge generation, and much taken into account by public opinion (Pardo Kuklinski, 2005). This means that we should approach marketing and social profitability in universities not only by imitating marketing strategies of

commercial companies but thinking about the contribution that the university can make to the community, how it can gain prestige, reputation and social value.

“Branding has also become a strategic managerial issue for universities and other post-compulsory educational institutions since it has been shown that the greater the congruence between the student’s values, goals and attitudes and those of the institution, the less likely a student is to drop out”. (Jevons, 2006).

According to the research conducted by Janna Anderson and Lee Rainie for the Pew Research Centre (Anderson and Rainie, 2010), the impact of the Internet upon public institution is major, as the graphic bellow explains:

Figure 2. The Impact of the Internet on Institutions in the Future



Note. From “The Impact of the Internet on Institutions in the Future” by Janna Anderson and Lee Rainie, 2010 March, *Pew Research Center*, (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2010/03/31/the-impact-of-the-internet-on-institutions-in-the-future-2>).

We can see that the pressure to use of innovative ways of communication is getting higher, and public universities need to implement every new technology in order to survive on the market. Matthew Allen, from the department of internet studies, Curtin University of Technology, Australia, and past president of the Association of Internet Researchers sums up this entire process and underlines the importance of adapting to the new technologies’ tendencies: “Institutions have, by and large, always been astute at reshaping themselves to account for new forms of knowledge and economy and, indeed, to use their social power to shape the uses of technology.” (Anderson and Rainie, 2010)

The authors also talk about the enthusiasm of universities and buying into video-style broadcast and conference models of e-learning because they enable the lecture / tutorial model to propagate across the internet (and thus ensuring universities remain institutionally powerful); so alternative models, that challenge institutions (e.g., crowd-wise knowledge networking) are squeezed out by the power of institutions to say that this is what the technology does and is for.

They consider that the date is the main problem – institutions will change, and can change, but perhaps on a longer timeframe than 10 years, so on a long-term basis. (Anderson and Rainie, 2010) The Internet provides huge opportunities, customization, interaction, permanent information and communication, so it can be used with different elements of the marketing mix. It is important to mention here the ways in which the Internet enhances public services, helping universities to

provide them in a more adequate form, customized to the need of each student or potential student.

Even if the new digital era removes limitations, reduces the barriers of space and time, there are also some limitations which need to be known and assessed. Jack M. Balkin and Julia Sonnevend discuss and enounce these limitations in the book “Education and Social Media: Toward a Digital Future”:

- internet access (who and how people can gain access to digital information and education);
- language (which replaces geography as a major barrier in education);
- control over architectures and standards;
- scalability (only some aspects of education are successfully scalable online, the rest are likely to be labour-intensive and costly);
- control over intellectual property. (Greenhow, Sonnevend and Agur, 2016)

It is key to maintain a good, student-oriented communication, because it will create a long-term advantage for the university, it can help bring new students and create loyalty of the existing ones. In recent times we are witnessing the conversion of web pages in portals. The users search for universities which can provide them with a variety of information, access to online library, e-mail, researches, requests for certificates, scholarships, online courses, classes, presentations and events, internship platforms, jobs and academic formation and specialization. It is all about offering incorporated value-added communication services.

Changes in communication are no longer limited to the transformation of spaces, but also structurally affect other dimensions of communication: they affect the paradigm of communication itself. One of these changes, probably one of the most transcendent, is the one that determines a new centrality for communication:

that of the production of content and, consequently, the increase in the importance of the conditions of access to information.

A second important consequence is the change in the actors of communication. In the Internet age, social institutions (Town halls, ONGs, cultural societies, sports clubs, companies, businesses, Universities, citizen networks, social movements), so far clearly differentiated from the media, also become means of communication. (de Moragas et al., 1999)

The focus of the universities should therefore be on communication management, communication research and ways to integrate new technologies in communication strategies. This includes implementation of technology tools of interaction within the university (in internal networks) as well as interaction with the external environment (in external networks). The university who will be able to use all of these in an efficient way will gain competitive advantage by creativity in the communication process.

If we search for universities that use social media, we can see that the universities which have high ranking in educational tops also have the most followers and social media groups. Best Colleges.com has made a top in 2016, according to the numbers of followers on Twitter, Instagram and likes on Facebook. These three major social media platforms have been choosing according to their global popularity (over 2.2 billion users worldwide, Best Colleges, 2017).

With the help of the table below, I tried to gather the information of the research conducted by Bestcolleges.com and make a brief summary of top universities according to social media presence and preferences.

Table 1. Ranking of universities according to social media

Ranking	Name of University	Facebook (likes)	Twitter (followers)	Instagram (followers)
1.	HARVARD UNIVERSITY	4.4 M	576 K	166 K
2.	STANFORD UNIVERSITY	1.05 M	576 K	105 K
3.	YALE UNIVERSITY	1.15 M	246 K	63.6 K
4.	UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN - ANN ARBOR	730 K	141 K	91.6 K
5.	OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY	672.7 K	164.4 K	89.7 K
6.	TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	541 K	178 K	98.9 K
7.	UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA	628.5 K	111 K	79.5 K
8.	MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	761 K	261 K	12.3 K
9.	LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY	767.8 K	142 K	15.7 K
10.	PRINCETON UNIVERSITY	448.2 K	188 K	48.4 K

Note. Adapted from “The Colleges Dominating Social Media”, 2017, Best colleges portal, <http://www.bestcolleges.com/features/best-college-social-media/>

We can make an analogy between the university’s presence and impact in social media and its brand and worldwide recognition. The importance of using new technology and use of social media devolves from this top. If we take a look at the most used social media platform today, we can see that currently (May 2017), Harvard University has 728 K followers on Twitter (20% more than in 2016), 4.9 M likes on Facebook (with 0.5 M likes more than in 2016), Stanford University has 1.19 M likes on Facebook (0.14 M more likes than in 2016) and 509 K followers

on Twitter (a decrease of 67 K followers since last year) and Yale University has 337 K followers on Twitter (an increase of 27% of followers since 2016) and 1.27 M likes on Facebook (0.12 M more likes than in 2016).

And the numbers will probably keep growing considering that this top universities will have more students each year, will enroll more graduates and will increase in research, numbers of published materials, articles, interviews and keep on consolidating their brand. It is the direction in which European public universities should go, including public universities from Spain, where the research will further take us.

II. Status of the investigation

2.1 What it means to establish an efficient communication process via social media

First of all, let's try to define social media and its boundaries, tool, ways in which it manifests itself. According to Wikipedia, social media is computer-mediated technology and it facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression, using virtual communities and networks.

“Social media use web-based technologies, desktop computers and mobile technologies (e.g., smartphones and tablet computers) to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals, communities and organizations can share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content or pre-made content posted online. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between businesses, organizations, communities and individuals. Social media changes the way individuals and large organizations communicate. These changes are the focus of the emerging field of technoself studies.” (Wikipedia, Social media, 2019)

If we consult The Business Dictionary, we can find a simpler definition “Primarily internet or cellular phone-based applications and tools to share information among people. Social media includes popular networking websites, like Facebook and Twitter; as well as bookmarking sites like Reddit. It involves blogging and forums and any aspect of an interactive presence which allows individuals the ability to engage in conversations with one another, often as a

discussion over a particular blog post, news article, or event”. (Business Dictionary, Social media, 2018)

So, when we talk about social media, we should analyze its tools and application used for communication.

In 2015, Madianou, M. published a paper about polymedia and speaks about this new term again, redefining it. The paper is called “Polymedia and Ethnography: Understanding the Social in Social Media” and it is important to see this passage before moving on to analyzing each social media environment for the universities we set our research upon:

As social media proliferate, each acquires its own niche in people’s communicative repertoires. What emerges then is a complex environment of multiple, evolving social media that combine with other platforms, older and newer. The term “polymedia,” which I developed together with D. Miller (Madianou & Miller, 2012, 2013), shifts our attention from social media as discrete platforms to an understanding of media environments which users navigate to suit their communicative needs. If the term “social media” is too generic while “Facebook,” “Viber,” or “Twitter” are too specific and ephemeral (given the perpetual evolution of platforms), polymedia puts forward a dynamic model of media as a composite structure of converging communicative opportunities within which social media can be understood. According to this approach, the emphasis is on the relational definition of all media from a users’ point of view within this composite structure. (Madianu and Miller, 2015)

In case of universities, and public ones analyzed, it is needed to see which of these (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Reddit, including magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, etc.) are used and how.

The concept of digital medial comes to mind, in more recent years and has gained the spotlight. It is the most recent step in the evolution of information and communication technologies and this can be seen in its fast development and coverage (Pfeffer, 2011).

According to a 2012 research published in the International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, the main advantages of the use of social media are:

- Sharing of ideas: As all social networking sites allow their users to share ideas, activities, events and interests within their network.

Here it would be good to mention that the sharing concept has taken a broader approach. The author then speaks of the following, tool of communication and source of information.

- “Tool of communication: Social networks are increasingly being used by teachers and learners as a communication tool.” (Dowerah Baruah, 2012) In the following chapter of the thesis, this will be analyzed in more detail, especially after and during the lockdown.

- “Bridges communication gap: Social media bridges the distance among different people. It offers platforms for online users to find others who share the same interests and build virtual communities based on those shared interests.” (Dowerah Baruah, 2012)

- Source of information: Content generating and sharing sites serve as sources of information for various topics. The sites used by each university will be included so that a connection can be realized.

- “Important marketing tool: Social media is widely used by most of the firms/organizations to market their products/services in the society. The companies resort to social networking sites to generate opinions on the existing and future products that are available in the market.” (Dowerah Baruah, 2012) The author also mentions why this marketing strategy is undertaken by most of the companies with

the scope to draw consumers and elicit public opinion. Why such comments or opinions help the organization to redesign their products? Because social networking and user appraisal sites are an important way of promoting products and generating opinions, gather data from the user experience and that is the key information to be used in a good marketing strategy.

- “Important customer interaction tool: Social Media Networking is perfect for customer interaction, customer feedback, and customer support. New business contacts can be obtained for networking purposes.” (Dowerah Baruah, 2012)

- “Important crisis communication tool: When the major forms of public relations tool fail, social media can be used extensively to communicate with the general public regarding any crisis situation that might have gripped the nation or any organization.” (Dowerah Baruah, 2012) What the author thinks is important to remember, is that while social media can have a positive impact during natural disasters, it can have a less favorable effect during business crises, in which case, corporate communication teams need to understand how they can use social media to their advantage. So, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis can definitely become more than a challenge. It is true that communications landscape has changed thanks to social media, especially during times of crisis, and an analysis upon the communication scenario during and after lockdown is included, especially for the universities analyzed in Romania, where the interviews have been conducted in 2020.

- “Low Costs/ Cost effective: It is cheaper to use online social networking for both personal and business use because most of it is usually free. Unlike in other forms of media like electronic or print, one has to pay a certain amount of money for a news item to get published. A person can scout out potential customers and target markets with just a few clicks and keystrokes.” (Dowerah Baruah, 2012)

- Less time consuming: Social media is an effective time management medium of communication both for business as well as for academic purposes. There are also a lot of tools and apps that help marketer to schedule posts in advance, accessible

and all at the click of a button. This is an added advantage if we think of print and other electronic media like television and radio. Also, the author mentions that social media channels provide impromptu information and connection with the people that matters most.

Basically, if we reanalyze these advantages and if we translate them to public universities, we can reach the same positive points. Web based social networking services make it possible to connect students, researchers, teachers who share common educational interests and persons who want to follow or are following similar educational programs and courses.

Teachers use social networks to create study groups, forums, and discussion groups, chat rooms, to expand the reach of the traditional classroom, to reach students from different corners of the planet, to interact with different opinions, to post assignments and explanations, even virtual courses and demonstrations, to post quizzes, test and exercises, to be able to interact with their students and assist them. On the other hand, students can do the same, engaging discussions, realizing tasks in groups, interact with different study groups and expand their overall learning experience.

The social media bridges reduce the distance for all students. It provides them with the opportunity to study abroad, to experience opinions, study methods and courses from different countries, to expand their educational horizon. For teachers and researches it is also highly positive because it offers the possibility to gain access to innovative technologies, new and ground breaking information from all over the world.

The source of information is expanding, integrating virtual libraries, studies and research from around the world. As a marketing and customer interaction tool,

social media can perfectly serve as a base of information, feedback from students, teachers, researchers, it can provide the perfect instrument for marketing strategy, perfectly adapted to respond to the needs of potential students.

It is also less time consuming for universities, keeping fast and correct interaction worldwide, without the expense of sending materials via post, printing and responding to immediate questions and needs of students.

Everything has changed with the development of the Internet. For further enhancing the effectiveness of the communication process via social media in public universities a blog, webpage or portal of the university is needed.

A blog is an easy-to-use website in which you can, among many other things, express your opinions quickly and interact with other users. All this free. (Risso Ubeda and Lutzky-Susel, 2009) The popularity of the blog is increasing, and it can provide the institution with opinions from students, potential students, teachers, researchers, a base of information from where you can extract tendencies, points to improve or to enhance, sources of competitive advantage.

But a blog is not everything you can use, as a student, researcher or as a university. Different social media platforms, programs, are gaining space and at least one of them can become the next big thing in communication. So, it would be advisable for the innovative university that wants to keep in touch with the new technology and to attract new students to use as many as these new platforms as possible. Further on we can discover some of these social media instruments, as defined and analyzed by Eleanor Ross from The Guardian:

Table 2. Ways to use social media in universities

Instagram	It's not just for selfies; the image-sharing tool can be harnessed to collect real-time data for coursework. Rather than passively relying on data collected by others, students can engage in their own collection of all kinds of evidence. Instagram also provides an opportunity for collaboration – students can upload, tag, and comment on pictures on each other's feeds, thus expanding the reach of discussion.
Wunderlist	Organisational app Wunderlist allows students – and lecturers – to create folders for each module, with notes, due dates, comments, contact lists and, perhaps most crucially, reminders of upcoming deadlines.
Italk	Primarily used as a recording tool, this is one of the best ways to capture lectures and upload them online, or share via email.
Google Docs	Google Docs allows tracked editing and comments, which means that students can work in groups in their own time, without having to take part in structured seminars, and the document can be sent to the lecturer for feedback.
Vine	Six-second, looping videos are all over social media – and they can be a resource for higher education institutions too. They can be used to show off the university campus or promote events, but they're also a great tool for wider engagement.
Trello	Essentially an online sticky-note tool, Trello links pictures, videos, and documents in threads that can be shared between group members. The tool organises discussions into boards like Pinterest, so you can pin, share, and curate relevant information.
Snapchat	The popular photo and video messaging app can engage students with learning materials in real time.

Note. Adapted from “Eight smart ways to use social media in universities” by Eleanor Ross, 2016, The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2016/jan/20/eight-smart-ways-to-use-social-media-in-universities>)

The evolution of the audiovisual industry implies the incorporation of new technologies in the strategy of universities and a permanent orientation towards updating the available knowledge. The internet revolution has begun and in order to respond to the demands of the students, universities have been forced to change by the inclusion of new technologies in the classrooms. Students use technology for every information they receive and issue, they use it in the entire communication process with teachers, with university administration, to create networks, to create groups, to acquire knowledge.

Focusing on new technologies and their academic use in the environment of the University, the Internet is transforming the context of teaching and learning since it is extremely easy to use and put at our disposal an extraordinary information potential. (Farias Batlle, Gómez Aguilar and Roses Campos, 2010)

Another very important aspect that has transformed the way universities act today, are online courses and seminars. The influence of the new technology can be seen in the way courses and seminars are held and students and researches from all over the world can now have access to classes that have become spread worldwide. Competition increases, and now teachers can reach a worldwide auditorium.

Universities have adapted and the use of these new technologies has become mandatory and part of the strategy. The University of Today uses more and more social media to broadcast itself, its events, and conferences, to communicate with the public, to public courses and seminars, lectures and to gain visibility online.

It is a productive strategy to attract more students and increase their interest. Programs have been included of online courses to be held entirely via internet. The way students seek information has also changed. They do not go to school anymore

to sit and listen and write-down information. When students need information, they seek it on the internet; they create forums of debate and discussion, share and receive information online.

A way to measure social media activity is by making use of digital trace. Kristian Møller and Brady Robards make a pertinent and useful analysis of digital trace, its meaning and how it should be used in order to see the online activity in their paper “Walking Through, Going Along and Scrolling Back. Ephemeral mobilities in digital ethnography” in 2019. This was inspiring to make use of the data and include a question in this thesis regarding the use of evaluation tools and to see if social presence is evaluated by university directives. The concept is best reflected in the following passage:

“The concept of a “digital trace” has mostly been used to call attention to inscriptions in media that reflect human activity: the digital trace is digital traces are “records of activity [...] undertaken through an online information system” (Howison et al. 2011: 769). Hine noted that internet ethnography may engage with at least two types of traces: those readily available on social media platforms, for example, and those that the ethnographer forges through interventionist strategies to represent activity and make it available for collaborative interpretation.” (Møller and Robards, 2019)

After the authors address in their paper the view of Hine, they open up the digital ethnography: “As digital traces are significant elements of the media spaces that people navigate daily, engaging with them in digital ethnography is the key to understanding what such media environments mean to their users. Further, in terms of media as social spaces, digital traces are the building blocks of what can be thought of as online presence and, thus, constitutive of a sense of online sociality.” (Møller and Robards, 2019)

It is important to add that, according to the authors, digital traces should not become the only thing that digital ethnographers follow. What they should also follow and be able to integrate analyses of media objects and media environments reflexively, with traces of use, observation of participant media practice and media narration. (Møller and Robards, 2019)

2.2. Description of the current context: Digital transformation and the ways it affects social media communication

The marketing strategy has to adapt to these changes, in order for the university to be able to offer a system that is attractive to its students, that can offer and implement fast enough the new technologies in order to adapt to their needs. The marketers need to comprehend these changes and know how to make this campaign reach the students of today via online. Also, it is mandatory to see for what marketing is intended. When talking about superior education, a university, marketing campaign should be implemented for:

- reputation of the university;
- ranking;
- attract more students;
- gaining investments, funding;
- cooperation with the business environment.

The spaces of development and exhibition of the communication products gain a new contribution from the Web 2.0, and especially with the blogs and YouTube, thanks to the creation of particular channels of communication, but also to the ones opened to the general public. It is now possible for a person or group to have their own communication channel, with a personalized layout, and a content

offering according to their interests. These channels of communication are already present in the teaching methodologies developed by the professors of the Universities.

Universities are responsible for promoting through advertising their product: degrees, study plans, facilities, means of transport, teaching staff, etc., as well as various slogans loaded with messages meant to attract the attention of their future students. In this way, it becomes clear that the Institutional Communication policy can be conceived only as a part of the overall organization of the institution. (Oliva Marañón, 2012)

As a conclusion, the marketing department of a university should always take into consideration the following changes that have occurred due to the impact of new technologies in superior education:

- the changing role of the teacher and the students, the changing relationship;
- the change in the learning system (increase of self-learning and unlimited and fast access to information);
- the availability of information and worldwide access;
- the change in the teaching model (use of new technology, online courses, innovative teaching methods).

For public universities and in Spain, the changes are the same, so a similar strategy has to be applied. According to the Spanish Ministry of Education, Estrategia Universidad 2015, the internationalization of the Spanish universities is one of the top priorities in the education system. In the same study conducted, some very important and conclusive strategies have been established, vectors for universities to follow, as they are stated in the image below:

Figure 2. Schema of action vectors towards internationalization targets under Estrategia Universidad 2015 (Spanish universities)



Note. From “The contribution of universities to Spanish socio-economic progress 2010-2015” by Spanish Ministry of Education, 2015, Estrategia Universidad 2015, educacion.es, Spain, p. 130. In the public domain

In Spain, a similar phenomenon is taking place; we can see more and more universities implementing the social web. Corporate communication in universities in Spain, according to the research conducted by Elvira San Millán Fernandez, Francisco Blanco Jiménez y José Carlos Del Arco Prieto upon public Spanish University Rey Juan Carlos, incorporates in a gradual form the social strategies by means of the rector’s blog, bloggers’ communities, syndication of

contents, online video channels such as YouTube, elaboration of wikis, etc. (San Millán Fernandez, Blanco Jiménez and Del Arco Prieto, 2008)

Also, a very recent research conducted upon Spanish public universities in 2017 by Simancas-González Esther and García-López Marcial has some very interesting finding regarding communication management. The research is conclusive by including 47 Spanish universities where communication directors have been interviewed. Regarding the obtained results, the most important objectives of university communication have been (in percentage from a total of 47 analyzed universities):

- university brand management (70%)
- reputation (39%)
- diffusion of activity (33%)
- accountability (24%)
- international projection (24%)
- support strategic objectives (18%)
- internal communication (18%)
- student recruitment (18%)
- other objectives (9%) (Simancas-González and García-López, 2017)

Another result of the mentioned study is important for the current investigation, to see the main functions of communication departments from Spanish public universities. “The most mentioned function is the relations with the media (94%), including sending press releases, attention to journalists and other activities such as files, the documentation, and information and monitoring.

The management of own media and / or creation and diffusion of contents and university activities through media is conducted by 88% of communication departments. The own mean that has been most named and that is considered more important is the institutional website. Among the functions of the communication

department, 58% of the directors appoint the management of profiles of institutions in social networks, but there are different degrees of professionalization and use”. (Simancas-González and García-López, 2017)

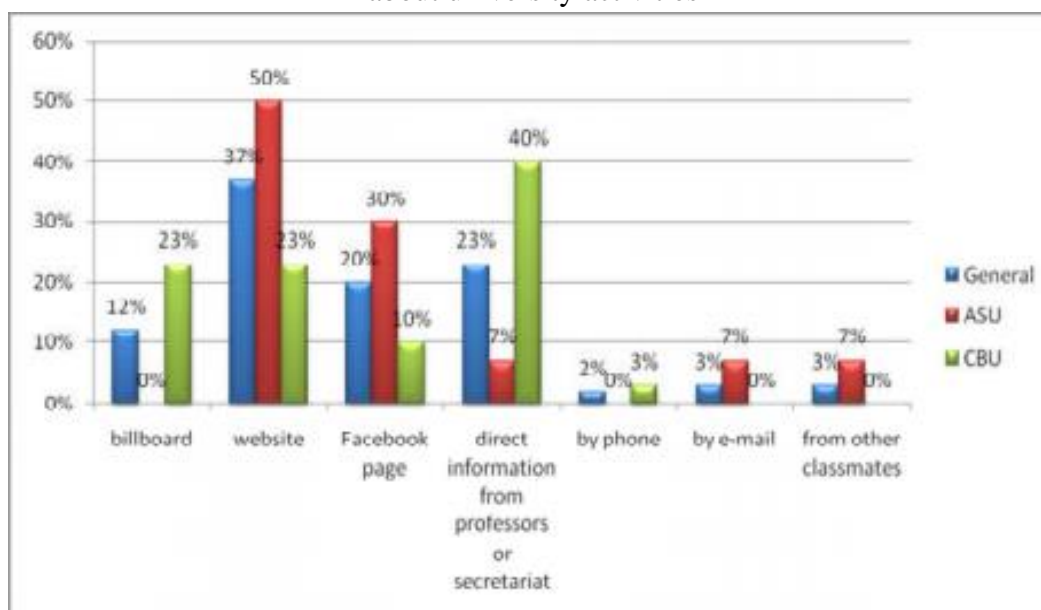
It will be interesting to see, for the selected universities in Spain, if the interest in social media and means of communication is as high as the cited research showed. Also, a more detailed approach and investigation upon the digital media channels used, type of messages, measurement instruments to evaluate the effectiveness and the feedback from the students is needed.

2.3 Institutional context – The development of the public university in Europe

The Internet has had a significant impact on the traditional way of communication at Romania universities as well. Thus, many universities have invested in online communication, creating portals, internet pages, Facebook page, Twitter or other social media platforms in order to maintain a level of social interaction. The number of social media platforms users in Romania is increasing; also, Romania is one of the European countries with the most efficient and rapid internet access via optical fiber network.

In the 2010 research conducted upon 2 top public universities from Romania (Andrei Saguna University – ASU and Constantin Brancoveanu University - CBU), by professors and researchers Tasențe Tănase and Nicoleta Ciacu, we find an interesting result regarding the means which students use most often in order to obtain information about university activities. From the graphic below we can easily see the importance of the universities’ web page and of the Facebook page.

Figure 3. Means which students from Romanian universities Constantin Brancoveanu and Andrei Saguna use most often in order to obtain information about university activities



Note. From “Mijloacele de informare in mediul universitar” (Information means in university environment) by Tasețe Tănase and Nicoleta Ciacu, 2010 (http://www.strategiimanageriale.ro/images/images_site/articole/article_26a674832769b1992377be8845a7e39c.pdf)

Unfortunately, bigger studies, which include more than 50% of public universities from Romania, have not been conducted. What can be stated is that, in accordance with the European policy, the majorities of Romanian universities have as an objective the integration of new technologies and have at least one social media account and a website.

Learning more about the Ethnography of Communication is important before getting into analyzing further the universities included on the study, because it brings an insight on the environment and its structure. It sets the basis for communication, how we engage others in a discussion so it important to look at

relevant studies upon the subject before engaging in interviews. It was used to systemically analyze the culture of the people interviewed and adapt the interviews, based on observation. This was conducted so that more complete and complex results to be obtained.

Saskia Witteborn, Trudy Milburn and Evelyn Y. Ho in their “The Ethnography of Communication as Applied Methodology: Insights from Three Case Studies” in 2013 have set a great basis and definition for EC:

Research in EC maps the practices, social structures, and related worldviews through which people constitute what it means to act as a member of a group in a particular spatial and temporal context. EC enables researchers to move between contextualized communicative practices and conceptualizing ways of being, acting, and relating, tightening them into a communicative theory about social life. As a theoretical frame, EC provides useful guidelines for understanding the applied nature of researching situated communicative conduct and, in fact, the nature of research itself. EC foregrounds communication, and it is through communication that we engage others. (Witteborn, Milburn and Y. Ho, 2013)

The level of engagement in interviews is therefore extremely important. Even with the questionnaire as a guide, interviewing directives and specialist in the communication field is enlightening and it brings so much value if the people interviewed want to share more, more knowledge, bring more example and engage in a longer conversation than just responding to questions. In the same paper stated above, important conclusions were drawn by Saskia Witteborn, Trudy Milburn & Evelyn Y. Ho (2013), after conducting 3 case studies:

“Both researchers and participants are not static in their roles, and analyzing the research process itself can provide important insights into how participants’ ends may alter the researchers’ role from experts of social scientific inquiry, to problem solvers, or to listeners.” (Witteborn, Milburn and Y. Ho, 2013)

Let us have a look at the way the analyzed universities from Andalucía are organized in terms of communication and marketing departments.

According to the ranking of catalogues of international universities in Shanghai and QS, the University of Seville is among the top 500 worldwide. In Andalusia, the University of Seville ranks as the second, after the University of Granada, according to Wikipedia.

The top universities from Spain in the Shanghai ranking are found in the table below:

Table 3. The top universities from Spain in the Shanghai ranking					
Universidad	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Universidad Pompeu Fabra	8	8	7	8	5
Universidad Politécnica de Valencia	6	5	5	6	6
Universidad Politécnica de Cataluña	—	—	—	9	9
Universidad del País Vasco	—	10	9	11	12
Universidad de Zaragoza	11	11	10	12	13
Universidad de Vigo	10	9	—	—	—
Universidad de Valencia	4	6	8	4	8
Universidad de Sevilla	—	—	—	—	11

Universidad de Santiago de Compostela	9	—	—	10	10
Universidad de Granada	7	7	6	7	7
Universidad de Barcelona	3	3	4	1	1
Universidad Complutense de Madrid	2	2	3	5	4
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid	1	1	2	3	3
Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona	5	4	1	2	2

Note. From “Clasificación académica de universidades de España” (Ranking of universities in Spain) by Wikipedia, 2019

(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clasificaci%C3%B3n_acad%C3%A9mica_de_universidades_de_Espa%C3%B1a)

Table 4. Spanish universities in the QS ranking		
Universidad	España	Mundo
Universidad de Barcelona	1	156
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid	2	187
Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona	3	=195
Universidad Complutense de Madrid	4	233
Universidad de Navarra	5	=270
Universidad Politécnica de Cataluña	6	275
Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M)	7	281
Universidad Pompeu Fabra	8	=296

Universidad Politécnica de Valencia	9	=373
Universidad de Zaragoza	10	461-470
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid	11	491-500
Universidad de Granada	12	501-550
Universidad de Alcalá	13	551-600
Universidad de Valencia	14	551-600
Universidad de Salamanca	15	601-650
Universidad de Sevilla	16	601-650
Universidad de Santiago de Compostela	17	601-650
Universidad del País Vasco	18	651-700
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha	19	801-1000
Universidad de Murcia	20	801-1000
Universidad de Oviedo	21	801-1000
Universidad Rey Juan Carlos	22	801-1000
Universidad de La Coruña	23	801-1000

Note. Adapted from “Clasificación académica de universidades de España” (Clasification of Spanish universities), Wikipedia, 2019
(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clasificaci%C3%B3n_acad%C3%A9mica_de_universidades_de_Espa%C3%B1a)

2.3.1 Organization of Seville University

According to the World University Rankings (The World University Ranking, 2020) in the past year, the University of Seville in European teaching rankings is situated between 151-200th place and has over 500 years of activity.

University centers: 27 own and 6 attached

University departments: 133

Knowledge areas: 157 (Seville University, Wikipedia, 2020)

Degree programs - Grade: 671

Postgraduate program

Master: 91

Doctoral programs: 99

Postgraduate studies: 238

In regards to the beginning of the university, we have to see a bit how it started in Andalusia. In Andalusia, university foundations began in the 16th century, on December 18, 1256, King Alfonso X gave the city of Seville the privilege to create "study and general schools of Latin i Arabigo" in the region. But this was not put into practice. In 1502, during their stay in the city, the Catholic Monarchs granted the Seville City Council a Royal Certificate by which they granted a license to found a General Study with "chairs in which Theology or Canons or Laws or Medicine and other liberal arts were read", although nothing was done to fulfill it until 1551, when the city council gave it to the Colegio Santa María de Jesús. Thus, the year 1502 cannot be considered as the constitution of the university. The first students were admitted in 1516. The Santa María de Jesús College-University building, located in the Puerta de Jerez, was completed in 1517.

Already in the 18th century, under the reign of Carlos III, the university reform of Pablo de Olavide took place. It establishes as a question of fundamental importance the total and definitive separation of the University and the College of Santa María de Jesús. Fundamental to the incipient university was the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767. Of all the patrimony left by the Company, the College-University inherits the Professed House, located on the site of the current Faculty of Fine Arts.

The change of headquarters took place on December 31, 1771. By cutting university autonomy, the State assumed responsibility for the regulations but not

the financing of the reforms, so the Sevillian University had to continue subsisting on its own means, which they consisted primarily of enrollment and examination fees, tips for obtaining degrees, and some meager income he owned. (facts translated and resumed from History of Seville University, US.es portal, 2020)

According to the official site of the university, the origin and beginnings of the university are also related to the Colegio de Santa María de Jesús:

In the 16th century, in the year 1505 to be exact, the Pope Julius II granted the College the faculty of imparting degrees in Theology, Philosophy, Law, Medicine and Arts.

Less than 50 years later, in 1551, the City Council transferred the Royal Provision granted by a General Study. The foundation of Maese Rodrigo thus became the official University, enjoying all the privileges of the other Universities inside the Spanish kingdom.

From the information gathered from the year 1621, it appears that the University of Seville was, at that time, composed of several Faculties, like the following: Theology, Canons and Laws, Medicine and Arts, and also granted several degrees of Bachelor and Doctor in all the Faculties mentioned before. A Master for the Faculty of Arts is also mentioned and was present at that time. (History of Seville University, university portal, 2020)

During the reign of Carlos III, the reform effort of the 18th century took place. It is then when the University moved to a new headquarters, the one situated on Laraña Street. It is mentioned that this Professed House of expelled Compañía de Jesús is currently the Faculty of Fine Arts.

At the University of Seville, the materialization of the Illustrated Reform came together with the Olavide Study Plan. This happened in 1768 and when the

whole concept of the University as a public service came to life. Courses such as Mathematics appeared, typical of the concern of the time for the teachings of science subjects. “In conclusion, we can say that it signified the origin of the conception of the modern University, although this model was not consolidated until well into the 19th century.” (History of Seville University, university portal, 2020)

If we want to have a brief number analysis of the university, we can take a look at the following table, provided by the University, on their site:

Table 5. Seville University in numbers		
ACADEMIC STRUCTURE - COURSE 2019/2020		
NO. OF UNIVERSITY CENTERS	Own centers	27
	Affiliated Centers	5
NO. OF UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS		134
NO. OF KNOWLEDGE AREAS		158
NO. OF OTHER UNIVERSITY CENTERS		4
UNIVERSITY OFFER - COURSE 2019/2020		
NO. DEGREE, DEGREES OFFERED SINCE 1st. COURSE		88
NO. OF UNIVERSITY MASTER'S DEGREE		99
NO. OF DOCTORATE PROGRAMS		32
NO. OF UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE STUDIES		165
UNIVERSITY DEMAND - COURSE 2019/2020		
NO. OF STUDENTS ENROLLED	Grade. Own Centers	48.725
	Grade. Affiliated Centers	3.619
	Master's degree. Own Centers	6.346

	Master's degree. Affiliated Centers	181
	PhD	3.219
	Postgraduate and other Own Teachings	2.980
	Teachings Institute of Languages	3.302
	College extension	209
	Experience Classroom	2.393
GRADUATED STUDENTS - COURSE 2018/2019		
NO. GRADUATED STUDENTS	1st and 2nd Cycle. Own Centers	7
	1st and 2nd Cycle. Affiliated Centers	-
	Grade. Own Centers	6.742
	Grade. Affiliated Centers	695
	Master's degree. Own Centers	2.424
	Master's degree. Affiliated Centers	162
	PhD	382
RESEACH - YEAR 2019		
NO. OF GENERAL INVESTIGATION SERVICES		15
NO. OF CENTERS AND LARGE FACILITIES		7
NO. OF INSTITUTES OF P.A.I. WITH HEADQUARTERS IN USE		3
NO. OF UNIVERSITY INSTITUTES		13
NO. OF FOUNDATIONS		1
NO. OF OTHER CENTERS		1
NO. OF RESEARCH PERSONNEL IN TRAINING		334

NO. OF CONTRACTED PERSONNEL (RESEARCH PROJECTS)	479
NO. OF POST-DOCTORAL CONTRACTS	112
NO. OF CONTRACTS NATIONAL YOUTH GUARANTEE SYSTEM	325
NO. OF CONTRACTS ART. 83 (LOU)	519
NO. OF AID GRANTED BY THE OWN PLAN	1.002
NO. OF PROJECTS OF THE STATE PLAN. EXCELLENCE AND CHALLENGES	86
NO. OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS	31
NO. REGISTRATIONS OF INDUSTRIAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY	50
STAFF EFFECTS - DECEMBER 2019	
STAFF	4.225
P.A.S. OFFICIAL	1.373
P.A.S. STAFF	1.358
TOTAL STAFF	6.956

Note. From “Seville University in numbers” by Seville university us.es portal, 2020

In our analysis, we orientate the research upon the departments of each university that oversee and do the communication and marketing services. But it is valuable to see the overall numbers of faculties, staff, organization and volume of the university because it helps in our comparison.

Another important information to have, is related to the online users and tools indicators. We can see from there how many of the students are also remote users, the impact of the digitalization upon the overall staff, members and students is and so on. It is directly connected to the questions in our interviews in regards to the importance of engagement, online campaigns, targeted audience and evaluation.

In the case of Seville University, the following briefing document and analysis of the GDPR compliance “Cumplimiento conjunto del RGPD y ENS en la Universidad de Sevilla” (Joint compliance of the GDPR and ENS in the Seville University), offered us more insight about the online usage and integration:

“> 12,000 public Ips
> 200,000 user accounts (UVUS)
> 100,000 email boxes
> 2,000 web page hosts
> 200 server digital certificates
> 790 distribution lists” (Francisco de Asís Gómez, Julia Cortés, 2020)

In the same documents they also mention difficulties when dealing with new tech integration and cybersecurity such as the size of the university, large number of users, costs and implementation. But we will analyze challenges after seeing the answers to related questions from the interviews.

Related strictly to the communication department, where our focus is, we see that on the university portal they have a separate landing page (<https://comunicacion.us.es/>), an online journal (<http://www.revistacomunicacion.org/>) and a radio for the university (RadiUS, available on platforms like iVoox, Google Podcasts and Spotify). In terms of organization, the department has the following positions, as stated on their portal:

- General Director of Communication
- Director of the Secretariat for External Communication and Social Networks
- Director of RadiUS, the Radio of the University of Seville
- Higher Degree in Press and Information – 2 positions/members
- Press and Information Specialist Technician
- New Media
- Administrative secretary

- Technical team RadiUS, the Radio of the University of Seville (Communication landing page Seville University portal, 2020)

2.3.2 Organization of Malaga University

A quick overview of the Malaga university, apart from the social media pages and the portal is found in the international student's guide, which can be accessed on the Malaga University webpage: Malaga university is a young institution, especially when compared to other public universities in the area. It is also a state-owned institution and was founded in 1972 and has an annual budget exceeding 250 million Euros. With more than 35,000 students and 2,400 teachers, UMA's study options contain around 60 Bachelor's programmes, over 50 Master's programmes, over 40 PhD programmes and around 100 courses held throughout the academic year. A total of 81 departments are managing all this and at this moment, 18 faculties form the entire university.

The international space and research areas are held and developed by 278 research groups currently involved in 180 national projects and 30 international projects. In recent years, the number of partnerships with companies and other organizations has ranged between 350 and 400; Also, an average of 50 patents per year have been registered, a third of these having international relevance, which emphasized the international reach and the impact upon the research community. (Malaga University webpage, 2020)

Because an emphasize on the international part is made on the webpage, we can also add here that over 1300 new international exchange students from different mobility programs as Erasmus+, Erasmus Mundus or Non-European programs come to Malaga every year. In this sense, a lot agreements with foreign universities

must be made and the portal mentions that there are done especially in Europe and South America.

“UMA constitutes one of the three vertices of the so-called “productive triangle” of the city, together with the airport and the PTA or Parque Tecnológico de Andalucía (Andalusia Science and Technology Park). The latter has close ties with the University due to the constant flow of ideas, highly qualified professionals and advanced technologies.” (Malaga University webpage, 2020)

The university also has a special landing page within the university portal, called the portal of transparency (<https://www.uma.es/portal-de-transparencia-universidad-de-malaga/info/119932/la-uma-en-cifras/>), where reports and data regarding the offer and demand of master degrees, university degrees, number of enrolled students, human resources per center, investigation projects, efficiency and efficacy rates, other taxes and tools can all be found.

A bit about Malaga’s university history. Even though it is recent history, especially in comparison with Seville university, Malaga university is one of the most important ones in Andalusia and surprisingly, its history related to Granada university as we can see here: The origins of Málaga University dates back to the 1960s, at which time there was an evident need of superior education in the Málaga society, and according to the website, this need was manifested by its citizens, authorities and media, and they all demanded the setting up of a university. Their argument was based mainly on the number of university institutions found in northern and southern Spain and the fact that Málaga was the only European city of over 300,000 inhabitants which did not have a University or a Higher Technical School. Malaga was becoming an important city, and you can only build on that with solid education options.

One of the loudest voices demanding the birth of a university in Málaga was the Association of Friends of Málaga University. This association, according to same portal of the university, was created in 1968, which counted on important figures from local life as members. This Association produced the biggest effort and initiatives in the history of Málaga, all destined to creating a higher teaching institution and working toward achieving this goal.

The basis for the creation of this higher institution was already in place, since Málaga counted on an Industrial College, a Higher College, a Faculty of Economics (at that time dependent on the University of Granada though but with enough expertise and base in the city) and a Seminary, which imparted different subjects of philosophy and theology.

The birth of the University was marked by a long process, which included, most notably, the creation of the University College of Málaga, which started to operate for the 1970/1971 academic year (initially including the sections of Sciences, Letters, Medicine and Pharmacy), and the decree for the creation of Málaga University (along with the universities of Córdoba and Santander), which was signed on 18th August 1972 and published in the Official State Journal on 30th September 1972, this being the final act in the process of the creation of the University of Málaga. The University counted initially on the already existing Faculty of Economics and Business Studies, and the Faculty of Medicine, which was also created at this moment in time. A long process, but successful and with several important sectors to cover. (Adapted and translated from Malaga University History webpage, 2020)

In the first years of its activity, the main location of the university centers was the campus of El Ejido, although it continued to count on faculties in the centre of the city and in different outlying districts, such as the Faculty of Medicine, which

was the first to be established at the new campus of Teatinos, which would be the future location of the University City. (Malaga University History webpage, 2020)

If we want to see the UMA in numbers, we can take a look at the following, found and updated on the InfoUMA landing page:

1. General information about the UMA

- Date of creation: 1972
- Ownership: Public
- Rector: José Ángel Narváez
- Number of professors: 2,554 (1,378 pdi doctor - 1,176 pdi not doctor)
- Number of professors: 257
- Number of PAS: 1,725
- Number of students: 35,354
- Annual budget: 253,942,115 (2012)

2. University Offer

- Number of Degrees: 59
- Number of Doctoral Programs: 42
- Master number: 53
- Number of own postgraduate degrees: master-17 / expert-13 / specialized courses-around 100 courses during the course

3. Academic Structure

- Number of university centers: 21 + 3 affiliated centers + 5 classrooms
- Number of university departments: 81
- Number of vice-rectorships: 8
- Number of other centers: 13

4. University demand

- Number of enrolled students Degrees and degrees to be extinguished (degree, diploma and engineering): 33,827 (15,966 men and 19,208 women)
- Number of students enrolled Doctoral Programs: 178
- Number of Master students enrolled: 1,349

5. Services

5.1 Research

- Research groups: 278
- Number of collaborative national projects (in force in 2011): 26
- Number of national projects (in force in 2011): 153
- Number of European and international projects (in force in 2011): 29
- Agreements and contracts with companies or entities of the last year: 371
- Number of patents registered in 2011: 26 National, 19 International

5.2 Library

- Book volumes: 1,031,816 of which 263,849 are electronic
- Magazines: 24,475 subscribed magazine titles, of which 19,264 in digital format and 5,211 on paper (of the latter 2,764 for payment).

5.3 Mobility

- Number of Erasmus students sent: 894 Received: 735
- Number of students with Sicue / Seneca Scholarship: 208 (sent: 106, received: 102)

5.4 Internships and future employment

- Number of practices: 2456
- Number of companies with which an agreement has been signed: 424
(Translated from Malaga University in numbers webpage, 2020)

In terms of analyzing the communication department specifically, we see that a separate landing page within the university portal is instated, called Department of Audiovisual Communication and Publicity, within the Faculty of Communication Sciences (<https://www.uma.es/departamento-de-comunicacion-audiovisual-y-publicidad/>), but also a Department of journalism-communication, with a different director and a separate web page <http://www.periodismo.uma.es/>.

However, the site for the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Publicity seems new, as they still haven't uploaded information in some parts like history, personnel, but probably are in the process. Information about investigation is however quite complete. In regards to the faculty of Communication, they have a radio as well, <http://comutopiartv.uma.es/> and also a television for the university.

2.3.3 Organization of Transilvania University

The history of the Transilvania University from Brasov, Romania is strongly related to the silviculture sector and the first Faculty of silviculture being founded in 1948. The following year, 1949, the mechanical institute is founded. The two institutes merge in 1956 and so the Polytechnic Institute in Brasov appears.

The Pedagogical Institute is established in 1960 (Mathematics, Physics - Chemistry, Biology), to which is added Music, in 1969. Through the merger of the Pedagogical Institute with the Polytechnic Institute, the University of Braşov was established later on, in 1971. This is the beginning of the establishment as a university with different faculties. It changes its name to Transilvania University only in 1991. (adapted from the timeline of the UNITBV Transilvania University webpage, 2020) Currently, the Transilvania University of Braşov (UNITBV) is the largest university in the center of the country, a comprehensive university that offers programs in 43 fields of science.

For information about the structure and organization of the University, the 2019 report was used, found at the University portal in the documents section, reports: Of the 100 undergraduate programs, 8 are conducted in languages of international circulation and 17 programs are offered in the form of distance and part-time education.

UNITBV's master's programs cover 33 areas. Most of them are programs with frequency, in Romanian, the university having as strategy the extension of the offer of programs in languages of international circulation.

UNITBV organizes doctoral studies in 18 accredited fields. “On October 1, 2019, 19,526 students were enrolled in the university undergraduate, master's and doctoral programs.” (Transilvania UNITBV University portal, 2020)

In terms of organization, they divide it in 4 parts, each of them with their own structure and organization, as we can see from a resume made from UNITBV University portal, administration landing page:

- Senate
- Administrative consulate or board
- Administrative structures
- Support structures (UNITBV Transilvania University website, 2020)

If we take a look at all the support structures and administrative ones, we can see that there is no centralized department of communication. There a lot of support structures and each one of them covers a niche, without having to follow an overall communication plan, even if it exists. They have the liberty to organize their actions as experts. Inside the support structures we can find the following, related to communication and marketing activities:

- Communication bureau (led by a bureau chief)
- IT bureau (led by a bureau chief, expert in engineering)
- Intellectual property bureau (led by a coordinator)
- Bureau of relations with the economic environment (led by a coordinator)
- Marketing and image bureau (led by a coordinator)
- Bureau of public information (led by the prorector and a lawyer-legal adviser)
- Bureau of academic process management (led by a coordinator)
- International relations office (led by a coordinator)
- Project management bureau (led by a coordinator)
- ALUMNI (led by a coordinator)
- Quality assurance bureau (led by a coordinator)
- Musical center (led by a director)
- Cultural center (led by a director)
- Business and tech incubator (led by a coordinator)
- Career information, counseling and guidance center (led by a coordinator)
- Center for Modern Language Learning (led by a coordinator)
- Continuing education center (led by a coordinator)
- Distance learning and part-time education center (led by a coordinator)
- Publishing house (led by a director)
- Library (led by a director)

We can see that Transilvania University has a different structure, with many support departments and that the activity is divided between a lot more departments. We will see how that impacts the overall strategy of marketing in communication in our interviews with the directives.

2.3.4 Organization of Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

According to the University page <https://www.ulbsibiu.ro/ro/despre/despre-ulbs/istoric/radacini/>, Lucian Blaga institution has its roots related with the first theological institution in the region:

the roots that allowed the definition and development of a modern, dynamic and anchored university in the community of Sibiu can be found since the Middle Ages, but the most representative moments are given by the appearance, in the 19th century of the Saxon Academy of Law (1844) and of the Andreian Theological Seminary (1874). Higher education in the city of Sibiu being closely linked to the history of theological and legal institutions from the XVIII-XIX centuries, but the real brick from which the construction of the Sibiu University started between (1940-1945). Following the Vienna Dictate of August 1940, the "King Ferdinand I" University was evacuated in a short time, the decision to move to Sibiu being taken at the meeting of the University Council on September 1, 1940. (History of Lucian Blaga University ULBS portal, 2020)

About dates and facts about the founding of the university itself, we can extract the from <https://www.ulbsibiu.ro/ro/despre/despre-ulbs/istoric/infiintarea-si-dezvoltarea/>, where we can also see the relationship with another major university in Transilvania, the University of Cluj and how that impacted the rise of the one situated in the center in Romania, Sibiu:

The Minister of Education Ștefan Bălan approved on June 30, 1967 and two years later, the Council of Ministers issued Decision number 1322 of June 12, 1969 establishing the Faculty of Philology and History in Sibiu as a branch of the "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj. ...

Starting with 1971, along with the two specializations, the English language and literature section was added, and, by the decision of the Council of Ministers no. 775 of June 30, 1971, a second faculty was opened in Sibiu, namely Economic and

Administrative Sciences. It lasted 4 years and trained specialists for the local administration. Following the restructuring of Romanian higher education on July 1, 1976, the Institute of Higher Education in Sibiu was established, which consisted of the Faculty of Philology and History, the Faculty of Economic and Administrative Law and the Faculty of Mechanics.

The accelerated development of the Sibiu university center was abruptly stopped in 1984, when by the decree of the State Council no. 213 of June 23, 1984, no tuition for the philology, history and law profiles was granted, and the Institute of Higher Education was transformed into the Institute of Sub-Engineers, subordinated to the Polytechnic Institute of Cluj-Napoca. As a result of this decision in 1987 he graduated the last promotion of the specializations philology, history and law. (History of Lucian Blaga University, 2020)

The new transformation of the university then took place, and now on its own, and not related to the University of Cluj, as we can see from the official page. In accordance with the provisions of Decree no. 225 of March 5, 1990 the first academic year – the one between 1990-1991 – that year inaugurated the courses of five faculties, as following: the Faculty of Letters, History and Law, the Faculty of Sciences, the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Food and Textile Technology. The Orthodox Theological Institute of University Degree "Andrei Șaguna" was added to five just mentioned, by the Protocol no. 1375 of September 27, 1991, thus becoming the Faculty of Theology "Andrei Șaguna".

“On May 12, 1995, on the 100th anniversary of the birth of the great poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga, the University of Sibiu received official approval to change its name to the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu. The attribution of the name was determined by the special significance that Lucian Blaga's personality has in Romanian culture, as well as his strong ties with Sibiu during 1940-1945.” (History of Lucian Blaga University, 2020)

ULBS (the abbreviation used for Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu) currently has 9 faculties: Faculty of Theology, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Letters and Arts, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Socio-Human Sciences, Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Food Industry and Environmental Protection and the Faculty of Economic Sciences.

Let's take a look at some figures about the university and have a better picture about its organization from the ULBS portal:

- Students: 11.059 undergraduate students, 2.733 graduate students, 417 PhD students
- Study programs: 71 undergraduate study programs, 60 graduate study programs, 15 doctoral fields, 90 doctoral supervisors, 637 teachers
- Research centers: 24 research centers (ULBS portal, 2020)

If we take a closer look at the structure of the department inside the universities related to communication and marketing, we can observe the following departments with the following attributions:

- Computerization and communications department (run by a director, with the following attributions: “administration of the INTERNET and INTRANET network of the “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu; maintaining contact with the communication network of the Ministry of National Education (RoEduNet); web-hosting, web-design and web-mail; dissemination of internal electronic documents; equipment and network service;” (ULBS portal Lucian Blaga University organization, 2020)
- Academic events office (run by an office chief, with the following attributions “Paltinis Research and Development Center; Academic Meeting Center” (ULBS portal Lucian Blaga University organization, 2020)

- Marketing and PR department (with the following objectives “Carrying out marketing campaigns and ensuring communication with the local and national press” (ULBS portal Lucian Blaga University organization, 2020)
- Marketing commission (no extra information on the portal)
- Noted that a ULBS shop is also available, with branded souvenirs and materials

These universities have been selected to fit the same size and importance in each country, both Spain and Romania. Even if the number of students differs, if we take a look at the ranking of each of the two countries, the positions are very similar. The geographic and history of the region in education has also been taken into account.

Because the analyzed public universities from Spain are situated in Andalusia, and representative for the area, when selecting the universities from Romania the following process was conducted:

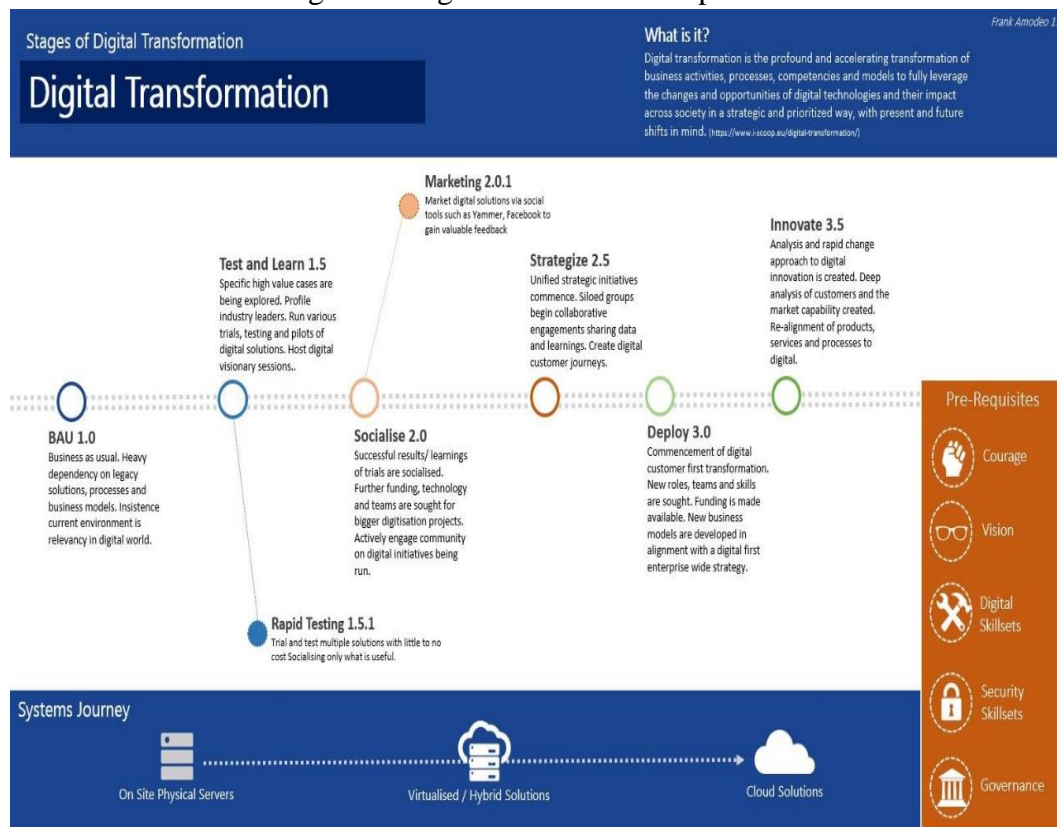
- Same geographical area in Romania, situated close by
- Area with a tradition in tourism and tourism related education programmes
- Important history
- Large number of students and of specializations, variety of programmes (master, MBAs and doctoral studies included)
- With tradition in communication and marketing activities

This is how Transylvania area stood out and in particular two universities, Lucian Blaga from Sibiu and Transilvania University from Brasov. There are also several other similarities, especially in the use of social media, similarities that stood out during the interviews. The universities are relevant to a comparison because of history, region, tradition and structure, but also because of the percentage of local and international students and this also has an impact upon the communication process and ways the message is transmitted.

2.4 New developments in the current context

Digital transformation is sustained and accompanied by the change of mentality, of culture and, even, of the very logic of the business. Change in processes, change in people and, of course, and change in the tools used to raise the foundations of a new vision of the company, and in our case the university. To better understand the process of digital transformation in communication, the article by Frank Amodeo from 2017 has a graph that depicts the new concepts of the elements and the stages already included in the mix 3 years ago.

Figure 4. Digital transformation process



Note. From “Stages of Digital transformation” by Frank Amodeo, 2017, Communication Innovation blog, (https://medium.com/@Frank_Amodeo/stages-of-digital-transformation-d3acc9ed2e56)

But digital transformation implies - apart from the use of technological tools or solutions - a change that is so profound and extensive that, in some cases, it forces departments and universities to redesign the way they communicate and the strategy of using social media tools. And that includes the transformation of operational and service models, the optimization of specific processes and the digitization of work environments and infrastructures that support operations such as communicating via social networks, making videos, posting photos, organizing digital workshops, online classes, promoting events via digital means.

That is a change, which, depending on the level from which it is split, can be disruptive and stressful. But the decision is simple when we think of the new generation of students and the means they use to inform themselves, which are mainly digital.

The future of universities is inevitably linked to the impact of the digital revolution. Not only when we think that now every university has courses online and online platforms (MOOC), but also when we think of social media, the area this thesis is focused on. Communication processes are deeply involved and need to keep pace with the digital area.

In regards to communication strategy, according to my understanding, the major lines and directions that apply to business apply to universities. It is true that universities deal with people at another level, being responsible for their training and learning experience, but to a certain point, in order to survive, they too have to comply with the rules of profitability, effectiveness and marketing.

Will try to part the communication process in the same way it is applied to a company, but to translate it to the educational process as a service.

1. Launch strategy

When you open your business for the first time, or you have a new product or service, or enter a new market. This can be translated to the universities' communication strategy as a new training program, a new master, PhD or scientific, investigation line or department.

2. Brand Visibility strategy

This applies to all universities, as they want to reach more people, be able to attract and retain talent, to grow and to have more students as well as a higher impact in research and development, thus a higher position in the world ranking for private and public universities. Reputation is highly important and I think that here public universities have invested and build a strong position on the market through brand and reputation. Something companies should take a look at and learn from.

What it needs to be added here and what the thesis proposes is to introduce here new methods and tools to increase the visibility, such as social media, influencers, online trending, not just to have a web page and post there. The options are multiple and this thesis sets to analyze the benefits of working with new methodology and new communication channels.

3. Positioning strategy

About values and relating to your brand so that the customers would position your company or university in front of the competition. It basically means what values to promote and have in order for the students to choose your programs and not others. This need increases as students are more flexible, more eager and willing to travel nowadays than in the past so it increases the competition.

4. Expansion strategy

Reaching new customers, new markets or expanding the range of services or products. This can also apply to universities, in the sense that they are also

looking to evolve, to grow, to attract talent maybe from other regions or countries, or to launch new areas and training programs. This is extremely important when we talk about being flexible, to adapt to the demands on the market. For instance, is there is a new area such as IT, new jobs being created the university should be able to reorient and open new program in emergent technologies for instance. We hear a lot about blockchain, data specialist and analysts, experts in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and universities should adapt to these changes and once they do to know how to promote and communicate that they have these on demand training programs and masters. A communication strategy in a public university should take into consideration all of these scenarios and have a plan for sharing the information in each one of these cases.

In regards to online communication strategy, we need to see each opportunity that we currently have and always keep an eye out for new technologies, new tools that we can use in order to reach out to more people, to better get to our target audience and to send the message accordingly.

To have a look at some of the online communication strategies, I have selected the ones I consider having a greater impact and that are useful for universities as well:

1. Design strategy - refers to the web, page, portal or application design if used. It is the digital image, our Brand reflected today, and it is where the target audience of universities goes for the first time to receive more information and to search.
2. SEO (Search Engine Optimization) strategy – refers to positioning in search engines (without paying for better positioning on Google)
3. SEM (Search Engine Marketing) strategy – better positioning via investing, paying for the service

4. Content marketing
5. Social media management
6. Social media publicity or marketing
7. Email marketing
8. Video marketing
9. Influencers
10. Storytelling

The most important direction in a communication strategy in social media lies in: Positioning, Notoriety, Monitoring, Channels and Analysis. It is important for the universities to integrate these concepts into the overall strategy to see the benefits. The research conducted via interviews has drawn attention to social media platforms, their use and the need to augment campaigns.

Table 6. Social media following for analyzed universities					
University	LinkedIn followers	Facebook followers	Instagram followers	Twitter followers	YouTube channel subscribers
Malaga University	94.903	34.761	17.900	119.416	1.420
Seville University	182.341	86.800	27.700	126.600	4.670
Transilvania University Brasov	2,539 English company page or 6,695 Romanian company profile	36,102	2,765	77	380
Lucian Blaga University	16.321	4.049	-	783	196

Note. Data compiled from social media pages of each university, on 18th of March 2020

As we saw the importance of social media, analyzing number of followers and subscribers is a definite input on the accent that each university is putting on each platform, impact they have in the community. Taking a look at the overall data we can easily see that there is a close connection with the total number of students and followers. The bigger the university, the more students they have, it translates immediately into more followers. In the case of Malaga University there is something that draws the attention, number of Twitter followers that is not only higher than the rest of platforms, but almost equal in comparison with Seville university that also has more students.

What has happened is that Malaga University uses its resources to communicate more on Twitter, to post often and to attract followers by using photos and not only for students, information that can attract more interaction in general. It could be a good idea to extrapolate the successful strategy they are applying on Twitter for other social media platforms, especially for the YouTube channel and create more video content. Now it is quite easy to do, you can use the phone as the performance and apps for video editing at easy to use and apply.

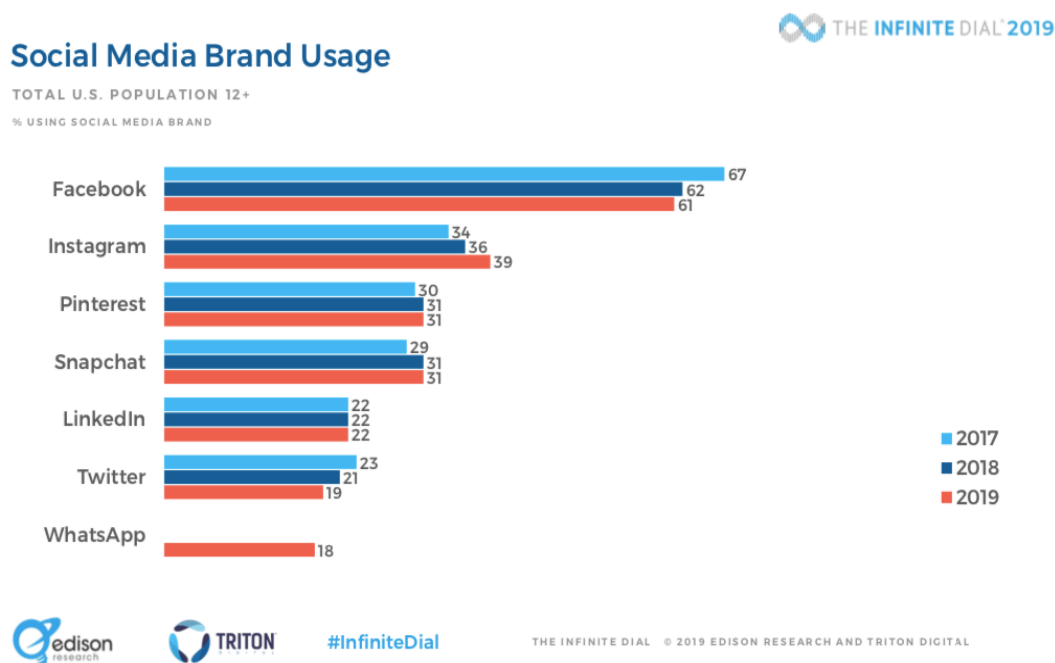
In the case of the 2 Romanian universities, it is clear that even if they have a YouTube Channel, the content they share is scarce, thus the few subscribers. The number of views for the last video posted is of over 200-250 viewers but then if any other video content is not uploaded to keep the viewers active and engaged, the number of subscribers will not increase. In the case of Transilvania University the Channel has been recently created, first post of the 5 uploaded being of only 5-month-old. The lockdown has caused a move to video content in this case.

This is some data that we can certainly analyze a bit more, to understand where the universities are going to when sharing and communicating online. The trend is similar in each one of the cases in the sense that the go to pages are LinkedIn

and Twitter, which are also seen as more professional. Cadiz and Malaga University have both more followers on Twitter however and less on LinkedIn, for the Seville University the opposite being true. But the tendency to use less Facebook, Instagram and YouTube is also general.

I think that the power of sharing more video content is something underused in all the studied cases. We see more and more videos being shared, the newer generation is more influenced and in search of more content online and I think it is something that universities should use in their favor. Also, the use of Instagram and YouTube channels has increased in the past years as we can see from the following graphics:

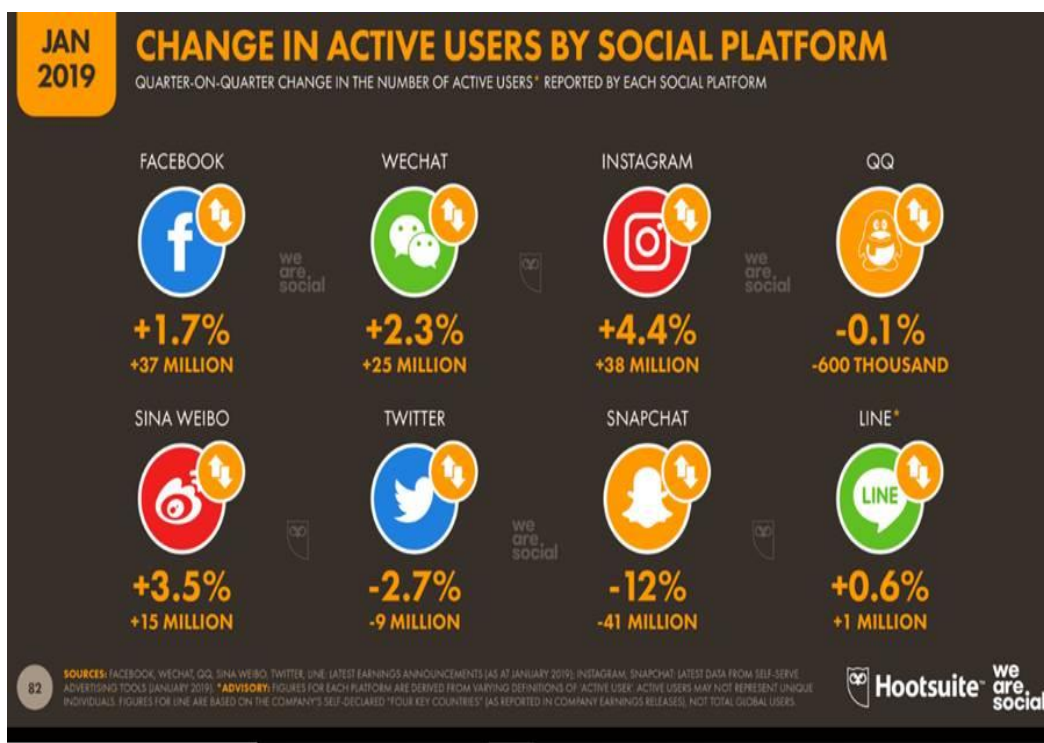
Figure 5. Social media brand usage between 2017-2019



Note. From “Key findings from the infinite dial 2019 report” by Content 10x, 2019, article from episode 85 podcast (<https://www.content10x.com/key-findings-from-the-infinite-dial-2019-report/>).

The digital data report for 2019 made my Hootsuite shows in more detail interesting details that draws the conclusion the social media platform has more and more users each month, thus the importance of posting more and being present. Twitter is one of the platforms that has lost a bit over the past year, so it should be reflected in the communication strategy of the universities. Recommending increasing number of posts and participation on other social media platform. A change in active users by social platform is represented in the figure below:

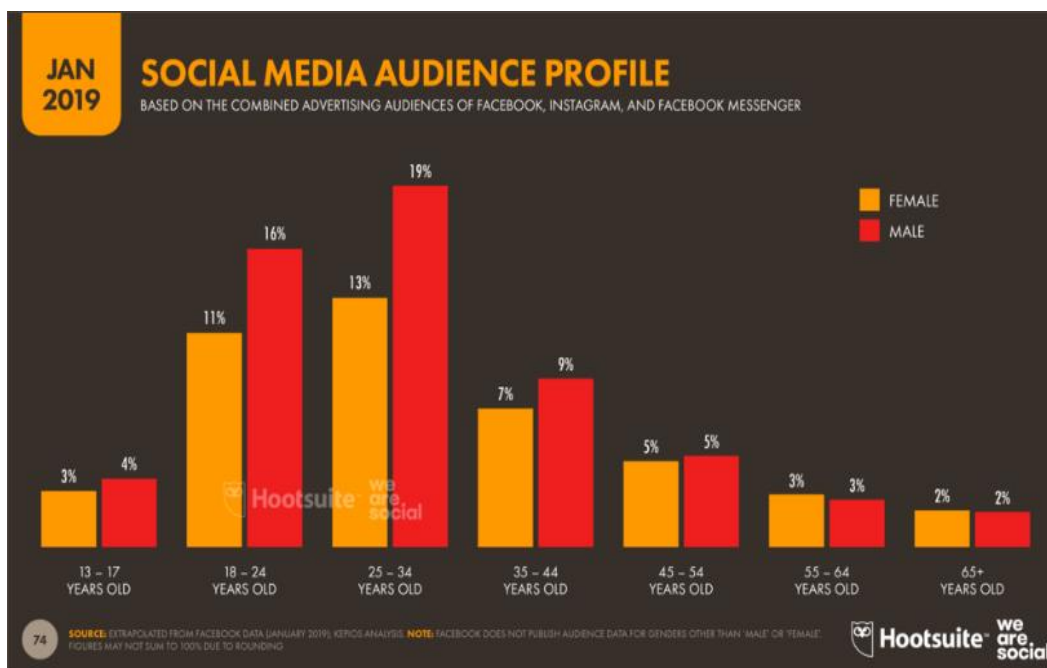
Figure 6. Change in active users by social platform



Note. From “The digital data report for 2019”, by Simon Kemp for Hootsuite, 2019, Hootsuite We are social webpage (<https://blog.hootsuite.com/simon-kemp-social-media/>)

The same study reflects the age frame for most active social media users, which is exactly the age when they start university, thus the importance for universities to act now and to focus their attention on new trends in social media:

Figure 7. Social media audience profile



Note. From “The digital data report for 2019”, by Simon Kemp for Hootsuite, 2019, Hootsuite We are social webpage (<https://blog.hootsuite.com/simon-kemp-social-media/>)

An interesting conclusion upon the use of social media sites, especially Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn upon universities in Portugal in 2020 has been conducted by Amaral and Correia Santos:

This study shows the centrality of Facebook in the communication strategies of HEI. The number of followers on Facebook and LinkedIn substantially increases network value. The results allow concluding that universities with fewer students

can create network value through Facebook and LinkedIn as long as they have a high publication frequency.

A consistent presence in the different platforms enables increasing visibility of the brand. However, presence on all platforms is not synonymous with visibility. The results suggest that presence needs to be consistent with activity so that there can be higher visibility.

Concerning content, the frequency of publication suggests that higher activity is related to higher visibility of the brand. The most common publications have images (posts with photos and videos = 57.84%), following studies that demonstrate that the image mobilises more interactivity and generates more visibility.

HEI with more visibility can be those with a number of fans consistent with the level of 'applause'. However, not all HEI with higher activity have more fans or 'applause'. (Amaral and Correia Santos, 2020).

This extensive study shows the direct relation between number of publications, number of followers on social media and the brand awareness and value.

Speaking about branding and brand value, some universal tactics that should be employed are stated by Black in 2008. He describes each point, each tactic:

1. Seek to understand constituent needs is the first one. The author includes here surveys, focus groups, observations, a review of historical data, all of which are used to collect information for pattern matching of constituent behaviours and understandings that reflect their needs of the institution.
2. Identify market segments that are highly valued by the institution is the second one. This helps define the characteristics of each segment, including motivators and barriers, all to support the university to reach its objectives.

3. Determine which brand attributes will remove or lessen identified barriers and exploit motivators is the third one. In this case, the author recommends considering the market segment of out-of-state prospective students. Potential barriers may be distance from home or the perception that the school is a "suitcase campus", as the author calls it. And the motivators might include the reputation of a high-profile academic program, tuition reciprocity, or the desire to experience new places.
4. Use relevant brand attributes to effectively position the institution against would-be competitors is the fourth one. The questions an institution should ask according to the author are the following: What are your institutional strengths and competitor weaknesses associated with the needs of a particular market segment? How can you capture this niche and defend it against all who seek to encroach upon your market space?
5. Differentiate the institution from competitors through relevant communications is the fifth and final one. The advice here is to remain true to the corporate brand message, but while doing so to be able to also spin the marketing message in a way that differentiates your institution from competitors and that is also relevant to the targeted segment. The value of the proposition comes to play at this point and how the institution can describe how their unique needs will be met by them. The emphasis is on how the value proposition analyzed at this fifth point is different from direct competitors.

Beyond the tactics themselves, practical matters of implementation must be addressed as well. What communication channels will be most effective in delivering the message? Who will have the most influence over the targeted population and hence, should deliver the message? When will the message most likely influence decision-making? What resources and infrastructure are needed to ensure successful implementation? How will the quality of execution be

monitored? How will effectiveness of the brand promotional efforts be measured?
(Black, 2008)

If we analyse the situation in Spain, Garcia Garcia has conducted a research upon most used social media sites and the situation of social media in around universities:

A relevant question was to know which are the priority platforms for Spanish universities. Taking into account that the question invited the people contacted to rank the platforms (1 being the highest priority value in terms of presence), the lower the average reached, the more important the platform was for brand management.

Graph 1 shows that the most important platform for Spanish universities is Twitter, followed by Facebook and LinkedIn. The results confirm that Facebook and Twitter are the most used social networks, however it is surprising to find Twitter above Facebook since according to IAB data (2016, 2) users spend more than 4 hours a week using Facebook and a little more than 2 hours on Twitter (data that is maintained in 2017).

When asking about the objectives, it was intended to know what universities are looking for when communicating with their audiences through social media. The ranking of the responses indicates that the objective with a lower average (more times prioritized) is the recognition of the brand, followed by the commitment to the brand and word of mouth.

To foster ties between the brand and users, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) indicate that a brand can have different strategies: active, of interest to the visitor, modest, informal or honest. Spanish universities are more inclined to employ active strategies with up-to-date content and quick responses. But the strategies are not exclusive, they can be used simultaneously or even be different on each platform. The second most used strategy is honesty. Spanish universities seem to be aware of the need to be transparent on social media. This question is very relevant on the

Internet where society is increasingly critical of the behaviour of organizations that it observes through the Internet. (Garcia, Garcia, 2018)

One of the key factors when deciding whether a strategy is going to focus on digital or traditional is the audience. You need to know the interests of your audience, their influencers and the topics they consider most relevant. Obviously, if we are going to target a young audience, online actions will be protagonists, with social networks at the forefront. And in a crisis case you should always communicate through both channels, online and traditional.

During the Covid-19 crisis communication was key, especially to know which sources are reliable and what type of information is vital to share. And due to social distancing and all over the world lock downs, social media platforms and channels were the only solution. It has shifted the traditional way in which we communicate, it has changed the way we interact, the way we manage and look to new solutions to keep moving forward.

Companies are looking to keep connected with their customers and also to move to remote working so that they can better cope with the situation and keep moving forward with their projects and business. But for universities this means to move to online training and course entirely during the lockdown.

A good platform, interactive, with clear communication is of massive importance, so is the identity management and security of the users. Ways of integrating exams and evaluation online methods are also imperative as in Spain the decision was to end the school year of 2020 remotely. It is a time in which both companies and universities see the importance of online communication, remote working and digitalization. It is the only way. Communication departments from the analyzed universities have all posted on a daily basis the updates during the

crisis and lockdown, email the students and also used more frequently social media platforms.

What it could be a good idea is for universities to have a managed system option, infrastructure for remote support, chat box and helpdesk for the students and teachers that need help. The demand for helpdesk remote support has increased during March and April of 2020 with more than 30% or 40% according to major players on the market. (Data compiled and observed by the author while working with a B2B platform with more than 20.000 companies and 42 Chambers of Commerce when defining new strategies for SMEs) And it is an option that you externalize and benefit from on a long-term basis. It is a way in which you can stay close to you students and teachers, in which you can interact and better communicate.

In the current context of digital transformation and online marketing strategies depicted in the previous chapter, new developments have occurred. And SEO strategy take center stage for online marketing experts and is mandatory to be included in a successful campaign and communication process.

SEO is a marketing discipline focused on increasing the visibility of the results of organic (unpaid) search engines. SEO encompasses both the technical and creative elements needed to improve rankings, boost traffic and increase awareness in search engines. There are many aspects of SEO, from the words on your page to the way other sites link you to the web. Sometimes, SEO is simply a matter of making sure your site is structured so that the search engines understand it.

Figure 8. The SEO process



Note. From “San Antonio SEO” by Digital Sapiens Marketing, 2019, What we do (<https://digitalmarketingsapiens.com/what-we-do/search-engine-optimization-seo/>)

I see it extremely important to reach the subject of SEO before making a communication strategy because the question is not only to build a friendly website for search engines, it's about making it better for people too, and easier to find. Also, students need to interact well, understand and navigate easily through a page. They need to find important applications, to gain personalized access and to find what they are looking for fast. Otherwise, they will leave the page in less than 30 seconds. Universities can gain lots of benefits from using SEO for analyzing and update their webpages, blogs and social media pages.

Marcus Miller, in an article about the pillars of the SEO strategy, published in The Search Engine Land, gives us a great perspective about best practice and what to analyze in terms of effectiveness.

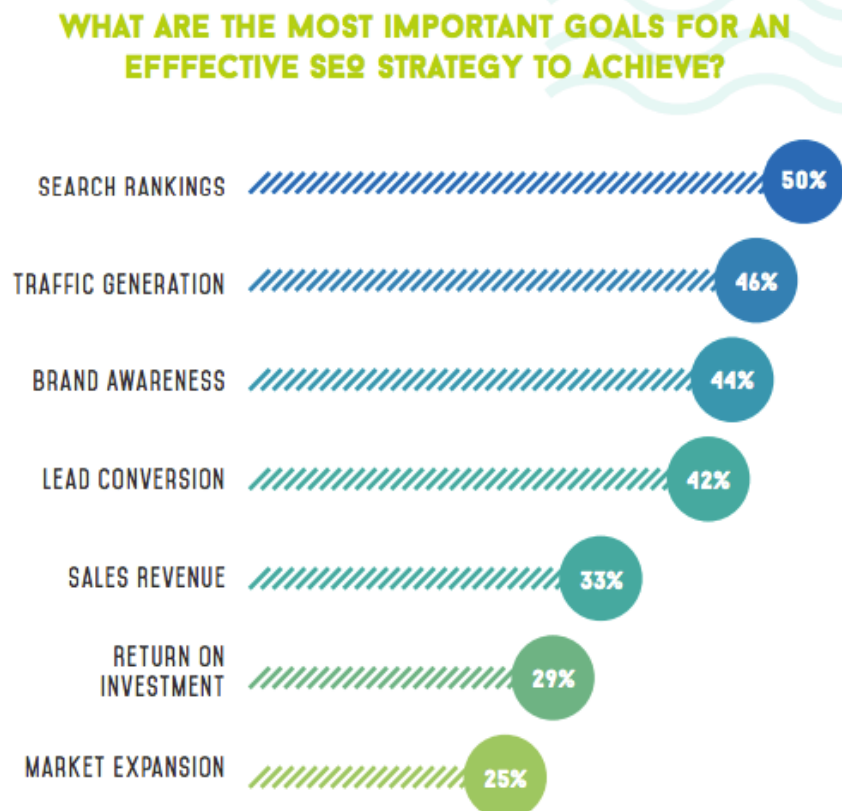
The four key areas of SEO that site owners need to consider are, according to the article, the following:

- technical SEO: Referring to how well your content can be crawled and indexed.
- content: The question of relevance to your audience and how you answer your customers' questions.
- on-site SEO: Meaning the optimization of all the content and HTML.
- off-site SEO: Meaning building authority to ensure Google stacks the deck in the favor of the website or portal.

“Of course, these four areas have some complexity and overlap, but understanding your strengths and weaknesses in relation to them is key to focusing your efforts.” (Marcus Miller, 2017)

So, what are the main objectives for the SEO strategy? Found this graph from 2019 that explains the main goals perfectly.

Figure 9. Goals for SEO strategy as seen by marketers



Note. From “Good to SEO analysis on main marketing companies in 2019 online” by Good to SEO, 2019, (<https://www.goodtoseo.com/what-are-the-most-important-goals-for-an-effective-b2b-seo-strategy/>)

III. Objectives and Methodology

3.1 Objectives

3.1.1 Main objectives:

Main objective: Explore how public universities are using new technologies and resources, such as social networks (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networking sites) and other communication channels on the web (YouTube), to communicate with the targeted public, here referring to students, potential new students and researchers.

General objectives:

O1: To discover which are the key factors when it comes to a successful marketing and communication campaign via social media in the superior public education system and how these processes are evaluated by the communication responsible of each analysed university.

O2: To examine the most relevant trends and practices of public universities' communication, from the specialists' working in the departments of communication point of view.

O3: Obtain results regarding which social media channels are more often used and how the results are evaluated.

O4: To see which audience, stakeholder is targeted by the studied universities and what are the lines of communication used.

O5: Discover the main problems facing communication and marketing communication campaigns in higher education in the analysed universities.

Specific objectives:

O6: Analyse the criteria each university from the study follows when they make the communication policy.

O7: To assess the use of digital media in the communication departments of public universities analysed.

O8: To determine what the marketing campaign in the analysed university aims for, what its general orientation is and, within it, what messages are given to digital media.

3.1.2 Hypothesis

H1: One of the key factors mentioned when it comes to a successful marketing and communication campaign via social media is related to defining goals in a clear manner, the clarity of the message.

H2: Among the most used practices of public universities' communication are the use of social media for student recruitment and as a tool to promote research and innovation.

H3: All of the analysed universities have their own web page. The top three social media channels used are the university's webpage, Facebook page and Twitter.

H4: The audience targeted by the majority of the analysed universities is formed by the new students (ages between 16 and 24 years old).

H5: One of the major pain-points for the universities included in the study is finding a way to efficiently streamline their social efforts throughout all the campus, faculties.

H6: One of the most mentioned criteria in the conducted interviews is to implement strategies and tactics that support the main goal, helping to achieve that goal.

H7: Among the most important tools of digital media used in the communication departments is the university/institution website.

H8: One of the most stated objectives of the marketing campaigns (from the total) is aiming for attracting new students.

3.2 Methodology of the qualitative analysis and digital ethnography

3.2.1 Method and participant selection

Interview (face to face and online interview) – **qualitative research**

There are more types of interview techniques, e-mail interview, messenger interview, telephone interview, online platform interview and face to face interview.

Participants: Participants were selected according to criteria that guaranteed their homogeneity based on one variable: working in the field of communication and/or public relations within the public universities included in the study.

Interviewees: people working in the field of communication and/or public relations within the public universities included in the study, selected from both parts of the communication department.

The profile of the interviewee was intended to be similar for all the universities analysed. In order to obtain pertinent answers to all the questions in the interview, the interviewees had to be managing the communication and marketing processes, not only participate in the actions. All the people interviewed had the highest directive position inside the communication or marketing and communication departments of each university, and also teaching inside the same university.

They have been selected via the position held inside the university, but also at the recommendation of other teachers, involved in communication and marketing, deans of faculties or past directives of the same department. So, questions around strategy, decision making, funding, coordination of human resources have been included in the interview.

Interviewers: 1 person (moderator).

Number of participants: 1 per interview. It was guaranteed that each of them had sufficient time for the expression of their comments. All interventions were recorded for further analysis.

Selected universities: Malaga University, Seville University, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Transilvania University of Brasov.

It is necessary for the researcher to prepare before the actual interview. The interview starts before the interview actually begins. This is the researcher's preparation stage.

Once the interview is conducted the researcher needs to make sure that the respondents have:

- A clear idea of why they have been asked;
- Basic information about the purpose of the interview and the research project of which it is a part;
- Some idea of the probable length of the interview and that you would like to record it (explaining why);
- A clear idea of precisely where and when the interview will take place. (Bhamani Kajornboon, 2017)

The reasons for choosing to use the interview:

- a high response rate;
- the continuous and dynamic interaction that leads to stimulating ideas and their corresponding responses;

- allows the confrontation of experiences and opinions and sharing of personal views and knowledge of the interviewee;
- it allows to obtain a more detailed information, a more in-depth point of view upon the subject;
- it allows the use of more detailed questions;
- dismisses the influence that other people or opinions of other people may have upon the answers given;
- no predetermined durations, the interview length can be considerably longer than other methods;
- the option to ask for explanations to the answers received;
- the possibility of clarifying any problems or unclear questions along the interview. (Steinar Kvale, 1996) (Irving Seidman, 2015) (Kathryn Roulston, 2010)

Characteristics of the face-to-face or online interview:

- Participants come from the same background, and are specialist in communication and PR in public universities;
- Participants are selected according to criteria that guarantee homogeneity, mentioned at the beginning;
- The interviewer asks each selected interviewee the same series of questions;
- The interviewer creates and establishes with specialist in the field the questions prior to the interview;
- The order of the questions, phrasing is kept consistent from one interview to another;
- The interviewer must play a neutral role and not insert his or her own perceptions or suggest answers.

The benefits and use of online interviews with video have been researched since years ago. Especially now, with lockdowns and mobility restrictions, having the option to organize face to face interviews using apps has helped a lot in the research. Debenham, M. (2007) in her research paper “Epistolary Interviews On-Line: A Novel Addition to the Researcher’s Palette” presents it as something new and game changing:

In summary, the findings suggest that epistolary interviews on-line may be considered suitable for in-depth interviews in the following cases:

- where participants live/work in locations that are at long distances from the researcher, whether within the same country or internationally;
- where participants have access to computers and an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and are already reasonably experienced users of e-mail;
- where participants (be they interviewees or researcher) have various disabilities and/or long-term health conditions, for the reasons discussed earlier.

In the context of research interviews generally this method provides a useful additional tool to the researcher’s palette.” (Debenham, 2007)

In today’s context, the problem of teachers and students not having access to internet and a computer almost disappeared when we think of the analysed areas within the European Union. And people are used to working remotely now, it is a change in the working environment that is here to stay. So, no issues have been encountered when organizing and having the interviews online.

Reading more recent research in terms of media communication and the use of new apps such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype or recently Signal prove that we are more and more accustomed and inclined to its use and dependent on them to communicate and do our jobs. Kaufmann, K., & Peil, C. (2019) in their

paper “The mobile instant messaging interview (MIMI): Using WhatsApp to enhance self-reporting and explore media usage in situ” state the following:

When the MIMI is preceded by a qualitative interview, the survey phase could be thoroughly prepared, for example by explaining the scope of research to the participants or by preestablishing a trusting relationship with them; whereas, when applied in the run-up to a guided interview, the MIMI could generate valuable stimuli for a later elicitation and reflection process. In conjunction with observations, MIMIs seem apt to deliver relevant context information and to establish frames of reference. Also, in line with ethnographic approaches, a key aspect is the small number of participants implied by the MIMI. As WhatsApp chats are not automated, but attention-demanding, real-time interactions, MIMIs are not appropriate for larger samples. (Kaufmann and Peil, 2019)

In this thesis, MIMI was used before the qualitative interview done also online, so that the objective could be previously stated, all the details and scheduling of the interview could be done correctly and for a brief introduction between the parties. It was also in line with a small sample and determined fast responses and easy access to scheduling and calendar apps so that interviews could be easily notified and established.

3.2.2 The interview guide

Introduction

1. Presentation of the interviewer
2. Explain the essence of the research method, the topic and objective and mention that the interview will be recorded
3. Starting to ask the predetermined questions and keep a neutral, yet friendly and communication-encouraging attitude
4. Presentations by the participant:
 - Surname and name

- Location
- University name and position occupied
- Number of years working in the field

Objective: to analyse the communication and PR processes in the selected public universities, from the people who work there point of views, the peculiarities and effectiveness of the marketing process regarding the use of new technologies in the communication strategies and ways to improve it.

3.2.2.1 Block I - Introductory Questions

1. What do you think are the main problems facing communication and marketing communication campaigns in higher education in Spain/Romania (according to the country the interviewee is from and activates)?

2. Are the new ways of communication (internet, social media) truly effective when it comes to superior public education? Can you give examples of effective ones used in your university?

3.2.2.2 Block II - the communication policy of the analysed university

1. What criteria do you follow and what are the reasons for these criteria?

2. What are the target audiences and what are the lines of communication for each audience?

3. Do you have some type of manual or communication plan that defines the strategies at your university?

4. When it comes to the generation of content for social networks, the interaction between political positions and technical positions are in accordance or do they differ?

5. Does your university subcontract services (such as advertising campaigns, media plans, etc.)? If yes, which ones?

3.2.2.3 Block III – Assessing the use of digital media in the communication departments of public universities analysed

1. What are the digital media channels used by your university and which type of messages (website, app, social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, mobile messages) do you use for each selected channel?
2. Can you please make a description of the digital media landscape you mentioned, developing for what purpose, what messages and for which public, each digital medial channel is used?
3. From your knowledge, what routes do students from your university use (social networks, social media) when they search information about a certain university or about the one, they are currently studying in?
4. Do you use any measurement instrument to evaluate the effectiveness and the feedback from the students? If so, which one/s and with which results?
5. Related to the persons in charge of the digital management and their training, most of them are specialist, scholars or interns?
6. Do you use SEO or have a SEO consultant or company?
7. If the answer is yes, how do you measure the success of your SEO campaigns and do you consider these practices to be important in the overall communication strategy?
8. If the answer is yes, what are some of the strategies and tactics you have seen working well recently for your university?
9. If the answer is no, do you consider that SEO campaigns are important in a communication campaign and strategy? Have you analyzed it's potential benefits or inconvenient?
10. If the answer is no, what was the reason that led to not using SEO?

3.2.2.4 Block IV – creating a marketing campaign in public universities and ways to assess its success

1. Can you please tell me what the marketing campaign in your university aims for, what its general orientation is, and within it, what messages are given to digital media?

2. Which are the key factors when it comes to a successful marketing and communication campaign via social media in your universities, according to your personal experience and results?

3. How are these processes evaluated by the communication responsible from your university? Would you change the assessment process, introduce something else? If yes, what?

IV. Study and results: Analysis of the use of new technologies in marketing strategies, communication and Public Relations processes in public universities in Spain and Romania

4.1 Communication using the new technologies in public universities: the process, barriers and improvement

When it comes to new technologies and their use in communication, we mainly think of social media. It is more than that and we have seen, throughout the first chapters, that it takes more to implement and introduce new tech and to digitally transform the communication and marketing departments in the education sector. But what are the new tech, tendencies and the online response to these? And which are the ones used mostly by universities and why it is important to introduce questions about them and address them to communication directives from the analysed universities?

We talked previously about SEO (Search engine optimization) as a strategy and its uses. Let's see some of the key factors for this strategy and what it needs to include so that it can work and provide the departments with advantages.

Some key factors when it comes to set a strategy based on SEO:

- Keywords: keywords become very important when you want students to search and encounter your academic offers, your study programs. Mainly you can research the market, use google analytics and see what your current user is searching for, make a list of words and then compare them to the most searched word on the internet in the past months. It is starting point and a great resource

base for then adapting the texts in the university's webpage, blog, online marketing campaign.

- Content: Adapt the content of your media communication process to the main keywords encountered and to the message you want to transmit to your students
- Evaluate the current search ranking: Necessary tools available online that can tell you your university's current ranking regarding a certain keyword and/or in comparison with another study program of university
- Analyze the speed of your site: It is an important factor in Google rankings, and you can find a lot of free online tools to help you with the results (<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/feature/testmysite/>, <https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed>, <https://tools.pingdom.com>)
- Analysis: Important to have a clear image of your audience and of the message you want to transmit. Use all the tools you have in order to find out all that you can about your users, students, needs and implement them into your website design, online campaign, blog, and other messages you want to transmit.
- Social media: The construction of the final message and distributing it online is what gathers all the above. Use a different message, be innovative, use hashtags and center on what makes your university program different, what benefits it can bring, what skills it can develop.

It is interesting to see if SEO is used in the communication departments of the analyzed universities and if so, to what extent. Are the strategic decision and the messages posted online based on these processes? The interviews conducted are trying to answer these questions and also to bring some light upon the importance of SEO in the eyes of the communication and marketing department directives.

Apart from this, the use of social media platforms and tools has increased drastically and a focus on online teaching and communication is long overdue.

Maybe due to the COVID-19 crisis or maybe the crisis helped speed up a bit the digitalization process, but in 2020 we definitely seen and experienced first-hand, a shift towards online learning, which implies online communication. And at all levels this time. A need of digital platforms and portals arises, one connected and able to communicate and use data with the web page, social media pages and all on premises and cloud applications. It is difficult, implies extra care and increased security for so many remote users. A whole IT system has to support now the marketing and communication department and give them the adequate tools to achieve their objective and give them access to all the data that now they can access and use to improve their campaigns.

Nuere, S., de Miguel, L. (2020) make some important remarks and evaluate the online teaching process and its effects upon communication:

To sum up, if the different steps carried out to teach online are analysed, the following points can be concluded:

- Universities that are used to online teaching have minimal problems to continue working.
- For the one that does not have good resources to teach online, it is maybe compulsory to think about getting a good online platform for unforeseen circumstances.
- Tools available for the teaching–learning process must be learned by teachers and students in record time.
- Maybe due to the situation, in every house there is only a computer and several members of a family. They maybe have to share the computer as the parents are teleworking, and maybe a brother also needs it.
- The different characteristics that are taught are not considered (artistic drawing, chemistry, physics or electronics laboratories).
- WIFI connections can be weak.

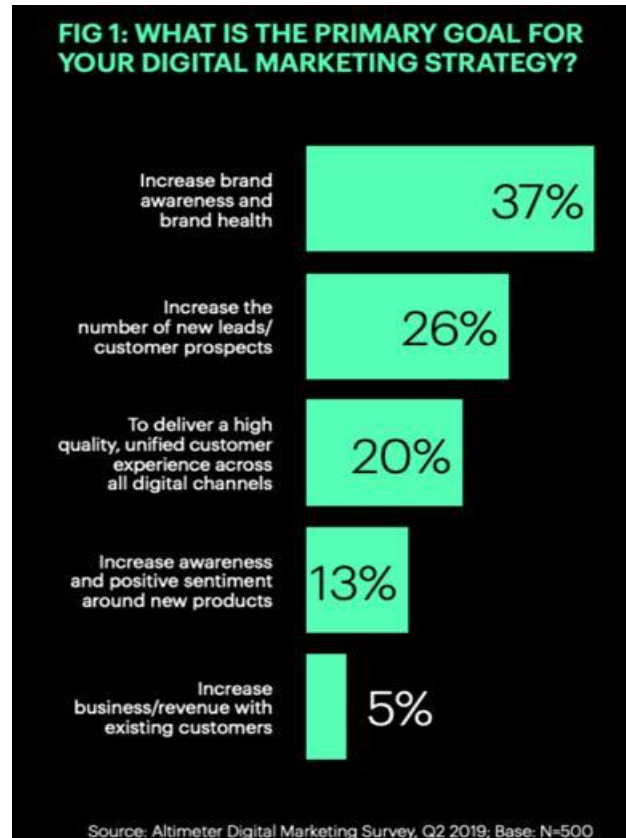
- For the subject “Artistic Drawing”, you realize that previous class work has increased more than double. For example, it is not the same telling a student what has to be corrected while they are drawing, than writing one by one (52 students) each personal comment. Also, when you are teaching while drawing on the blackboard, you do it live. For this kind of teaching, you need a specific support to your camera to draw and record everything, at once.

We have analysed the different reactions carried out by two universities, one used to teach online and the other with no experience in it. Maybe we can sum up that the use of teaching technologies is essential for an online learning process. Although a University is not prepared for the new technologies of online teaching, should it investigate and invest in tools that facilitate this modality? (Nuere and de Miguel, 2020)

A valid question has been raised in this study, a question that this thesis also tries to answer from the angle of the communication and marketing departments. Here, in my opinion, there is a slight advantage in the sense that innovative and online tools have been used previously and social media and data bases and online campaigns have become a more present and used part of the overall strategy used by public universities as well.

Let’s take a look at the following image, a recent study done upon the goal of digital marketing campaigns.

Figure 10. The primary goal for digital marketing strategy



Note. From “37% of marketers say top priority this year is brand awareness” by Smart insights expert commentator, 2019, Smart insights (<https://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-strategy/marketers-top-priority-brand-awareness/>)

Brand awareness is first place, even before generating new leads. I think this is an important take for universities as well. Brand awareness and customer satisfaction is reflected the most in generating leads, new students. So, the message should be adapted accordingly. To be able to this is more accessible now via social media marketing.

“In the U.S. alone, 77% of people have some type of social media account and globally, there are over 3.7 billion social media users. This is why social media marketing is a popular trend that's become a part of almost every business's greater marketing strategy. Social media marketing allows you to authentically connect with your audience on a personal level, humanizing your brand.” (Allie Decker, 2020)

What is particularly exciting about the 2020 digital marketing trends is that the innovations and developments are not evolving in isolation from each other, but can be considered in terms of an all-encompassing marketing approach. Whether influencer marketing and shoppable posts or personalization and conversational marketing: the large overlaps between the individual areas mean that companies can come up with innovative and broad-based marketing concepts for greater brand awareness, more precise positioning and measurably greater commercial success. (Daniel Dodt, 2019)

Because we speak about the communication and marketing department, or the department that is in charge of the communication process for each analyzed university, a study about the communication process in Spain and its main functionalities, has been conducted by Simancas-González, E., and García-López, M. in 2019:

Finally, on the communication department or service itself, and reflecting from a democratic and participatory conception of university communication, we would be talking about a body in charge of coordinating communication, rather than managing it, because its main task would become that of act as a facilitator and coordinator of processes and spaces for dialogue and participation and, therefore, the role that its members would exercise would be that of cultural mediators, because it is not that this body monopolizes relations with the different agents.

Specifically, we could define it as a permanent space for information, training and listening, from which contact, encounter and cooperation between the different social agents that make up the university, from within and from without, are promoted.

Among its tasks would be the coordination and moderation of open, inclusive and horizontal communication channels and tools, as well as the creation and dissemination of accessible and interesting content, related to the activity that (is) generated in the university. However, these actions would not be enough if we are talking about transversality and joint responsibility of communication; Its main functions include the following:

- Sensitize the university community about the role of communication in the institution.
- Identify the competences and needs of the different groups to contribute to their involvement in communication.
- Channel, evaluate and support communication projects and actions of university members.
- Promote, facilitate and stimulate the development of cultural processes, meeting channels, participatory communication initiatives and the creation of networks, so that both the university community and external social agents can dialogue, intervene and identify common links that move them to action.
- Advise, support and coordinate, in collaboration with the representative bodies of the university community and citizens, the different commissions, as well as communication links and working groups. (Simancas-González and García-López, 2019)

But the difference between public and private universities in terms of funding and innovative tools integrated and the digitalization process is still visible and it was stated by all the directives interviewed, as we will see from the analysis at the following point. The funding part and lack of funding not only for tools and tech, but also for creating and bringing teams of experts in the field or for

outsourcing this type of services has also been a subject of interest when conducting the interviews.

I strongly believe that learning the necessities of public universities and of the communication and marketing departments in terms of funding and expertise needed is the key to solve some of the major problems regarding digitalization, retaining and gaining more students and an overall improvement in brand visibility.

A comparison between public Romanian and Spanish universities has also been conducted, so that, from the interviews, we can see if there are differences between funding strategies in different countries, even they are both members of the EU and follow similar directives and strategies in education. There is a major problem in access to tech also, and remote user's security, problem which arise during a global crisis, the situation that we are experiencing at the moment.

A new tool is e-learning platforms, the majority of universities use it already, some have created online programs and online courses for students to access all around the globe, some have made it even further by centring entire programs online so that they can add more students and respond to the necessities of students to learn in the conform of their home and at their own pace. The pandemic moved this to imperative, as all the educational system in Romania is online and due to be made online at least until February 2021 and in Spain it depends on each Autonomous community and the number of new cases and situation. But for international students, it is also a must.

An article published in the IT chronicles by Terry Brown, right during the first major lockdown in spring 2020, analysed the advantages of different tech in different industries and sectors. Here is what they had to say about education:

Melding database technology with communications and interactive programming techniques, ICT facilitates electronic learning or eLearning. Here, students from all walks of life can enjoy a self-paced education in subject areas limited only by the imaginations of the course creators.

eLearning platforms like Coursera and Lectora, for example, enable individuals and organizations to partake in vocational or special interest training courses combining formal instruction, quizzes, practical exercises, research, and interactive multimedia elements, all conducted in the learner's own time, and at their own pace.....

..... concepts like the Massive Open Online Course or MOOC are bringing educational opportunities to candidates who might otherwise miss out. Many of the courses on offer originate from some of the most prestigious institutions of learning on the planet.

For schools and colleges, Information and Communication Technology provides students with engaging, interactive, and self-paced methods of learning which increase their independence and involvement in the learning process, while also increasing their levels of digital sophistication and computer literacy. ICT-powered learning projects enable teachers and instructors to contribute their own input while continuously analyzing and monitoring the progress of their students. (Brown, 2020)

An overview upon studies conducted regarding the effects of the COVID Crisis and the use of social media in Spanish universities, brought to attention some important result upon Twitter:

- As for the use of Twitter by the universities studied, this has been varied, and although some have not made full use of this tool, others have promptly reported on the teaching of the new course.
- The use of the social network Twitter during the months of August, September and October 2020 has oscillated between 71 tweets and 452.
- There is no relationship between the number of tweets and COVID-19 content management. That is to say, not by having published a higher number of tweets,

the university has reported more or better about the pandemic. -The month in which the most content was generated was October, while August was the month with the least number of publications. Regarding the publications related to COVID-19, the month in which they have been published in the greatest number has been the month of September.

- The contents have been varied, although the most popular have been the adaptation to teaching and the guidelines for action and hygiene. The universities that have reflected the most variety in their contents have been the Francisco de Vitoria University, the Comillas Pontifical University and the Granada University, while less COVID-19 content has been generated by the Polytechnic University of Madrid and the Carlos III University.
- The average content about COVID-19 in the social network Twitter of the universities analyzed during the months of August, September and October is 17% The Autonomous University of Madrid being the one with the most related content being the pandemic created (35% of the total) and the Polytechnic University of Madrid the one that least (4%).” (Sanromán, 2020)

To add to this, the use software and digital tools in universities is also to automate tasks, including research, library management, and general documentation, reducing costs, gaining information that is easy to access and use and communicate faster and more efficiently with everyone who has online access. Which is the tendency across all sector.

This was the flame that ignited the research and the questions included in the questionnaire, to see the use of these new technologies and how it affects the communication process. Also, to see the response from the directives of the departments, if they value all this as resources, where they fit in in their strategy and if they have know-how around it or people equipped for the task.

4.2 SWOT analysis of the superior education department of communication in the mark of digital transformation in Spain and Romania

Education in general, as in many other areas (social, technological, economic, etc.), are in a moment of constant change and adaptation. I set to analyze the impact of these changes, to see the impact of the both internal and external environment of universities and how it affects the communication process.

To set the space for the interpretation of the interviews I did a SWOT analysis, in the mark of digital transformation, of the communication department inside public universities included in the research. Both environments have been analyzed for the Romanian and Spanish universities. Although it is an analysis technique designed especially for the business world, it can be very useful for the topic that concerns us today.

In particular, for those responsible for centers, departments or work teams inside universities, directives whom are included in the study, in order to carry out an analysis of their current situation and design an action plan on which strategic decisions will be made.

Diagnosis of the university center means doing two types of analysis, as stated below:

- Internal Analysis (Weaknesses / Strengths)
- External Analysis (Threats / Opportunities)

The preparation of the SWOT Matrix is then the next step, which leads to determination of the strategy to be used and eventually, the decision-making process (different strategies can emerge, or they can also be combined, such as consolidate strengths, minimize weak points, etc.).

Ingrid Mosquera Gende in her article published with UNIR in 2018, she analyzed the use of SWOT in education, the questions to follow and the resulted strategy after using the method.

Once a SWOT has been created, the author states the necessity to find the necessary strategies to be able to cope with and overcome weaknesses, face or avoid threats, take advantage of opportunities and be aware of the strengths to try exploit, share or promote them. There are usually four basic types of strategies that then emerge, as the same author points out, similar to other authors and experts in the field.

Defensive: using strengths to counter threats.

Offensive: focus on the positive aspects to move forward, through the strengths and opportunities.

Reorientation: taking advantage of opportunities in order to overcome the weaknesses detected inside the matrix.

Survival: looking for ways to overcome weaknesses and threats. (Mosquera Gende, 2018)

Let us take a look at the analysis for the Spanish universities and then compare it with the Romanian SWOT table.

It will allow us to answer, among many others, questions such as the following:

- How can we improve the communication and marketing strategy?
- Are there financing problems?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses as a communication center?

- How does the evolution of digital transformation affect the departments?
- Are there technological changes that affect us?
- Does the environment help or harms the department?
- What factors hinder the achievement of the objectives?

Table 7. SWOT analysis of the superior education department of communication in the mark of digital transformation, in Spain

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researchers and research centers already implemented in the university system - Collaborative nature of the communication department with other departments, with other universities, enterprises and other entities - Access to information - Powerful brand value and online tools implemented (such as webpage, portal, blog, presence on social media) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governance model, paperwork and long implementation process - High resistance to change - Lack of funding for new technologies
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use digital technology to direct innovation and bring new value to business model - companies in search for partnerships with universities - Easy access to information via social media and internet - Free promotion via social networks - New ways of online communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New competitors - Intermediate companies and consultant firms - Fast change in technologies and new ways of communication - Change in mentality of students that need fast information access and user-friendly sites, applications and portals - Global crisis - Switch to remote users' access

Note. Analysis of the external and internal environment made by the author

Although the realization of a SWOT analysis of the Spanish public universities in the context of digitalization may be a priori, very subjective, if applied correctly, it is a very useful strategic thinking tool that can set a base for the analysis of the results from the interviews. We can see that there are significantly more strengths than weaknesses and the opportunities and threats are levelled. This shows that a strategy focused on strengths and preparedness to be more flexible to change and take advantage of the opportunities is indicated.

In the further analysis with the same tool but applied upon Romanian public universities, a large number of similarities emerged. Especially related to the external environment, as we can see below:

Table 8. SWOT analysis of the superior education department of communication in the mark of digital transformation, in Romania	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researchers and research centers already implemented in the university system - Collaborative nature of the communication department with other departments, with other universities, enterprises and other entities - Access to information - Local brand value and a significant number of online tools implemented (such as webpage, blog, presence on social media) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governance model, paperwork and long implementation process - High resistance to change - Long implementation and digitalization process and lack of new features for web page and portal - Lack of funding for new technology and specialist in the field
Opportunities	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New competitors

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use digital technology to direct innovation and bring new value to business model - companies in search for partnerships with universities - Easy access to information via social media and internet - Free promotion via social networks - New ways of online communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intermediate companies and consultant firms - Global crisis - Fast change in technologies and new ways of communication - Change in mentality of students that need fast information access and user-friendly sites, applications and portals - Switch to remote users' access
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Note. Analysis of the external and internal environment made by the author

Taking in consideration the SWOT analysis above we can state that the strategy should focus on fast adaptation to change and incorporation of technologies into the communication department of a university. Not only a fast adaptation, but also a strategic and appropriate one. This is where analyzing information comes in handy. We can state that information is key. Learn to listen and embrace change.

The website, the portal, the blog, all that appears in social media must reflect:

- what educational offers the university has
- in which areas, domains and programs the university is a specialist in
- the relationship with students, teachers, employees and partners
- interest in new technologies and continuous innovation
- easy to contact, obtain information and have a clear and simple registration process that can be done online

Main benefits of having an online communication strategy:

- better visibility of the university (also abroad)
- increase the number of research projects and collaborations with companies
- growth in registration number
- brand consolidation

4.3 Investigation results overview: the importance of asking the right questions

User experience is key because it can give future students the possibility to see beforehand the system, they are going to be involved in. In my research I tried to ask the right questions to managers of the communication department in order to see if they realize the importance of the user experience and if so, what are they doing in order to improve their techniques and platforms.

The majority of the answers were related to new campaign in social media, the use of different platform to engage the student to interact with the university, to share information, opinions, to participate in the university's actions and events, research projects, to read and comment on articles and on posts in general.

This is the positive point that resulted from the interviews. The intention is there, some steps are being taken. Maybe it just needs to be more adaptive in the sense that more posts mean more interaction, more events and more online activity means more implication from the students and also access to more visibility.

For research and development projects, for published articles and for campaigns this is extremely important. Traditional marketing methods are losing value for the younger generation and attention should be oriented on sharing on social media, on knowing how to tell a story, an accomplishment, how to promote it to gain more visibility. This is where the importance of SEO strategy and online marketing strategy comes to play.

The majority of the interviewed managers have knowledge of SEO, but they do not have the resources to apply it. Financial resources and human resources as well. Only few of them have access to funding for their campaigns or work with agencies.

All departments however have at least one person that is in charge of posting and using social media. Maybe a solution would be to have interns passionate about social media, online marketing, programming and ask for their involvement in the university's departments as well. Maybe that experience and involvement can lead to a better view upon the campaigns and bring a fresh insight upon the newest marketing methods and design that appeal to students.

This can also contribute to a better branding campaign for further implication of students in the university's strategies and we know already that the younger generation loves to be involved to be asked of their opinion on things and to be able to have more practice time.

All universities have a communication plan, objectives but maybe it is time to take another step and to integrate a separate planning for social media and for the active implication of its students. Ideas are free but knowing how to make use of them that is an art and this can be the determinative point for universities to achieve competitive advantage. There is no better marketer than your own student.

The development of video content and the use of influencers have become norms in the communication industry.

4.3.1 Results from the interviews

The interpretation of the interviews has implied a qualitative analysis and a narrative approach, which involves making sense of the individual stories that each

communication director provided. I used the transcripts and recordings of each interview to highlight important aspects of their stories that will best resonate with the situation of each analysed university and with the objectives of the research. Also, critical points that I have found in other areas of my research are being highlighted.

4.3.1.1 Block I of introductory questions

The first block of introductory questions about the main problems that marketing, and communication campaigns face are very similar. For all public universities analysed. This could prove a tendency across Europe for the public education. Lack of funding for marketing in general is the biggest problem.

But another issue was signalled, by the interviews had at the Universities of Malaga and Sevilla especially, brand awareness and the problems with marketing campaigns to attract students. Especially when they were referring to campaigns done by private and public universities and the competency between the two.

It was signalled that the competition between campaigns is more visible for university degrees than for masters or doctoral, postdoctoral studies. That the focus is there. The experience of private universities stands out, in terms of marketing campaigns, funding, man power, in comparison to public ones, according to the interviews. Experience for campaign in gaining new students and brand awareness, more campaigns, more money invested and a dedicated department that focuses on this specifically. Something that does not happen in the universities analysed in Romania, for example.

The interviewees also mention the breach between public and private. But the power that public universities have is that they are able to attract new students because of the reputation and long presence in time, this being signalled as an

advantage, so this is the reason they do not invest that much in campaigns to attract new public, because the majority consider that they already have an established name in the country and region and their offer is much more diversified.

About new ways of communication, all communication responsible interviewed agreed they are effective and important as the world is shifting right now to online communication. There is even a greater emphasis on this as part of the interviews were done during the corona virus crisis and lockdown.

Interviewing several communications responsible for Chambers of Commerce that work with national universities during the state of emergency for the pandemic brought interesting results. The following communication responsible from Chambers of commerce have been asked to answer the question: How has the traffic and use of the portal and communication platform that you use changed during the lockdown in comparison with the period before?

The media of the answers was over 40% increase in use of the communication platform during the crisis which emphasizes the tendency to move towards the online environment which is comprehensible. The study was done while being invited as a speaker for several European Chambers of Commerce and assessing the use of the communication platform as an alternative during the covid-19 crisis between 20th of April and 29th of April while all countries in Europe were in lockdown. I think that this tendency can be extrapolated for universities as well as the majority of public universities are members of the Chamber of commerce and are users of the platform.

What universities in Spain signalled during interviews is the difference in campaign between the targeted public? And it is extremely important to make the

separation when evaluating the success of a campaign, of a strategy. The following questions will take this topic a bit deeper.

4.3.1.2. Block II - the communication policy of the analysed university

Regarding the second block of the interviews, the information extracted is about the communication policy of the analysed university. The criteria followed by all the directors of the communication department is the same, to follow the strategies and objectives of the communication policy of the university. They are all setting up objectives and ways to reach out those objectives with the means that they possess. Basically, the process is like the one of a company, they also divide those strategies to cover different target audience, segmenting the market.

We then get to the second questions of the second block of questions: What are the target audiences and what are the lines of communication for each audience? The segmentation is according and strictly related to the group of ages of each level of study, university degree, master's degree and doctoral studies. Because all the universities analysed have the same structure and include all steps of superior education, the segmentation is the same.

It is highlighted the differentiation between the strategies dedicated at first degrees and ones dedicated for masters and doctoral studies. The University of Malaga and Sevilla mentioned specifically that for master degrees and doctoral studies the response and focus is on LinkedIn campaigns, is where they find more traction, as for university degrees, Facebook is the one to go. And YouTube for video campaigns. In the case of Romanian universities, the differential is not made from the beginning, from the setting of the strategy, but also noticed when analysing the response on social media. In Romania, the focus is on Facebook.

To the question: Do you have some type of manual or communication plan that defines the strategies at your university? all analysed universities responded affirmative. It is what guides them, sets the objectives and the planning.

All universities said they do not have a dedicated agency or company they use to subcontract services for advertising campaigns, media publishing, SEO strategy and so on. Because inside the public sector they need to go to tenders, evaluate the offers and select the ones that are most appropriate. To keep track of campaign, The Malaga university have a system of centralizing all communication: “but in the main sense, there are creativity works, development campaigns that can be carried out from outside in this sense but that always go through our channel. I already said, not just as a control, but to have a more adequate image of where they can come from.” (from the interview with Malaga University)

Also, a response inclining that there is not sufficient funding for such campaigns has been noted from the responses. They usually go to an intern, a student that can has been studying or working in the field and researchers that work with and for the university. This collaboration has proven to be valuable and cost effective from what we could extrapolate from the interviews.

Maybe some extra funding and agreements or partnerships with important companies in the field could be a solution, in the sense of win strategies for both parties that would reduce costs but still provide universities access to latest techniques, technologies. “Incorporating those skills within the services, this will be a question that I think will be necessary in one way or another and within the institution itself or outsourcing it through external hiring campaigns or outsourcing jobs. It seems to me that this is fundamental.” (from the interview with Malaga University)

The University of Seville however said that they did subcontract for a campaign last year and was quite satisfied with the service and would probably repeat it in the future. The only problem is funding. It would be interesting to study the funding for marketing and digital marketing campaigns within the public sector. Especially now, with the pandemic, when universities and all education organizations are struggling to sustain and maintain their activity online, some funding has been allocated from the government.

4.3.1.3 Block III of questions

Moving onto the 3rd block of questions, we analyse the use of digital means within the communication department of universities. The main social media platforms used, according to the interviews are: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Facebook is the one that universities started using from the beginning alongside Twitter, Instagram being one of the more recent ones and the public universities analysed from Spain said that is the one the is starting to get more and more terrain.

In Romania however, the analysed public universities do not have Instagram pages and use Facebook on a daily basis. In Romania the most used social media platform remains Facebook, leading for the past years and will probably do so for next year as well. Facebook groups were also mentioned in the interviews as a place where student or future students interact, ask questions or just write on the university's wall and expect answers. "We have a Facebook page, most of our students write to us there, even if not in designated groups. But it a good way for them to reach out" (From the interview with Trnasilvania University) "Some students just write on our page's wall, whatever question or inquiry they have and we try to reply and redirect them." (From the interview with Lucian Blaga University)

What is missing from the social media platforms are newer ones, like Tik Tok or YouTube, with some other YouTube short video products that have been recently launched as an alternative to Tik Tok. So, we can highlight that platforms that use video content are not amongst the preferred ones and not even introduced in the strategy of the analysed universities. “We do have a Youtube page and we did some videos specific for this. Especially now, during the lockdown, we have used the channel to share some of our events” (from the interview with Transilvania University). Transilvania university has 33 videos uploaded at this point on their Youtube Channel.

What is surprising and worth mentioning is the poor use and lack of interest to publish on more professional platforms such as LinkedIn. I did not ask if maybe for recruitment processes or for getting in touch with the business community they are using LinkedIn, as the focus was on the campaign that they currently use, but maybe it could be a good future strategy in order to gain more traction with companies and business.

And the questions to be directed to HR and talent departments and see how and when they collaborate with the communication and marketing department. Also, what they choose to communicate and publish related to HR activities. I can mention that none of the managers and director whom I have interviewed have mentioned any striking campaign related to talent, HR or any other related processes when I asked about types of campaign they have done in the past and examples of successful communication campaigns and posts.

This brings us to the second question from the 3rd block, related to the media landscape analysis how the strategy had been developed for each digital media channel, for what purpose, what messages and for what audience. In the case of the Romanian public universities analysed, the answers and the feedback are very

similar. There is almost no orientation of video campaigns on platform such as YouTube, Tik Tok or even Instagram.

For Romanian universities the most important platform is by far Facebook, where they use the public page, pages of Faculties and also groups to share the message and publish. LinkedIn is also not a frequently used tool. Facebook is used for attracting new students as well as for current ones and teachers also use it to inform. While assessing the answers received from Spanish universities, what stood out was the answer from Malaga University, as they mentioned how they are looking to manage, as much as possible the messages that arrive from external channels as well and redirect them and use them to increase the awareness for their brand.

The strategy applied is to share a relevant message for all target audiences. All universities have general messages, more inclusive for a large part of audience and also more targeted ones. “We see a great use of Facebook by our students and so we keep track with that” (from the interview with Transilvania University)

In the case of Malaga university, last year the strategy was to share content and direct more campaign towards research and investigation. Sevilla university also mentioned this as one of the objectives and their target for 2019. That a more directed communication campaign directed towards bringing more visibility to the investigation done by the university is the way to go and it is related to the scientific results.

Malaga university also mentioned that the best results were obtained from this type of campaigns, because the scientific communities, media, they are all interested in learning about new discoveries, new investigations and breakthroughs and the media picks it up immediately and propagates this further. To this,

campaigns for sporting and cultural events are added and on a newer basis, equality and inclusion campaigns that had a good response and feedback. The main pain point is the clarity of the message “the clarity of the campaign conducted. Make sure the message you want to convey is clear, not in overly complex, elaborate formulas, but rather a specific message that is aimed at these audiences.” (from the interview with Malaga University)

The fact that the interviews for the Romanian Universities have been completed in 2020, during lockdown, affected the strategy and the overall answers. Especially to this question, because they had to adapt on the go, and use social media and the webpage as the only communication tools with their students, as all schools and universities in Romania have been closed during the first wave and have been closed again after a short period of weeks of functioning in the second wave. So, a strategy of communicating the new function of online classes, exams, evaluation, took centre stage, as it probably happened all over the world. “We try to adapt and share our content online as well. We are working on a new, more adaptive platform for our university” (from the interview with Transilvania University)

And the focus is on students, starting February 2021 they will think of an online campaign to attract new students, depending on how the things evolve.

The Seville university mentioned, apart from this, that they try to give their marketing campaign a certain flavour, a theme and for them it was “We try to give our campaigns a certain character of corporate social responsibility.” (from the interview with Seville University)

I have also asked about what routes students use when looking for information about a particular university. Routes that they know from the

evaluation from their department. From the answered received, universities do not particularly focus on gathering info from students or potential students. All universities have forms and satisfaction questionnaires that send to students and use to evaluate the communication process as well. And also use some of the features provided by social media sites. Use of written media is also mentioned, or articles that have proven to be successful “Another campaign that had a lot of impact was selectivity. 10 tips for selectivity that worked very well.” (from the interview with Seville University)

But a further market assessment and user experience evaluation is not done in detail. Romanian universities have complained in our interviews that they do not have a dedicated IT team for marketing, social media, web page and design, so they cannot ask to much from interns or collaborators when big changes need to be done. So, a corroboration between the interaction data, search engine data and the front-page design, interaction and user experience is not done properly. Which is a big issue, because even if they know what students are looking for, they cannot put it into practice, cannot adapt in due time and make the most of the data to optimize the strategy.

This brings us to our following question, regarding measuring instruments to evaluate the effectiveness; and feedback from students. All directors use the instruments provided by the social media used, it is easy to access and interpret. Malaga university stated in the interview that they do not use another instrument apart from this and the webpage, so I asked about Google analytics and its use. They said they are using it. Sevilla University also mentioned it. It seems that the web page of each university is the main instrument used in this type o analysis.

Apart from this, Spanish universities also made a reference to the fact that the majority of the social media campaigns are designated to attract visits to the

main webpage of the university. Something similar is happening in Romania, using groups and social networks as well, but the difference is that in this case, the objective is not so clearly stated, it is more a consequence of the campaign, noted by directives and leveraged with links to the web page, so it does have the same outcome. “The key to success, then, I think it is essential to attract attention. Use the language of each network” (from the interview with Seville University)

The next steps were to find out the use of SEO (Search engine optimization) or of a consulting or specialized person for this type of analysis. It was surprising to learn that apart from specific work or campaign, SEO is not used on a daily basis in any of the analyzed universities. Malaga University mentioned that they used it for a brand awareness campaign, but it was dedicated to that campaign only. They mentioned that they have it in plan, with all the changes and emphasis on the online environment and the increase in the use of technology.

Before the pandemic the strategy was to allocate funding to a external consultant in term of SEO specific. Sevilla also mentioned the fact they are looking for funding to have at least an intern specialized in online marketing and also SEO optimization of campaigns. Lucian Blaga university has no designated person for online marketing and SEO strategy. They see the importance, which leads us to the next question regarding the importance of SEO and its advantages. They have interns and students from marketing whom do research and had a project investigating new online strategies and they applied it to the university the past year. They managed to give quite an increase in traction for the webpage and overall interaction, so they are thinking of continuing this kind of projects with future students as well.

Transilvania University also rely on interns and IT students for the webpage and adding new features. But they did not use SEO. However, it was a difficult

year, universities concentrating upon online classes and courses, exams with the lockdown and the fact the schools in Romania remain shut in January 2021 as well. The government is still looking for options to safe return to school so the priorities changed. Transilvania university mentioned the fact that they invested in an online platform, redoing the webpage with the help of students interested in software development work and also some of them interested in SEO.

All universities agreed on the importance of SEO, of including it in the online marketing strategy and all of them noticed the direction towards digitalization and the extra steps and efforts that public universities need to take to integrate technology. They are all in a transition period and the objective is to have this as part of the general communication strategy integrated. Spanish universities mentioned they would like to have some permanently overseeing this, but if it is not possible, to be able to externalize the services.

For the directives whom mentioned a use of SEO, even it was directed to a specific campaign and not a general use inside the strategy, I have tried to also find out about the strategies and tactics observed to have been working well recently for the university.

In terms of SEO, the Romanian universities said that they are not using it, although some developers and marketers that handle the webpage have knowledge of SEO and applied it. But the reason for not using it is the lack of funding and also the integration of online media strategies in an overall university communication and marketing strategy.

The directives interviewed from both Transilvania and Lucian Blaga mentioned that they are working in that direction, trying to focus on online marketing and campaign, to find funding and get involved in more campaign

because they recognize the importance and the direction in which the university must go in order to keep track with its public, its students. They also mentioned that focusing only on Facebook has to change and a bigger investment in the platform and the website must be made.

The funding is also an issue that Spanish public universities are confronted with, especially when the directives answered why SEO strategy is not used. They also see a lack of integration of specific new innovative online strategies in the overall strategy, something they would like to better manage in the future.

4.3.1.4 Block IV - creating a marketing campaign in public universities and ways to evaluate its success

The last part of the questionnaire was made to establish some answers on regards to what a marketing campaign means for the analysed public universities and how such campaigns are evaluated. It is very important to see how they analyse this and how that reflects in the future strategy and directions.

In relation to the first question from this block, the overall response regarding what message is transmitted in a marketing campaign in towards which general objective is it orientated is similar across universities. Similar in a way that it establishes clearly to orientation towards a clear and concise message, and a target public, students and what they can study at the university. To sum the responses up. The hypothesis was that more than 30% of these campaigns are directed toward attracting new students, but because no one could offer a concise data and because the main reason was getting to know the university and its programs, I couldn't extrapolate that to just new students, as they are included in the stated objective.

In the case of the University of Malaga and Sevilla, they both have programs and marketing campaigns to create brand awareness, the one at Malaga University

being called “Destino UMA” (Destination UMA) and it is the general objective to get the brand out there and for students to get to know the programmes. It is one of the most successful and engaging ones as they mentioned in the interview.

Campaigns with similar objectives are used all across universities, the difference that we can notice between Romanian and Spanish ones is that in Romania, the analysed universities also had campaigns with same objective at a smaller scale, just for faculties and it was not stated in common strategy of marketing from the top, but decided and applied and managed by faculties on their own. This is also a reason why centralized data is not accessible and a percentage could not be calculated. Spanish universities claimed to have a more centralized marketing plan that is reflected by smaller scale ones.

For the directives interviewed from Romania this is one of the issues in the communication and marketing departments, that you have people whom are active and want to get involve, to do more, but the organization and bureaucracy does not help them apply new ideas, propose strategies in due time and follow a productive analysis of past campaigns so that they can improve. For Spanish Universities, lack of funding for additional qualified personnel is also mentioned “I also believe that we should have an economic endowment or have the necessary means ... also that for social media we do not have enough personnel” (from the interview with Seville University)

This leaves us to the final question, how the campaigns are reviewed. Here the data from social media and tools for web page analytics are used by all universities. Maybe a step further would be a centralized KPI analysis. No university mentioned KPIs or the use of them to measure a marketing campaign and its success. The majority of times they look at number of reactions, likes and comments but a suggestion would be to go deeper in the overall analysis and see

maybe the demographic of the likes, age, shares and try to use that in future campaigns.

I believe that the communication process and universities should embark on a digital transformation journey, not only to digitalize some aspects. It is important to know the difference between the concepts and how to prepare for digitization, digitalization and digital transformation.

Proved hypothesis: H1, H2, H3, H5, H6, H7

Disproved hypothesis: none

Not enough data to certify and prove the hypothesis: H4 and H8

Digitization is just a process of transforming, encoding from analogue to digits, 1 or 0s as we commonly know it (Gartner's IT Glossary, 2020) "Digitization is the process of changing from analogue to digital form". Digitalization, however, refers to how we use technology to transform the business and communication, the move from analogue tech to digital one like social media, chat box, emails, online meetings and so on. And digital transformation is beyond the concept of digitalization, it includes several digitalization projects, true, but implies a change in the whole organization. It is more about how people embrace and use technology than the technology itself in my opinion.

Digital transformation is a journey, it is customer orientated. In our case, student and user orientated which means that universities should embrace digital transformation and it will imply a long process in which they will need to change their structure and way of thinking. All departments are involved, not only the communication and marketing or IT department, but it is the way to go to further adapt to change and to be flexible on a long-term basis.

4.4 Communication trends for 2020 and how will they influence the communication process inside universities, in connection with the result obtained from the analyzed universities in Spain and Romania

According to Forbes specialist in communications, whom make an analysis each year regarding communications and marketing trends and what will work in 2020, these are the important ones to look out for:

- Visual, Conversion-Focused Campaigns is the first one that appears

Here we have an expert opinion on the matter, that in our digital-first world, it's becoming increasingly difficult to stand out among competitors. Marketing has always been cyclical, and more organizations will go back to the golden age of advertising. Clever ads, catchy taglines, vibrant visuals and marketers need to make a statement in the blink of an eye. We'll see less content and more campaigns to drive conversions and build audiences. - Maria Juan, Peerfit

- The Globalization of Local Talent is point number two

This marketing trend is viewed by the expert in the following manner: “One marketing trend with staying power is the pairing of a national or global corporation with a local business. Sneakers are adorned with designs from unknown artists. Brands are tapping lettering masters to draw their in-store signs. The mixture of big and small adds authenticity where corporate stagnation could reign, imbuing new life to the marketing of products that feels fresh and alive. - Melissa Kandel, little word studio” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

The next trend would be brand activism and Meghann Craig, from Empower speaks about the trend in the same Forbes article: “Given 2020 is an election year, I predict that we will see more brands take a stand on issues that impact their brand purpose and audiences. Research has shown that trust among government is down, and more people are looking to their workplace and brands that emulate their personality and beliefs to drive change. For brands, it's an opportunity to demonstrate their cultural relevance.” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

We can certainly see more and more use of Artificial intelligence in business, and the way it changes our world. Algorithms are so important and the way data are interpreted has shifted to a more automatized world and especially after the lockdown and the way the world changed after the coronavirus has brought AI solutions in place for a safer way to work.

- AI Advancements

“Artificial intelligence (AI) is only going to strengthen and evolve at a breakneck pace. It's all about the consumer, and the consumer not only demands, but also expects to receive relevant, personalized content at the right time and in the right place. With that, they expect response times from brands immediately. AI can work faster and smarter and can react 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. - Carly Driscoll, TWIO Brand” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

We have also seen the importance of influencers and live videos over the past chapters and social media. Universities should consider these trends and see how better they can include them on their platform and communicate better.

- Influencers is number 5 and Forbes' expert talk about the influencer trend in a growing manner, that it will take further impact:

“I think the influencer and influencer agencies trend will continue to grow. Companies will also increasingly bring influencer management in house. This strategy should succeed in terms of general brand awareness, but it will most likely be difficult to measure direct ROI and justify high cost per CPA/CAC. - Joseph Rauch, Public Goods” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

- Live Video

The sixth point is also related to a lot of the answers received from the interviews, as the communication experts interviewed all agreed upon its increased importance. Forbes expert says the following: “Live video in 2019 has been the domain of influencers and personalities. Live video in 2020 will be the domain of companies and brands. With Instagram, Facebook and Twitch already well-placed, and LinkedIn on their heels, brands and companies will turn to live video as a more authentic way to share their story, as consumers will grow increasingly skeptical of overly-polished, corporatized videos. - Patrick Ward, High Speed Experts” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

Especially during the lockdown, we have noted a significant increase in podcasting, as a solution to get your message out there and still be able to interact with viewers. This what Kristy Fair from Lenovo has to say about podcasting, quoted in the same article:

- Podcasting

“Podcasting is going through the same momentum blogs went through 10 years ago. Everyone is jumping into this channel as yet another way of self-publishing content, but few are doing it really well. There's no highly accessible

way to measure success clearly today, and we're seeing lots of experimentation in format and content—from editorial to branded, episodic content. - Kristy Fair, Lenovo” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

Other important advocates of technology and experts in the field join in the article to talk about the other important trends:

- Longer Content for SEO And Lead Generation

“The trend has been to create bite-sized content pieces super focused with a "read more" call to action. Even though gated content is effective at driving leads, it doesn't help when it comes to SEO, keywords and site rankings. In the future, we will see longer content freely given on landing pages with anchor texts and multiple calls to action throughout pages—driving better SEO and leads. - Justin Bridegan, Stellar” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

- Local SEO

“A growing ecosystem already targets local search results, showing first for common phrases and a locale, or on Google Maps. Since 2020 is an election year, local broadcast media in many markets will be increasingly saturated with political ads—and increasingly expensive. Don't be surprised if this drives even more competitors to invest in local search! - Max Kornblith, Radvocate” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

- Microtargeting And Conversion

“Brands have already started moving in this direction and will continue to execute campaigns that specifically target a dedicated group of customers or a niche audience. The more advanced technology gets, the more targeted we become. Conversion will also continue to be a priority, particularly in ways to measure ROI

resulting from influencer collaborations and PR campaigns versus impressions. - Dana Baasiri, AIC Hotel Group” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

- Interactive Audio

“With the popularity of podcasts, audiobooks and other aural content growing alongside natural language processing and voice control, it seems likely that we'll see more audio games, interactive storytelling and other responsive, dynamic audio products and services entering the market. Within this new communications paradigm, new approaches to engagement, marketing and influence will follow. - Lian Amaris, Spiralgroup Marketing + PR” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

- Chatbots

“I believe in the next year chatbots will come much more into play as an engagement tool and succeed by helping marketing professionals be even more efficient. By answering repeated questions and making targeted product suggestions, chatbots allow brands to both improve and streamline their customer service. The full extent of what they can do has really not been tapped into yet, but will be. - Jennifer Brantley, The Cowfish Sushi Burger Bar” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

- Increasingly Granular Personalization

“Personalization is key. As message clutter grows across digital channels, companies need to capture and keep customer attention. They're leveraging master data to build more complete profiles of customers' needs, wants and preferences, and matching profiles with appropriate ads and content. These efforts can increase website traffic and even entice customers to come in store for exclusive deals. - Prashant Bhatia, Stibo Systems” (Forbes Communication Council, 2019)

These trends will affect the youngest audience mostly, so in direct connection with the communication and marketing campaigns of universities. In regards to the first point, visual campaigns, according to the answers of the interviews, the more recent campaigns are focusing on visual, videos, photos, encoring more visual posts, using more Instagram and YouTube to promote different campaigns.

So would say that this is going in the right direction. All of the interviewees said that they receive a better response to interactive posts, visual post and that they always try to add photos or videos to what they post, even if it is on the web page or on social media. Live videos are also increasing in use among universities sin Spain and in Romania, from conference streaming to online classes.

Also, personalization is one of the trends I perceive is growing among mangers of communication and marketing departments. They are trying to find the preferences of the students, they analyze the data from social media, see which posts are more interacted with and use that information. All universities have responded positively and mentioned that they analyze data from social media and use it.

V. General conclusions and after-words

The thesis sets to discover how the new communication and marketing strategies, social media used and how these are conducted and measured in a public university. From the answers of all the directives interviewed from Spain and Romania, when it comes to a successful marketing and communication campaign via social media, the interviews uncovered that what in their expertise makes the difference are defining goals in a clear manner, the clarity of the message.

All of the interviewees use social media and consider it an important part of the strategy, including mentioning the effort they are making to have extra help and expertise in new apps and practices. The results revealed that it is a great tool to communicate with students, promote the university in order to attract new ones and also to promote the research and innovation. Which is not a surprise, especially with all data showing a great increase of the use of social media especially in younger generations. We can add here the impact that the COVID-19 crisis had upon education and the necessity to go online for classes and communication.

All of the analysed universities have their own web page. But in terms of social media channels used, we can conclude that the webpage, Facebook, Twitter are among the most used by both Spanish and Romanian universities. A slight increase of use of Instagram and video sharing on social media like Youtube channel has resulted from the interviews. The interviews conducted upon Romanian universities revealed one of the major pain-points they are having, which is finding a way to efficiently streamline their social efforts throughout all the campus, faculties. A lack of unity and a centralized plan was mentioned by both directives of communication department from Transilvania and Lucian Blaga

University. In the case of Lucian Blaga University, this is also one of the main changes that need to be conducted in order to have an overall improvement.

The answers received were not enough however, to establish with a certainty the main targeted audience and if it is formed by new students. Also, attracting new students cannot be established as the main objective of the marketing campaigns. The objective is more complex, including more targets.

In terms of results obtained to the questions addressing the use of social media, new technologies and SEO (search engine optimization), all directives have know-how and understand the importance of digital transformation and of using SEO strategies. In addition to this, they also use the results obtained from social media to evaluate and prepare future campaigns. This is a good indicator that digital transformation plays an important role and that the people in charge of communication and marketing departments from public universities in Spain and Romania are conscious of it and try to be flexible and integrate new technologies.

But also, it becomes more and more difficult every year to do such an analysis, not because new innovations do not appear annually, but because these trends not only appear and disappear with the threshold of years, but evolve constantly over time. Even if this is the case, universities need to integrate them and to be flexible.

Now more than never it is a time to build bridges, to network. A new business model emerged, during the lockdown or the lockdown and having this crisis helped reshape the way we work, we network and add value to our business and we need more innovative tools to help us better adapt, to be able to survive in crisis and emerge from critical situations.

We need to introduce tech in order for our business to better adapt to change and to not be disrupted. But we also need empathy, to be able to build those strong, long lasting business relationships and trust that will help us thrive. I cannot emphasize enough the need of digital solutions and talent-empathy to be integrated together in a business that wishes to be adaptable to change, to deliver a message that is both empathic and informative and that has the objective to help.

The communication strategy had to change during the pandemic. And from the interviews conducted during the lockdown with public universities in Romania, this was highlighted. Also, the need to integrate new technologies and the direction of doing so has been signaled by all the directives interviewed, both from Spain and Romania. Having specialized and dedicated human resources to do so, especially for online marketing, development and SEO strategy is also the major pain-point that resulted from all interviews. For students to keep up with their university, especially during the pandemic, it was also challenging. All directives mentioned that they try to use more social media groups and the website to post and communicate with students.

I believe that for students all over the world having a trust worthy environment where you can network and find answers, information, stay in touch with colleagues and teachers, solve issues online too, to be part of a community that understands the changes and the importance of working together is one of the main things that remains and that will be appreciated. Employees value now the option to work remotely, from home or any other place because it gives them extra security.

Companies struggle with offering access to remote users and facilitate all this. Commercial people and business developers, marketers have to move quickly to online networking, webinars and events and to bring value through this. So do

teachers and administrations, so do students. This is the direction that both public and private universities alike must take. To find that balance between technology and talent, to focus on helping and adding value to tech. Because things have changed, technology and online working and studying is here to stay and universities have to embrace it and be prepared.

The benefits will be huge because the response rate among the younger audience increases. The user experience takes precedence as brands become the sum of the experiences lived and shared by customers, so marketing specialists need to create interactions that make life simpler, more enjoyable and personal.

The same applies to universities, training should be custom, and access to information should be simple and fast. It will increase the user experience, making it the place to go when needing information, so the universities can use that in their advantage. Not only to increase the brand awareness but also to interact with students and researchers.

The amount of data the communication department can access and receive will only increase their knowledge of the market, know the trends, tendencies, adapt messages, restructure campaigns, increase the interaction on social media. There is actually no down point of having data and info that can be easily accessed and interpreted so that it can help the marketers and communication specialist at the university keep up with the needs of the students.

The user experience is key because it can give future students the possibility to see in advance the system in which they will participate. In my research I tried to ask the right questions to the managers of the communication department to see if they realize the importance of the user experience and, if so, what they are doing to improve their techniques and platforms.

Up until now, the dedicated departments have been relying on the help of students and interns to be able to integrate new tools and make more use of social media and do further development. Some of the directives also gave examples of interns and student groups from a dedicated specialty who do work and projects to help either with the radio of the university, do videos for YouTube channels, do online marketing or even help with the development on the website in the case of the Romanian universities. Maybe it is time to have an expert, a specialist inside the team that can coordinate this. The problem that all directives signaled here is that there is not sufficient funding to do so.

Most of the responses related to the new campaign in social networks, the use of different platforms to involve the student to interact with the university, share information, opinions, participate in the actions and events of the university, research projects, read and comment on articles and publications in general. This is the positive point that resulted from the interviews. The intention is there, some steps are being taken. You may just need to be more adaptable in the sense that more publications mean more interaction, more events and more online activity means more student involvement and also access to more visibility.

For research and development projects, for published articles and for campaigns, this is extremely important. Traditional marketing methods are losing value for the younger generation and attention should be directed to sharing on social networks, namely how to tell a story, an achievement, how to promote it and gain greater visibility. This is where the importance of SEO strategy and online marketing strategy comes into play. Most managers interviewed have SEO knowledge, but do not have the resources to apply it. Financial resources and human resources too. Only a few have access to funds for their campaigns or work with agencies.

However, all departments have at least one person who is responsible for publishing and using social networks. It might be an intern that gives support or even the communication responsible or social media responsible. It is important to also know that all the persons interviewed want to add value to the personnel, to train them in new technologies and use social media more. It was mentioned more than once in every interview the intention of having more know-how of social media and ways to use it better and that efforts are being made for this purpose.

Another point that I wanted to analyze within the interviews is the objective and the targeted audience of the communication and marketing campaigns. It is important to find out if universities from Spain target the same audience, if something changes in the campaigns along with the audience. Age groups are the same, they all separate the target to recent graduates, to current students to master's degrees or research and PhD. Here there is no notable difference. But how about the message for each group?

What is a major concern for me, after the analysis, is the fact that public universities need more time to adapt and to implement changes. So, the more disruptive the industry is, the faster the technologies change, the harder it will be for them to keep up. Funding one problem, it was said in the majority of the interviews, but also the amount of paperwork and the pyramidal structure that makes the process harder to apply. Having specialist in tech and maybe integrating the research and development areas into the communication and marketing strategy can solve some problems.

But not all. Bringing flexibility and new technologies into the mix will be probably the biggest challenge that universities will have to face. The ones that succeed are seen as innovative, as attractive to students, as the ones able to offer

better training for a better future, possibility to find higher paid jobs and better careers. It is all related.

Flexibility is one of the main characteristics that the communication directors want to achieve, as resulted from the interviews. They are setting strategies towards that direction and realize the importance of having new tools and set to achieve digital transformation in the communication process.

This is the key point, whoever manages to send those messages and to adapt to current volatile conditions and online communication with more and more situations of remote students and researchers, will win in this game.

The thesis also established a concrete need for digital transformation and directives signaled this during the interviews, they see the trends, know that it is here to stay and that new technologies and tools are mandatory to be integrated and they are setting up base and try to manage the resources so that they can make the most of new tools. They also rely on social media and the analysis that social media platform offers for their pages, know how to make the most of data. So, the signal is good, they are seeing the direction, trying to steer the communication and marketing campaign towards it, see the positive response from students and researchers. But also, much more involvement is needed, from a bigger perspective, not to mention funding. It is a bigger investment at the biggening but then it is something that will help the whole university benefit, not to mention long lasting results and resilience to change.

V. Conclusiones generales y epílogo

El objetivo de la tesis es descubrir cómo se utilizan las nuevas estrategias de comunicación y marketing, las redes sociales y cómo se llevan a cabo y miden en una universidad pública. De las respuestas de todas las directivas entrevistadas de España y Rumanía, cuando se trata de una exitosa campaña de marketing y comunicación a través de las redes sociales, las entrevistas revelaron que lo que en su experiencia marca la diferencia es definir metas de manera clara, la claridad del mensaje.

Todos los entrevistados utilizan las redes sociales y las consideran una parte importante de la estrategia, incluida la mención del esfuerzo que están haciendo para tener ayuda adicional y experiencia en nuevas aplicaciones y prácticas. Los resultados revelaron que es una gran herramienta para comunicarse con los estudiantes, promover la universidad para atraer nuevos estudiantes y también para promover la investigación y la innovación. Lo cual no es una sorpresa, especialmente con todos los datos que muestran un gran aumento del uso de las redes sociales, especialmente en las generaciones más jóvenes. Podemos agregar aquí el impacto que tuvo la crisis de COVID-19 en la educación y la necesidad de conectarse en línea para las clases y la comunicación.

Todas las universidades analizadas tienen su propia página web. Pero en cuanto a los canales de redes sociales utilizados, podemos concluir que la página web, Facebook, Twitter se encuentran entre los más utilizados por las universidades tanto españolas como rumanas. Como resultado de las entrevistas, se ha producido un ligero aumento en el uso de Instagram y el intercambio de videos en las redes sociales como el canal de YouTube. Las entrevistas realizadas a las universidades rumanas revelaron uno de los principales puntos débiles que están teniendo, que es

encontrar una manera de racionalizar de manera eficiente sus esfuerzos sociales en todo el campus, las facultades. Tanto las directivas del departamento de comunicación de Transilvania como la Universidad Lucian Blaga mencionaron la falta de unidad y de un plan centralizado. En el caso de la Universidad Lucian Blaga, este es también uno de los principales cambios que deben realizarse para tener una mejora general.

Sin embargo, las respuestas recibidas no fueron suficientes para establecer con certeza el público objetivo principal y si está formado por nuevos estudiantes. Además, la captación de nuevos estudiantes no puede establecerse como el objetivo principal de las campañas de marketing. El objetivo es más complejo e incluye más objetivos.

En cuanto a los resultados obtenidos a las preguntas que abordan el uso de las redes sociales, las nuevas tecnologías y el SEO (optimización de motores de búsqueda), todos los directivos tienen conocimiento y comprenden la importancia de la transformación digital y del uso de estrategias de SEO. Además de esto, también utilizan los resultados obtenidos de las redes sociales para evaluar y preparar futuras campañas. Este es un buen indicador de que la transformación digital juega un papel importante y que los responsables de los departamentos de comunicación y marketing de las universidades públicas de España y Rumanía son conscientes de ello y tratan de ser flexibles e integrar las nuevas tecnologías.

Pero, cada año se hace más difícil hacer tal análisis, no porque las innovaciones no aparezcan anualmente, sino porque estas tendencias no solo aparecen y desaparecen con el umbral de los años, sino que evolucionan constantemente en el tiempo. Incluso si este es el caso, las universidades deben integrarlos y ser flexibles.

Ahora más que nunca es el momento de construir puentes, de establecer contactos. Surgió un nuevo modelo de negocio, durante el confinamiento y tener esta crisis ayudó a remodelar la forma en que trabajamos, nos relacionamos y agregamos valor a nuestro negocio y necesitamos herramientas más innovadoras para ayudarnos a adaptarnos mejor, para poder sobrevivir en la crisis. y emerger de situaciones críticas.

Necesitamos introducir tecnología para que nuestro negocio se adapte mejor al cambio y no se vea interrumpido. Pero también necesitamos empatía para poder construir esas relaciones comerciales sólidas y duraderas y la confianza que nos ayudarán a prosperar. No puedo enfatizar lo suficiente la necesidad de que las soluciones digitales y la empatía del talento se integren en una empresa que desee adaptarse al cambio, para entregar un mensaje empático e informativo y que tenga como objetivo ayudar.

La estrategia de comunicación tuvo que cambiar durante la pandemia. Y de las entrevistas realizadas durante el cierre con universidades públicas en Rumania, esto se destacó. Asimismo, la necesidad de integrar nuevas tecnologías y la dirección de hacerlo ha sido señalada por todas las directivas entrevistadas, tanto de España como de Rumanía. Tener recursos humanos especializados y dedicados para hacerlo, especialmente para el marketing online, el desarrollo y la estrategia de SEO, es también el principal problema que surgió de todas las entrevistas. Para los estudiantes, mantenerse al día con su universidad, especialmente durante la pandemia, también fue un desafío. Todas las directivas mencionaron que intentan utilizar más grupos de redes sociales y el sitio web para publicar y comunicarse con los estudiantes.

Creo que, para los estudiantes de todo el mundo, tener un entorno digno de confianza en el que pueda establecer contactos y encontrar respuestas, información,

mantenerse en contacto con colegas y maestros, resolver problemas en línea también, ser parte de una comunidad que comprende los cambios y la importancia de trabajar juntos es una de las principales cosas que queda y que se agradecerá. Los empleados valoran ahora la opción de trabajar de forma remota, desde casa o en cualquier otro lugar porque les brinda seguridad adicional.

Las empresas luchan por ofrecer acceso a usuarios remotos y facilitan todo esto. Las personas comerciales y los desarrolladores de negocios, los especialistas en marketing tienen que moverse rápidamente hacia las redes en línea, los seminarios web y los eventos y aportar valor a través de esto. También los profesores y las administraciones, también los estudiantes. Ésta es la dirección que deben tomar tanto las universidades públicas como las privadas. Encontrar ese equilibrio entre tecnología y talento, enfocarse en ayudar y agregar valor a la tecnología. Debido a que las cosas han cambiado, la tecnología y el trabajo y el estudio en línea llegaron para quedarse y las universidades deben adoptarlo y estar preparadas.

Los beneficios serán enormes porque aumentará la tasa de respuesta entre la audiencia más joven. La experiencia del usuario tiene prioridad ya que las marcas se convierten en la suma de las experiencias vividas y compartidas por los clientes, por lo que los especialistas en marketing necesitan crear interacciones que hagan la vida más simple, placentera y personal.

Lo mismo se aplica a las universidades, la formación debe ser personalizada y el acceso a la información debe ser simple y rápido. Aumentará la experiencia del usuario, convirtiéndolo en el lugar al que acudir cuando se necesite información, para que las universidades puedan utilizarla en su beneficio. No solo para aumentar el conocimiento de la marca, sino también para interactuar con estudiantes e investigadores.

La cantidad de datos a los que puede acceder y recibir el departamento de comunicación solo aumentará su conocimiento del mercado, conocerá las tendencias, adecuará los mensajes, reestructurará las campañas, aumentará la interacción en las redes sociales. En realidad, no tiene sentido tener datos e información a los que se pueda acceder e interpretar fácilmente para que puedan ayudar a los especialistas en marketing y comunicación de la universidad a mantenerse al día con las necesidades de los estudiantes.

La experiencia del usuario es clave porque puede brindar a los futuros estudiantes la posibilidad de ver de antemano el sistema en el que participarán. En mi investigación intenté hacer las preguntas correctas a los gerentes del departamento de comunicación para ver si se dan cuenta de la importancia de la experiencia del usuario y, de ser así, qué están haciendo para mejorar sus técnicas y plataformas.

Hasta ahora, los departamentos dedicados han dependido de la ayuda de estudiantes y pasantes para poder integrar nuevas herramientas y hacer un mayor uso de las redes sociales y hacer un mayor desarrollo. Algunas de las directivas también dieron ejemplos de pasantes y grupos de estudiantes de una especialidad dedicada que hacen trabajos y proyectos para ayudar ya sea con la radio de la universidad, hacer videos para los canales de YouTube, hacer marketing en línea o incluso ayudar con el desarrollo del sitio web en el caso de las universidades rumanas. Quizás sea el momento de contar con un experto, un especialista dentro del equipo que pueda coordinar esto. El problema que todas las directivas señalaron aquí es que no hay financiación suficiente para hacerlo.

La mayoría de las respuestas relacionadas con la nueva campaña en redes sociales, el uso de diferentes plataformas para involucrar al estudiante a interactuar

con la universidad, compartir información, opiniones, participar de las acciones y eventos de la universidad, proyectos de investigación, leer y comentar artículos y publicaciones en general. Este es el punto positivo que resultó de las entrevistas. La intención está ahí, se están dando algunos pasos. Es posible que solo necesite ser más adaptable en el sentido de que más publicaciones significan más interacción, más eventos y más actividad en línea significa más participación de los estudiantes y también acceso a más visibilidad.

Para proyectos de investigación y desarrollo, artículos publicados y campañas, esto es extremadamente importante. Los métodos de marketing tradicionales están perdiendo valor para las generaciones más jóvenes y la atención debe dirigirse a compartir en las redes sociales, es decir, cómo contar una historia, un logro, cómo promoverlo y obtener una mayor visibilidad. Aquí es donde entra en juego la importancia de la estrategia SEO y la estrategia de marketing online. La mayoría de los gerentes entrevistados tienen conocimientos de SEO, pero no tienen los recursos para aplicarlos. Recursos financieros y recursos humanos también. Solo unos pocos tienen acceso a fondos para sus campañas o trabajan con agencias.

Sin embargo, todos los departamentos cuentan con al menos una persona que se encarga de publicar y usar las redes sociales. Puede ser un becario que da soporte o incluso el responsable de comunicación o el responsable de redes sociales. Es importante saber también que todas las personas entrevistadas quieren agregar valor al personal, capacitarlo en nuevas tecnologías y usar más las redes sociales. Se mencionó más de una vez en cada entrevista la intención de tener más conocimiento de las redes sociales y formas de usarlas mejor y que se están haciendo esfuerzos para tal fin.

Otro punto que quería analizar dentro de las entrevistas es el objetivo y el público objetivo de las campañas de comunicación y marketing. Es importante

saber si las universidades de España se dirigen a la misma audiencia, si algo cambia en las campañas junto con la audiencia. Los grupos de edad son los mismos, todos separan el objetivo de los recién graduados, a estudiantes actuales de maestría o investigación y doctorado. Aquí no hay diferencia notable. Pero, ¿qué hay del mensaje para cada grupo?

Lo que más me preocupa después del análisis es el hecho de que las universidades públicas necesitan más tiempo para adaptarse e implementar cambios. Por lo tanto, cuanto más disruptiva sea la industria, más rápido cambian las tecnologías, más difícil les resultará mantenerse al día. La financiación de un problema, se dijo en la mayoría de las entrevistas, pero también la cantidad de papeleo y la estructura piramidal que dificulta la aplicación del proceso. Tener un especialista en tecnología y tal vez integrar las áreas de investigación y desarrollo en la estrategia de comunicación y marketing puede resolver algunos problemas.

Pero no todos. Aportar flexibilidad y nuevas tecnologías a la mezcla será probablemente el mayor desafío que tendrán que afrontar las universidades. Los que tienen éxito son vistos como innovadores, tan atractivos para los estudiantes, como los que pueden ofrecer una mejor formación para un futuro mejor, la posibilidad de encontrar trabajos mejor remunerados y mejores carreras. Todo está relacionado.

La flexibilidad es una de las principales características que los directores de comunicación quieren lograr, como resultado de las entrevistas. Están marcando estrategias en esa dirección y se dan cuenta de la importancia de contar con nuevas herramientas y preparadas para lograr la transformación digital en el proceso de comunicación.

Este es el punto clave, quien logre enviar esos mensajes y adaptarse a las volátiles condiciones actuales y la comunicación online con cada vez más situaciones de estudiantes e investigadores remotos, ganará en este juego.

La tesis también estableció una necesidad concreta de transformación digital y los directivos lo señalaron durante las entrevistas, ven las tendencias, saben que está aquí para quedarse y que las nuevas tecnologías y herramientas son obligatorias para integrarse y están sentando base y tratando de gestionar los recursos para que puedan aprovechar al máximo las nuevas herramientas.

También confían en las redes sociales y el análisis que ofrece la plataforma de redes sociales para sus páginas, saben cómo aprovechar al máximo los datos. Entonces, la señal es buena, están viendo la dirección, tratando de dirigir la campaña de comunicación y marketing hacia ella, ven la respuesta positiva de estudiantes e investigadores. Pero también, se necesita mucha más participación, desde una perspectiva más amplia, sin mencionar la financiación. Es una inversión más grande a gran escala, pero luego es algo que ayudará a toda la universidad a beneficiarse, sin mencionar los resultados duraderos y la resistencia al cambio.

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Leila Lunguleac Bardasuc

She is a doctoral student at the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at the University of Malaga, within the Interuniversity Program in Communication at the Universities of Cádiz, Huelva, Malaga and Seville.

Graduate in International Relations, Master degree in Management and Marketing Strategies, Doctor in Economics and Business. She is the Head of Partnerships at TIAO company and CONNECTS digital transformation platform for business and Chambers of Commerce worldwide, based in Brussels. Teaches at the Master Program in Industry 4.0: Transformation and Digital Strategy with the European University in Madrid.

This thesis sets to analyse the communication and marketing processes in higher educational public institutes, the peculiarities and effectiveness of the marketing process regarding the use of new technologies and ways to improve it. A comparison between the public superior educational sector in Spain and in Romania is included, after interviewing top communication executives from each analysed university during 2018 and 2020.

The qualitative research conducted brings forward ways of improving communication and PR skills for public universities and also a better understanding of the particularities of the newest communication forms in the educational system. Precisely, the research conducted intends to offer some reflections that contribute to better understand these new techniques which are already adopted in the communication process of universities which highlights strategic and tactical aspects of marketing and social media that make it easier to deploy the new ways of communicating.

