

I HAVE, I POST, THEREFORE I AM! HEDONIC CONSUMPTION AS A TOOL FOR SELF-PROMOTING BEHAVIOR ON SOCIAL NETWORKING PLATFORMS

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ABSTRACT. Research shows that people often associate themselves with material objects or places and use them to gain a certain validating status from others. (Millan and Mittal, 2017:2, Thompson and Hirschman 1995:151, Schau and Gilly, 2003:1-5). Individuals often find themselves engaged in social comparison and self-presentation behaviors in order to fit in and gain recognition. The present paper takes a closer look at the ways the rise of social media is affecting these behaviors. The main aim of our research is to find out whether there is a link between hedonic acquisitions and self-promoting on SNS. Our hypothesis, that individuals who practice self-promotion on social networking platforms are more likely to make hedonic acquisitions than those who use social media for other gratifications, has been confirmed to a certain extent.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, self-promotion, self-representation, hedonic acquisitions, social comparison.

Introduction

Human self-presentation behavior is driven by self-esteem and belonging needs. Status aspirations influences individual's behavior, and consumption objects may satisfy certain needs. Even in tribal

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times, people used material goods to show their social status to other individuals. This consumption behavior is specific for the current modern times and is often referred to as status consumption. Specialized literature on marketing defines it as „acquisition and use of consumer goods symbolizing status, both to the individual and to relevant others, motivated by a desire to maintain, protect, and/or enhance one’s social status” (Millan and Mittal, 2017:2). Concerts, gourmet food, art, flowers, designer clothes, sports cars, luxury items are hedonic goods. They are characterized by an emotional and sensory experience such as fun or pleasure. Social Network Sites provide the individual with the necessary tools to display and promote the self to a large audience: friends, followers and other users in the network. Images of the self, feelings, actions, associations with brands or celebrities, places, possessions and many other types of information can be made publicly available in the online environment.

In this paper we examine the relationship between self-promoting behavior on social network sites and hedonic consumption. First we reviewed the literature regarding the classification of human needs and how people cope with the means they have to satisfy them. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs has been analyzed. Needs of belonging and self-esteem drive individuals to engage in social comparison and self-presentation behaviors in order to fit in and gain recognition. We looked at how the rise of social media is affecting these behaviors and drives the desire of fame.

Specialized literature indicates that possessions and places are often used to create an identity and that brand, celebrity and location affiliations can increase engagement among the audience and increase the number of reactions of the shared content (Veblen, 1953 and Campbell, 1987 in Richins and Dawson, 1992:2, Thompson and Hirschman 1995:151, Schau and Gilly, 2003:1-5, Dhar and Wertebroch, 2000:2; Khan et al, 2004:6; Oesch, 2015:4-5). A survey has been conducted in order to collect information from users and non-users of social media, in order to identify a link between their online behavior and hedonic consumption.

The present study provides valuable information for the fields of marketing and psychology. Influencers, and those who want to become influencers, can improve their strategies in order to increase their number of followers, to become more popular in their community and beyond it. Patterns found on demographic data can be valuable for companies when segmenting the target audience by showing how various categories of people react to different content they are exposed to. For the field of psychology, this research offers information about how individuals are gratifying their needs through social media use and how self-presentation is influencing their buying decisions. The framework can be easily replicated and personalized based on certain marketing or psychology goals.

Literature review

Impression management

Ed Diener, a researcher in positive psychology, argued that people are happy as long as they think they are happy and that subjective well-being (SWB) can be empirically measured. Diener's research shows that SWB consists of positive feelings (positive affect), negative feelings (negative affect) and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is measured by assessment of balance between positive and negative affect in an individual's life and how well that life measures up to his aspirations.³ Individuals have needs that psychologist Maslow (1954) classified in a 5 level pyramid. Beside physiological and security needs, people need to be loved, to be part of a group, they need to feel appreciated and capable of success. (Cao et al, 2012:3, Noltemeyer et al, 2012:1, Wahba and Bridgell, 1976:3; Heylighen, 1992:3). Research shows that individuals use media to satisfy certain needs. SNS provide opportunities for users to gratify their needs of connection and belonging but also to increase self-esteem. Recent studies indicate that relationship

³ <http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/ed-diener/>, accessed on 16.01.2018

maintenance, entertainment, social sharing, relaxation, social surveillance, expressing appreciation, offering or seeking help, are some of the reasons why people use social media. (Quan-Haase, 2012:2).

According to Krämer (2008:2) and Chen (2010:3-4), Maslow (1954), Schlenker (1980), Steel (1988) and later on Leary (1995) identified the human need for self-esteem, therefore it is expected that people want to be perceived by others in a certain way. Impression management (self-presentation) is generally considered to be persuaded by the desire to make a favorable impression (one's ideals) on others, because the impressions people have about others, affect how others perceive, evaluate, and treat them, and also how they view themselves. Specialized literature indicates a variety of variables that motivate people to control how others perceive them. The larger the audience and the more public a person's behavior is, the more likely he/she is concerned with how it appears to others. To construct the image of the audience, people rely on the number of friends or followers they have (Choi and Bazarova, 2014:1-3, Marwick and Boyd, 2010:1-3, Marwick, 2015:1). Walther and colleagues (2008) found that comments made by one's Facebook friends impacted the profile owner's rating of social attractiveness and credibility (Walther et al, 2008:1-27). Another study by Tong and colleagues (2008:1-24) found that the more Facebook friends a profile owner had, the more socially attractive he or she was perceived to be. The impression motivation should increase with the value of the outcomes one hopes to attain. If one can achieve material and social outcomes, self-esteem maintenance or identity development, he/she will feel more motivated to manage the impressions generated. Target characteristics can also influence the importance of creating an impression. When an individual interacts with targets that are of high power or status position, the impression management motivation will increase as such targets are able to confer these types of outcomes. People have boundaries in regard to the images they find acceptable to project and become motivated to manage their image when they believe the impression others have about them falls outside these boundaries (Leary & Kowalski, 1990:1-6, Krämer and Winter, 2008:2;

Chen, 2010:3-4). Individuals evaluate themselves also by comparison with others (Social Comparison). If they perceive they are superior, their psychological well-being will be boosted. If they believe they are inferior, self-esteem will be affected and the psychological well-being is threatened. Vogel's experiments indicate that the use of social media is directly related to high social comparison due to the opportunities provided by SNS (Vogel et al, 2015:2). Many other studies showed the relation between the use of SNS and social comparison behaviors. Mehdizadeh's (2010:1-8) research on Facebook users indicated that low self-esteem is tied to the amount of time spent on Facebook. Angie Zuo's (2014:4-17) research on 417 undergraduate students showed that the more time an individual spends on Facebook, the more likely he is to be engaged in social comparison. Haferkamp et al (2011) surveys and experiments concluded that woman who looked at beautiful users experienced a more negative body image than those who were exposed to less-attractive users and that men exposed to profiles of successful others presented higher discrepancy between the actual and the desired career status, than those confronted with less-successful males.⁴

Users receive public feedback from other users on profile features. Thus, they evaluate the impression they make online in terms of reactions others have to the content they post (likes, comments, shares). A study conducted by AliAlassiri and his colleagues (2014:3) reviewed the dominant types of self-presentation, showing that self-promotion (enhancing and promoting one's positive traits) and ingratiation (imitation, addressing compliments in order to get others to like the individual) are the most frequent forms of self-presentation in the online environment. When self-promoting, the individual enhances its own positive traits and promotes its qualities to others. The individual seeks to be viewed as competent (AliAlassiri et al, 2014:3, Zuo, 2014:4-17, Mehdizadeh, 2010:1-8, Krämer and Winter, 2008:2). Using biased information, social comparison made on the online environment

⁴ <http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/cyber.2010.0120>, accessed on 12.01.2018

differs from in-person social comparison and predominantly concerns upward comparison. There is vast research showing that in SNS profiles, the self is presented in a favorable light. Rosenberg (2009:1-95) found that individuals who used Facebook to self-promote, as a means of self-presentation, emphasized their qualities and achievements. A research conducted by Lo and McKercher (2015:8-9) shows that tourists did not take photos of themselves if they believed the photo will not benefit them (eg no makeup, shabby clothes). Lola Chen's research (2009:7) on YouTube amateur performers indicated the use of self-promotion tactics in order to achieve a larger audience who can recognize and admire their competences.

Materialism and the desire of fame

Media and celebrity have always been related. Two major changes in celebrity appeared with the rise of social networking sites: pop stars, actors and other traditional celebrities welcomed social media and the opportunities to create direct relationships with fans and the creation of micro-celebrity was enabled. Following the example of celebrities, self-promotion has become a phenomenon even in ordinary peoples' lives. Dr. Michael Brustein, a clinical psychologist, has noted that society's beauty ideals are influenced mostly by celebrities and that people often mimic them in order to comply with these ideals. One way to "fit in" is to model the self after social media's most popular figures⁵ (Chen, 2009:7; Marwick, 2015:2-3; Djick, 2013:5). Popularity is "the state or condition of being liked, admired, or supported by many people".⁶ In the online environment users can compare themselves with others in terms of audience size (friends, followers) and amount of reactions (likes, shares, comments) (Choi and Bazarova, 2014:1-3, Boyd and Marwick, 2010:1-3, Marwick, 2015:1).

⁵ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/instagram-influencers-beauty_us_5aa13616e4b002df2c6163bc, accessed on 13.03.2018

⁶ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/popularity>, accessed on 12.01.2018

The consumption of utilitarian goods is cognitively driven and attains a functional task: food, clothing, detergents, fridge, and so on. Hedonic goods are characterized by an emotional and sensory experience, fun, pleasure (such as gourmet food), concerts, art, designer clothes, sport car, luxury items. Many theories have been elaborated to describe materialism such as "the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions". Materialists consider acquisitions, symbols of identity and see them as essential for their well-being. The value of possessions comes from their potential to confer status and also from their capacity to display a desired self in an imagined perfect life". (Veblen, 1953 and Campbell, 1987 in Richins and Dawson, 1992:2). Several theories and empirical studies show that people invest meaning in things, they acquire and display them and that human-object relationships functions three-way (person-thing-person). (Thompson and Hirschman 1995:151, Schau and Gilly, 2003:1-5, Dhar and Wertebroch, 2000:2; Khan et al, 2004:6; Oesch, 2015:4-5).

There is a lack in scientific research regarding the tools and strategies people use to self-promote, the types of behavior which aim at gaining popularity and whether possessions or places can increase fame in the online environment. In an interview for the New York Post, Instagram influencer Lissette Calveiro (32.2k followers) confessed that in order to make her social media life look glamorous she sank \$10,000 into debt by dining out, going on shopping sprees and traveling, all for the attempt of displaying a fascinating life.⁷ The editorial team of a famous campaign and brand analysis platform, Social Samosa, published an article with confessions of influencers that admitted that they often bought unnecessary and fancy thing just to blog about them and that they were often taking hundreds of pictures before selecting the final one⁸.

⁷ <https://nypost.com/2018/03/03/my-quest-for-instagram-stardom-left-me-in-financial-ruin/>, accessed on 13.03.2018

⁸ <https://www.socialsamosa.com/2017/11/influencer-confessions-surprise/>, accessed on 13.03.2018

At this stage, an intermediate conclusion would be that individuals behave in such ways to satisfy their needs and to achieve a state of well-being. It is in the human nature for people to evaluate themselves by comparison to others and present themselves in ways they want to be perceived. They use various tools in order to achieve recognition and to fit in. Association with material things and places is often used in order to shape an image. Through their features, social media platforms allow users to present a desired self to a large audience and provide opportunities for social comparison. Users can find much information about other users and compare themselves in terms of physical aspect, marital, professional and financial status and also lifestyle: hobbies, dining and travel preferences. Individuals can engage in various behaviors aiming to find equilibrium of (subjective) well-being. Frequently, they practice self-promoting in order to gain popularity and achieve the desired level of recognition. They analyze the number of likes, comments and shares they receive, as well as the numbers attained by others, in order to compare themselves to them. SNS provide users with tools for quantifying the results of their self-presentation actions, in order to shape their image and future behavior based on the number of reactions they receive.

The main aim of the present paper is to find out whether there is a link between hedonic consumption and self-promoting on SNS. Our hypothesis is that individuals that practice self-promotion on SNS are more likely to make hedonic acquisitions than those who use social media for other gratifications. This study aims to answer the research question: Is self-promotion behavior on SNS a predictor of an increase in consumer needs for hedonic acquisitions?

Methodology and research design

We conducted an online survey among Romanian residents, users and non-users of social media platforms. The questionnaires' structure was designed in such a way that it enabled the researchers to make correlations between the shopping behavior and the frequency/

nature of social media use of the respondents. It consisted of three main parts: the first five questions concerning the demographic data: gender, age, income, occupational status and the area they live in (rural or urban). The next 13 questions concerning the shopping behavior for clothing and electronic devices, travel and events. The last 17 questions analyzed the use of social media platforms. Our focus is on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Gemius data from 2017 reveals that Facebook is the most used social media platform in Romania, with 79.8% of internet users in the country. Following Facebook, in descending order, is Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter.⁹ We were not interested in Pinterest, as it is mostly used to search for specific content, products, tips or inspiration, nor in LinkedIn, due to its business and employment-orientation.

The age classification of the participants was made according to Rose M. Kundanis in her book “Children, teens, families and mass media The Millennial Generation” (Kundanis, 2003:37-43), based on the data provided by The Center for Generational Kinetics.¹⁰

Table 1. Generation classification

Generation	Generation Z teenagers	Generation Z young adults	Generation Y (millennials)	Generation X	Baby Boomers
Age range	14-18	19-25	26-35	36-56	57 or older

Based on their income, respondents were divided in three major categories: low-class, middle-class and upper class. In order to establish the range of income for each class we have considered the minimum (1162 lei) and medium (2434 lei) disposable income in Romania, in 2018. Low class is represented by those that have a

⁹ <https://www.gemius.com/agencies-news/romania-top5-social-networks.html>, accessed on 08.03.2018

¹⁰ <http://genhq.com/igen/>, accessed on 09.02.2018

disposable income up to 1162 lei. For the middle class, the income range is between 1162 lei and 2433 lei. In the upper class, the income is 2434 lei and above.¹¹

Respondents were classified according to their occupational status in eight categories: employers/entrepreneurs, employees, self-employees in non-agricultural activities, self-employed in agriculture (farmers), pensioners, non-employees and students/pupils, according to Romania's National Institute of Statistics (INS) classification¹². Since statistics regarding the amount of money Romanians spend yearly for traveling were not publicly available, we used as guidelines the results of a study conducted by MKOR, a research company, regarding Romanians' preferences and the budget allocated for traveling in the summer of 2017¹³. The following categories with regard to the expenses generated annually by traveling for tourism purposes have been taken into account: those who spend yearly 4500 lei or less, those who spend between 4501-9000 lei and those who spent 9001 lei or more. After analyzing the Eurostat statistic data¹⁴, we created the ranges of expenditure for clothing, per year: 500 lei or less, between 501 lei and 1000 lei and 1001 lei or more. Using Quickmobile statistics on how much Romanians spend on smartphones, the following categories of expenditure were created: 1000 lei or less, between 1001 and 2000 lei and more than 2000 lei.¹⁵

The questions revolved around aspects regarding the affinity for luxury and towards following trends, the frequency of traveling for more than three days for tourism purposes, for buying clothing items and new gadgets, for attending certain events and eating out.

¹¹ <http://www.calculator-salarii.ro/>, accessed on 06.03.2018

¹² <http://www.insse.ro/cms/en/content/coordinates-living-standard-romania-population-income-and-consumption-2016-romanian>, accessed on 28.02.2018

¹³ <https://mkor.ro/blog/studiu-turism-vacanta-vara-2017/>, accessed on 07.03.2018

¹⁴ <http://adevarul.ro/economie/stiri-economice/romanii-cheltuie-putin-haine-incaltaminte-comparativ-ceilalti-cetateni-europeni-5a4cefe5d7af743f8d0119a1/index.html>, accessed on 07.03.2018

¹⁵ <https://observator.tv/economic/studiu-cat-cheltuie-romanii-pe-smartphoneuri-178241.html>, accessed on 08.03.2018

In terms of expenses, the focus lays in the yearly amount of money spent for traveling and for clothing. Other data is considering the possession of certain gadgets, such as computers, smartphones, smart watches, game consoles and so on, the willingness to buy one or more of the newest smartphones introduced on the market in the past year and the type of events and festivals respondents are usually attending. Also, we searched for the most in-trend smartphones and created a list of items people might be interested in. As for the SNS behavior, we asked about the frequency and nature of use for each platform: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Since not all three networks have the same features, we framed the questions adapted to each of the platforms and some general questions that apply to all of them. Other information needed is regarding the frequency and the type of content shared: self-generated or other shared content and the frequency of posting on each of the four categories of topics: news, educational, personal and entertaining. Personal posts consist in self-generated content that discloses personal information. It can be pictures, gifs, videos of the user, event attendance, check-ins, product review and other status updates that directly expose a trait of the individual. Self-praising (self-promoting) posts are defined as “deliberate updates (pictures or writings), which published and shared on social media, are heavily conveyed with the positive self-images or self-focusing messages.” (Kik, 2017:1-8). Self-praising posts can consist in images, text, check-ins or other status updates that display positive characteristics of the user. It can be a check-in at a certain notorious event, an exotic destination they traveled, presents received, relationship status or professional achievements.

We used convenience sampling and distributed the questionnaire on Facebook Groups dedicated to survey participation, among students or on online groups for different types of users: mothers, students’ research groups, clothing sales and others. The respondents were also asked to share the survey among their peers.

For reasons of efficiency, costs and ease of use, we decided to use SQL (Structured Query Language) to interrogate our database.

SQL language is a standard computer language for relational database management and data manipulation. We used PostgreSQL as our database management system (DBMS). It uses and extends the SQL language and offers a variety of features for data workloads storing and scaling. By using PgAdmin as a client application for PostgreSQL, we were able to run SQL queries to extract and manipulate data. We used the language to formulate our queries. It allowed us to select certain columns with specified attributes, counting the number of results and averaging them respectively or selecting records that have matching values. We were interested in correlating demographic characteristics of certain groups of respondents (gender, age, income, occupation, living area) with online behavior (frequency of posting, type of content shared and so on) and offline behavior (private event attendance). The open source tool is user-friendly and time-efficient. The results of the interrogations are retrieved within seconds. Multiple conditions can be applied, "AND conditions" and "OR conditions" can be combined.

Findings

A number of 203 participants filled out the questionnaire: 68 male and 135 female, most of them from urban areas (169 subjects). Most of the respondents are Millennials (44%) followed by generation Z teenagers (28%), generation Z young adults (12%), generation X (11%) and Baby Boomers (6%). With regard to the monthly income, the majority of subjects (42%) earn more than 2433 lei, 27% earn between 1162 and 2432 lei and 25% have less than 1162 lei at their disposal per month.

A vast majority of respondents use Facebook (93%), 61% use Instagram and only 12% use Twitter. 31% of them use only Facebook while 43% use both Facebook and Instagram. 54% of them use multiple social networks (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and others). Only one respondent claimed to be using only the platform Twitter. Some of the reasons for not using the most common platform, Facebook, were data protection and the presence of fake news. Instagram non-users argued that the content they are exposed to on this network does not fit their needs and also the lack of time.

In order to identify a shopping behavior oriented towards hedonic acquisitions, we analyzed the social media behavior of individuals who often travel, buy clothing, shoes, accessories and gadgets and who take part in multiple events or who spend more money on each of the above. The main aim was to find whether there is a correlation between this behavior and self-praising posts. We have created four categories of individuals: those who travel for more than three days for tourism purposes, three or more times a year, those who buy clothing, shoes and accessories monthly or more often, those who possess more than three gadgets and those who attend/plan to attend more than two music festivals in the following year.

Only 31% of the respondents travel for more than three days for tourism purposes, three or more times a year. Almost half of them (49%) use both platforms: Facebook and Instagram and follow life-style and travel influencers. Only 30% of them claimed that they did not follow any celebrity/influencer. Regarding the amounts spent for traveling, 41% spend less than 4500 lei/year, 33% spend between 4501 lei and 9000 lei and 8% spend more than 9000 lei/year. The rest of the participants did not give details about how much they spend for traveling. Regarding the frequency of posting, there are groups of similar size that post weekly, monthly and yearly. No relation between travelling behavior and location/travelling disclosure on SNS or self-praising behavior was found, as displayed in Figure 1.

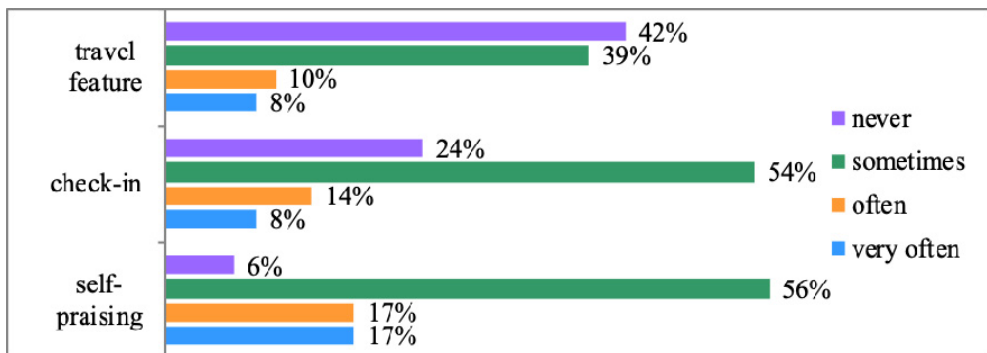


Fig. 1 Frequency and types of posts shared on different social networking platforms by respondents who travel three or more times a year

Most of the participants never disclose location or they do it only sometimes. The majority of people in this category claimed that they mostly share personal content, careless of the amount of travel expenses, as can be seen in Figure 2.

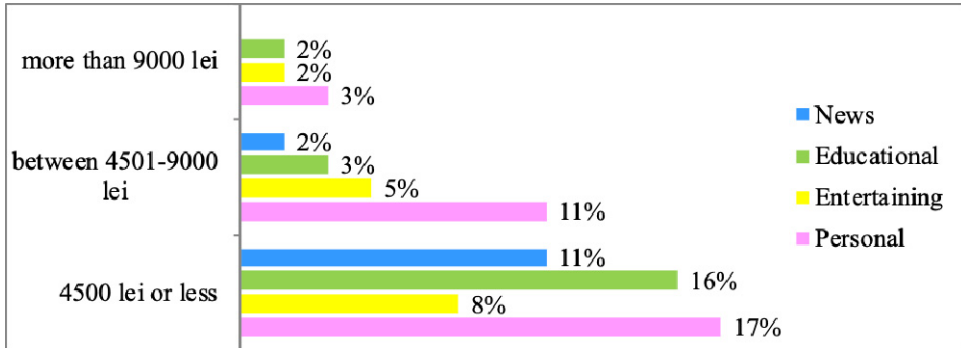


Fig. 2 Correlation between annually expenses on travel and the type of content shared on SNS

35% of respondents buy clothing, shoes and accessories monthly or more often. Half of them follow fashion and life-style influencers while 20% are not interested in any celebrity/influencer. 56% of participants in this category are Instagram and Facebook users and 24% only Facebook users. When asked about the frequency of posting self-praising posts, 36% of the participants said they do it sometimes, 28% do it often and 26% do it very often. Only 8% of them said they never share content that enhances traits of the self, as displayed in Figure 3.

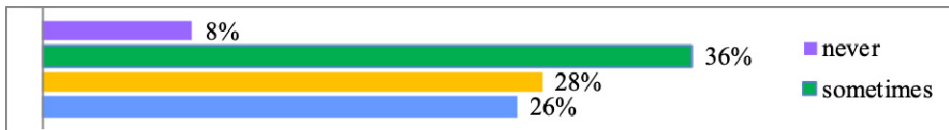


Fig. 3 Frequency of posting self-praising content on different social networking platforms by individuals who buy clothing, shoes and accessories monthly or more often

Results did not show any relation between the frequency of sharing self-praising post and buying luxury or designer items.

Based on the data collected from people who gave us information regarding the amount of expenses, the higher the amount of money spent on clothing, the higher the discrepancy between the number of individuals who share mostly personal content compared with other types of content, as can be seen in Figure 4.

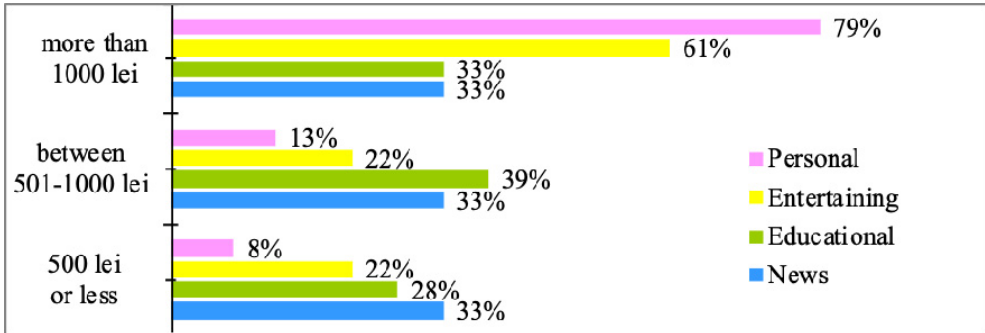


Fig. 4 Correlation between monthly expenditures for clothing, shoes and accessories and types of content shared on SNS

No relation has been found between buying behaviors and posting about acquisitions or gifts on social media. The majority of respondents said they never post about acquisitions (more than 50%) and gifts (more than 40%). The percent of respondents who publish such content often or very often is lower (below 20%) as displayed in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

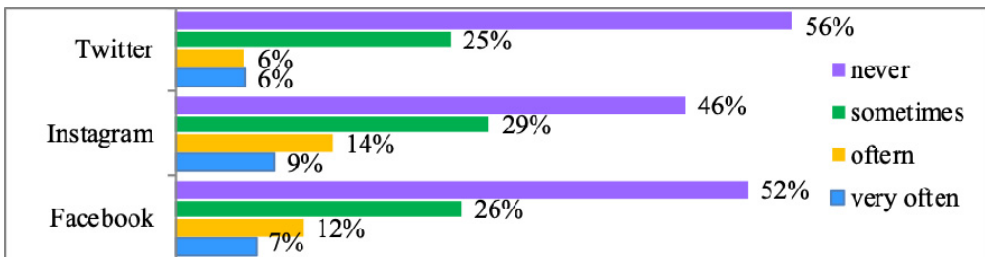


Fig. 5 Frequency of posting about acquisitions on different social networking platforms for respondents who buy clothing and accessories monthly or more often

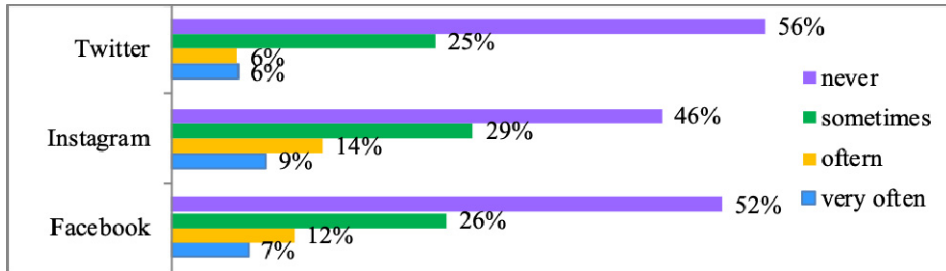


Fig. 6 Frequency of posting about gifts on different social networking platforms for respondents who buy clothing and accessories monthly or more often

We considered that people who own more than three gadgets are most likely to be hedonic consumers. Therefore, we analyzed their behavior on SNS. Almost half of the respondents (44%) own more than three gadgets. Also, more than half of them (57%) follow lifestyle, fashion and other influencers on social media, 20% don't follow any. 48% of them use both Facebook and Instagram and 30% use only Facebook. A similar percent of multiple SNS use (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), has been found on this category compared with other categories analyzed. A large majority (83%) declared they buy a new phone once every two years or more rarely and 14% make such acquisitions annually, while 48% declared they own or desire to have one of the most in-trend smartphones. 48% spend more than 2000 lei on smartphones, 29% spent between 1000-2000 lei and 17% spend less than 1000 lei. No relation has been found between this buying behavior and posting about acquisitions or gifts on social media. More than 50% of respondents in these category claimed they never post about acquisitions and gifts as displayed in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

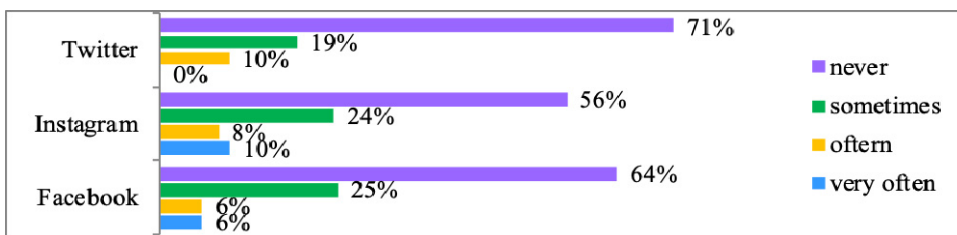


Fig. 7 Frequency of posting about acquisitions on different social networking platforms for respondents who own more than three gadgets

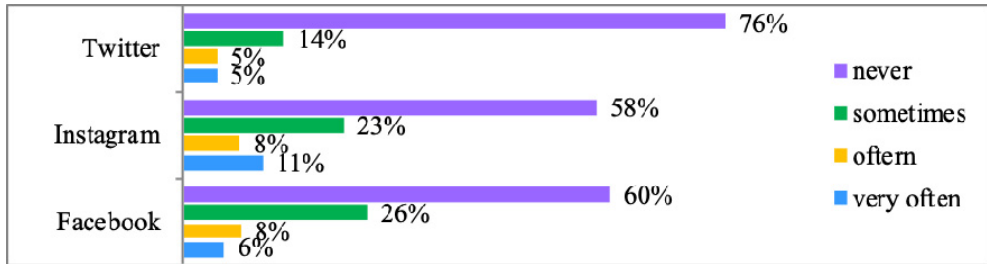


Fig. 8 Frequency of posting about gifts on different social networking platforms for respondents who own more than three gadgets

The results show no connection between the frequency of posting personal content and behavior patterns in buying technology items for individuals that buy a new smartphone annually or when a new model appears. Still, the higher the amount of money spent on a new phone, the higher the discrepancy between the number of people who share mostly personal content, as can be seen in Figure 9.

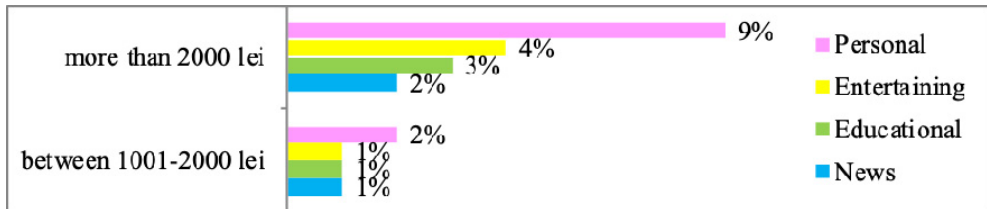


Fig. 9 Correlation between smartphone expenses and the type of content shared on SNS

In the events category, we have 31% of the respondents. They participated or plan to participate in more than two music festivals in the current year. They are mostly multiple SNS users (61%). Half of individuals in this category follow life-style influencers and 20% don't follow any celebrity. Contrary to the findings for the previous categories, the number of individuals that never post about themselves is significantly lower than those who post (careless of the frequency).

Most respondents that share self-praising content often and very often, participate in private events, while those who post only sometimes or never such content, are not interested or they would like to participate in private events, as displayed in Figure 10.

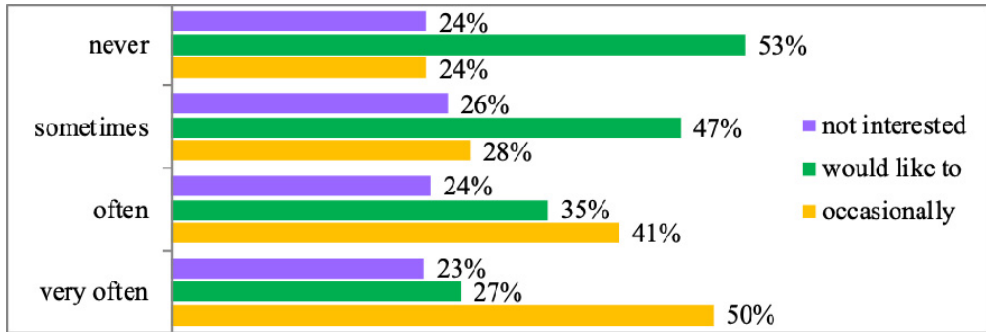


Fig. 10 Frequency of participating in private events correlated with the frequency of posting self-praising content on SNS

Regarding the type of content posted, there is a higher number of individuals who post mostly personal content than those who post news, educational or entertaining content as illustrated in Figure 11.

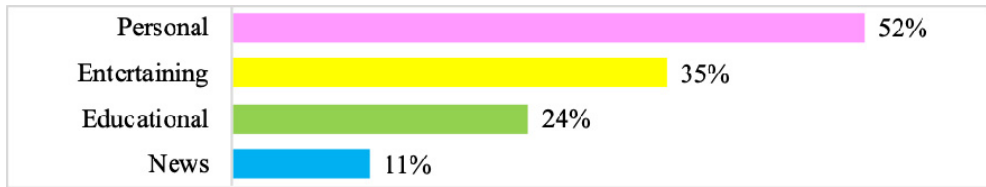


Fig. 11 Type of content shared on different social networking platforms by respondents who attend more than 2 festivals/ year

Regarding the frequency of posting self-praising posts, 51% of the participants responded they do it sometimes, 24% do it often, 16% very often and 9% never post such content. We tried to correlate this with a higher orientation for hedonic acquisitions. Therefore our focus was on those who travel more than 3 times a year, spend more than 9000 lei on travel and more than 1000 lei on clothing yearly, those who own more than three gadgets, who buy a smartphone yearly or more often or spend more than 2000 lei on such acquisitions and also on those who attend more than 2 music festivals in a year. As displayed in Figure 13, the results show a tendency towards hedonic acquisitions, such as fashion items and event attendance, for those who publish very often self-praising posts.

The majority (70%), of those who share very often self-praising posts attend more than two music festivals a year, compared to those who share such content often (24%), sometimes (24%) and never (17%). The same pattern has been found for fashion acquisition behavior: 77% of those who share self-promoting content buy clothing, shoes and accessories monthly or more often, while less than 50% of those who promote themselves often (43%), sometimes (27%) or never (33%) have this behavior. The frequency of buying a smartphone and the amount spent on such acquisitions showed similar trends. Most individuals with a higher frequency of self-promoting are spending more on smartphones and buy them more often. For other categories of buying behavior, the results are balanced.

Regarding the types of posts which generated the most reactions, our data indicated that personal content scored higher for Facebook and Instagram, compared to Twitter where the values were balanced, as displayed in Figure 12.

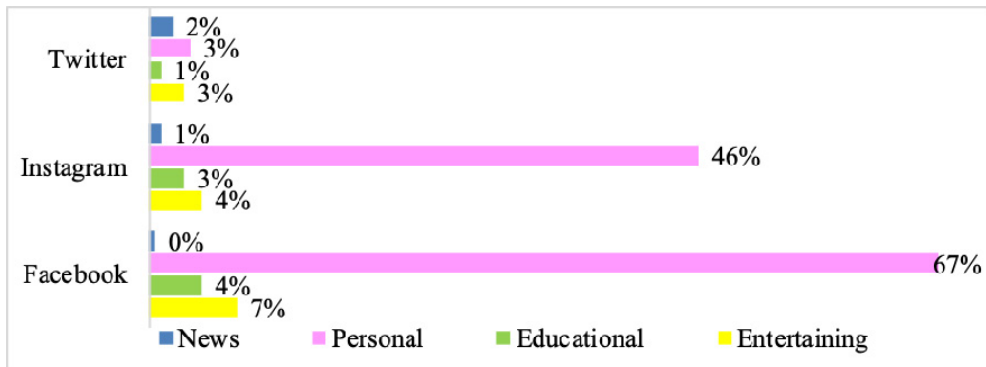


Fig. 12. Type of content that generated most reactions on different social networking platforms

The findings show that each age group uses various social media platforms for different reasons. Differences in uses and gratifications between age generations can be observed. Generation Z teenagers use Facebook mostly for information seeking (67%) and Instagram for pastime (86%). The majority of other generations use Facebook for

relationship maintenance (Gen Z young adults 44%, Millennials 38%, Gen X 43% and Baby boomers 50%) and Instagram for entertaining (Gen Z young adults 36%, Gen X 40%) or information seeking (29% Millennials). Most Millennials use Twitter for information seeking (41%). All respondents from Gen X claimed they use Twitter for relationship initiation and all Baby boomers for professional development. No participant from Gen Z teenagers uses Twitter. Gen Z young adults use Twitter mostly for information seeking, professional development and relationship initiation in equal shares (25%).

Conclusions

We can conclude that individuals who travel often, spend a higher amount on traveling or own multiple gadgets, do not use social media platforms more often than others in order to make their way of living public. They do not post check-ins or photos about their acquisitions, gifts or travel destinations. More than 60% of respondents claimed they never or just sometimes use check-ins or travel action features. The same pattern was found regarding clothing, shoes, accessories and gadgets. People who buy such items more frequently, or spend more money on them, do not post more about their acquisitions or gifts on social media platforms.

The results were different for those who attend or plan to attend more than two music festivals in the following year, partially confirming our hypothesis. Individuals in this category use more often tools, such as check-ins and event attendance that allow them to publish their location and participation to certain events.

Regarding the frequency of sharing personal content, more than 50% of people who travel for more than 3 times a year for tourism purposes, make their travels public more often, regardless of the amount of money spent on traveling. As for clothing, shoes, accessories and smartphones shopping behavior, the higher the expenses, the higher the number of individuals who share personal content. Respondents oriented towards hedonic consumption share mostly self-praising posts.

The present research showed that self-promoting behavior on SNS is a predictor of an increase in consumer needs for hedonic acquisitions, partially confirming our hypothesis that individuals that practice self-promoting on SNS are more likely to make hedonic acquisitions than those who use social media for other gratifications.

The limits of our research reside in the low number of respondents. Another aspect is the fact that a very small number of respondents do not use any social media platform (2%) or use other platforms than the ones in our focus (3%), therefore future research could consider making comparisons concerning buying behaviors between users and non-users of social media and expanding the research on a larger sample.

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