Consumption exposure on Facebook:
What do we share in the online environment?

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Abstract. *In Romania there is already a significant access to the Internet so that the online presence or manifestation of individuals in this medium is no longer an unknown or isolated situation, but can be turned into an object of study. Online social networks, such as Facebook, provide the right environment for exposure and construction/ reconstruction of self by means of consumption. Therefore from the last book we read, the last theater play we watched, the last visited museum or the name of the café where we relaxed with friends, everything is on the Internet. How does consumption look like in the light of the online social networks? What do we share in the online social environment in which we express ourselves? As a result of this research, I expect an understanding of what we choose to expose on Facebook. I also hope to confirm the viability of the research strategy and to identify ways of improving and expanding the research.*

Keywords: *Facebook; consumption; online; methodology; netnography.*

Introduction

In Romania there is already a significant access to the Internet[1]so that the online presence or manifestation of individuals in this medium is no longer an unknown or isolated situation, but can be turned into an object of study. A key aspect in

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1 According to Internet World Stats (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2013), by June 30, 2012, in Romania there were 9,642,383 users, meaning a penetration rate of the Internet of 44.1%.

this respect is consumption. The arguments in this regard are that, without being consumed, the Internet would not exist, and without consuming/ absorbing information (in the most broad meaning), the Internet would not evolve, it would not enrich: we consume on the Internet, we consume through the Internet, we buy and sell online, we consume basically all that the World Wide Web offers, we consume online social networks. Furthermore, in our turn, we are "consumed" because we actively manifest ourselves in this reality and sometimes even in virtual worlds.

But the version that I have in mind relates to the representation of consumption in the online environment. People choose to share on the Internet a virtual portrait built through the exposed consumption. Thus, not only we photograph objects, the food, the consumed experiences, but filtering out what is happening in our lives, we publish online pictures of the new car, the new phone, the last purchased shoes, the palm trees from the exotic vacation we have just returned from with souvenirs that we do not forget and we make them popular on our network of online connections. Online social networks such as Facebook[2] provide the right environment for exposure and construction/ reconstruction of self by means of consumption. Therefore from the last book we read, the last theater play we watched, the last visited museum or the name of the café where we relaxed with friends, everything is on the Internet. How does consumption look like in the light of the online social networks? What do we share in the online social environment in which express ourselves? As a result of this research, I expect an understanding of what we expose on Facebook. I also hope to confirm the viability of the research strategy and to identify ways of improving and expanding the research.

Internet, research strategies, online social networks and consumption

As our life is becoming increasingly mediated by technology, study disciplines must adapt and blogs, forums and online social networks unveil new research opportunities and better and easier coverage from the geographical point of view. I noticed, during the search and while consulting the bibliography, that the trend is to rather write about the advantages, disadvantages, problems, limitations or the statute of the online research in its broadest sense. Responding to questions about social life, about people through the Internet and taking advantage of its role in the lives of individuals falls into the background. In the case of these researches, although there is a subject attached to the article, the methodology section is detailed to the same extent, the thesis being a pretext for developing the methodological aspects. This finding reinforces my idea that the online research still has some legitimacy issues.

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2   Facebook is the second most used site in the world, after Google (Alexa Internet, 2013).

Photo cameras, video cameras, web, videoconferences, questionnaires and online or by email interviews, although they open the door to otherwise inaccessible respondents they are still instruments with limited influence in the method textbooks (Murthy, 2008). On the other hand, Angela Cora Garcia, Alecea I. Standlee, Jennifer Bechkoff and Yan Cui (2009) consider that ethnographic research of the Internet and computer-mediated communication transforms the interaction between subjects and the researcher in an anonymous one. Direct contact is replaced by information in the form of text, audio or visual data. All this requires that the researcher adjusts the way he defines the research question, but also the way he actually performs the research and responds to emerging ethical dilemmas.

Thus being a field that reveals new methodological challenges, researchers have addressed different strategies to answer any raised questions and hypotheses. One example is that of Robert V. Kozinets (2002), who chose to study an online discussion community with coffee as the common interest by using netnography. The first part of his article, however, is a guide to this method, its application, but also its limitations compared to traditional ethnography. Thus he says that netnography is simpler, faster and cheaper than previous known versions, it is more natural and less intrusive than focus groups or interviews. Netnography can provide information about symbols, meanings and consumption patterns of the online groups. A limit of this is that the results cannot be generalized outside the studied community. A solution is triangulation, switching to the broader framework of ethnography, or the use of other methods (including quantitative) to validate the results and gain the possibility of extrapolation. In the second part of his article, Kozinets applies the method of netnography as an "example" for the online community built around coffee. He aims to see which are the meanings and symbol system that came with the consumption of coffee, especially the consumption of espresso and Starbucks, classifying the posts according to a scale. At the same time, the author makes sure that he complies with the ethical boundaries as defined by himself a few years before the publication of the article: the subject's consented agreement, respect for the dignity and interests of the community members, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity. The latter is even more important when analyzing online posts as they can be falsely regarded as public (1998).

Brian Wilson (2006) takes Hine's model which considers that studies with methodologies built both online and offline do not necessarily guarantee the holistic character. On the other hand, tracing the relationships and connections between the online and offline, is possible with a multi-lateral approach, a mixed methodology. Text analysis related to the Internet is ideally completed by ethnographic research which includes interviews with the audience, but also with

the producers of online content. Wilson conducted a case study analyzing social movements, globalization and the community in the Internet era while referring to young people.

The phases of his research were: (1) analysis of web-site content (articles, chat room activities, and promotional materials), identifying respondents and understanding the rules of the subculture; (2) in-depth interviews with website owners and movement organizers; (3) observation and interviewing at formal and informal events (demonstrations, conventions, protests, festivals, etc.).

Another research strategy is the one used by Juliana Friend (2013) which focuses on initiating the contact in real life, offline. In her article, she discusses the role of Facebook in shaping the ethnic identity within Senegalese diaspora. The author started from the idea that she can find contacts through Facebook, but the process had not given any results. The solution was binding the friendships on Facebook through face-to-face contact. Thus they could build trust and the relationship. This way the snowball method could work and more important, the processes behind the attitude towards Facebook could be understood. Her approach starts from face-to-face and reaches the online, considering the classical/ traditional approach as the best window into the world of Facebook.

Another aspect taken into account in building the online research (but also in general) is respecting the limits of ethics. Carrie Paechter (2013) writes about the methodological challenges that occurred when studying a support website for divorced people. Although supporting the need to investigate the development of the online communities, the fact that the information is retrospective and the amount of data is very large may be an obstacle. Also Paechter discusses the researcher positioning within its community by his hybrid quality as being both the active user and the passive observer, ethical issues, the boundaries between public and private, and the temporal aspect of an online research. In online research, borders are difficult to establish or find and the term of privacy has changed its definition. While private space can be interpreted as, for example, sharing a nude picture with your friends on Facebook, it is unethical to use this image without the informed consent of the owner. Considering this, ethics should adapt the old principles to the new conditions of social reality.

Natalie M. Underberg and Elayne Zorn (2013) talk about the way in which researchers like Hine and Paccagnella think about the research ethics as a collaborative effort. Moreover, Hope Jensen Schau and Mary C. Gilly (2003) have developed a collaborative research model for a comprehensive view of the problem studied. The authors propose the expansion of knowledge about how and why personal presentation is manifested on the Web. The question is whether individuals are represented by what they post. The theoretical fundament came from the socio-cultural definition of consumption, focusing on how people

transform objects in possessions and symbols in personal expressions. Throughout the paper there are no references to problems or ethical dilemmas, but it was rather a process of collaboration. The study was conducted mainly in real life, and the data came from three sources: (1) personal websites (referring to how they are used for self-presentation); (2) semi-structured interviews, face to face with the owners of personal websites (how and why the exposed materials are chosen) and (3) electronic communications (for further questions occurred during the analysis). The study was conducted in waves over several years. The websites content was studied by encoding the text, images, audio, icons, hyperlinks and animations. The interviews contained questions about the purpose of the website, what it communicates and its motivations, the way in which content is selected, everything happening while the interviewee was watching the images from its website (self-driving). Moreover, during the interviews, there were presented initial interpretations of the web content for corrections, additions, etc. from the subjects. Over the years, the interpretations were sent online to the participants for additions – the third set of data – electronic communication. In this example, we can easily see that the Internet makes collaboration between researcher and subject comfortable, but it can also be converted into a strategy to prevent or to respond to ethical controversies through collaborative effort.

The analysis of previous studies by highlighting the difficulties and research process led to the construction of a scheme of principles that might prove successful in an online survey. Thus multilateral approach (combining paradigms, methods, means), respecting the limits of ethics, initiating offline contact for gaining confidence and binding the relationship, collaborative effort and transformation of the subject in a research assistant, returning for additions, corrections or confirmations, interviews, all have the potential to be the path to a holistic approach.

As a global social phenomenon, the use of the online social networks can be analyzed by using categories of associated reasons. The vocabulary that accompanies this aspect of social reality is diverse. Addressing the question "Why?"– "Why do you use the social networking sites?" – we will probably not get justifications that will necessarily facilitate the understanding of "exactly what kind of reasoning lies behind them, what calculus of costs and benefits motivates the action" (Rughiniş, 2007, p. 78). In order to understand the meaning and the engine of using these networks it may be useful to understand what the rules are or what meanings/ importance are associated with these online environments, meanings that can be found in in-depth explanations offered by respondents.

The motives behind the use of the online social networks are diverse and distributed by dimensions. Petter Bae Brandtzæg and Jan Heim (2009) addressed to the online social networks users the question "What is your main reason for

using the online social networks?", considering it to be a prodigious question to which subjects would respond with detailed descriptions. The study was conducted online, for the first four most popular social networks in Norway at the time, and received 4,700 responses. Out of these, they selected the first 1.200 responses, downward, depending on the number of characters, and they used the content analysis as the research method. The conclusions include the fact that they understood that it is wrong to look at this issue in the light of a single reason, some users stating several reasons: although they selected 1,200 responses, 1,518 were put on the list of reasons.

The categories of reasons should be regarded, therefore, in close connection and as part of the same picture. The two authors have built, for the stated reasons, the following groups: the opportunity to make new contacts and the opportunity to meet people (31%); contact with friends, acquaintances and also their influence (respondents stated that they were members of a community because their friends were) (21%); social activities, small talks, profile comments, support, entertainment (14%); access to information in any field both from the proximate universe as well as from the distant one (10%); debates (6.5%); the possibility to send free messages (3.5%); filling time (3.5%); the sharing but also the consumption of content (3%); fun, although without specifying anything in particular (2%); tracking and profiling activities of other users (1.5%); contact with family (although the authors say it rarely occurs, in 1% of responses); other reasons such as curiosity or the opportunity for the artists to promote themselves (3%). Another categorization of the reasons for using online social networks refers to the fact that they are ubiquitous, they fill the time, they create reflexes, they influence real life and help businesses (Dunn, 2013).

Therefore, the analysis of the motivations invoked by the users provides an interesting framework and it could lead to the construction of a generalized grid analysis. Social valences that hide behind social networks lay in the power of bringing and keeping people together. Instruments that can define the identity, they could provide a sense of belonging, a sense of affiliation by sharing a common activity; they could help binding new relationships and can become a measure of time.

With the Internet as a constant variable, consumption analysis can work with several types/ categories: the first type refers to the online shopping, respectively ordering and purchasing products in a process mediated by the computer; a different aspect is the consumption of audio, video and unlimited text. The Internet can be only one point on the path of purchasing having the role of strengthening the decision by seeking the opinions of others concerning the targeted products. With online social networks and the opportunity to share with others, the consumption has become digital through its representation in

the online environment: individuals choose to expose the consumption in virtual communities to which they belong, but this exposure is not by chance. Selection, processing and presentation of photographs as a vehicle of online identity is based on acknowledged consequences (Vivienne & Burgess, 2013). On the other hand, the brilliant and happy holiday shared on Facebook was not necessarily so in reality, and the pictures are either processed or premeditated in the idea of publishing them on the social network (McMahan, 2013).

As a result, the idea of exposing consumption finds its roots in the meaning and the symbols attached to products that help defining and building the self but it is also fulfilling the expected role due to a specific status. Messages that many products carry with them are the major reason for purchase and use, individuals are evaluated and placed in the social context also depending on the products that surround them (Solomon, 1983). Products and services are the main source of the impression of others about the individual-consumer, the data being integrated along with other known information: the status and personality are deciphered not only by the number or type of goods consumed, but also by style, color, uniqueness of wear and their brand (Belk, 1978). Moreover, owned objects are an indicator of material or post-material values of an individual. Thus the type of objects with a degree of importance for the user and also their public and private meanings, the relationships between things and people are signs of orientation towards either hedonic values or functional or status values (Richins, 1994).

Research methodology

The present study is a mix of methods and the innovative research method, in this case, is the netnography that supports the objective. At the same time, however, I considered to be useful the collection of quantitative data, to oppose information obtained through ethnography with those collected through an online journal. The consumption has been studied online predominantly using quantitative methods – views of websites, number of visitors, and leaderboards of pages. For this reason the digital ethnography arose, as to render a more complete experience of consumption through digital methods.

Digital ethnography is "the modern digital equivalent of traditional, malinowskien forms of ethnography," (Masten & Plowman, 2003, p. 77). Netnography, as a form of digital ethnography is "the ethnography conducted in cyberspace", being "a qualitative, interpretative research method, that adapts direct traditional ethnographic techniques of anthropology to the studying of culture and online communities" (Kozinets, 2006). So far, digital ethnographies studied the online social networks and the construction of identity within them (Larsen, 2007), the role of communities around a brand ((Avery, 2007), (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011)), blogs (Hookway, 2008).

The first phase of the study was to initiate contact with potential respondents and it was conducted through two presentations (in early December, 2014). These included the description of the project, of the researcher, of the purpose of the study, but also precise instructions about involvement in the research. The participants in the presentation were asked to fill in an agreement form, the form requesting also socio-demographic information (gender, age and place of residence, year of study, professional status – employed/ unemployed, time spent online, time spent on Facebook).

In the second phase, after obtaining consent, the participants were contacted by email and they received instructions regarding the completing of an online journal about their activities and about Facebook. The journal was constructed in such a way as to be filled in quickly, on any device connected to the Internet. After testing, the instrument has undergone significant changes. People who completed and evaluated the list of questions sent me the difficulties, the uncertainties they had. Testing took place over a week from 17th to 23rd of November 2014. The effective application was conducted between 22nd of December 2014 and 25th of January 2015 through a website dedicated to this research. The data collected in the period from December 22nd to January 4th were used as a stage of testing and adjustment of the online platform, furthermore as it was superimposed over the vacation and winter holidays.

In addition to the auxiliary information and inserts that constantly informed about the study and how to proceed, the respondents completed in the journal items related to everyday activities of consumption. Consumption categories included in the analysis are: Media (press/ magazines, articles, shows, radio stations/ TV stations)/ Websites; Reading/ Documentation; Vacation/ Weekend; Music (attending concerts, listening to songs, posting videos); Movies (at home or at the cinema); Sport (I watched sport activities) and Sport (I did sport activities); Shopping/ consumption of food, clothing, cosmetics, accessories, and electronics. The classification and segmentation of consumption categories are based on the place of action, on the use of Facebook during, about or after the activity, on the device used to access the social network, on sharing the activity within the social platform and on all the actions typical to the website: "share", "like", "follow", "add", "check-in", "tag", "comment" and "post".

The third phase assumed that, during data collection through the diary, I had to return to the respondents to confirm that the instructions were followed, that there were no problems in understanding what to do, about the completion and of a technical nature. Subsequent to completion and in relation to preliminary analysis, I studied the data gathered directly from the Facebook pages of the valid respondents, collecting information from the "About" section of the user.

An important aspect of this study, and especially of the recruitment of respondents, is the introduction of a reward system whose purpose was to

encourage both the adhesion to the proposal as well as to avoid high abandon rates. The participants in the study were rewarded through a lottery system according to some participation rules, with a random extraction from the participants. All those who completed the journal as indicated and during the entire period of the research, at the same time ensuring support for the researcher for explanations or clarifications, received prizes in objects: a tablet and USB memory sticks.

Data analysis: results and discussion

The data obtained generated the need for a multi-level analysis based on respondents' participation. Each level had a different degree of detail based on the information available. Thus, I will discuss those who completed the questionnaire of agreement, about those who agreed to participate in the study in comparison with those who did not, about those who actually started completing the online journal and as well about the level with the most information available: those who have completed the online journal during the entire period. From each level I will keep only those fitting to the next one until I get to the heart of research, to the people that should help me answer the questions raised.

In the first phase of the research, initiating contact with potential respondents, 87 people filled in the agreement form. They are students in the first year[3] at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Bucharest. These students represent the entire pool of respondents. 17% are males and 83% females, aged between 18 and 36 years (72% focusing around the age of 19 years), and 12% are employed. Among the 87 respondents, only one person said that it did not have a Facebook account. After recoding the outliers (using the method of the nearest non-extreme value), the average time spent online is 4.5 hours for the 87 respondents ("How much time do you spend on average daily on the Internet?"). In terms of time spent on Facebook ("How much time on average do you spend on average every day on Facebook?") the average is 2.7 hours. More than 60% of the online presence is dedicated to the social network. There is a difference between those employed and those who have no job: those who have the status of unemployed tend to spend more time online than those who have professional obligations. Thus, the latter stay on the Internet 3.9 hours and 2.5 hours on Facebook, but the differences from the others are not significant: those without a job stay on the Internet 4.5 hours and 2.7 hours on Facebook. For 13% of respondents, time spent on the Internet overlaps with the one used to access the online social network, Facebook. Although they spend 4.5 hours online, the specificity of this group is accessing the Internet in order to navigate through Zuckerberg's universe.

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3 85 out of the students finished high school, one is licensed and one is a doctor in law.

Moving to the next level, 69% of the 87 participants in the presentation described above have said that they agree to cooperate in the proposed research, respectively completing the online journal with their daily consumption activities. With a demographic profile similar to the entire database, in their case although the average time spent online, and the time allocated every day for Facebook increases slightly (4.9 hours, and 2.9 hours), the difference from the total respondents turns out to be statistically insignificant. On the other hand, comparing those who agreed with those who refused to participate, I noticed a difference regarding Internet usage, the latter using it significantly less (3.4 hours versus 4.9 hours, with a coefficient of significance of 0.02 at a confidence level of 95%).

Further, restricting even more the database for analysis, those who have actually started completing have a demographic profile that complies with the total base, similar with those who agreed to answer the proposal. Of those 69% who agreed, only two thirds (63%) completed the online journal in at least one of the days in which the online platform for data collection was active. This is the level at which I experienced the first type of dropout – before the actual start of the online phase of the study: the expression of the difference between declaration and action. For those 63% who began completing the journal, time spent online reaches 5 hours, while on Facebook they spend 3.2 hours of this period.

Coming closer to answering the question of the study, respectively what consumption activities do we share in the online environment in which we manifest ourselves, I noticed that there are no differences between those who completed the diary at least once throughout the data collection period (from December 22nd to January 25th) and those who completed it daily during the reference period (from January 5th to January 25th, 2015). Meanwhile, this latter level of analysis brings out the second type of abandonment, the renunciation rate reaching 58% compared with those who actively responded to the proposal and 73% in relation to those who initially said they would participate. In the case of the final respondents, those who went all the way, average time spent online is 5.6 hours, while the average time spent on Facebook is 3.8 hours.

Summing up of what time spent online means, it can be seen that the time allocated to the Internet, but also the one invested in Facebook grow from one level to another: thus, from the 87 respondents to the 60 who agreed to the participation, to the 38 who have been active and to the 16 which fulfilled the entire mission, the daily averages increase (Table 1). Assumptions for this gradual increase in the lot may be explained by the greater availability given the fact that they are connected more time during the day, the affinity to this topic, being a known one, but also the increased manifestation (active or passive – only consulting the pages of others) in relation to the social network.

Table 1. Average time spent online and on Facebook daily for each level of analysis

	Average time spent online (hours)	Average time spent on Facebook (hours)
All respondents (N=87)	**4.5**	**2.7**
Employed (N=10)	3.9	2.5
Unemployed (N=77)	4.5	2.7
Agreed to participate in the study (N=60)	**4.9**	**2.9**
They have not agreed to participate (N=27)	3.4	2.2
Those who have completed at least once (N=38)	**5.0**	**3.2**
Final respondents (N=16)	**5.6**	**3.8**

The last level of analysis assumes for respondents to have completed the online diary every day, from the 5th of January to 25th of January 2015, as instructed. The final respondents are also those who, during December 22nd, 2014 - January 4th, 2015, asked questions, reported problems and actively helped adjusting the technical aspects of the platform. Although, as mentioned above, no significant differences were found between them and those who completed sporadically, I chose to analyze only the first variant, the argument being to have a greater degree of safety in relation to the information recorded.

The 16 respondents, who completed the diary with their daily consumption activities between the 5th of January to 25th of January 2015, are females, one having an employee status[4]. Using the journal as a data collection method enables the researcher to do the analysis in relation to the number of responses, so the percentages shown below are relative to the total number of entries in the database, where each entry represents a new consumption activity of the respondent. In addition to these quantitative data comes the one collected from the Facebook page of respondents, information gained from the "About" section of the user. I note that out of the 16, only eight allowed me access to their personal page by adding me to the list of online friends.

Each respondent introduced an average of about two consumption activities, the number of total recorded activities being 609. The top three most frequently reported activities are assigned to "Read/ Documentation" (27%), followed by "Media (press/ magazine articles, shows, radio stations/ TV stations)/ Web Sites" (19%) and "Shopping/ consumption of food, clothing, cosmetics, accessories, electronics" (13%). The least mentioned are activities that relate to "Vacation/ Weekend" (4%) and "Sport", both in the category of "I did sport activities" (2%) and of "I watched sport activities" (0%). Although the sport is not among the main activities, having a small number of mentions during the 21 days of diary records, the online profile of respondents appears to be slightly different. In six out of eight

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4 The hired respondent is the one that finished the doctoral school.

cases, the personal description contains appreciations for football teams („FCSB", „Syria national football team," „Real Madrid CF", „FC Petrolul Ploiesti") or tennis players („Maria Sharapova", „Simona Halep").

The places where the activities mentioned above were carried are "Home/ Student campus", two thirds of the activities being reported here, the "College" (9%) and "In shops" (7%). The least mentioned places are "In cafes" (1%), "The gym/ sports training" (1%, which is consistent with the reported list of activities where sport has a weak presence) and "At work" (0%), the latter being obvious as for the small number of persons employed in the analyzed group.

If I talked about places, these are closely related to the device with which users choose to connect and browse both the internet and the social network. The users' preferred devices to access Facebook are mobile phones, in 47% of the cases, and the laptop in a similar proportion, i.e. 41%. At the opposite end, the tablet has 7% of claims, and personal computer (defined as "Desktop PC") has 5%. Where they live, respondents connect by rather using the laptop, while at college or in stores, mobile phone has priority. Thus, even if the laptop addresses the need of mobility, the phone provides versatility, but also convenience. The evolution of phones has made them to be at least as powerful as laptops or tablets, but much easier to use and carry.

When it comes to the use of Facebook during, in relation or after the performed consumption activity, one third of the activities are related to the use of the network. On the other hand, the presence or the expression inside Facebook is itself a consumption activity which also generates, in its turn, through the platform's facilities, a type of consumption. 69% of activities are independent of the online social network, according to the respondents.

Regarding the activities shared on Facebook by respondents, only a third of them (36%) were exposed online. In the same context, they differ from those reported in total. Their distribution, meaning both hierarchy and the top three activities, is slightly changed. The first, in order of most exposed activities on Facebook, are those that have been classified as "Media (press/ magazine articles, radio, radio stations/ TV stations)/ Web Sites" (31%), followed by "Read/ Documentation" (15%) and "Music (attending concerts, listening to songs, posting videos)" (13%). Although the music appears as the third activity exposed, it is the most conspicuous consumption according to the online profile of respondents. The dedicated section from the personal description contains most entries and it is followed by films and events. The category "Read/ Documentation", which appears to be in second place based on the collected data, is weak on Facebook pages, but not ignored.

Respondents were asked to also register in the online diary all the specific actions for the Facebook platform and for the way of interaction inside it, but with

reference to consumption activities declared. Therefore, analyzing how these shared activities are expressed, in 44% of cases the respondent gave a "like", appreciating elements related to the activity. This form of exposing personal consumption is the most common and it is visible within every user's network of connections. The appreciation of an item on Facebook is like a statement apparently unintended to be visible to others, but rather a supportive action for the element appreciated, and it is a statement that contributes to a user's profile. Another form of exposure, but which requires a more active, a more involved presence is publishing a text, audio or video (27%). A similar action to appreciation is following a page (22%) and the "check-in" – stating the place or event where the activity took place or that was related to it - happens in 18% of cases. 14% of consumption activities are generating social capital, as respondents said they added people in their circle of friends or connections from the activities. There is also the exposure variant by sharing the information taken from another Facebook user or from another source by pressing the „share" button (13% of cases) for items related to the activity. All these platform features allow the free expression, but also the indirect building (i.e. independent of the required settings for the profile) of a user's page. Only in 7% of cases, users have chosen to post photos related to the activity on Facebook, most of them posting one photo.

An important aspect of the exposure on Facebook, especially in consumption and building the user's profile, is the association with people or brands. Interestingly, in terms of consumption activities reported, respondents mentioned other people as being part of their activities in 7% of cases. Tagging a brand is rarer, happening in 2% of cases.

Conclusions

The analysis of the previous studies by highlighting the difficulties and the research process, led to the construction of a scheme of principles that might prove successful in an online survey. The multilateral approach (combining paradigms, methods, environments), respecting the limits of ethics, initiating the contact offline for gaining trust and binding relationship, the collaborative effort and the transformation of the subject in a research assistant, returning for additions, confirmations or corrections, interviews, all these seem to be an important way, but also one with potential for improvement, in order not to miss anything by sight, with the purpose of a holistic approach.

The present study brings with it the attempt to combine the strategies above as well as answering the research question. What do we share in the online social environment in which we express ourselves? After the data collection, I realized the need for a multi-level analysis. The first phase brought with it information regarding the average time spent daily on the Internet, but also on Facebook.

Thus, from an average of 4.5 hours spent online (for the entire group), I observed that over 60% of the online presence is dedicated to the social network. Moreover, there is a segment for which the online time is synonymous with the time spent on Facebook. In other words, the online social network is the single reason for accessing the Internet, other situations being probably isolated. At the level of the strata considered, I found that the time allocated to the Internet, but also the one invested in Facebook, tend to increase, so that those who entered the final analysis allocated most time both to the Internet as well as to the social platform.

After a drop-out rate calculated in two steps (first calculated with respect to those who have initially agreed – 73%, and, second, to those who completed the diary at least once – 58%), I reached the final group for which I analyzed the information gathered through the online journal, taking into account the Facebook personal pages of respondents (only for those where I had access). The data show that those who chose to respond to the survey reported that the most frequent activities were clustered under the category of "Read/ Documentation" and the least mentioned were activities that related to "Sport", both in the category of "I did sport activities" and „I watched sport activities". The places where the activities mentioned above were carried are most often "Home/ Student campus" and people connect by rather using the phone. Regarding the activities shared on Facebook by respondents, only a third of these were exhibited in the online environment, however on the first place are those categorized as "Media (press/ magazine articles, shows, radio stations/ TV stations)/ Websites".

The present research suggests some issues, amongst the most important being the high dropout rate, even in the conditions of establishing material rewards. On the other hand, the advantage of online research is that there is the possibility of ongoing adjustment of the design, especially as the researcher can have real time access to the data collected. This study may represent a starting point in studying large populations, but also increasingly complex targets derived or not from the present one. Technologically, the approach has brought along the platform[5] that hosted the online diary, platform that can be used by adapting it to other research projects.

Acknowledgements

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5   The platform is available online by accessing: http://surveyfb.tk/.

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