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# ROMANIAN JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

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# Political Communication in the (Social) Media

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Negesse B. GESSESE*

# The Political Reform and the Amharic Biweekly *Reporter*: The Editorial Contents of the *Reporter* Newspaper in Ethiopia from 2017 to 2019

## Abstract

This research examines the agenda and frames used by the Reporter newspaper editorial coverage of issues and actors before and after the reform in Ethiopia. The study applies quantitative content analysis method and examined 99 (Period 1 = 57 and Period 2 = 42) editorials in all periods. The source of data and the period of data collection were purposely selected. The results indicated that societal issue, government and party issues were frequent in both periods. Professional journalist was the only Author in both periods. More government criticism and more reforms were mentioned before the reform. Compared with editorials published before and after the reform, noticeable changes were observed in government critique, attribution of responsibility frames, human interest frames and economic issue frames. However, content selection, sources of information, mentioned reforms, conflict relationship frames and ideological frames didn't have relationship with date of publication. Finally, the Reporter editorials coverage did change significantly in many respects, although it is difficult to determine the causes of the changes-economic factors, reduced political control, social changes or globalization forces.

**Keywords:** agenda, frame, editorial, reporter newspaper

## 1. Introduction

This research explores the print media agenda trends in Ethiopia, following a new political reform in 2018. The research chose The Reporter newspaper purposely as it has been the only few sustained private newspapers for long time in Ethiopia. The reform date was taken as a frame of reference to check whether reporting style, agenda, tone, and source varies.

### 1.1. Background

Ethiopia is the second populous country in Africa. The country has gone through a number of dictator regimes. The current ruling party took the power for 27 years and its name is Ethiopian People Republic Democratic Front (EPRDF). In 1991, the press law was pro-

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claimed, and a number of private presses flooded in the country; however, following 2005 election, except few, almost all of them were intimidated and closed. Among few private presses which were not closed is the Reporter newspaper.

In Ethiopia, Article 29 of the constitution, which was adopted verbatim from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), has been faithfully implemented. The article states everyone has the right to hold opinions without intrusion and to freedom of expression without any interference. It goes onto say that this right shall include freedom to receive, seek and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in print or in writing, in the form of art, or through any media of his/her choice. It also stipulates that freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed and sets out the specific elements it constitutes. In addition, it offers that any citizen who violates any legal limitations on the exercise of these rights may be held responsible under the law. Moreover, Ethiopia is a signatory to other international instruments asserting the fundamental importance of freedom of expression including, the UDHR, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, the Windhoek Declaration, the African Charter on Broadcasting and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) program. These instruments would also have gone a long way to amplifying the constitution's protection of press freedom if they had seen the light of day. There still lie testing challenges ahead.

Though the press has a 120-year history in Ethiopia, the private press began full-fledged operations just 21 years ago. As a promising profession, it is affected with a raft of internal and external problems. A significant chunk of the private press is devoid of a code of conduct and editorial policy; it also suffers from chronic organizational weaknesses and the propensity to spurn neutrality and display political activism. The pathetic state of the various journalists' associations and the blatant factionalism characterizing the private press also serve to demonstrate this point. The problem is compounded by the government's reluctance to provide incentives for and overt animosity towards the private press. This was evidenced by Ethiopia's designation as the fifth worst jailer of journalists in the world and its enactment of a draconian mass media law. The testing challenges that attended the founding of the press council have left a scar on the right to organize the press. Although the media council was officially established after many trials and misfortunes in September 2016 with 19 media institutions and journalists' associations, its failure to be registered to date on account of the non-existence of an allowing entity has troupe a cloud over its future. No solution has been found to the problem in spite of bringing the matter to the attention of several government organizations.

After the military regime step down in 1991, the press and its freedom have revealed remarkable change. During transition, the government has taken significant measures which ensure the freedom and development of the press. The most important one is the declaration of the freedom of press which includes the right of expression without restriction and censorship. In addition, a press law has also been codified for the first time. This changes in the legal and institutional sphere resulted for the spread of private press in the country. As such, the new EPRDF led government has come up with various institution provision and embodiments. It sought to ensure the freedom of the press as well as its growth a popular as a viable institution of democracy and the building of democratic society and culture.

Accordingly, its guarantee is that any individual can form a private press institution and perform all the legitimate and responsible activity of press. The freedom of the press is also incorporated in the FDRE constitution and further detailed by the press law. The time between 1991 and 1992 could be said to be one of the freest times in the history of the Ethiopian private press as there was no need to formally register in order to own and run a newspaper or a magazine (PMC, 2006). This trend, however, was short lived as proclamation 34/92 came into effect with requirements for pre-publication registration and licensing formalities for the private press. This period witnessed several papers and magazines produced by some who were simply zealous to do journalism and some who had a cause, and a few others who wanted to earn a living out of newspaper publishing.

### 1.2. Statement of the problem

Ethiopia is one of the biggest countries in Eastern Africa (its population estimated to be over 100 million) has a short-lived history of a private press. Both the imperial regime of Haile Sellasie and the military regime, the Dergue, controlled the tasks of the private press. The defeat of the military regime in 1991 created a prospect for the private press to come into presence. The private newspapers are believed to have voiced alternative views for the past two decades because the two national dailies: Addis Zemen (Amharic) and the Ethiopian Herald (English) as well as the electronic media (Ethiopian Television and Radio) have been controlled by the Government. The military regime, the Dergue, with its "Ethiopia First" discourse left no room for freedom of the press in practice. Hence, the private press faced many internal and external challenges. The external challenges included pressure from the government, lack of getting access to information from government officials, a low reading culture, cost of publication and distribution. Furthermore, lack of technical and professional expertise, financial instability, and ethical problems are related within the private print media themselves (Shimelis, 2006,).

Though they are considered as an elite media (primarily used by the educated section of society especially catering for the urban population and mainly the Capital Addis Ababa), the private-print media with its limitations (educational, professional, cultural, legal, political etc.) are believed to play a positive role by notifying society. The print media have focused on various topics ranging from the social, cultural, economic, and political up to entertainment and sports (Article 19, 2003).

The Ethiopian private press is blamed for partiality in reporting the government in negative terms (Shimelis, 2000; Hailemarkos, 2006). Research conducted on two private and two government-owned ones to evaluate their coverage of political parties during the 2005 election. The result revealed that the two private newspapers (Ethiop-now defunct, and Addis Admas) allotted much of their space for accusation by the opposition against the ruling party-100% and 76% consecutively. The same result was replicated by the government English daily and The Ethiopian Herald that put 100% of the blame on the opposition (Hailemarkos, 2006).

A more recent study on the private print media in Ethiopia arrived at a pessimistic conclusion, questioning their role and forming uncertainty on their capacity in helping the transition to democracy, describing them as constitutionally motivated (Skjerdal, &Hallelijah, 2009). Viewing them as partisans of the opposition, the Ethiopian government responded to

the deeds of the private press in different terms ranging from denying access to government held information to imprisonment of journalists and owners (Skjerdal, & Hailelujah, 2009).

It is shown that comparison between private and government print media reporting were conducted by many scholars. The result showed that the media became polarized. Researches showed that many newspapers were banned after 2005 election but reporter was not. Researches were conducted in the Reporter newspaper: its circulation in comparison with private and government newspapers, its development reporting compared with government newspapers, political framing compared with private and government newspapers. Besides these, at the start of its publication, the Reporter was critical to the government, but it changed to soft area of criticism. As the new political reform has come into existence in Ethiopia since 2018, the media and journalists have got relief from intimidations. Therefore, the researcher wanted to compare the contents of 'Reporter newspaper (Amharic biweekly)' based on different time frames whether it was consistent or not before and after the new reform in Ethiopia.

### 1.3. Objectives

The major objective of this study is to examine the contents of the Reporter Newspaper editorials before and after the new reform in Ethiopia.

### 1.4. Research questions

1. Which contents of the Reporter newspaper editorial were frequently chosen before and after the new reform in Ethiopia?
2. Is there any similarity or difference between sourcing editorials before and after the new reform in Ethiopia?
3. What kind of frames was dominantly used in the Reporter newspaper editorials before and after the reform?
4. Does the Reporter newspaper editorial contents have relationship with date of publication?

## 2. Theoretical framework

The investigation of these research questions is mainly based on the theories of agenda-setting and framing. As notable media effect theories, agenda-setting and framing paradigms provide for the theoretical frameworks through which the degree of salience and descriptions can be studied (Fourie, 2001).

### 2.1. Conceptual Overview of Agenda setting theory

Historically, agenda-setting theory has contributed to the resurgence of moderate effects of the media after the era of limited media effects claimed by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues (1944) and Klapper (1960). Indeed, McCombs and Shaw's (1972) findings of the transfer of salience from the media agenda to the public agenda stimulated scholars to re-evaluate their thinking about the relationship of the media and the public. Agenda-setting theory set its place with this theoretical and methodological development and its multi-faceted applicability in various fields such as politics, business, and culture. If a successful theory is judged by its

potentials in generating new inquiries and venues of research (Conant, 1951), agenda setting clearly is one of the few in communication that has passed the muster of such tests. As McCombs and Shaw (1993) opined more than two decades ago, agenda setting had accumulated a healthy share of its literature, integrated other theories in its inquires, and developed a number of subfields along its historical growth.

Most agenda-setting research still tends to focus on newspapers and TV rather than other media. However, the prevalence of new media such as the Internet and social media calls for more attention from future researchers to examine these new media channels. In particular, considering that the Internet and social media are horizontal media which provide different kinds of information to different target audiences, additional work on agenda setting remains to be done in order to further study individual differences in agenda-setting effects. Consistent with McCombs' (2004, 2005) prediction that agenda-setting theory would expand to new contexts, the findings suggest that agenda-setting research has been conducted in many different domains.

The media has the ability to influence the visibility of events in the public mind as the press selectively chooses what people see or hear in the media. Agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong relationship between the emphasis that mass media places on certain issues and the importance endorsed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). They describe media's role as the agenda setters and the media's ability to influence public opinion by setting the agenda of what people think about. In this research, agenda setting theory has been used to compare the contents of The Reporter newspaper in Ethiopia before and after April, 2018 since political reform began on the stated time.

Further, the media have a paramount importance in news items priorities. The media give some news events more prominence than others. It is believed that people form attitudes based on the thoughts that are most prominent when they make decisions (Hastie & Park, 1986) that ultimately shape the considerations they take into account when making judgments about political leaders. Scheufele (2000) observed that agenda setting looks on story selection as a determinant of public perceptions of issue importance through priming and evaluations of political leaders. Along with the manner in which the news is presented, the frequency of publication plays an important role. Readers tend to consider items which are reported on frequently as being very important.

The basic intention of agenda-setting theory can be stated broadly as elements that are prominent on the media agenda over time frequently converted prominent on the public agenda. The discussion of attribute agenda-setting explicitly introduced the conceptual language of objects and attributes that can be operationalized in many ways other than public issues.

There are several agendas in present-day society. Recently, researchers have practiced the central idea of agenda-setting theory, the transfer of salience from one agenda to another, to a wide multiplicity of new arenas as miscellaneous as professional sports (Fortunato, 2001) and classroom teaching (Díaz, 2004). One rapidly escalating area is the business news agenda and its impact on corporate reputations and economic outcomes ranging from profits to stock prices (McCombs, 2004). The internet is a major research frontier not only the traditional but also new domains of agenda-setting. For some observers, the obtainability of many channels and the opportunity for users to seek their own personal agendas challenges a basic tenet of agenda-setting which the media tend to share the same set of news priorities. Thus, the argument goes to the power of the mass media to set the public agenda may disappear. The evidence currently shows that courtesy to news on the web tends to be more highly con-

centrated than in the print world though this research has been continued to map the evolving agendas in the print media environment.

### 2.2. Framing theory

Framing is forming information in a very definite light to sway what people think, believe, or do. Its accustomed transfer a difficulty could be a priority to whom or what may be to blame for it, and what should be done about it (Iyengar, 1996). Framing is employed to speak in a very big selection of channels that include conversation, media reports and communal debate. They are accustomed to convey persuasive messages; as an example, marketing professionals and researchers have long employed and studied approaches to communicating in media to convince others (Kotler & Keller, 2015). Frames are expected to influence judgments about complex issues to an individual's prevailing ways of organizing, considering, and interpreting the sphere (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2009). Much of the research on framing thus far has involved experiments comparing equivalent messages that convey either gains or losses (gain/loss framing) related to an action while Others compare the results on audiences with different emphases which call it emphasis framing.

Emphasis frames are rendered as interpretive story lines that communicate what's at stake in a very complex policy debate and why the problem matters. The story positions influence decisions by posing different trains of thought. Each of which emphasizes one dimension of a posh issue over another. A customary type of research in emphasis framing compares episodic and thematic framing: information is cast either in terms of specific personalized stories (episodes) or more broadly (themes). Like gain/loss framing, however, evidence for the effectiveness of either approach in altering attitudes is mixed. Mixed are findings on framing complex related problems like obesity or temperature change in terms of personalized stories as a persuasive strategy for encouraging behaviors or building support for policy actions. Framing as an idea has become too broad and overlaps a disproportionate amount of with other effects of the media on people's decisions about the problems and ways of thinking that are relevant to them (Cacciatore et al., 2016).

The extent of issues coverage in the news is the principle by which the general public assesses the performance and credibility of agency, corporation, or scientific organization (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Nisbet & Feldman, 2011). Political leaders and organizations recognize and antedate these effects. Consequently, when an occurrence raises on the general news agenda and thereby becomes an object of public concern, political actors are likely to require some type of action to deal with it. This action could also be in loving little or no expert advice on the topic given. The action on contentious issues in society often is driven by values, beliefs, and other considerations. Thus, research on the agenda-setting effect of the media has repeatedly provided evidence that the problems portrayed within the media shape the problem priorities of the general public. The results of such agenda setting are often both positive and negative.

Framing has emerged together with the foremost popular areas of research for scholars in communication. The ambiguity of the concept begins with a insufficiency of consistency how the concept is defined or how these definitions connect with the descriptive models basic the idea (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The communication literature is extensive with different conceptualizations of frames and framing. Druckman (2001) listed no fewer than seven definitions of the concept. These range

from frames as principles of organization (Goffman, 1974) to frames as principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation (Gitlin, 1980). Sweetser and Fauconnier (1996) defined frames as organized deliberations of the way aspects of the world function whereas (Capella & Jamieson 1997) offered a definition more directly tied to journalism, arguing that framing is the manner in which a story is produced.

The implications of these varied definitions are twofold (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016). These scholars explain, first, there is considerable disagreement over what exactly constitutes framing. This is perhaps most readily outward in the different operationalization of the concept, particularly between equivalence framing and emphasis framing. The former is a form of framing that involves manipulating the presentation of logically equivalent information, and the later involves manipulating the content of a communication (Scheufele & Iyengar 2016). Second, framing overlaps with a number of other conceptual models, including priming, agenda-setting and persuasion, and related concepts such as schemas and scripts. This conceptual overlap has left scholars with an inadequate thoughtful of the framing notion both in terms of its theoretical boundaries and methods of operationalization.

Scholars' abandon the general framing label altogether and rely on (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016) more specific terminology when discussing their work and the media effects models underlying it. They argue that scholars must do a much better job of distinguishing between different types of framing, most notably emphasis and equivalence framing. Some of the frames are field specific.

For instance, psychology-rooted framing refers to variations in how a given piece of information is presented to audiences, rather than differences in what is being communicated. The sociological beginnings of framing can best be traced back to (Goffman, 1974) and, later, to (Gamson, 1992). Compelled in part by concerns about the ecological validity of equivalence-based framing work, the sociological tradition views framing as a means of understanding how people construct meaning and make sense of the everyday world (Ferree et al., 2002). Goffman (1974) described framing as a method by which persons put on interpretive schemas to both classify and interpret the information that they encounter in their day-today lives, whereas (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987) defined frames as a central organizing idea or story line that gives aiming to an unfolding strip of events.

Unlike the equivalence-based delineation of framing, the sociologically rooted definition moves framing outside of the presentation of reasonably equivalent information into territory where the choice of one set of realities or arguments over another are often supposed a frame. As a result, framing definition in the sociological tradition, with studies often manipulating what an audience receives rather than how equivalent information is presented. This involves emphasizing one set of considerations over another; this sociologically oriented approach to framing has been labeled emphasis framing. This sociological tradition helped galvanize framing work by expanding the scope of studies that would fall into the framing label. This included, as an example , a growth of emphasis framing studies in communication that specialize in thematic framing, which involves placing a problem during a general context, and episodic framing, which treats an issue more exceptionally and without the context of its thematic-based counterpart (Iyengar, 2005).

Disagreements have emerged over the vividness of framing as compared to other related communication theories. Framing has been said to overlap with or be subsumed by theories like priming and agenda-setting (McCombs, 2004). The majority of the overlap concerning these different communication theories has to do with issues of applicability and accessibil-

ity. Entman's (1993) definition of framing is made around ideas of choice and salience, but it is frequently used incorrectly to subsume other media effects models under the framing label. Frames focus on some bits of data about an item that's the topic of a communication, (Entman, 1993).

Entman's meaning of framing is as a product of accessibility as disparate to applicability, and his definition is essentially aligned with several other salience-based definitions within the literature. For instance, (Gitlin, 1980) argued that frames are a way of presentation whereby certain essentials of the communicated text are highlighted or omitted by the communicator. These definitions, also as others overlooked here, suggest that framing operates by making some aspect of a drag or communication more accessible, visible, or salient to an audience.

Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar (2016) argued that agenda-setting and priming are also based on models featuring accessibility as a central construct. Agenda-setting refers to the thought that media tell people what to believe supported issues being covered more habitually or more prominently. Therefore, the media transfer salience to audiences. In some ways priming are often thought of as an extension of the agenda-setting process (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The concept of spreading activation explains a process whereby media coverage serves to increase the salience of an issue in a person's mind, resulting in that issue being more likely to serve as a standard by which related issues are evaluated (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Priming is the process of activating a particular construct in memory resulting in that construct becoming more obtainable and powerful in succeeding thinking (Ratcliff & McKoon, 1988).

Price, Tewksbury, and Powers (1997), as well as Scheufele (2000) contend that agenda-setting and priming involve a different set of cognitive processes than those required by framing. Although agenda-setting and priming are said to rely on the notion of attitude accessibility, framing is rooted in Gestalt psychology and attribution theory, which explored the tendency among people to detect patterns in pieces of information that were consistent with preexisting rational schemas (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016). Hence, framing operates kept applicability effects that appeal particular interpretive schemas which determine how information is processed (Scheufele, 2000).

The accessibility–applicability distinction is crucial to (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016) understand of framing effects on a minimum of three fronts. First, as noted, Entman's, 1993 definition of framing played an important role in galvanizing framing work in communication. Unfortunately, this salience-based definition of framing is just too loose to possess practical value as it makes possible to argue that any number of differences in communication constitute a difference in framing. First, Entman's framing measure and far from his own empirical work on the subject (Entman, 1991) overlap with early studies in agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which makes it difficult to isolate framing effects from those supported agenda-setting.

Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar (2016) argue that emphasis-based studies push framing into a more general category of persuasion where any observed effects may be the result of differences in the convincing power or quality of a given message, rather than differences in the way the similar information is presented.

The accessibility–applicability distinction is important for (Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar, 2016) understanding of the mechanisms behind framing, priming, and agenda-setting. One can assume that accessibility effects (priming and agenda-setting) will operate, at least to some degree, among all members of a population (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016).

The same cannot be said about applicability effects as an audience member's preexisting cognitive schema or knowledge structures will determine the degree to which a frame will resonate. The presence of a cognitive schema that matches the frame should produce a framing effect, whereas a mismatch between frame and schema should fail to supply such an impact. It has been argued that disentangling the various mechanisms underlying priming, agenda-setting, and framing are critical for the trajectory of research in each of those different areas (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The sociologically based definition both threaten to form framing as a laid off communication concept and pushes the sector of communications toward an obsolete and possibly unwarranted model of media affects that subsumes most effects under a broad persuasive framing authority (McQuail, 2005). This example has been built on the belief that mass media has potentially strong effects on attitudes and information processing but any effects was contingent on a host of individual-level characteristics (McQuail, 2005). As a result, this loose definition of framing has undoubtedly contributed to creating framing effects appear the maximum amount more widespread and powerful than they really are. After half a century of framing research, one would expect these studies to operate at least in part deductively and discover frames that previous research has shown to resonate well with culturally shared schemas among audiences. Specifically in the communication discipline, however, there seems to be little uniformity across studies in the types of content or framing categories identified. Instead, many studies still inductively discover issue-specific content categories with little conceptual concern for how these content categories would influence audiences within framing effects model.

Framing research be both terminologically and conceptually refocused around equivalence-based definitions that are more directly tied to alterations in the presentation of information rather than the credible value of that information, (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016). Although this narrows the scope of framing work by excluding emphasis-based manipulations, it should not be read as an effort to suppress framing research. To the contrary, Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar (2016) interpret this as an opportunity to expand and produce equivalence frames. These might include movement away from text-based framing operations and movement toward frames based on nonverbal ( Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016).

Although framing studies have exploded in recent years, the process behind the phenomenon remains a contentious issue, and one that only a limited amount of research exists. The best way to understand framing is to explicate the mechanisms behind the phenomenon as well as related phenomena such as priming and agenda-setting, (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016).

Moreover, the most successful way of pursuing these ends is paying more attention to the historical and theoretical foundations of these concepts. According to Price et al. (1997) framing effect is one during which salient features of a message to its organization, selection of content extract particular thoughts valid, leading to their activation and use in evaluations. Their view suggests that the act of reading a news article will determine which stored knowledge structure becomes active. In turn, the activated knowledge structure was used to interpret the news article. In this respect, choices made by journalists and editors can play a task in determining the cognitive schema that a reader will apply to a news article.

One of the operational problems related to framing and research, however, is that it can often prove difficult to isolate framing effects from agenda-setting and priming effects. This is because issues tend to be framed during a consistent manner as they emerge on the gener-

al public agenda (Downs, 1972). This is in part due to the journalistic norms associated with the issue-attention cycle, but also because journalists, just like everyone else, learn about issues in large.

The most promising model for distinguishing the mechanisms of priming, framing, and agenda-setting, scholars should devise research to test the ideas put forth in (Price & Tewksbury's, 1997) knowledge activation model, explicitly those regarding the mechanisms underlying framing, agenda-setting , and priming. For this research framing and agenda setting are taken as a theoretical frame work.

Media effects research ought to abandon the general term framing as a catch-all phrase for a number of distinct media effects models and substitute it with the more precise terminological distinction between equivalence and emphasis framing, (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016). They add that this is not only help resolve a number of the terminological confusion that has surrounded framing research for many years (Scheufele, 1999) but also benefit clarify the very distinct mechanisms that underlie both models. As (Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar, 2016) begin to explore the new paradigm of preference-based effects models, equivalence framing could also be crucial in helping to know strong media effects. However, emphasis frames will be increasingly faced with the challenge of distinguishing its understanding of framing effects from other persuasive media effects mechanisms in these new communication environments.

Though framing has diverse meanings having field rooted backgrounds and strong and weak effects, this study proposed five deductive frames. These are attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest and morality frames.

Attribution of responsibility frame shows the problem or issue focusing on who caused a situation or who must solve it. The conflict frame presents the issue from the perspective of polarization and battle of individuals or social groups sometimes using a language of war or games and competitions (Patterson, 1994; D'Haenens & De Lange, 2001). The human interest frame is used to bring the issue or problem closer to any type of receiver as the human emotion captivates everyone. The issue is personalized, showing the human side, and can reach dramatization (D'Haenens & De Lange, 2001). The economic consequences frame stresses the economic effect that a certain issue may have on citizens in general or on any particular group might seem irrelevant (D'Haenens & Lange, 2001). The morality frame gives reputation to the religious or moral implications of an issue or indicates a group or an individual should behave.

## 3. Research design and methodology

### 3.1. Research design

The study was based on a quantitative content analysis design. Content analysis is a research technique for the systematic, objective, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952). One of the most frequent uses of the content analysis is to study the changing trends in the theoretical content and methodological approaches by content analyzing the journal articles of the discipline (Loy, 1979). It shows the variety of messages used to draw inferences about the source, content of the message etc. Therefore, using content analysis as a quantitative method used to analysis the following variables in the Reporter Newspaper editorials before and after the new reform in Ethiopia.

Variables are attributes that the researcher measured as the cases vary in their scores on the attributes. In this research, a number of variables are included in the study: main topic of the article, quotations, author identity, government (National) critique, government (National) praise, and mentions of reform. The variables were chosen following an inductive approach. The categories were built by the researcher according to prior review of six editorials of the 'Reporter'. Besides that five types of frames were analyzed quantitatively. These were Attribution of responsibility, Conflict, Human interest, Ideology/morality and Economic consequences.

### 3.2. Samples, and Sampling Technique

The researcher employed purposive sampling to take samples of newspapers, dates, and editorial contents. Therefore, the Reporter newspaper (Amharic biweekly) two years period and editorials of the newspaper were purposefully selected. Whereas from the biweekly newspaper published on Sunday and Wednesday, Sunday publication was selected by simple random sampling technique.

Related to sample size, Kothari (2004) defines sample size as the number of subjects or items selected from a researcher's target population in order that it represents the target population. Sample size is a set of units drawn from a population, so an estimation of the characteristics the population can be made. The total samples were 99 (57 of them were before the reform and 42 of them were after the reform) articles.

### 3.3. Data gathering instruments

A number of methods exist for the collection of primary data. They include use of questionnaires, interviews, observations, focus groups and document analysis (Kothari, 2004). This research used document analysis or what is otherwise known as content analysis to collect the data required.

### 3.4. Inter-coder reliability

The coders are two, one graduate student majoring in journalism and communication and the other is the researcher. One of the coders received training before the coding process started. The study used Krippendorff's Alpha test of inter-coder reliability, which is regarded as a stringent measure of coder agreement (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). Both coders coded 10% of the samples (10 out of 99 editorials) to test reliability. With all variables coded, the average inter-coder reliability was greater than 0.78. For one variable, inter-coder reliability was below 0.7: the anonymous quotations variable (alpha=0.54. However, this variable is not critical to this study; therefore, their lower level of reliability does not influence the final results.

### 3.5. Data analysis procedures

The coded collected data screened and filled into the SPSS Version 20 software. After filling the variables and data into the software, descriptive Statistics such as frequency, percentage and Chi-square test were computed. Frequencies and percentages were used to show the comparison between two periods within the investigated variables. The Chi-square test was used to see whether the two independent variables have relationship with date of publication

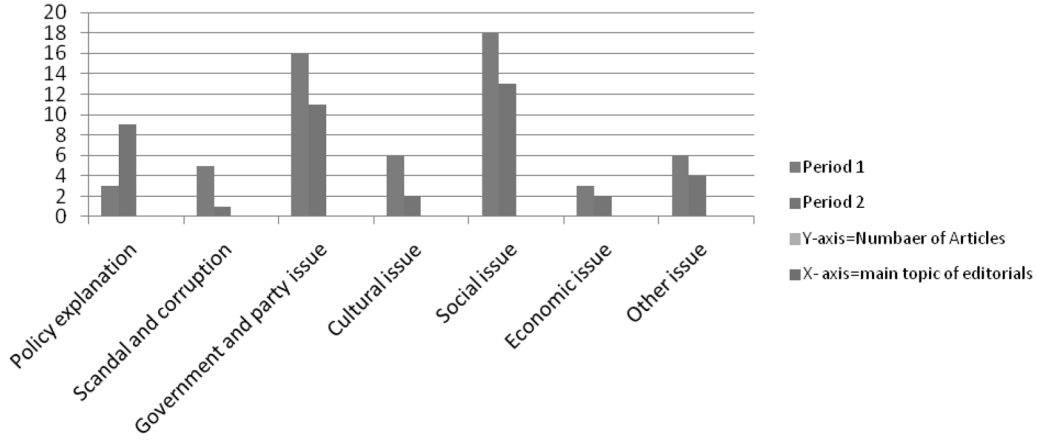
or not. Finally, the out puts were displayed into tables, which were analyzed by using words under each table.

## 4. Findings

A total of 99 editorials were analyzed in this study (N= 99) with 57 from April 2017 to March 2018 (Period 1) and 42 from April 2018 to January 2019 (period 2) about 1 editorial per week that is every Sunday's editorial. The average length of paragraphs is 5.25 and the author identity was professional journalist in each period.

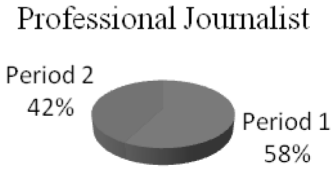
Figure 1. The main topic of the editorial.

To examine the statistical significance of changes in the main topic, percentage and frequencies were used. The results across the two time periods show that government and par-



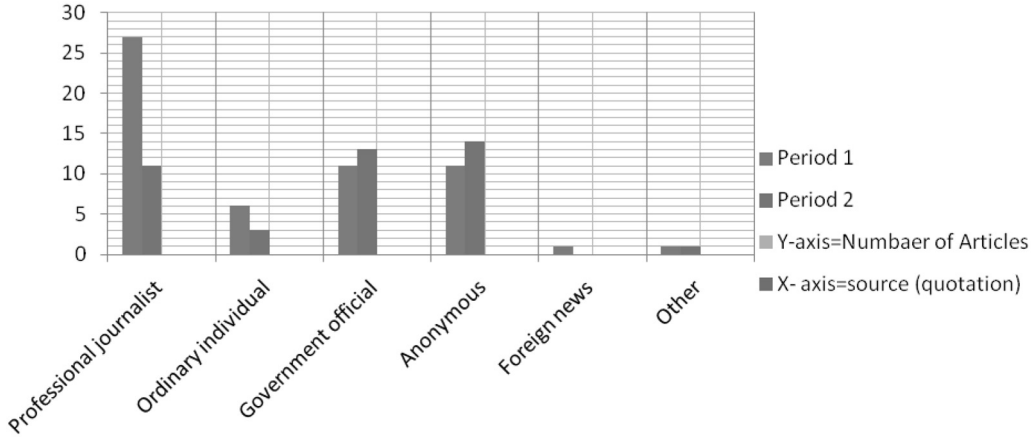

ty issues appear more frequently in Period 2(3(25%), 9(75%)) than in Period 1. In contrast, editorials covered more societal issues in period 1(18(58.1%)) than period 2 (13(41.9%)). Editorials cover less scandal and corruption in period 1 (1(16.7%)) than in period 2 (5(83.3%)). Government and party issues were frequently covered in period 1(16(59.3%)) than period 2(11(40.7%)). Editorials covered cultural issues more in period 1(6(75%)) than period 2(2(25%)). Economic issues appeared less frequently in period 2 (2(40%)) than period 1(3(60%)).Pearson chi- square =7.908, p=.245 and p >.05, two-tailed. This indicates there is no shift in editorials' main topics across two periods in the Reporter newspaper editorials before and after the reform.

Figure 2. Author identity.



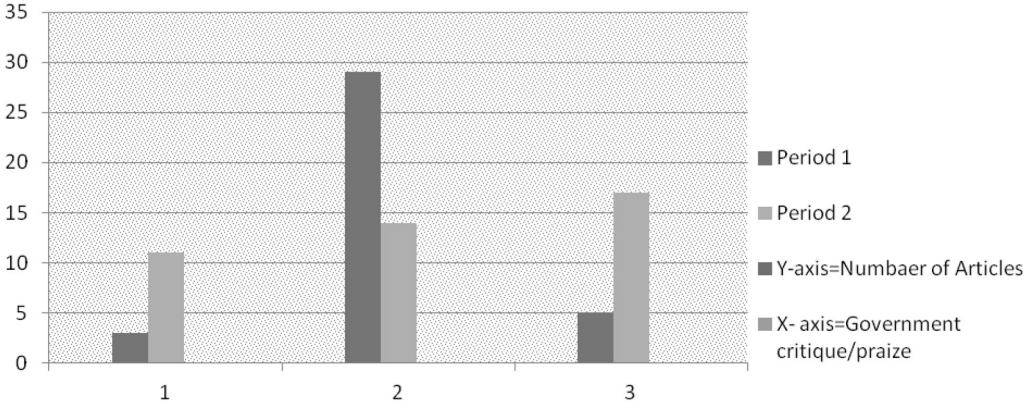
In all the sample editorials of the selected periods (1 &2), professional journalists were the only author of the editorials. Hence, there was no relationship between author identity and date of publication in the Reporter editorials as (Chi-square=2.99, p=.83 and p>.05)

Figure 3. Source (content quotation).



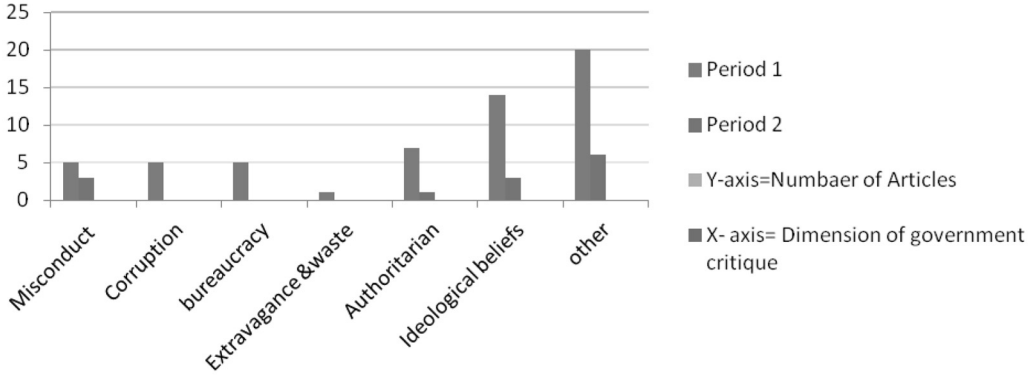

As the data portrayed in Figure 4.3, the difference in number of quotations is especially evident in five categories. Professional journalist quotations were frequent before the reform (27(71.1%)) than after the reform (11(28.9%)). Ordinary individual quotations were less frequent after the reform (3(33.3%)) than before the reform (11(45.8%)). Government official quotations were more frequent after the reform (13(54.2%)) than before the reform (11(45.8%)). Anonymous sources were less frequent before the reform (11(44%)) than after the reform (14(56%)) whereas Foreign news and other sources were not frequently sourced in the two periods. Therefore, chi-square =7.15, p=.20 >.05, two-tailed revealed that there is no changes in sourcing before and after the reform in the Reporter newspaper editorials.

Figure 4. Government praise/critique.



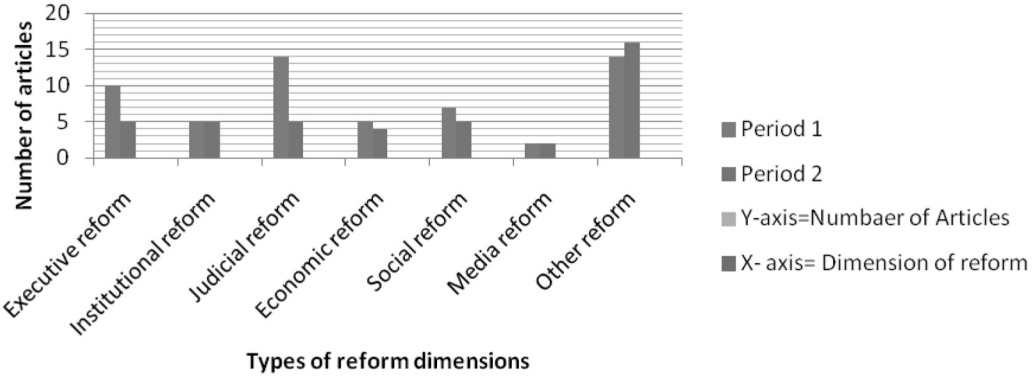
The result in Figure 4.4 depicted that government praise more frequent after the reform (11(26.2%)) than before the reform (3(5.2%)). Moreover, government critique was less frequent after the reform (14(33.3%)) than before the reform (29(50.9%)). However, P = .86 > .05, two-tailed as there is no significant relationship between government critique and praise with date of editorial publication.

Figure 5. Dimensions of government critique.




The result in Figure 4.5 indicated that editorials covered government critique more before the reform than after the reform. It revealed that misconduct reported more frequent before the reform (5(62.5%)) than after the reform (3(37.5%)). It also showed that corruption, bureaucracy and extravagance were (5(100%)), (5(100%)) and (1 (100%)) consecutively reported before the reform. The editorials reported authoritarian government less frequent after the reform (1(12.5%)) than before the reform (7(87.5%)). Ideological critics were more frequent before the reform (14(82.4%)) than after the reform (3(17.6%)). Other critics were also less frequent after the reform (6(23.1%)) than before the reform (20(76.9%)). To sum up, government critique had a relationship with date of editorials reporting as P = .00 < .05, two-tailed.

Figure 6. Dimensions of reform.

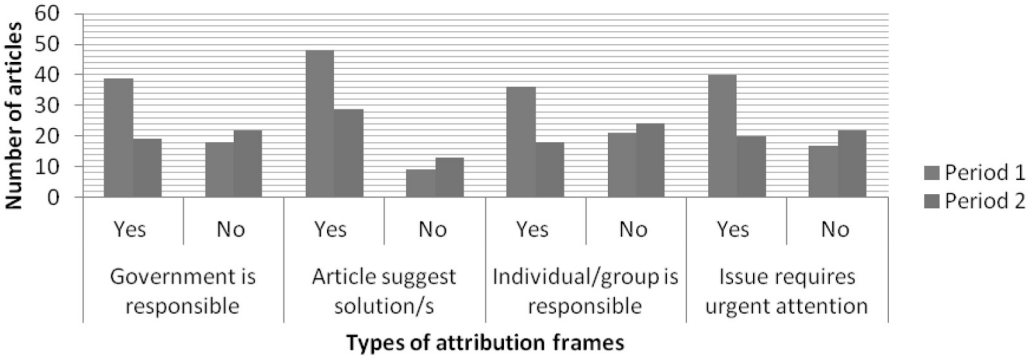



The frequencies showed that executive reforms were mentioned more frequently in Period 1 (10(66.7%)) than in Period 2 (5(33.3%)). Judicial reform was more frequent in period 1(14(73.7%)) than period 2 (5(26.3%)). Economic reform was less frequent in period 2

(4(44.4%)) than period 1 (5(55.6%)). Social reform was mentioned more frequently in Period 1 (7(58.3%)) than in Period 2 (5(41.7%)). Other reform was mentioned more frequently in Period 2 (16(53.3%)) than in Period 1 (14(46.7%)). Four out of the seven types of reform were mentioned more frequently in Period 1than Period 2. However, there were no difference between institutional reform and media reform in the two periods. (Chi-square = 4.33, p =.86 > .05); as a result, there was no relationship between reform and periods of the reform.

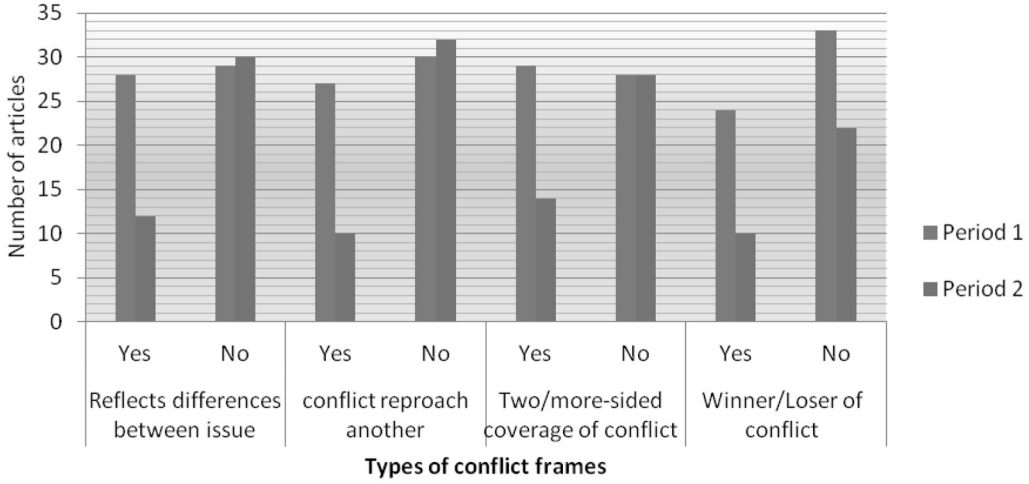
The study also compared the frequency of frames, before and after the reform: attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, ideology/morality, and economic consequences in the Reporter newspaper editorials.

Figure 7. Attribution of responsibility.



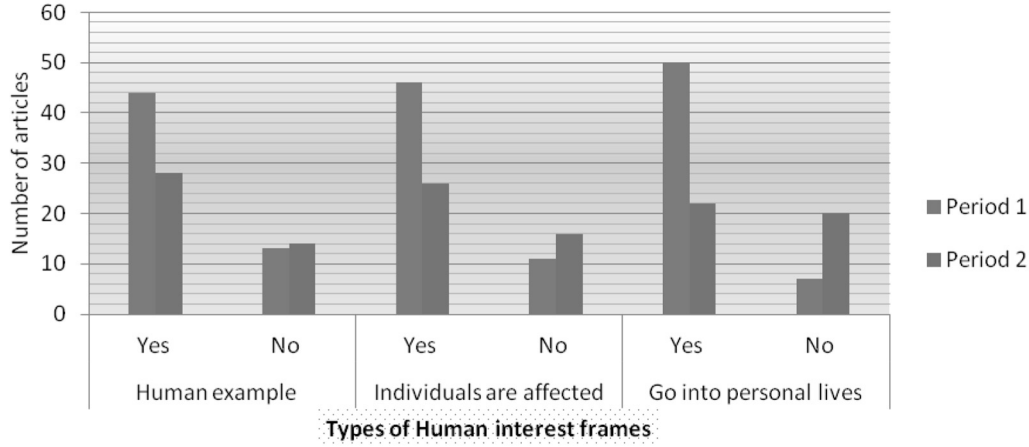

Findings in these categories showed that government responsibility provided in articles was more common before the reform (39(67.2%)) than after the reform (19(32.8%)), Chi-square = 6.16, p = .04 that is, $p < .05$, two-tailed. Therefore, government responsibility is dependent on the dates before and after the reform. Articles suggested solutions more before the reform (48(62.3%)) than after the reform (29(37.7%)), Chi- square = 3.21, p = .07 > .05, two-tailed. Hence, there was no relationship between suggesting solution of the problem mentioned in the article across two periods. Individual or group responsibility for raised issue in the article were more frequent before the reform (36(66.7%)) than after the reform (18(33.37%)), Chi-square = 3.21, p =.04 <.05, two-tailed. So, there is relationship between individual or group responsibility to the mentioned article to the dates of before and after the reform.

Figure 8. Conflict coverage.



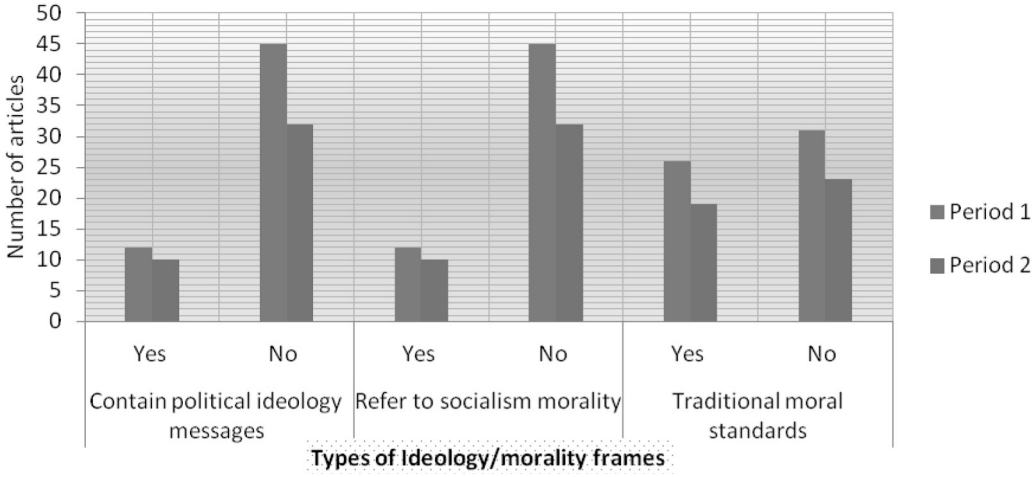

It inquired whether the story reflected any differences between issue/individual/group/country. The result showed that more differences reflected before the reform (28(70%)) than after the reform (12(30%)), P =.03 < .05. So, there was relationship between date and story reflection among or between groups. The editorials showed conflict reproach another more frequent before the reform (28(70%)) than after the reform (12(30%)), P = .01 < .05, two-tailed; as a result, there was a relationship between date of reporting and conflict reproaching. The editorials tended to have two or more sided coverage of a conflict before the reform (29(67.4%)) than after the reform (14(32.6%)), P= .10 > .05, two-tailed. Therefore, coverage of conflict did not relationship with date of editorial publication. The winner/loser in a conflict is less likely to be specified after the reform (10(29.4%)) than before the reform (24(70.6%)), whereas Chi-square = 3.59, p = .86 > .05, two-tailed. Consequently, winner/loser of conflict did not have relationship with before and after the reform periods.

Figure 9. Human interest.



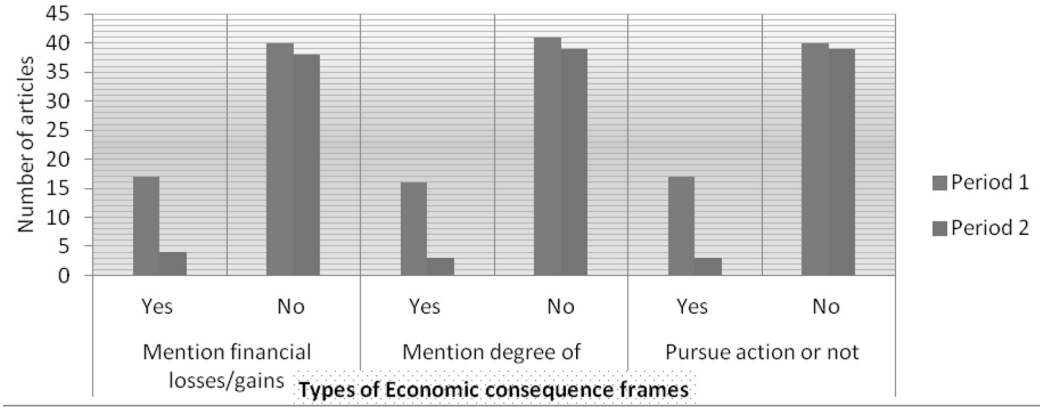
As indicated in Figure 4.9, editorials contained more human example in Period 1(44(61.1%)) than Period 2(28(38.9%)), P = .24 > .05, two-tailed. Human example and date of editorial publication did not have relationship. The editorials covered affected individuals more in Period 1 (46(63.9%)) than Period 2 (26(36.1%)), P = .03 <, 05, two-tailed, hence, there was relationship between date of editorial publication and affected individuals reporting. And also it asked if the story deep into personal lives. The result reveled that story dealt more personal lives in Period 1(50(69.4%)) than Period 2(22(30.6%)), P = .00 < .05, two-tailed; therefore, reporting personal lives had relationship with date of editorial reporting.

Figure 10. Ideology/morality.




Editorials mentioned more political ideology messages before the reform (12(54.5%)) than after the reform (10(45.5%)), P = .74 > .05, two-tailed. As a result, political ideology messages did not have relationship between dates of editorial reporting. Referring socialism morality story were covered more before the reform (12(54.4%)) than after the reform (10(45.5%)), P= .74 > .05, two-tailed although there was no relationship with date of reporting. Editorials mentioned traditional moral standards more frequently before the reform (26(57.8%)) than after the reform (19(42.2%)) P =1.00 > .05, two-tailed, so there was no relationship with date of reporting. It is noted that if the editorial offered specific social prescriptions about how to behave, the result showed that specific social perspective were less frequent after the reform (23(43.4%)) than before the reform (30(56.6%)), P = .83 > .05, two-tailed while relationship within date of reporting were not noticed.

Figure 11. Economic consequences frames.




The results in Figure 4.11 indicated that financial loses or gains were less frequent after the reform (4(19%)) than before the reform (17(81%)), P = .01 < .05, two-tailed. It showed financial losses and gains reporting had relationship. Editorials mentioned degree of expenses more before the reform (16(84.2%)) than after the reform (3(15.8%)), P = .00 < .05, two-tailed, they had relationship. The editorials pursued a course of action more frequent before the reform (17(85%)) than after the reform (3(15%)), P = .00 < .05, two-tailed. It showed relationship with date of editorials reporting.

## 5. Discussion

The study explored the changes in editorial content in The Reporter newspaper before and after April 2018, a watershed year in Ethiopia history. The results identify some significant changes after the reform. The extent of issues coverage in the news is the principle by which the general public assesses the performance and credibility of agency, corporation, or scientific organization (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Nisbet & Feldman, 2011). As a result, some noteworthy shifts occurred in the main topics of the Reporter newspaper editorials. These changes may indicate frequency of topics, with fewer government official topics before the reform than after the reform. Additionally, type of government critiques, and mentioned reforms significantly decreased after the reform compared with before the reform, while government praise changed after and before the two periods.

Several points are worth mentioning with regard to the main topic of editorials. The editorials in both Period 1 and Period 2 covered more societal and government issues though differences existed.

The focus of the writing of foreign issues is different before and after the reform, as the editorials on foreign issues are mostly critiques towards national governments; the only difference is that after the reform, they seem to focus more on domestic issues. Recently, researchers have practiced the central idea of agenda-setting theory, the transfer of salience from one agenda to another, to a wide multiplicity of new arenas and sources as miscellaneous as professional sports (Fortunato, 2001) and classroom teaching (Díaz, 2004). This may imply in Reporter editorials be considered an improvement after reform put more emphasis on

domestic Ethiopian issues. Also, perhaps surprisingly, the earlier editorials cover more scandal and corruption issues than those of the more recent period although there is more government critique and more reform mentioned, the Reporter tends to give less coverage of the scandals and corruptions today. Another possible explanation is that, although the Reporter may mention anti-corruption policies and discipline many times, it rarely names the corrupt official or describes the case in detail. Mass media has potentially strong effects on attitudes and information processing but any effects was contingent on a host of individual-level characteristics (McQuail, 2005). Similarly, the Reporter editorials tend to talk more about how to adopt anti-corruption measures rather than reporting the actual corruption cases.

Deacon et al. (1999) say that it is the usual practice of the media to find a greater number of sources cited in favor of a particular outlook or a line of interpretation and evaluation. Certain sources are undermined, discredited or disclaimed, particularly those advanced by others whose positions are at variance with those, which are given priority. According to Deacon et al (1999), quoting certain sources in their ranks and others without makes significant differences in shaping the news content in terms of influencing how the political power is distributed among various parties.

The difference in number of quotations is especially evident in five categories as the media agenda varies on different periods. Agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong relationship between the emphasis that mass media places on certain issues and the importance endorsed to these issues by mass audiences across different periods, (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Professional journalist quotations were more frequent before the reform than after the reform. Ordinary individual quotations were less frequent after the reform than before the reform. Government official quotations were more frequent after the reform which indicates the media are inclined to celebrity sources than ordinary citizens. Anonymous sources were less frequent before the reform than after the reform whereas foreign news and other sources were not frequently sourced in the two periods. The number and frequency of sources were different as (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016) argue that emphasis-based studies push framing into a more general category of persuasion where any observed effects may be the result of differences in the convincing power or quality of a given message or sources, who says what matters, rather than differences in the way the similar information is presented.

This study proposed five frames. 'Attribution of responsibility' shows the problem or issue focusing on who caused a situation or who must solve it. The 'conflict' frame presents the issue from the perspective of polarization and confrontation of individuals or social groups, sometimes using a language of war or games and competitions (Patterson, 1993; D'Haenens & De Lange, 2001). The 'human interest' frame is used to bring the issue or problem closer to any type of receiver, because the human emotion captivates everyone. Before the reform human examples were frequent since framing accustomed to transfer a difficulty could be a priority to whom or what may be to blame for it and what should be done about it (Iyengar, 1996).

The 'economic consequences' frame emphasizes the economic impact that a particular issue may have on citizens in general or on any particular group, making the public aware of a problem which, otherwise, might seem irrelevant (D'Haenens & Lange, 2001). The 'morality' frame gives prominence to the religious or moral implications of an issue or indicates a group or an individual how should behave. This framing is often camouflaged through the use of quotes, attributing the moral or religious recommendations or evaluations. To the contrary, the sociological tradition views framing as a means of understanding how people construct meaning and make sense of the everyday world (Ferree et al., 2002). Goffman (1974)

described framing as a method by which persons put on interpretive schemas to both classify and interpret the information that they encounter in their day-today lives, whereas (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987) defined frames as a central organizing idea or story line that gives aiming to an unfolding strip of events. Therefore, before the reform, economic consequence, human interest, and conflict frame got a priority.

The overall pressure of these on journalists has thus been said to result in the change in the manner in which journalism is practiced. According to Campbell (2004), in order to produce an audience-friendly and sellable content, journalists have been made to be technically uniform, and as a result, produce visually sophisticated, easy-to-understand, fast-paced, and people-oriented programmes in a minimum amount of time. The result of such a trend, as to Rayner, Wall and Kruger (2004), makes power elites, celebrities, surprises, bad news, good news, and greater magnitude (in either number of people involved or potential impact), increasingly dominant news values in the Western world. By the same token, all the Reporter newspaper editorials have visual cartons; the author was only journalist and dominantly used human examples.

Finally, compared with editorials published before the reform, those published after the reform are less likely to provide winners or losers in an argument. Instead of indulging in harsh reproaching, they seem more willing to reason with readers and provide a two-sided view to persuade readers to accept their ideas. More human examples are also included in editorials to arouse the sympathy of readers, and less rough ideological preaching is evident.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

It can be concluded that the Reporter newspaper did not have consistent coverage of editorial contents in many aspects. As it compared with editorials published before and after the reform, noticeable changes were observed in government critique, attribution of responsibility frames, human interest frames and economic issue frames. However, content selection, sources of information, mentioned reforms, conflict relationship frames and ideological frames did not have relationship with date of publication. As this study focused only on one private newspaper, it is likely that it could not test the impact of media independence and ownership. It examined the changes in media topics, author identity, source, criticism and praise, and reform, which is taken together, could be seen as proxies of media freedom.

Finally, compared with editorials published before the reform, those published after the reform are less likely to provide winners or losers in an argument. Instead of indulging in harsh reproaching, they seem more willing to reason with readers and provide a two-sided view to persuade readers to accept their ideas. More human examples are also included in editorials to arouse the sympathy of readers, and less rough ideological preaching is evident.

It is recommended that journalist ought to be loyal to the profession. They should not be the material of their employers. The Reporter newspaper should have clear ideology instead of waving towards or against the ruling party ideologies. Finally, I would like to recommend the Reporter newspaper editor to have diversified source of information to be reliable. This research is delimited to one newspaper and limited time frames, hence it will work as a benchmark to extend in wider context and longer period data.

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# Emotive and Positive Political Communication on Facebook: The Case of Argentinean Leaders

## Abstract

The communication that political leaders have performed on social media in recent years demands constant and novel approaches for understanding how politicians interact with their supporters in the digital space. In this sense, the aim of this research is to examine the communication that Argentine political leaders display on Facebook, the most popular social media amongst Argentineans, during a highly polarized and politicized period in the country, taking special attention to the role that emotions play in this digital scenario. Using content analysis of the texts included in the posts, the results of this empirical work demonstrate that, on Facebook, political leaders prefer to communicate emotive messages rather than non-emotive contents and positive emotions rather than negative ones. Besides, hope is not only the most expressed one but also the emotion that generated more interaction among digital political supporters.

**Keywords:** political communication, emotions, Facebook, diffusion model, engagement

## Introduction

In the middle of 2015, Argentina was going to have general elections: firstly in August, citizens had to choose among pre-candidates from different alliances and political parties, the official candidates that were going to compete in the general elections in October 2015. In a highly politicized and polarized country (Lodola, Kitzberger, Lodola, & Kitzberger, 2017), negotiations about candidacies began at the end of 2014. Cristina Fernández was the president at that time but, according to the national constitution, she couldn't be a candidate for a third period. After several negotiations, Daniel Scioli was chosen as the candidate for the official political alliance. Mauricio Macri was seen as their principal opponent, a center right wing leader who was the mayor of Buenos Aires, the capital city of the country. Sergio Massa, a national congressional representative, was another candidate for presidency. The three ones had something in common: public polls indicated great general lack of knowledge about them around the country (I Profesional, 2014).

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Within the communication panorama, the general election that took place in Argentina in 2015 found the country in a novel situation. On one hand, Internet access was widespread for the first time in the country, and 70% of Argentineans spent more than four hours browsing the Internet (INDEC, 2015). Moreover, there were 1.4 mobile phones per inhabitant and more than 45% of the population had a smartphone (BancoMundial, 2014; INDEC, 2015; Kemp, 2015) and they checked these devices more than two hundred times per day, showing a growing interest for exploring their social media feeds (Gallo, 2015). In addition to this, almost 55% of Argentineans were active Facebook users (INDEC, 2015). This situation facilitated the incorporation of social media in local political communication as part of a communication strategy. Before then, most Argentine politicians had used social media but not frequently: leaders had a chaotic management of digital platforms: opening accounts, fan pages and profiles in every social media, without any prioritization or communication planning (Tarullo, 2014), without taking advantage of the tools and the functions these platforms allow, but spreading their messages in a top-down model similar to the one that is characteristic of traditional media (Holtz-Bacha, 2013). Along with this, social media as personal channels of promotion get on well with a personalist political communication that is an essential characteristic in the Argentinean political arena (Tarullo, 2018a).

This study aims to analyze the political communication that Argentinean leaders performed on Facebook during a highly politicized and polarized moment in the country, taking into particular consideration the role that emotions played in the posts, the engagement that they brought among politicians' Facebook fan page followers and whether there were differences among the studied politicians, the most popular ones when this study was conducted.

## Theoretical background

The absence of intermediaries and a non-stop connection facilitated by speed, versatility and low cost (Maarek, 2014), both characteristics that rest on the core of social media, are features, among others, that have transformed the way in which politicians communicate with citizenship (Castells, 2009). For some authors (Lotan, Ananny, Gaffney, & Boyd, 2011; Zuckerman, 2014) this can collaborate to a non-stop horizontal scheme where leaders are in communication with digitalized citizens and, for other scholars (Couldry, 2014; Gillespie, 2013; Gladwell, 2010; Graham, Jackson, & Broersma, 2014; Waisbord, 2015). This scheme collaborates with an incessant process of spreading and diffusion of political messages. Furthermore, social media has increased the personalization of political communication along with a simplification of political messages, a trend that has been recognized in previous studies, some of them previous to the dissemination in the use of social media (Bennett, 2012; Ortega, 2011).

Moreover, the popularization of social media has taken a portion of the emotion kingdom from television, the media that has been recognized as the principal channel in amplifying audiences and broadcasting political messages widely (Adamo, Beaudoux, & Freidenberg, 2000), due to some reasons. First, because social media accepts different formats of visual content such as short videos, pictures, memes and gifs (Russmann & Svensson, 2017); second, they concede different and novel circulation and interaction possibilities among users (Fuchs, 2013); and third, they have an emotional architecture that allows different performances among users and also among users, the content and the platforms (Karen Wahl-Jor-

gensen, 2014), including the possibility to express with emoji the emotions that users want to disseminate throughout the digital space (Sampietro, 2019).

Emotions promote political participation (Brader, 2006), as citizens participate motivated by their own concerns, beliefs, dreams and expectations (Rosas & Serrano Puche, 2018) and they participate when they "feel passionately" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019,p.28). Following this idea, authors have argued that rationality and emotion are connected as constitutive and complementary dimensions of the subject (Dahlgren, 2018; Papacharissi & Fatime Oliveira, 2012), making place for an affective public (Papacharissi, 2015) and an increasing emotional public sphere (Lunt & Pantti, 2007). In this sense, the concept of public sphere anchored on rational deliberative practices of participation (Castrelo, 2018; Habermas, 1990) has been overcome by this concept of an emotional public sphere that has emerged "as an alternative to the hegemony of rationalist models of the public sphere and the media built on the basis of traditional— but also misleading—dichotomies such as reason/emotion, mind/body, private/public, and objective/subjective" (Rosas and Serrano Puche, 2018, p.2033).

A range of studies has given empirical evidence about different emotional states and their effects on citizen's participation. For instance, fear motivates citizens to engage in electoral participation (Miller & Krosnick, 2004; Tarullo, 2018b; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, & Davis, 2008; Weeks, 2015), while anxiety leads to a growing interest in political issues in general (Huddy, Feldman, & Casesse, 2007; G. Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2015; G. Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, & Stevens, 2005). Besides, hope and enthusiasm increase the interest of knowing about the general context and the trust that the expected events will eventually occur (Just, Crigler, & Belt, 2007).

With the proliferation of social media, the role of emotions in communicating political messages through these platforms and the interaction and engagement that different emotions trigger among users have been studied recently and in different circumstances, especially in highly polarized contexts. For example: the digital communication strategy based essentially on anger, run by Donald Trump in the United State (Anderson, 2018; Guess, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2018; Lakoff, 2016), the Brexit referendum in Great Britain and the role of emotions, specially fear and anger, in spreading fake news (Bastos & Mercea, 2017), the speech of Podemos on Facebook in Spain (Sampietro & Valera Ordaz, 2015), among others.

Messages with emotions not only are the most and best remembered (Lang, 1994) but also, they generate emotional contagion and they are propagated faster than the contents that privilege rationalism and cognition (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Apson, 1994). Moreover, different empirical research demonstrated that on YouTube (English, Sweetser, & Ancu, 2011; Guadagno, Rempala, Murphy, & Okdie, 2013), videos containing particular emotions are shared more than others, while on Twitter, scholars have identified that emotive tweets are shared more than non-emotive messages (Aragón, Kappler, Kaltenbrunner, Laniado, & Volkovich, 2013; Boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013; Toret, 2013). Alongside, Bene (2017) has demonstrated that on Facebook, during the Hungarian elections, citizens preferred to share positive content than messages with negative emotions (Bene, 2017). In this sense, humor and enthusiasm were triggered by Barack Obama in his political communication strategy on Facebook, while Republicans appealed to fear during the 2008-2012 period (Borah, 2016). Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan have demonstrated that among Facebook followers of German politicians, posts with positive and negative emotions are more commented that messages without affective words or expressions (Stieglitz & Dang-xuan, 2012). Moreover, the relationship between emotions and digital participation on social media has been

studied on Facebook pages in the 2011 movements of the Egyptian revolution and the Spanish Indignados (Gerbaudo, 2016).

## Theoretical-methodological framework: studying emotions from the neuroscience perspective

Emotions in political communication can be studied from diverse angles and using different theoretical approaches (Peyton, 2014; Sánchez Aranda, 2012; Schemer, Wirth, & Matthes, 2007; Westen, 2008, among others). One approach comes from the neurosciences field: Antonio Damasio (1999) studies emotions as the driving force of thinking and behavior. Therefore, he breaks up with the dichotomy reason-emotion, placing them in the brain, where both share spaces, neuronal nets and decision-making. Damasio (1999) recognizes, at least, two groups of emotions: the primary basic ones and the social ones (Damasio, 1999). The primary ones, that were also identified by other scholars (Ekman, Wallace, & Phoebe, 1972), are profoundly settled in the human brain and in the great majority of the species as they were introduced through the survival instinct (Castells, 2009). Because of this, they are easy to recognize, no matter the context nor the cultures in which they are deployed. These primary emotions are fear, anger, disgust, surprise, sadness, and happiness, "the emotions that first come to mind whenever the term emotion is invoked" (Castells, 2009, p. 44). On the other hand, the social emotions include "sympathy, embarrassment, shame, guilt, pride, jealousy, envy, gratitude, admiration, indignation, hope and contempt" (Castells, 2009, p. 44). These emotions are not individual notions, but require relationships with other human beings.

For Castells (2009), fear and hope are different sides of the same coin because both emotions, even if they are opposite, drive to elector's involvement. That, in the case of Facebook, can be seen in the digital participation that this platform allows: likes, shares and comments. Therefore, people who experience these two emotions are more motivated to pay attention to political campaign messages and to exchange information and opinions than those who are not emotionally motivated, and this is more evident in politicized and polarized scenarios (Toret, 2013).

## Objectives and methodology

This exploratory research aims to study the communication that Argentinean political leaders perform on Facebook during 2014/2015, taking special consideration to the role that emotions played in the digital messages that the most popular Argentineans politicians posted on this social media. We assume that communicating emotions by local political leaders were particularly important during this moment of the country because of some reasons. Firstly, this period of time contains negotiations, primary elections, general elections and the first ballotage that took place in the country, situations that turn the context into a highly politicized scenario Secondly, social polarization has increased steadily in Argentina (Svampa, 2005) and some researchers have pointed out that polarized contexts could be seen as ideal for appealing to emotions (Toret, 2013; Tucker et al., 2018; Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019).

The questions that drive this research are the following:

RQ1. What kind of posts prevail in the political communication that Argentinean political leaders run on Facebook? Do they prefer to post emotive or non-emotive messages? Are there differences in the communication that the studied politicians establish on Facebook?

RQ2. Which are the emotions that local politicians display most? Do they prefer to communicate negative emotions, or do they run a digital campaign based on sharing positive emotions through their messages?

RQ3. Which are the emotions that generate more interaction, i.e. likes, shares and comments?

To achieve these aims, we conducted a quantitative content analysis of the messages that Argentinean politicians published on Facebook, more specifically the political posts published by Cristina Fernández (the president at the moment of this study), Mauricio Macri (the mayor of the Argentinean capital city), Sergio Massa (a national congressman) and Daniel Scioli (the governor of the province of Buenos Aires in 2014) on that platform, the most popular social media in the country (Hootsuite, 2018; INDEC, 2015, 2018).

From the Argentinean context, we chose these four leaders for the following reasons. Firstly, because they were the most mentioned politicians in online conversations. According to the Interbarómetro report in October 2014, Fernández led online conversations: her name was present in almost 20% of online political debates, followed by Scioli (12.94%), Macri (11.72%) and Massa, who was in fourth place (10.46%) (Interbarómetro, 2014). Furthermore, they were the ones with the highest number of followers on Facebook in the local context (Gallo, 2015; Tarullo, 2014).

Besides, according to media news, Macri, Massa and Scioli were the first ones in different intention voting polls for the 2015 general elections. In 2014, different press releases guessed that these three were going to be pre-candidates in the Primary, Open, Compulsory and Simultaneous elections (PASO), kind of internal primary political parties elections in which citizens choose the general elections candidates (I Profesional, 2014; La Nacion, 2014). This internal election was going to take place in August 2015.

The sample was formed as follows:

Cristina Fernández (2007-2011; 2011-2015) was voted as the president for a second consecutive time in October 2011, with 54.11% of total votes. Her husband, Néstor Kirchner, had been president of Argentina during the 2003-2007 period. Fernández was the main leader of the alliance Frente para la Victoria, an alliance of different sectors coming from Partido Justicialista, Union Civica Radical and the Socialist Party. At the beginning of this study, she had 1,474,786 followers on her Facebook fan page.

Mauricio Macri was, at the beginning of this study, the mayor of Buenos Aires City (2007-2011; 2011-2015). He was the leader of the political group PRO. In 2015, and with the general elections in mind, he founded Cambiemos, an alliance of central right wing political parties. When we started this research, Macri had 937,839 Facebook followers.

In November 2014, Sergio Massa was a national congressman, representing Frente Renovador, a political alliance that he had formed in 2013. In 2014, Massa created another alliance with different sectors that came from Unión Cívica Radical and Partido Justicialista. Massa had 588,488 followers on his fan page on the studied social platform.

At the moment of this study, Daniel Scioli was the governor of the province of Buenos Aires (2007-2011; 2011-2015). He was Frente para la Victoria presidential candidate for the

2015 general elections. He had been vice-president during Néstor Kirchner's presidency (2003-2007). He had 781,206 Facebook followers.

We chose Facebook because it was the most popular social media amongst Argentineans: more than half of the population had an account on this social platform (INDEC, 2014, 2015). On this social media, users could have a private account or a fan page. Politicians had a fan page, which users can "like" and follow. During the period of this research, Facebook allowed users to publish photos, albums of photos and videos that can be or not accompanied by a text. Moreover, users could write a text and attach, or not, a video, an album of pictures or a picture.

The constructed week was used for designing the sample (Stempel & Westley, 1989). In 49 days, we collected manually the posts, using the screenshot program Fireshot (Softonic, 2014), in a scheduled hour range from 21 to 23:30.

The collected data was analyzed with the statistical programme info.stat (Infostat, 2010).[1]

## Codebook

The codebook is fundamental for the content analysis technique. As Benoit states, "the codebook must be developed with the research purpose (research questions or hypotheses) in mind. The point of developing the codebook is to specify procedures that will allow the researcher to accomplish the purpose envisioned for the study" (Benoit, 2011, p. 272).

The codebook that was designed for this research was divided in three parts. In the first part, we recognized formal variables, this means: author of the post and date of the post. For the last, we only evaluated the text in the codification process, leaving the visual communication content for future research. Then, for the second section of the codebook, we categorized the status of the posts, this means we identified whether they had emotive content in the published messages. Sentiment analysis has been used in previous research that work with large amount of data (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2013; Ortigosa, Martín, & Carro, 2014). Taking into account the small sample of this study, we used manual analysis of the content, looking for the presence of affective words and expressions in the published texts. For the third variable to assess content, we classified what kind of emotion was included in the posts. For the operationalization of this variable, we used Damasio´s typification of primary emotions: fear, anger, disgust, surprise, sadness, and happiness. Moreover, after an inductive approach to the corpus of the study, we included others, which were: indignation, pride, gratitude, hope and feeling safe. Hope, pride, indignation and gratitude are some of the secondary emotions group identified by Damasio (1990). Moreover, feeling safe has been included by scholars in previous research that studied the presence of emotions in political communication (Hill, 2000).

The third part of the codebook was dedicated to studying the engagement that the posts had. We included the number of likes, shares and comments that each post received from politicians' followers. For this, engagement was categorized following the scheme proposed by Aragon et al. (2011). These scholars state that there are three types of interaction with the content on social media: support interaction (likes), diffusional interaction (shares) and conversational interaction (comments).

It is important to say that when we collected the data for this article, the button Like was the only one that Facebook offered for expressing a reaction to the posts. Others, such as sadness, surprise, anger and love were incorporated to the social platform in 2018.

## Reliability

Two external analyst-coders collaborated to measure intercoder reliability who analyzed all the variables in 20% (n=80) of the posts that the studied politicians published on Facebook (n=403).

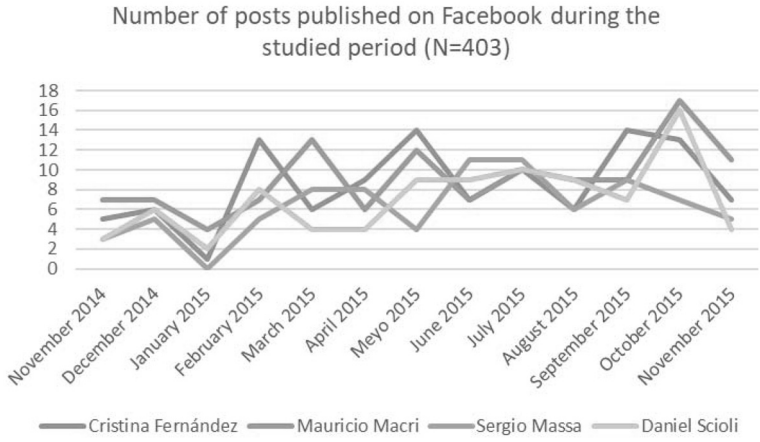
The coefficients Cohen's Kappa (ê) and Krippendorff's Alpha (á) were used to measure the level of agreement of the tabulation (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). According to the results, (0.88 for Cohen's Kappa (ê) and 0.92 for Krippendorff's Alpha (á) in one case and 0.87 (ê) and 0.90 (á) in the second one) the recording process has significant reliability (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991).

## Findings

The aim of this study is to analyze the communication that Argentinean political leaders Cristina Fernández, Sergio Massa, Mauricio Macri and Daniel Scioli published on Facebook from November 2014 to November 2015.

In 49 days of study, we collected manually 403 posts, that were distributed as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of posts during the studied period.




When we analyzed the performances on Facebook of the leaders included in this sample, the first findings revealed that they did not use Facebook with the same intensity nor regularity. Mauricio Macri (n=119, 29.52%) was the most active one on Facebook, especially in October, when the general elections took place. The peak of Scioli (n=91, 22.58%) was also in October. However, in November, when he contended in the ballotage against Macri, his activity on Facebook was similar to his lowest rate of publication during the studied period. Sergio Massa (n=82, 20.34%) didn't use this social platform neither regularly nor skillfully: he didn't use the platform close to electoral dates, such as August and October, and in November when he was not a candidate for the ballotage, practically he was not on Facebook. Fernández (n=111, 27.54%) used this digital channel frequently, especially in those months when she wanted to

propagate the public measures she had taken while in office. December and January (summer holidays in Argentina) are the months with the least activity in all cases.

When we examined the status of the messages that Argentinean political leaders published on their fan pages on Facebook, we found that 59% of the post (n=238) contained emotive words or expressions; meanwhile, 41% of Facebook posts (n=165) that were part of this sample did not contain any emotion. The image 1 is a screenshot of a post from Cristina Fernández Facebook in which she says: "Kids from Villa Lugano tell me about their projects of #robotica". This is an example of a message without any emotion in it.[2]

Image 1. Cristina Fernández during an informal visit to a school in the surroundings of Buenos Aires.




*Source:* https://www.facebook.com/CFKArgentina/photos/los-chicos-de-villa-lugano-me-cuentan-sus-proyectos-de-rob%C3%B3tica/978737465524122/.

Cristina Fernández was the least emotive one: 56% (n=62) of her posts did not communicate any emotions, while 44% (n=49) of the messages that she published on Facebook had emotive content. Macri communicated emotions in 55% (n=65) of his posts, while in 45% (n=54) he didn´t include any emotion in his posts. Sergio Massa was emotive in 73% (n=60) of his messages, while in 27% (n=22) of his posts he decided not to include any emotion. On Scioli's Facebook official account we could find emotive content in 80% (n=73) of his messages and non-emotive expressions in 20% (n=18) of his Facebook messages. With this figure, Scioli was the political leader who published emotive contents the most. In the following example (Image 2), we can see Scioli expressing gratitude to his voters, the day of the elections after knowing that there was going to be a ballotage between him and Mauricio Macri.

Image 2. Daniel Scioli, in a massive event, after knowing the general election´s results.




*Source:* https://www.facebook.com/danielsciolioficial/photos/a.104999958786/10153769818628787/?type=3&theater.

The second question of this article is in relation to the description of the most popular emotions in the messages that Argentinean political leaders published on their fan pages on Facebook. The presence of emotions in the political messages on Facebook of the studied leaders was not exclusive as each post can contain more than one affective word or expression.

The most popular emotions that political leaders communicated were positive: hope (27% n=64), pride (20% n=47), feeling safe (19% n=45) and gratitude (8% n=19) were the most expressed emotions, and all of them are social emotions (Castells, 2012; Damasio, 1994, 1999).

The most mentioned negative emotion was indignation, which is also a social emotion and it was present in 7% (n=17) of the posts. Fear (5% n=12), anger (5%, n=12) and sadness (2% n=5), all negative and primary emotions (Damasio, 1999), were less popular, even less than happiness (6% n=14), which was the least mentioned positive and primary emotion in the studied sample.

Nevertheless, as we can see in table 1 not all the politicians communicated the same emotions:

Table 2. The most mentioned emotions by the studied political leaders on Facebook.

| Cristina Fernández | | Daniel Scioli | | Mauricio Macri | | Sergio Massa | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Emotion** | **%** | **Emotion** | **%** | **Emotion** | **%** | **Emotion** | **%** |
| Pride | 48% | Security | 29% | Hope | 37% | Hope | 26% |
| Hope | 19% | Hope | 26% | Hapiness | 16% | Security | 22% |
| Gratitude | 8% | Pride | 23% | Security | 14% | Frustration | 18% |
| Fear | 6% | Gratitude | 8% | Gratitude | 10% | Anger | 11% |
| Anger | 5% | Fear | 7% | Pride | 9% | Gratitude | 7% |
| Security | 5% | Hapiness | 2% | Frustration | 5% | Pride | 6% |
| Frustration | 4% | Anger | 2% | Fear | 3% | Fear | 4% |
| Hapiness | 3% | Frustration | 2% | Sadness | 3% | Hapiness | 3% |
| Sadness | 2% | Sadness | 1% | Anger | 3% | Sadness | 1% |
| Other | 1% | Other | 1% | Disgust | 0% | Surprise | 1% |
| Disgust | 0% | Disgust | 1% | Surprise | 0% | Other | 1% |
| Surprise | 0% | Surprise | 0% | Other | 0% | Disgust | 0% |
| | 100% | | 100% | | 100% | | 100% |

Pride in Cristina Fernández, who communicated this emotion much more than the other studied politicians (48% n=23 of her emotive messages had pride), was related to two motivations. Firstly, it was in relation to the role that she had in the Argentinean scenario when this research was conducted: Fernández exhibited pride for national government performances. Moreover, pride was in relation to patriotism: "We have patriotism and we are proud of having it," she stated in the post that exemplified (image 3) the way in which she communicated this emotion. Patriotism´s pride was also in relation to the public measures she had taken during her period, as some public service companies were nationalized and part of the international debt was cancelled (Peregil,2012). Then, hope was present in 19% (n=9) of her emotive messages and gratitude in 8% (n=4). Then, she communicated negative and primary emotions, such as fear (6%, n=3), anger (5%,n=2,45) and indignation (4%, n=2). The presence of primary happiness (3%, n=1,47) and sadness (2%, n=1) were not substantially present in her messages.

Image 3. “We have homeland and we are proud of it”.




*Source:* https://www.facebook.com/pg/CFKArgentina/photos/?tab=album&album_id=956701417727727.

A similar situation happened if we look at Scioli’s case and his messages containing pride (23%, n=17 of his emotive messages had pride): proud of being part of “a national project”. “I have been with this project since its beginning,’’ posted Scioli on a Facebook message on June 11th 2015 “because I am proud of it,” he added at some point in the text (https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10153439732588787).

Scioli, along with Fernández, preferred pride of being part of the same political project, and Scioli evoked security of being himself the continuation of the *kirchnerismo* period, the one that had begun with Néstor Kirchner’s term (2003-2007)

Meanwhile, feeling safe is the emotion that Scioli preferred most and evoked in 29% (n=21) of his emotive messages: in 2014, results of local polls highlighted that citizens asked for security, it was one of the principal worries in the national concern ranking, along with

inflation and economic issues (Graña, 2014). Then, when Scioli appealed to his followers to feel safe if he was elected president, he was going to solve security problems. Scioli, but also Massa (22%, n=13 of his emotive posts communicated feeling safe), and Macri (14%, n=9 of his emotive messages triggered feeling safe) took this issue for electoral promises.

In the following example (Image 4), we can observe in the text how Scioli communicated the feeling of safety

Image 4. "Security was, is and is going to be a priority for me. For this, I carried out the greatest recruitment of security agents ever".




*Source:* https://www.facebook.com/pg/CFKArgentina/photos/?tab=album&album_id=956701417727727.

Macri was the politician who used hope the most (37%, n=24): hope for a better future in a dismaying present (see image 5), the same as Massa did (26%, n=16). Massa also tried to communicate hope for a better future, "A fair change", was his political motto, trying to attract the vote of the ones who hoped for a different future without denying the achievements of the former government. Moreover, when Scioli appealed to his followers' hope (in 26% n=19 of his emotive messages): this appellation was in relation to persuading the undecided voters, to those who Scioli invoked to have hope for a better future but as a continuation of a promising present. The same performance was run by Fernández, who decided to include hope in 19% (n=9) of her emotive messages on Facebook.

Image 5. Macri was the one who prioritized hope in his emotive content. In this post, he announced the closing event of his electoral campaign. The name of the event was: The celebration of hope (the title of the post).




*Source:* https://www.facebook.com/search/posts/?q=macri%20acto%20de%20la%20esperanza&epa=SEARCH_BOX.

Happiness is a primary emotion and Macri used it the most (16%, n=10 of his emotive posts contained happiness): the expression of happiness belonged to Macri: "the happiness revolution" was his electoral campaign slogan, and the political merchandising he used during the presidential campaign was used for expressing happiness: balloons, music and party cotillion decorated his political venues and electoral presentations.

In 18% (n=11) of his emotive posts, Massa used indignation and, with this percentage, he is the only one of the studied sample that preferred to include a negative emotion on top of the most ranked emotions. In his messages, he appealed to his followers' indignation in relation to the broken promises by the government in office. In the image 6, Massa said that if

pensioners are not paid, it is because the government doesn´t want to pay them. Massa based on pensioners a great portion of this digital communication because he used to be the director of ANSES, the official institution that administers pensions and benefits for this population group.

Image 6. Example of the indignation that Massa expressed on his Facebook messages during the studied period.




*Source:* https://www.facebook.com/SergioMassaOK/photos/a.10150278593454928/10153632306514928/?type=3&theater.

Gratitude was expressed by politicians for their supporters, citizens that followed the candidate expressing their backing and expressed their encouragement to go on in the same direction (Fernández -8%, N=4 and Scioli 8% n=6, as they were leaders of the official party at the moment of this study) or to change it (Macri -8% N=6,5%- and Massa, -7% n=4- both opposition candidates).

In this studied case, fear, a primary emotion, was used but very scarcely by Scioli (7% n=5), Massa (4% n=2) and Fernández (6% n=3), who communicated fear in some of their Facebook messages with the aim of increasing the pre-existing political polarization that characterized the country (Svampa,2005): they evoked fear of the consequences of having a center-right leader, Macri, as president, who was the one who least used fear (3%, n=2) among the Facebook messages of studied leaders. Furthermore, Macri was the most positive of the sample, preferring significantly positive emotions. On the contrary, Massa was the one who communicated negative emotions the most, because indignation was the third most mentioned emotion followed by anger (11%,n: 7), an emotion that politicians used in polarized contexts, as previous studies have pointed out (Esteve, Valle, Wanless-berk, & Mai, 2018; Lakoff, 2016).

The results indicated that not all the emotions received the same interaction, as we can observe in the table 3:

Table 3. The ranking of the communicated emotions that received more interaction during the studied period.

| The most liked emotions | | | The most commented emotions | | | The most shared emotions | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Emotion** | **%** | | **Emotion** | **%** | | **Emotion** | **%** |
| Pride | 25% | | Hope | 28% | | Hope | 30% |
| Security | 23% | | Pride | 17% | | Pride | 19% |
| Happiness | 17% | | Security | 17% | | Security | 18% |
| Gratitude | 14% | | Gratitude | 14% | | Happiness | 10% |
| Fear | 7% | | Happiness | 10% | | Gratitude | 9% |
| Frustration | 5% | | Fear | 6% | | Fear | 6% |
| Anger | 5% | | Anger | 4% | | Frustration | 4% |
| Hope | 2% | | Frustration | 4% | | Anger | 3% |
| Sadness | 1% | | Sadness | 1% | | Sadness | 1% |
| Other | 0% | | Other | 0% | | Other | 0% |

As we can see, positive emotions generated more interaction than negative ones. On average, 25% (n=12) of the posts with pride were liked by followers, 23% (n=10) of political messages communicating feeling safe received likes while 17% (n=11) of the posts containing hope were liked by political leaders' online supporters. Along with this, we found coincidences among the most commented and the most shared ones and similarities in the percentages of interaction: in both cases, the ones that received the most engagement were hope (28% n=18 of the messages with hope were commented and 30% n=20 were shared), pride (17% n=8 of the posts communicating pride were commented and 19% n=9 were shared) and feeling safe (commented in 17% n=7,9 of the cases and 18% n=8 of the messages with feeling safe were shared by politicians followers).

Amidst negative emotions that received an impoverished interaction, fear was the emotion that generated more, but still poor, interaction: on average, one post containing fear was liked (7%), shared (6%) and commented (6%).

## Discussion and conclusions

The study of political communication in the digital space has been accumulating many academic articles from different approaches in recent years, that collaborate to understand how politicians communicate strategically on their social media accounts and the ways in which citizens interact with those messages and with those politicians. In this research, we studied the digital communication that Argentinean political leaders published on Facebook, the most popular social media in the country, during a highly politicized and polarized period in the local context; taking into special consideration the role that emotions play in this scenario.

According to the content analysis of the texts published by Argentinean politicians on Facebook from November 2014 to November 2015, we could find that emotions played an

outstanding role in the digital communication that these studied politicians displayed on this social platform. In general, Argentinean leaders preferred to publish emotive content than non-emotive content, confirming a tendency identified in recent studies that sustain that political communication along with politicians are getting increasingly emotive with their messages (Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019), as these messages are easier to understand and remember than those ones that don't include emotions in them (Holtz-Bacha, 2013; Lang, 1994; Ortega, 2011). Furthermore, social media not only promote instantaneity and urgency (Castells, 2009; Maarek, 2014), but also their emotional architecture gets on well with simple emotive content that generate interaction among users (Karen Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014).

Although Facebook was widely used by more than 50% of Argentineans, who additionally spent more than four hours daily on social media, politicians did not consider this situation as an opportunity for communicating frequently with citizenship. Even more, in general they did not use this digital channel more frequently, taking advantage of this channel to get known in different contexts. As we could see Massa, Macri and Scioli, occupied political places in Buenos Aires, Argentina´s capital city, and these three ones were not well known in other regions of the country (I Profesional, 2014). In this sense, they lost an opportunity to interact, in a low cost and a disintermediated manner, with other audiences (Maarek, 2014). However, during electoral months, clearly politicized moments, Macri and Scioli, the ones that were in the opposite extremes of the polarization scheme, used Facebook more frequently, suggesting a propagating use of this channel, reproducing old habits of political communication of the top-down model instead of the horizontal model that social media promote (Waisbord, 2015). However, the digital silence of Scioli during November 2015, before the first ballotage in Argentina, is inquisitive. Though, it can be said that as this studied period was the beginning of a widely use of Facebook by political leaders as a channel for publishing their messages throughout the digital space, a professionalized use of this social platform had not been achieved yet.

According to RQ1, we observe that political communication of Argentinean leaders on Facebook is emotive, following a tendency that was observed in different studies (Bene, 2017; Borah, 2016; Gerbaudo, 2016): leaders are becoming more emotional in their messages so as to connect with their digital audiences (Valenzuela, 2011; Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019), as a way to be known, remembered, shared and commented (Aragón et al., 2013; Toret, 2013), along with the architecture of social media that collaborates to this trend of simplification of political content (Karen Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014) and a personalization of political communication, as every social media channel works as a private official communication (Bennett, 2012) or propagation channel (Couldry, 2014; Tarullo, 2018a). However, comparatively they don´t have the same performance. Three of the four studied politicians preferred emotive posts: while Fernández, who was not a candidate, preferred rational messages so as to spread and publicize her achievements as president; Macri, Massa and Scioli, the three ones that were presidential candidates in the election that took place in 2015, favored emotional content to communicate with their digital audiences. In this sense, polarization and politicization that are inherent to electoral periods (Bastos & Mercea, 2017) at least in the case of Argentina (Lodola et al., 2017) would reinforce the presence of emotional content in the case of the candidates' digital communication on Facebook so as to have the attention of a digital and fluid public (Bauman, 2003), amplifying the public space (Papacharissi, 2015). While Fernández, who at the moment of this study played an institutional role, preferred non emotive

messages, using Facebook as a personal/institutional channel to broadcast her personal/institutional achievements.

In relation to RQ2, when Argentinean politicians communicate emotions, they prefer to trigger positive and social emotions, such as gratitude, hope, feeling safe and pride and these chosen emotions were in relation to their political communication strategy, a similar strategy that has been used in different contexts and as previous research has described (Bene, 2017; Gerbaudo, 2016; Lakoff, 2016; Papacharissi & Fatime Oliveira, 2012).

Negative primary emotions, such as anger and fear, the ones that were present in other digital political communication flows (Bastos & Mercea, 2017; Brader, 2005), were not popular in the political communication that these leaders displayed on Facebook during the studied period. Hence, this pattern is different to the one that scholars recognized in recent political campaigns in the digital sphere: communication on Facebook was not emotionally negative, even when the scenario was highly polarized (Esteve et al., 2018), and this indicates an outstanding difference with other studies that demonstrated that politicians had used negative feelings so as to draw the attention of digital audiences and obtained the replication of these messages containing negative emotions (Esteve et al., 2018). Furthermore, anger and fear were not used by Macri´s communication on Facebook, different to other center-right and right-wing leaders that in other polarized contexts privileged both emotions to achieve their electoral goals (Huddy et al., 2007). Furthermore, Macri was the most optimist of the sample, privileging hope and happiness in his messages and mottos. Then, even though political communication is becoming increasingly emotional and this tendency is global, the kind of used emotions vary in relation to the context where the emotions are evoked. In this case, the variables that influence the inclusion of positive or negative emotions in political messages and specific emotions used can be part of future research of the topic.

The third research question analyses the digital interaction that political emotive messages published on Facebook received during the period of this study, trying to recognize which were the emotions that generated more interaction among digital political supporters. We measured interaction using the categorization used by Aragon et. al. (2013): likes (support interaction), comments and shares. Different to the button Like that just generates a "support interaction" (Aragón et al., 2013), the function of sharing that Facebook has for interacting with the posts is the one that collaborates in amplifying audiences (Aragón et al., 2013; Kalsnes & Larsson, 2017) and reaching new publics, as the shared posts reach as many digital walls as clicks they receive. Moreover, to comment a post could be seen as the starting point for digital conversation about general public issues (Valera-Ordaz, Calvo, & López-García, 2018). We could observe that amongst positive emotions, hope is the one that generated most shares and comments, while pride was the most liked one. In this sense, these findings are similar to a previous research that studied television audiences in relation to the presence of emotions in political communication. This study recognized that hope makes participation grow along with the interest of knowing about the general context and the trust that the expected events will eventually occur (Just et al., 2007).

Amongst negative ones, that were not popular in the communication that leaders displayed on Facebook during the studied period, fear was the emotion that generated most engagement in electoral participation, as has been identified in previous research (Miller & Krosnick, 2004; Tarullo, 2018a; Valentino et al., 2008; Weeks, 2015). Therefore, the most shared positive emotion is hope and the most shared negative emotion is fear and, as Manuel Castells

(2009) states, hope and fear are the two sides of the same coin as both emotions breed more interaction followers on Facebook.

Moreover, the use of emotions could give the idea that politicians were trying to have their messages shared, as a way of spreading their communication (Graham et al., 2014). Regarding the absence of intermediaries along with the versatility, velocity and low cost that characterize social media (Maarek, 2014), politicians digital followers become replicators of political messages (Guadagno et al., 2013), reproducing, instead of a communication scheme, a propagation scheme (Tarullo, 2018b). However, as content with hope has also been the most commented one, the evocation of this hope and the interaction it generated among digital citizens suggest the idea of the conformation of an emotional public sphere (Lunt & Pantti, 2007), as participation is promoted by emotions (Brader, 2006; Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019), creating an affective public (Papacharissi, 2015). In this sense, the content of the comments should be examined in future studies to analyze the interactions of these digital flows and their incidence in this emotional political communication scenario.

This article has limitations. Firstly, the analysis of the visual posts can add more information to understand the phenomenon of political communication on social media, as the presence of visual elements is fundamental in the architecture of these platforms (Russmann & Svensson, 2017). This can also influence the interaction that posts achieved, and this was not studied either. Moreover, comparison between periods (electoral –non electoral) can be deeply studied to examine variables that influence digital political communication performances in those more polarized and politicized moments (Lodola et al., 2017). Regarding to this, this research can be enriched if these findings are studied in relation to more recent political communication campaigns, understanding the permanent transformation of the digital political communication campaigns (Bossetta, 2018) A bigger sample can be collected for using automatized sentiment analysis (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2013; Ortigosa et al., 2014) and comparing results with this research in which collection and analysis was done manually.

Even though this research explored the first steps of using Facebook as a political communication channel in a polarized and politicized moment in the Argentinean context, and digital performances are versatile and change incessantly (Castells, 2009) further research of this use in recent periods can collaborate to have a wider idea of this phenomenon in Argentina.

## Notes

[1] Macarena Arostegui, teacher of statistics at UNNOBA, collaborated with the analysis of the collected data.

[2] With the aim of exampling the content and the results of the article, we included screen captures and we also included the link to the post to achieve the original.

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# E-public Relations in Health Organizations: How EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe Uses the Website and Facebook to Communicate with Key Publics

## Abstract

This article focuses on how EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe uses e-Public Relations to communicate and construct and strengthen relations with key publics, concretely the patients/members and journalists. Grounded on rhetorical theory and on a triple (qualitative, quantitative, and rhetorical) analysis to content, the study explores the website, Facebook page and press releases of EURORDIS. The results show that the EURORDIS' website encompasses six types of content: information, clarification, personalization, support, appeal, and empowerment. In Facebook (N=160), the most significant issue is "reference of an event promoted by EURORDIS" (59,4%), "information and appeal" (40,0%) is the most used content type, and "text and photo" (77,5%) is the preferable resource used. Among the rhetorical devices (N=103), the most frequent is "use of question". The other rhetorical devices used are repetition, mix of information and appeal, personalization, exclamation mark (*logos*), encouragement of an emphatic spirit (*pathos*), and reference to elite members (*ethos*). The most expressive issue in press releases (N=17) is "public support/promotion of actions benefiting the cause of rare diseases" and the most frequent sources are EURORDIS' direction. Rhetorical analysis reveals the focus on the target public – journalists –, confirmed by the use of a predominantly informative language style.

**Keywords**: e-Public Relations (e-PR), EURORDIS, rare diseases, digital media, press releases

## Introduction

Health is "central to our lives, a major topic of news, is politicised, underresourced, and a subject open to alternative perspectives so it is unsurprising that this sector of the public relations industry is expanding" (L'Etang, 2006, p. 254). One of the ways for preventing diseases is the transfer of health information by educating the patients and encouraging them to search for related information (Lalazaryan & Zare-Farashbandi, 2014). Many people lose their lives or suffer serious complications from diseases due to lack of knowledge about prevention methods (Lalazaryan & Zare-Farashbandi, 2014). In this sense, online communication of health organizations and online media can provide useful information. These actors explore the benefits of communication, accomplishing the postulates that "communication is all we have" and "it

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is what makes us human" (Macnamara, 2017). The vastly expanded electronic capacity collects and communicates a broader world opinion to more people, more quickly than at any other past time (McKie & Munshi, 2011, pp. 59-60). Online opportunities accelerate the rapidity of change (McKie & Munshi, 2011, p. 199) and the Internet is the most powerful relation-building tool the organizational world has ever witnessed (Haig, 2000, p. 3).

Regarding the online performance of health organizations, they need to exploit more fully the potential of new digital technologies to strengthen prevention and care (OECD/EU, 2018, p. 13). Davies (2016), for example, argues that medical and life sciences have not fully exploited the potential of social media sites, including Facebook. This online performance, which influences people's lives and seeks to build relationships between organizations and key publics (Pang, Shin, Lew & Walther, 2016; Vasquez & Taylor, 2001, p. 139), can be named as online public relations or e-PR. In a simple definition, e-PR refers to public relations (PR) on the Internet (Haig, 2000, p. 3). e-PR "has become more than a necessity, representing a communication opportunity" (Petrovici, 2014, p. 81). Exploring the power of the internet, e-PR represents an alternative to other forms of relationship building, communication and interaction (Petrovici, 2014, p. 83). This article makes sense within the "Web PR age" – announced by Hurme (2001) – in which the keywords for PR practitioners are interactivity, dialogue, dynamism, involvement.

"What is said about you is more valuable than what you say about yourself" (Levine, 2003, p. 12). But "what you say about yourself" influences "what is said about you". So, this article, aware of one of the PR's trends, such as the potential of "compelling content" (Ehrlich & Harrigan, 2019), focuses on what and how EURORDIS says about itself and rare diseases, and about its messages and communicational efforts to stablish and strengthen relationships with rare diseases' patients and journalists. EURORDIS is a unique, non-profit alliance of 837 rare disease patient organizations from 70 countries that work together to improve the lives of the 30 million people living with a rare disease in Europe (https://www.eurordis.org/who-we-are). e-PR can be particularly significant among health field specially among rare diseases, as it is likely that the number of patient groups on social media associated with specific pathogenic genetic mutations will increase substantially, once genome-wide analyses, such as exome or whole-genome sequencing, become more commonplace (Davies, 2016).

Bañón Hernández (2007) concludes that patients with rare diseases, because of their systematic exclusion from the main discussion forums, are considered a minority group with generally little capacity to exert any significant influence on political and social issues. In this line, one evidence from the studies of the Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Enfermedades Raras (CIBERER) is that the training and preparation of communicators influence the quality of information, and the information's effectiveness would increase if there was a correlation between the official sources' discourse on the what is done and what is actually accomplished (Bañón Hernández, Alcaraz, Almela & Sanchis, 2011). Therefore, there is a need for patients with rare diseases and organizations working in this field to gain an effective voice in the public sphere.

Practitioners of PR need to develop a structured understanding of the issues they are influencing in order to perceive the attitudes of others (Watson & Noble, 2014, p. 2). As Cuenca Fontbona (2012) remembers: if for Ivy Lee PR is an art, for Bernays it is an application of social sciences in which the research of publics has an essential role (p. 72). Ki, Kim and Ledingham (2015) and Bowen, Hung-Baesecke and Chen (2016), for example, agree with the statement that, today, organization-publics relationships (OPRs) are central to PR. Bowen et al. (2016) refer that ethics is a foundational concept in building trusting OPRs.

EURORDIS' website and Facebook page were the two online platforms analyzed. In addition, to perceive the contents intentionally made for media consumption, the press releases, available on EURORDIS website, were explored.

The website is a "key of direct communication" (Murray, 2010). Murray (2010) explains that every organization with a public profile should have a website and that, from the PR perspective, the website has become a vital communication tool as it is "often the first port of call" and will deliver the first tangible impression of the organization. On the other hand, Facebook can be "a great way to build and engage communities of advocates" (Wilson, 2012, p. 67), which can be particularly pertinent in the divulgation of rare diseases, which do not have enough visibility. PR practitioners "need to understand the social network landscape" (Howell, 2012, p. 11) and how social media constrain and enable PR practice and desired responses from target audiences (Lipschultz, 2015, p. 21), in order to improve their performance and communication's results.

It were also analyzed the press releases of EURORDIS, once the media are a significant player in promoting a healthier society by providing useful health information to their audiences and delivering news about the latest developments on health issues (Cho, 2006, p. 116) and the press releases, among the communication tools used by PR practitioners, are one of "the most tried and true sources of information for journalists" (Park & Reber, 2010, p. 40). Considering the potential of press releases for shaping the public health agenda via the mass media, the examination of health organizations' press releases is a pivotal step in determining their PR efforts to frame media coverage of health news (Park & Reber, 2010, p. 40). In addition, by disseminating press releases, health organizations are able to better frame their version of the social reality related to the health problems they represent and to portray themselves as reliable and credible resources for public health (Park & Reber, 2010, p. 43). Finally, how public relations practitioners frame their health messages to the media may have a direct impact on the public's health perceptions and decisions (Ruão, Lopes, Marinho & Araújo, 2012, pp. 69-70; Tanner, 2004b, p. 24).

This article grounds on rhetorical theory, trying to offer some response to the call for rhetorical contributions to health pedagogy and to the understanding of health communication practices (Campbell, 2017, pp. 8, 12).

## To be "e" or not to be "e", it is the question! e-PR in health field

Independently of being "e" or not, PR "is and always will be about human relationships" (Marlow, 1996, p. 161). As PR has to follow the public appetite for media, this is fast becoming internet based (Phillips & Young, 2009, p. 101).

PR is a tool through which organizations try to exercise the influence they have on the way we live our lives with particular outcomes in mind, but it is also a practice that has agency beyond organizational objectives (Edwards, 2018). PR "is what you pray for" and not "what you pay for" (Levine, 2003, p. 12).

One of the basic definitions of PR refers it as the management of communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6). Communication is a core word in the heart of PR. Bernays (2013) explains that "public understanding and support is basic to existence in our competitive system. To know how to get along with the public is important for everyone" (p. 7) and Phillips and Young (2009) clarifies that PR "is largely depend-

ent on communication" (p. 101). Another association of ideas is that PR "arises at points of societal change and resistance" (Phillips & Young, 2009, p. 13) and its success is committed to the credibility's maintenance (Newsom & Haynes, 2010, p. 274).

Haig (2000) states that having an e-PR perspective involves learning the three Rs: 1. Relations: e-PR focuses on building relations, which are long-term and mutually beneficial, through interacting with different publics; 2. Reputation: it is the most important organizational asset and e-PR is the art of managing online reputation; 3. Relevance: it is needed that everything that an organization puts online is directly relevant to its publics (pp. 5-6).

In e-PR, "e" is for electronic and concerns every aspect of the Internet, "P" is for public, stressing that the idea of a singular public is now outdated, and "R" is for relations, stablishing that building relations between organizations and its publics is the key to success on the Internet (Haig, 2000, p. 3).

As the rhetorical theory can help PR to account for the symbolic aspects of communication, which arguably are the heart of PR activity (Ihlen, 2008), the present study can be grounded on it. The rhetorical theory focuses on relationships, on how they are constructed between organizations (in this case, EURORDIS) and key publics (patients/members and journalists). This theory reflects the effort to shaping knowledge, images and opinions, as well as to being convincing and motivating others. The theory also features how the PR process becomes enriched through the role co-created. Shared meaning functions in society as a blend of mind and self (Heath & Frandsen, 2008). Heath says that PR can add value to society by assuring that choices become enlightened, risks are ethically managed, and relationships are mutually developed (Black, 2014, p. 36). This value or potential is perfectly suited to health field.

To optimize the communication's results, e-PR has to disseminate, through the publics, persuasive communication. If where there is meaning there is persuasion (Burke, 1969, p. 72), all communication – which brings together meanings – is persuasive. Persuasion may attempt to influence beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations or behaviors (Gass & Seiter, 2010, p. 33). In the persuasive way, Aristotle (IV century BC/2005) points to three means of persuasion:

– *Ethos*: Those derived from the character of the communicator (credibility, *ethos*);

– *Pathos*: Those derived from emotion aroused in the public (emotion, *pathos*); and

– *Logos*: Those based on evidence, true or probable arguments and logically extracted inferences capable of making the audience adhere to the thesis put forward (reason, the *logos*) (IV century BC/2005, p. 37).

Social media, used within health care contexts for communication purposes, is increasing and becoming more acceptable (Burke-Garcia & Scally, 2014; Moorhead, 2017). Specifically, the digital tools are likely to enable: (a) improved interactions with others; (b) more available, shared, and tailored information; (c) increased accessibility and widening access; and (d) increased peer/social/emotional support. These are some of numerous benefits of social media for healthcare communication (Moorhead, 2017).

In spite of recognizing that digital media have an ability to increase the reach of public health research and communication, as well as drive measurable behavior change, Burke-Garcia and Scally (2014) identify that there is an absence of both deep and wide understanding of the opportunities within digital media, that a smart and strategic planning for its widespread use is not a common practice and that rigorous evaluative studies of its effectiveness are few and far between.

Ramanadhan, Mendez, Rao and Viswanath (2013) surveyed social media usage among U.S. (from Boston, Lawrence, and Worcester, Massachusetts) 166 community-based organizations conducting health promotion (CBOs) and found that almost (98%) has a website and 70% a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and/or YouTube (p. 6). The top three types of content used are: organization promotion (66%), health education/news (24%), and cross-promotion (19%). Regarding the ways in which CBOs leveraged the multimedia and relational aspects of the Facebook platform, 32% included links to external links, 27% links to internal content, 22% included a photo and less than 1% included a video. About the engagement with posts via the "like" function, 65% of posts received at least one "like". Stories with human interest, although a small proportion of overall posts, received the highest average number of "likes" per post, with an average of almost 6 "likes" per post (Ramanadhan et al., 2013, p. 7).

Kite, Foley, Grunseit and Freeman (2016) give insight into post content that maximizes user engagement and begins to fill the knowledge gap on effective use of Facebook by (Australian) public health organizations. In spite of Facebook, the most widely used social media platform, has being adopted by public health organizations for health promotion and behavior change campaigns and activities, limited information is available on the most effective and efficient use of Facebook for this purpose. The authors selected 20 eligible pages through a systematic search and coded 360-days of posts for each page. Posts were coded by: post type (e.g., photo, text only), communication technique employed (e.g., testimonial, informative) and use of marketing elements (e.g., branding, use of mascots). The results showed that video posts attracted the greatest amount of user engagement, although an analysis of a subset of the data suggested this may be a reflection of the Facebook algorithm, which governs what is and is not shown in user newsfeeds and appear to preference videos over other post types. Posts that featured a positive emotional appeal or provided factual information attracted higher levels of user engagement, while conventional marketing elements, such as sponsorships and the use of persons of authority, generally discouraged user engagement, with the exception of posts that included a celebrity or sportsperson.

Comparing the way vaccination-related webpages (514 in favor, 471 against, and 108 neutral) communicate the issue and the quality of websites, Sak, Diviani, Allam and Schulz (2016) observe that, generally, webpages holding a favorable view present more quality indicators compared to both neutral and anti-vaccination pages. Websites, holding a favorable view toward the vaccination practice, provide more vaccination-specific information themes compared to the neutral vaccination-related online sources. Higher quality of pro-vaccination websites might be explained by higher professionalism of their owners, who were more often internationally recognized medical institutions (e.g., World Health Organization – WHO, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – CDC), while anti-vaccination websites were often operated by activists of the anti-vaccination movement, who are private citizens expressing their personal views on the topic.

## Rare diseases, but not rare in e-communication

Digital media have been contributing to the awareness of rare diseases and have even assumed diagnostic functions. Castillo-Esparcia and López-Villafranca (2016) focus on communication strategies employed by rare disease patient organizations, analyzing the media portrayal of these diseases and patient organizations in Spain between 2012 and 2014. By

carrying out a descriptive analysis of the digital communication activities performed by 143 national organizations and conducting a telephone questionnaire of a representative sample of 90 organizations, the investigators explore the association between media presence and funding and public image. They observe that increased visibility of the organizations, afforded by a growth in the coverage of the topic, increments the membership – but not donations – and also increases awareness of these diseases. Most of the organizations studied do not have a specific person responsible for communication due to lack of resources and time: they are rarely able to invest in hiring a communication specialist. Generally, communication is provided by volunteers who do not receive any type of remuneration and are likely to be women between the ages of 40 and 60. It turns out that organizations develop their communication strategies mainly through the internet. More than 80% of patient organizations have active pages. It is noted a little media-oriented option, as only 21% of organizations have a virtual press room.

However, the digital option has gained space, since more than half of organizations uses online social networks for communication purposes and views these networks as their most important and effective impact tool (Castillo-Esparcia & López-Villafranca, 2016). Davies (2016) also observes the insights of rare diseases from online surveys, a relatively new experimental method by which information can be obtained in a direct manner and can benefit affected individuals in a short timeframe. The author advocates that this approach may be especially useful for getting an overview of the wide range of phenotypes that affect patients (many of which may not be intuitive) and for gaining information on those issues which most impair affected individuals' lives.

Liuccio et al. (2015) analyze the role of communication in rare diseases through a systematic literature review, focusing on the information patients extract from (digital and traditional) media and, secondly, on interpersonal patient-physician communication. They observe that "only 56 papers" (Liuccio et al., 2015) were found to focus on the topic and use a narrative synthesis, highlighting three specific issues (p. 3):

The source of medication information and other information on diseases: Patients perceive physicians and Internet as credible sources of medication information. The Internet offers patients with rare disease:

– Perceived and objective disease knowledge: An opportunity to connect with, acquire knowledge and support from others facing identical situations (Doyle, 2015; Lasker, Sogolow & Sharim, 2005; Mursch & Behnke-Mursch, 2003; Wicks et al., 2010);

– Self-diagnosis and prevention: The possibility to screen prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of the disease, and also in early identification, personalized treatment, and health management in general (e.g. Dwyer, Quinton, Morin & Pitteloud, 2014; Kowalski, Kahana, Kuhr, Ansmann & Pfaff, 2014);

– Self-expression and communication: It permits to express concerns that patients could hardly communicate to their doctor and to prevent disease (Hilton-Kamm, Sklansky & Chang, 2014; Jhaveri, Schrier & Mattana, 2013; Zaid et al., 2013);

– Health-related information and education: The access to relevant information, especially older patients with little or no education and who live without a partner.

Patients use the Internet more than they ask pharmacists for medication advice, also when dealing with side effects and drug effectiveness (Carpenter, Blalock & DeVellis, 2012).

– The patient-physician interaction: Communication processes, in this context, are predominately affected by the role behavior of both patient and health care provider.

– Psycho social support: Families with patients with rare diseases are negatively affected by delays-in diagnosis and by the scarcity of access to peer support groups and to psychological advice.

Specifically studying the alignment of Facebook with the priorities of rare diseases associations, Subirats et al. (2018), reinforcing results from previous studies (Reguera, 2017; Reguera, Subirats & Armayones, 2017) and using computational analysis, find that photos are the type of posts with the highest number of reactions and engagement, while statuses are the type of posts with the highest number of comments, and events are the type of posts with more shares (p. 11). Among the word clouds, the authors discover that in Facebook the highlighted words are gratitude instead of help, life, people and children (more present in decalogue) and that differences among word clouds are grouped by level of engagement: the low engagement word cloud is related to spam messages, while medium/high engagement word clouds are related to treatments. It is also observed a high correlation between the polarity and the time of day. The authors recommend to users interested in rare diseases who want to maximize their engagement of their posts: (1) use photos in their posts; (2) update their status; (3) post content of common interest; and (4) post at midday or late at night.

The literature review shows that only a few studies have fully considered the communication role set in rare diseases and that there is no adequate attention paid to patients' health information seeking behaviors. Bouwman, Teunissen, Wijburg and Linthorst (2010) observe that, regarding rare diseases, the use of the internet may be an important tool in the diagnostic process. The authors present two cases in which concerned parents made a correct diagnosis of a lysosomal storage disorder in their child by searching the internet after a long doctor's delay. Black and Baker (2011) also have recognized the potential of digital media. The authors consider that IDEA League is an excellent example of the impact of patient advocacy groups, the Internet, and social networking on the landscape of rare diseases.

## Public relations-journalists: A relation of dependency in communication

PR professionals, operating in the health field, are responsible for providing organizational definitions of health problems and solutions to the media (Park & Reber, 2010, p. 42). Davis (2000) also mentions that PR practitioners serve as powerful mediators between journalists and the medical industry by influencing sources' abilities to gain access to journalists and managing health agendas in the media. While helping media to gather accurate and complete health information, PR professionals also can promote their health agencies' viewpoints on emerging health issues and facilitate public awareness and debates (Zoch & Molleda, 2006).

Park and Reber (2010) analyzed health organizations' PR efforts to frame health issues through their press releases. The content analysis of 316 press releases from three health organizations – the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, and the American Diabetes Association – revealed that they used the medical research frame most recurrently and emphasized societal responsibility for health issues. There were differences, however, among the organizations regarding the main frames and health issues: the American Diabetes Association was more likely to focus on the issues related to social support and education,

while the other two were more probable to address medical research and scientific news. To demonstrate their initiatives for public health, all the organizations employed the social support/educational frame most frequently. Researchers and medical doctors customarily were quoted as trusted sources in the releases.

The power of PR in health is reinforced by some particularities of health journalism, that make informational production very dependent on the technical skills of the sources – organizations, scientists or doctors (Lopes, Ruão, Marinho & Araújo, 2011, pp. 105-106). Some studies confirm this standpoint of view. Tanner (2004a) conducted a U.S. nationwide survey and concluded that institutional spokespersons and specialized sources have a very significant impact on the production of television health information: 60% of health journalists revealed they contacted experts very often to explain the technical information and 60% confirmed that health sources significantly influenced the news content. In the study of Turk (1986), content analyses of information subsidies and newspaper agendas, during a two-month period in 1984, supported some hypotheses: (1) conformity to journalistic norms of newsworthiness is the most important factor in a paper's decision to accept a news release; (2) the issues' agenda in news stories, using information from agency public information officers (PIOs), reflects the issue agenda and priorities of agency information subsidies; and (3) PIOs, who consider themselves as providers of persuasive propaganda, are less successful than are officials who view themselves as providers of information.

Friedman, Tanner and Rose (2013) conducted interviews with U.S. health journalists, revealing that while journalists "felt that current collaborations between health journalists and public health practitioners were good" some still cited it as lacking (p. 382). Journalists also reported personal difficulties in understanding public health information when presented to them, stating "many people with public health degrees become epidemiology-focused and not media-focused which makes it difficult to translate the data" (Friedman et al., 2013, p. 383).

## Method and data

The starting question that guides the study is: *How does EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe use e-Public Relations to communicate with key publics, concretely patients/members and journalists?* Associated to this question, some research questions are formulated: 1. What is the thematic agenda of online messages?; 2. What is the content type used in online messages?; 3. In order to explore the rhetorical practices used in online messages constructed for patients and members, what are the rhetorical devices/tactics used in these messages?; 4. Which is the most expressive type of resource used in online messages?; 5. What is the thematic agenda of press releases?; 6. Which are the sources quoted in press releases?; 7. In order to know the rhetorical discourse constructed to communicate with journalists, what are the rhetorical devices/tactics present in press releases?; and 8. Which are the content's patterns and variations?

The specific objectives proposed are: 1. to understand the EURORDIS' use of digital media (website and Facebook page) to communicate with patients and members; and 2. to perceive how EURORDIS construct the messages, through press releases, to disseminate among journalists.

To accomplish the first objective, the messages of digital communication of EURORDIS were analyzed, concretely in the website and Facebook page. In the Facebook, the analysis

period was one semester, concretely the last one: between January and June of 2019. The Facebook's corpus is composed with 160 posts. On 12 September 2019, EURORDIS' Facebook page had 36.120 likes and 36727 followers. The collection of data was updated at the referred date.

To fulfill the second one, the press releases – available in the website, in the item "News & Events" and, inside it, in the sub-item "EURORDIS press releases" – were analyzed. The analysis period meets the criterion of topicality and, thus, comprises the years 2018 and 2019 (until August). In total, the *corpus* has 17 press releases.

The techniques used are qualitative content analysis (preparatory analysis and auxiliary for the others), content analysis (to complement quantitatively the analysis), and the rhetorical analysis. The qualitative content analysis is the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents. It comprises a searching out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed (Bryman, 2012, p. 557).

To operate the technique, the procedures suggested by Altheide (2004) were adopted:

*Step 1*: Generate an operational research question (*How does EURORDIS use e-PR to communicate with patients/members and journalists through the website, the Facebook page and press releases?*);

*Step 2*: Become familiar with the context within which the documents were / are generated;

*Step 3*: Become familiar with a small number of documents (contents of website and Facebook);

*Step 4:* Generate some categories (e.g., issue, type of content, rhetorical device, type of resource) that guide the collection of data and draft a schedule for collecting the data in terms of the generated categories. The formulation of categories was also anchored in the literature review, concretely in the references: Kite et al., 2016; Park & Reber, 2010.

The categories and sub-categories generated were used/quantified in the (quantitative) content analysis of Facebook and press releases. Content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts, that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable way (Bryman, 2012, p. 290).

The rhetorical analysis is the examination of how texts persuade their audiences of their claims (Dysart-Gale 2010, p. 29). The aim of rhetorical analysis is not simply to describe the claims and arguments advanced within the discourse, but, most importantly, to identity the specific persuasive tactics/devices employed by the speaker to accomplish specific persuasive goals (O'Donohue, 2013). Traditional rhetorical analysis often "emphasize the situatedness of discourse, consider[ing] stylistic components (i.e., metaphor, trope) as key to persuasion, and culminate[ing] with a judgment about the rhetorical practice(s) being considered" (Lynch & Zoller, 2015, p. 498). In the analysis operationalized and exploring the rhetorical theory, the rhetoric devices included in the means of persuasion, referred by Aristotle, specially the *pathos* and *logos,* were used.

## How EURORDIS uses e-PR to communicate with key publics – Findings

### The website: "the first port of e-PR call". Utility of content types

The EURORDIS website encompasses six types of content: 1. Information; 2. Clarification; 3. Personalization; 4. Support; 5. Appeal; and 6. Empowerment. These types of content or practices are related to the uses that EURORDIS gives to website, an e-PR's communication tool.

In the category designated "information", it can be found some notes on "who we are" (what the EURORDIS is), "what we do" (EURORDIS' mission), "international activities" (EURORDIS' vision), "membership" (list of EURORDIS member associations), "library" (e.g., publications, activity reports, fact sheets and infographics), "our funding" (financial information, health sector corporates, top five donors), "job openings", "EURORDIS events" (summer schools, workshops), EURORDIS' advocacy for incentives, "members' news and announcements", "international rare disease events", "rare diseases in the arts" (the codification and inclusion of rare diseases in diverse arts, such dance, documentaries, movies, literature, functioning as an archive of artistic material focused on rare diseases), "EURORDIS webinars" (web seminars that provide interactive training on practical skills such as how to cultivate volunteers, social media and governance), "eNews" ("read past issues of EURORDIS' weekly newsletter"). There is a specific item, more directed to journalists, which is "EURORDIS press releases".

In the "clarification" category, EURORDIS uses contents that can contribute to better understanding and demystify some conceptions on rare diseases, such as: the document "rare diseases: understanding this public health priority" , some deconstructive information, such as: "a disease or disorder is defined rare in Europe when it affects less than 1 in 2,000 citizens" (Orphan Drug Regulation 141/2000), "no existing effective cure", "there are between 6,000 and 8,000 rare diseases, 75% of rare diseases affect children, 30% of rare disease patients die before the age of 15, 80% of rare diseases have identified genetic origins", "rare disease patients and their families are known to be more pro-active than patients suffering from other common illnesses", the clarification of some related concepts: rare diseases, neglected diseases, orphan diseases, orphan drugs.

The "personalization" is present in the item "Living with a Rare Disease". In this item, there are various videos with testimonial stories and a list from A to Z, according to disease name, of testimonial stories. The support grounds on statements, such: "useful to do", "good to know", "how patient groups can get involved". The appeal is anchored in some suggested behaviors, such as: "improve the safety of your medicines", "get involved", giving guidelines to individuals, patient groups and companies, "donate", "take action", "connect with others". The empowerment can be found in some titles such as: "From isolation to empowerment of patients", that focuses in the context of "insufficient scientific knowledge base and human isolation" and the solutions patients and parents have developed: a variety of "self-help support groups", creation of associations of patients and parents whose actions have already ensured progress in healthcare and social assistance provided to the victims, development of treatments, and in raising public awareness of this type of diseases.

In summary, the messages displayed on the website have a wide range of usefulness, allowing the recipient to find diverse issues and to satisfy different needs.

## Facebook: "A great way to build and engage communities of advocates"?

### Thematic agenda

The qualitative content analysis shows that the reference of an event is a very expressive practice used by e-PR to promote EURORDIS's actions and to give visibility to the association within the online community of patients and members. To illustrate the presence of the thematic agenda, the qualitative content analysis provides some examples for issues as category:

– *Reference of an event promoted by EURORDIS*: "webinar to learn more about Rare2030 - Foresight in Rare Disease Policy & how you can help shape future recommendations on rare disease policy", "join us at the EURORDIS Black Pearl Awards Ceremony!", "Live now! EURORDIS 'How to' webinar: Learn about digital health ecosystems", "Have your say in choosing the winner of the EURORDIS Photo Award 2019!", "Information on the #ProtectERNs campaign from Genetic Alliance UK is now available in French, Spanish, German, Italian & Portuguese", "the #IntimateAudrey exhibition on the life of Hollywood icon #AudreyHepburn in Brussels this weekend!", "The EURORDIS Membership Meeting 2019 begins today!";

– *Reference of online resources to facilitate the access to information or/and to promote rare diseases:* "Have you heard of EyeHarp? The gaze-controlled digital device enables people living with physical disabilities to learn & play music. Find out more: http://theeyeharp.org/", "webinar on 2 May at 12.00 CET to learn more about Rare2030 - Foresight in Rare Disease Policy", "Want to get the latest information from the #rarediseasе community? Read our eNews and share your news too! http://ow.ly/lDYV30orxKg";

– *Resources to support events or action:* "Out now! Download the official poster for #RareDiseaseDay 2019 now available via rarediseaseday.org/downloads. Share it today to show your support for the rare disease community. #ShowYourRare";

– *Attribution of an award:* "Anne-Dauphine Julliand is the recipient of the EURORDIS Visual and Audio Media Award in recognition of her inspiring documentary film 'Et Les Mistrals Gagnants'. Find out more on https://blackpearl.eurordis.org/", "@ALSLiga are the recipient of the EURORDIS Members Award in recognition of their great work in providing services and support that have significantly enhanced the quality of life of people living with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) across Belgium and Europe";

– *Happy holidays wish*: "The Board of Directors and the staff of EURORDIS wish you a Happy New Year!";

– *Demonstration and results of support*: "Thank you to Members of European Parliament Tilly Metz patron of the event, Inese Vaidere, John Howarth MEP & other supporters of the rare disease community", "Thank you to the 60+ MEPs & candidates from 13 countries across Europe who have supported the #Pledge4RD".

### Utility of content types

Applying qualitative content analysis to Facebook's *corpus*, the type of content can be illustrated by some examples extracted from Facebook contents:

– *Information:* "The gaze-controlled digital device enables people living with physical disabilities", "Intimate Audrey exhibition", "Rare Barometer survey", "The 10th World Conference on #CorneliadeLange syndrome will take place 31 July - 4 August in Germany", "EURORDIS and Rare Diseases International met Dr Tedros, Director-General of the WHO,

yesterday to discuss next steps towards a future collaboration to ensure people living with a rare disease are not left behind", "EURORDIS is leading the RARE-IMPACT initiative that aims to identify challenges and solutions to patients' access to #gene and cell therapies for rare diseases with secretariat support from Dolon", "Introducing ... the recipient of the EURORDIS Photo Award 2019 DEEP DERÝN", "A brand new online shop has been launched for #RareDiseaseDay where you can find t-shirts, jumpers and much more!";

– *Appeal/invitation:* "Have you heard of EyeHarp?", "Community Advisory Board in your disease area? Join a workshop to learn what's involved in starting a CAB during the EURORDIS Membership Meeting", "Ask your returning or candidate Member of the European Parliament to pledge their support for the rare disease community", "Join the first 22q11 Northern Ireland Conference", "Would you like to contribute to shaping the next 10 years of rare disease policy? Register for a webinar on 2 May at 12.00 CET to learn more about Rare2030 - Foresight in Rare Disease Policy & how you can help shape future recommendations on rare disease policy", "Register to join an event bringing together families and experts to discuss & exchange on Cornelia de Lange syndrome", "Want to get the latest information from the #raredisease community?", "Ask your returning or candidate Member of the European Parliament to pledge their support for rare diseases ahead of the European elections taking place in May!", "Are you looking to grow your rare disease network? Register for the EURORDIS Membership Meeting 2019 Bucharest", "Live now! EURORDIS 'How to' webinar: Learn about digital health ecosystems", "Take a look at the new website for more information https://rareimpact.eu/", "Want to get the latest information from the #raredisease community? Read our eNews and share your news too!", "Get inspired to join the #ShowYourRare campaign!", "Vote for your favourite photo to win the EURORDIS Photo Award 2019!";

– *Personalization: "*Ralf is a graduate of the #EURORDISSummerSchool & #EURORDISWinterSchool and shares his experience of becoming an active patient advocate for rare vascular diseases", "Sergio and his family had a long diagnostic odyssey before getting a diagnosis of #DravetSyndrome", "On #RareDiseaseDay 2019 watch and share Lorena's story of living with Phelan-McDermid syndrome to raise awareness of rare diseases!", video of Karlo who lives with the rare disease neurofibromatosis type 1, "Anne-Dauphine Julliand is the recipient of the EURORDIS Visual and Audio Media Award in recognition of her inspiring documentary film 'Et Les Mistrals Gagnants'", "HRH Princess Maria of Romania will show her support for the rare disease community by attending the EURORDIS #BlackPearl Awards Ceremony on 12 February", "Russell is the recipient of the EURORDIS Volunteer Award in recognition of his exceptional work as a patient advocate for all rare eye conditions through LHON Society and as a patient board member of Ern-Eye and for all rare diseases in his work as one of EURORDIS' longstanding volunteers".

### Rhetorical approach

On Facebook, some rhetorical devices are used, such as:

*Logos*:

– The question as a phatic or flashy element, which establishes contact, since demands a response (e.g., "Have you heard of EyeHarp?");

– Repetition: some initiatives and events are remembered in an intention to optimize the reception of the message and familiarity with it (e.g., the happy new year wishes appear in seven languages: German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, English, Portuguese, and French);

– Information and appeal work together to optimize the potential of message, constructing a discourse that is mainly entangled in the informational and appeal functions (e.g., "There's one week left to take the #RareBarometer survey! Is there a treatment for your rare disease? Are you able to access it? Take the survey by 30 April and share your experiences. Available here in 23 languages: http://bit.ly/eurordis-survey");

– Personalization by referring to people who experience illnesses, encouraging empathy and identification among subjects who deal with the same diseases and disorders, as well as the supportive and empathic spirit to those involved in the promotion of causes related to rare diseases (*pathos*);

– Exclamation mark is used as a phatic element and thus as a magnet for the reader's attention (e.g., "New!", "Live now!").

*Ethos*:

– The reference to "elite figures" such as Audrey Hepburn, affected by a rare cancer, Princess Maria of Romania, Dr Tedros, Director-General of the WHO, "the renowned film director and comedian Woody Allen", who being public figures and credible, persuade to an active and positive behavior and leverage the causes of EURORDIS.

### Facebook uses in numbers

The results of the content analysis reveal that the first two months of the year are the ones the frequency of posts was highest: February with 38 (23,8%) and January with 37 (23,1%). Among the first semester of the year, June is the month poorest in posts: 17 (10,6%).

Regarding the content of posts, and considering specifically the issue, the "reference of an event promoted by EURORDIS" is, distinctively, the most present (95 – 59,4%), followed by "reference of online resources to facilitate the access to information or/and to promote rare diseases" (34 – 21,3%). The other issues have a residual presence. In terms of the type of content, the most used type is "information and appeal" (64 – 40,0%). The appealing type is the second one more frequent, with almost 30%, and the informative type has an incidence of almost 20%.

In terms of form or style, each post uses text, but the most used type of resource is "text and photo" (124 – 77,5%), followed by "only text" (24 – 15,0%) and, at last, "text and video" (12 – 7,5%). Among the rhetorical devices used (N=103), the most frequent is "use of question" with more than 40% (see table 1).

Table 1. Rhetorical devices

| | **N** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Use of question | 43 | 41,7 |
| Personalization | 25 | 24,3 |
| Exclamation point | 22 | 21,4 |
| Statistical data | 4 | 3,9 |
| Factual data | 4 | 3,9 |
| Mix of information and appeal | 3 | 2,9 |
| Pleonasm / redundancy | 1 | 1 |
| Antithesis | 1 | 1 |
| **Total** | **103** | **100** |

### Interactivity

Interactivity is measured using the arithmetic mean (or average), a measure of central location, and the mean of likes is 23,75. The mean of shares is 8,56 and the mean of comments is 0,91. This signifies that, in total, there is an amount of 23,75 likes, 8,56 shares, and 0,91 comments per post. The most liked (76 likes) post is published on March 15 and refers to an event, concretely to the EURORDIS winter school. The most sharable post is published on the same day and is related to an appeal to "don't miss the chance to make your voice heard", by participating in the #RareBarometer survey. The most commented post (13 comments) is published on January 18, and focuses on a personal story, the story of Richard West, the recipient of the EURORDS Volunteer Award in recognition of his "admirable commitment of over 20 years as a dedicated advocate of rare disease issues on behalf of the Behçet's community".

In summary, the most interactive messages are those that promote events, those that motivate publics to have an audible voice and personalized stories that attract the recipient's identification and projection. Facebook allows events to gain visibility and breadth, organizations and their activities to penetrate larger networks of people, and patients and members to improve interactions and to expand the accessibility to messages of their interest. In addition, Facebook is a promotor of inclusion, visibility, identification, inspiration, incitement, and action.

## Trying to press the press: *The communicational potential of EURORDIS' press releases*

*Thematic agenda.* The qualitative content analysis reveals four issues: 1. public support/promotion of actions benefiting the cause of rare diseases (e.g., "EURORDIS calls for holistic care for the 30m people living with a rare disease in Europe by 2030", "Rare Disease Day 2019 Policy Event at the United Nations", "Takeda, Microsoft and EURORDIS release report with action plan to help rare disease community shorten the diagnostic odyssey"), 2. results of surveys on rare diseases (e.g., "Close to 100% of respondents are supportive of data-sharing initiatives to foster research and improve healthcare", "over 40% are against their data being shared outside the medical field"), 3. results of EURORDIS' efforts (e.g., "The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has made reference to persons living with a rare disease within its recently published annual report"); and 4. advocacy successes (e.g., "Rare diseases feature for first time at World Health Assembly").

In 2018, EURORDIS launches eight press releases and, during January and August of 2019, nine press releases. All the EURORDIS' press releases reflect the efforts and activity of the organization.

The most approached issue, in the press releases, is "public support/promotion of actions benefiting the cause of rare diseases" (14). Each one of the other issues ("results of surveys on rare diseases", "results of EURORDIS' efforts", "advocacy successes") has one presence. All issues lay emphasis on the merit of EURORDIS.

*Sources.* The most frequent sources are EURORDIS direction and institutional voice (12), followed by various organizations related to rare diseases and health (4) and intergovernmental organizations (United Nations – UN) (1).

*Rhetorical devices.* In terms of rhetorical devices, the personalization, present specially by the use of citations and specific positions, is the most frequent, concretely in the content

of eight press releases. Factual data, with seven presences, is the second one. At last, it was used statistical data in two press releases.

Results of rhetorical analysis show attention to the target public – journalists –, by using a predominantly informative and objective language style. The *ethos* is present through the use of official and institutional sources and, therefore, credible as: EURORDIS' direction. The *logos* is built on facts, statistics and personalization, through the expression of the voices from credible sources.

*Content: Patterns versus variations.* Use of a predominantly informative and factual language style. 15 of 17 press releases include a presentation of EURORDIS. Only one uses photos.

## Discussion and conclusions

### EURORDIS' use of digital media (website and Facebook page) to communicate with patients and members

This study tries to give some contributions, responding to the OECD/EU's (2018, p. 13) and Davies' diagnosis (2016) of a scarce exploitation by the health systems of new digital technologies to strengthen prevention and care. Recognizing that "health is wealth" (Unger, 2004) and the imperatives and virtues of the "Web PR age" (Hurme, 2001), this article assumes the premise "healthy thanks to communication" (Belim & Vaz de Almeida, 2018).

The EURORDIS' website tries to be eclectic, providing different types of content – information, clarification, personalization, support, appeal, and empowerment – that can satisfy various needs. The personal stories and the various testimonial videos, for example, play a human role (*pathos*), inviting the recipient into a more intimate and closer approach to the patient. In addition, the construction of personal stories of suffering helps individuals to understand certain situations (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003, p. 29). Ramanadhan et al. (2013, p. 7) also mentions that stories with human interest received the highest average number of "likes" per post. It is also noted a media-oriented option, as the website presents an item intitled "EURORDIS press releases", contrasting with the results by the Castillo-Esparcia and López-Villafranca's study (2016), that identify only 21% of organizations with a virtual press room.

EURORDIS tries to be active in Facebook. The topics, covered in the posts, are diverse, exploring various types of content, such as: informative, appealing, utilitarian (the poster for 2019's rare disease day) and even ludic ("Have your say in choosing the winner of the EURORDIS Photo Award 2019", invitation for #IntimateAudrey exhibition). The most significative type is "information and appeal" (40,0%), followed by appealing type. Discussing these specific results, EURORDIS can be exploiting Facebook as "a great way to build and engage communities of advocates" (Wilson, 2012, p. 67), which can be particularly pertinent in the divulgation of rare diseases, which do not have enough visibility.

The most published issue is "reference of an event promoted by EURORDIS" (59,4%), being in coherence with the results by Ramanadhan et al. (2013), that conclude that the most significant issue, published by U.S. 166 CBOs, is organization promotion (66%).

There is a predominance of the visual dimension in Facebook, with 77.5% of posts using text and photo together. This particular result reinforces previous studies on the use of Facebook by rare disease associations (Reguera, 2017; Reguera, Subirats & Armayones, 2017; Subirats et al. (2018) and meets the trends of "compelling content" (Ehrlich & Harrigan,

2019) and of the growing protagonism of the image (Puentes-Rivera, Rúas-Araújo & Dapena-González, 2017, p. 86).

The rhetorical devices used in Facebook's messages, to communicate with patients and members, make them more attractive and motivate for persuasion, the essence of rhetorical theory: a) the question as a phatic or flashy element, which establishes contact, since demands a response; b) repetition: some initiatives and events are remembered in order to optimize the reception of the message and familiarity with it. The repetition favors the memory performance, that can be enhanced and maintained for a long time (Zhan, Guo, Chen & Yang, 2018); c) the information appears as a partner of the appeal, constructing and improving the potential of a discourse that is mainly entangled in the informational and appeal functions; d) exemplification and personalization by referring to people who experience illnesses, encouraging empathy and identification of people who deal and not deal with same diseases and disorders, and to those involved in the promotion of causes related to rare diseases, stimulating a supportive and empathic spirit (*pathos*); e) exclamation point is used as a phatic element and, thus, acts as a magnet for the reader's attention; f) the reference to "elite figures" makes the speech credible. Hovland group confirmed that communicators high in expertise and trustworthiness (such as medical specialists) tend to be more persuasive (Ajzen, 1992, p. 5); and g) the factual and statistical data and style resources help to persuade. For Aristotle (IV century/2005), proof and demonstration are fundamental in discourse (p. 49). Style figures concretize and clarify the sender's speech (Corbett, 2004, 143). The use of examples gives a better illustration of the speaker's statement (Petric, 2007, p. 263).

### Constructing messages on rare diseases to journalists

All the EURORDIS' press releases reflect the efforts and activity of the organization, since the aim is to promote it and how public relations practitioners frame their health messages to the media may have a direct impact on the public's health perceptions and decisions (Ruăo et al., 2012, pp. 69-70; Tanner, 2004b, p. 24). The most significant issue, in the press releases, is "public support/promotion of actions benefiting the cause of rare diseases" (14), being in line with the result by Park and Reber's study (2010). The authors stand out that, to demonstrate their initiatives for public health, the three organizations analyzed employed most frequently the social support/educational frame.

The use of EURORDIS' direction and institutional voice as the main quoted sources reinforces the position and an intervention's image of the organization. All the sources used are institutional, fulfilling the criterion of *ethos* – the reference to elite members. In the journalistic praxis, this type of sources facilitates the task of confirming sources and injects credibility into the news discourse. Lee (2016), analyzing the use of quotations in offline (*The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*) and online (*The Huffington Post* and *Newsmax*) newspapers in terms of verb objectivity and source qualification (transparency and credibility), observes that source credibility was the key determinant, followed by verb objectivity, for online papers when analyzed with verb objectivity because source credibility first determines the order of quotation use as a whole followed by verb objectivity (p. 13).

The *logos* is built on facts, statistics and personalization, through the expression of the voices from credible sources. This rhetorical tactic is in accordance with journalistic language style. Turk (1986) adverts that the conformity to journalistic norms of newsworthiness is the most important factor in a newspaper's decision to accept a news release and this style solves

the problem identified by Friedman et al. (2013) that journalists faced personal difficulties in understanding public health information due to "many people with public health degrees become epidemiology-focused and not media-focused" (p. 383).

However, only one press release used photos. Ehrlich and Harrigan (2019) explain that, with a strong headline in place, adding captivating visuals will increase the appeal of the news release. The authors suggest to "show your story, don't tell it", once research finds out that approximately 65% of today's audiences are "visual-first" and that multimedia increases open rates by 200% over traditional text-only news releases.

### Takeaways

Given the conclusion by Bañón Hernández (2007) that patients with rare diseases, because of their systematic exclusion from the main discussion forums, are considered a minority group with generally little capacity to exert any significant influence on political and social issues, all means and resources will be welcome to give voice to patients with rare diseases. Subirats et al. (2018), previously, made some recommendations regarding the Facebook (e.g. use photos in their posts; update their status; post content of common interest and post at midday or late at night), that can be adopted in the e-PR's performance.

Grounded on the results of the present investigation, it can be recommended regarding the online performance of e-PR in website and Facebook page: 1. Diversification of contents in order to satisfy different needs of publics; 2. Reference of personal stories that promote proximity, inclusion, inspiration, incitation, empathy; 3. Promotion of events and, inherently, promotion of the health organization, accomplishing the aim of showing the amplitude of activities and dynamism of the health organization; 4. Use of various resources and channels – integrated communication – to motivate the engagement and empowerment of communities and to give visibility to rare diseases; 5. Exploration of the visual dimension; 6. Use of rhetorical devices, such as the question point, the repetition, the articulation between information and appeal, the exemplification and the personalization, the exclamation point, the reference to credible and "elite figures", factual and statistical data, style devices.

Regarding the communication through press releases with journalistic public, it can be recommended to health organizations : 1. the public support / promotion of actions benefiting the cause of rare diseases as frame; 2. institutional and credible sources as sources of information; 3. narration based on facts, statistics, and personalization; 4. a rhetorical strategy in accordance with journalistic language style, i.e., a more media-oriented approach; 5. use of captivating visuals to increase the appeal.

These are the tactics that compose the rhetorical strategy that a health organization, regarding e-PR, can use "to make the most convincing argument that will persuade publics to agree with them" (Inoue, 2018) and, answering to Campbell's challenge (2017, pp. 8, 12), the rhetorical contributions to health pedagogy and to the understanding of health communication practices. All the options of EURORDIS's e-PR described reflect the approach of rhetorical theory, that advocates the effort to shape knowledge, images and opinions, as well to be convincing and motivating others.

The theory also features how the PR process becomes enriched through the role co-created. Online health communities, as the ones EURORDIS constitutes through online channels, can function as platforms for co-creation. In this sense, social media technologies "enable individuals around the globe to connect with each other to share and exchange information

via virtual platforms" (Amann & Rubinelli, 2017). For example, the level of interactivity in the *corpus* analyzed reveals that, in total, there is an amount of 23,75 likes, 8,56 shares, and 0,91 comments per post. Shared meaning functions socially as a blend of mind and self (Heath & Frandsen, 2008). Through this via, PR can add value to society by assuring that health choices become enlightened, risks are ethically managed, and relationships are mutually developed (Black, 2014, p. 36).

### Future investigation

Other researches can be done, increasing the number of cases of health organizations being studied, and more studies on the health effects of e-PR on the public should also be conducted.

e-PR has tremendous challenges, as it deals with "the minds and hearts of people" and, concretely in health field, manages two major resources: "communication is what makes us human" (Macnamara, 2017) and "health is wealth" (Unger, 2004).

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# The Development of a Questionnaire for Measuring the Quality of the Work of the PR Department in Organizations

## Abstract

This paper presents the development of a questionnaire for measuring the quality of the work of the PR department (office, sector) in organizations. For this purpose, the necessary research was carried out with experts in the field of public relations, and the statistical methods of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were used. The research was conducted in Serbia. As a result of these procedures and analysis, a questionnaire was prepared for measuring the quality of the work of the PR department in organizations. The questionnaire consists of 5 dimensions and 16 items. The dimensions are as follows: ethical and responsible action, proactive and quality action, strategic and effective action, media relations and internal public relations. The questionnaire can be widely applied, both in practical terms and in a theoretical (scientific) sense. The basic practical application of the questionnaire involves evaluating PR department according to the set items and dimensions. In a scientific sense, the questionnaire can be used to examine the impact of various aspects of organizational behaviour on the quality of the work of the PR department, as well as the impact of the quality of the work of the PR department on different aspects of financial and organizational performance.

**Keywords**: PR departments, quality of the work, experts, questionnaire, Serbia.

## 1. Introduction

Public relations is subject to the evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness, just like any other activity. In doing so, the characteristics of the public relations profession should be taken into account. Carrying out an evaluation of public relations means measuring the results achieved in relation to the goals set in the PR program planning. The evaluation of the PR program is increasingly imposed as both a need and an obligation, but also as an extremely useful activity. In addition, PR evaluation does not require too much money, or too much time.

The evaluation of public relations is a key element of the communications strategy/campaign. Measuring the success of the undertaken activities is done through their evaluation.

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This promotes experiential learning, which may be incorporated into the next planning process, which in turn leads to continuous improvement of the given process (COI, 2009). Wilcox and Cameron (2010) discuss about two very important reasons for evaluating public relations: 1. The desire to do a better job next time. 2. Wide acceptance of the goal management system. Clients and PR professionals want to know whether the money, time and efforts that have been invested in the PR program have contributed to the successful realization of their organizational goals.

Evaluation in public relations provides information on the success of the actions taken and the effects achieved. Evaluation assesses the degree of fulfilment of the defined communication objectives. In addition to providing insight into the success and effects of the implemented activities and procedures, the evaluation also indicates what was good and what was bad. This provides opportunities for the improvement of future actions (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). In addition, the significance of the evaluation is also present in the presentation of the responsibility and effectiveness of PR campaigns (Dozier, 1990; Fairchild, 2002; White & Blamphin, 1994), as well as presenting the impact of public relations on the organization's success (Radford & Goldstein, 2002).

Watson (2012) claims that measurement and evaluation in public relations have been the focus of research since the 1970s. Nevertheless, the same author further notes that measuring and evaluating the efficiency of public relations has been one of the main problems encountered by PR practitioners and researchers for many years (Watson, 2012). According to Xavier et al. (2005), although PR professionals use numerous measurement and evaluation techniques, it is still not clear to what extent the results of the evaluation match real outcomes. Similarly, Baskin et al. (2010) state that while there is still a lack of more sophisticated methods for measuring and evaluating public relations, at the same time there is an increasing need for the application of such methods. Sha (2011) notes that the PR profession has changed greatly over time, but PR practice itself has remained the same. Although public relations evaluation has been present for many years, this topic has become increasingly important and even more relevant.

Based on the aforementioned, it is clear that the measurement and evaluation of PR activities is essential both for the development of the company's PR department and for the success of the organization as a whole. Many societies and public relations institutes, together with numerous researchers, scientists and PR practitioners, have debated the problems and needs involved in developing evaluation techniques, and determining objects of measurement and measuring instruments, but also the role and significance of measurement. However, there is still no clear answer to these questions and problems. As stated by Macnamara (2015), "public relations and corporate communication are caught in a deadlock in relation to measurement and evaluation" (p. 371). Similarly, Michaelson and Stacks (2011) conclude that "public relations practitioners have consistently failed to reach a consensus on what basic evaluation measures are or how to conduct the underlying research for the evaluation and measurement of public relations performance" (p.1). Gregory and White (2008) note that the debate about evaluation in public relations can be described as: "a great deal of discussion, but no forward movement", and that "debate about evaluation goes on, but little if any progress is made". In a recent reference, Volk (2016) concludes that the evaluation and measurement of public relations in an organizational context has been a perennial topic for academics from the very beginning of the research in this field, since the 1970s. Although significant progress has been made, there are still many challenges, and thus, among other things, "until this day,

however, no standardized analysis of the large body of academic literature within the evaluation and measurement domain has been conducted" (Volk, 2016).

It is obvious that there are still concerns and open issues in the field of the measurement and evaluation of public relations, which will be further discussed below. For this reason, the aim of this paper was the development of a questionnaire with precisely and specifically defined dimensions and items, which would enable the direct measurement of the quality of the work of the PR department (office, sector) in organizations. We believe that such a questionnaire can, to a significant extent, contribute to filling the gap in the measurement of the quality of the work of the PR department in organizations. Under the quality of work of the PR department, in this paper, we mean the degree to which the PR department of an organization performs its activities and tasks in the necessary or desired way. In other words, we regard the quality of the work of the PR department as the degree of efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the jobs of the PR department in organizations.

We also consider the concept and the approach that was applied to achieve the set goal to be of importance, starting from the method used to formulate the initial items, followed by the exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The necessary research was carried out by means of surveys of experts in public relations from Serbia, who are employed in organizations (PR managers and PR practitioners) and higher education institutions. The results of this research, the questionnaire with dimensions and items, as well as the corresponding analysis are given below. Of course, we would like to mention immediately that this paper does not call into question the quality, importance or application of the existing instruments. Our goal is to form a useful questionnaire, but primarily to present the idea and the possibility of conducting similar research in the future. Clearly, the main limitation of the research is that it relates to conditions in Serbia, so the questionnaire obtained will be applicable, first and foremost, to public relations research in Serbia. Otherwise, the history, condition and perspectives of public relations in Serbia, as well as some other specific analyses, can be seen in (Nikolic, Dordevic & Cockalo, 2007; Nikolic et al., 2011; Nikolic et al., 2012; Nikolic et al., 2014).

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Evaluation and measurement in public relations

Public relations, as well as the other departments within the organization, are evaluated for their contribution to achieving organizational goals (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006). PR practitioners are increasingly asked to document measurable results and the realized profit from the PR program is expected to be proportionate to the costs of the program. A more robust attitude is expressed by Childers Hon (1997), who states that in a modern, complex organizational environment, public relations can no longer claim that the existence of the PR department is justified, unless they show evidence of measurable results. Some authors, for example (Macnamara, 1996; White & Blamphin, 1994), consider that PR evaluation is one of the most important areas in public relations research.

According to Gordon (2011, p. 217), "evaluation and public relations is the analysis of an active communication model." Wilcox and Cameron (2010) see the evaluation as one step in the public relations process, which represents a measurement of the results in relation to the

set goals in the planning process. According to (Lindenmann, 2003), public relations and evaluation is "any and all research designed to determine the relative effectiveness or value of what is done in public relations." In the same reference, the focus is placed on both the PR measurement in the short term (the performance evaluation of specific PR programs, strategies and activities, measuring the outputs, outtakes and/or outcomes of those programs in relation to the set goals) and the PR measurement in the long-term (assessing the wider PR efforts, which have the capacity to improve the relationships between the organization and its public).

When it comes to evaluating public relations, it is useful to list five leading models of public relations research and evaluation: (Noble & Watson, 1999)

1. The PII Model (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985).

2. The Macro Model of PR evaluation. This model was later named the Pyramid Model of PR Research (Macnamara, 1992, 1999).

3. The PR Effectiveness Yardstick (Lindenmann, 1993).

4. The Continuing Model of Evaluation (Watson, 1997).

5. The Unified Model of Evaluation (Noble & Watson, 1999).

According to (Macnamara, 2006), there are two other important models of public relations evaluation:

– The IPR PRE process (The UK Institute of Public Relations).

– The Measurement Tree (The Institute of Public Relations USA).

Similarly, numerous authors, for example (Lindenmann, 1993; Noble & Watson, 1999; Macnamara, 1992, 1999, 2002; Wilcox & Cameron, 2010), agree that there are three levels in the measurement and evaluation of public relations:

Level 1: the basic level (the measurement of outputs). This level involves only a quantitative calculation of the number of posted messages and repetitions of specific messages in the media, without estimating the actual reception, understanding or remembering of these messages.

Level 2: the intermediate level (the measurement of outgrowths or outtakes). At this level, the extent to which the targeted audience received the message, paid attention to the sent message, as well as the degree of understanding, acceptance and memory of the message is measured.

Level 3: the advanced level (measuring outcomes). The fact that a large number of messages have been sent and a large number of people have received, understood and memorized the message does not yet mean that the organization will have a concrete benefit. There needs to be a change in the opinions, attitudes and behaviour of the target audience. The degree of change in thinking, attitudes and behaviour is measured at the third, highest level.

It is clear that only measurements at the third level can provide a complete picture of the actual performance of the PR department. However, a greater number of references, for example, (Watson, 1992; Watson & Simmons, 2004; Macnamara, 2006) show that in practice, the method at the first level of measurement is more commonly applied. Similarly, according to Baskin et al. (2010), the most advanced methods of evaluation in public relations are less used in the European Union. Furthermore, Xavier et al. (2005) pointed out that although

they are aware of the importance of applying evaluation in public relations, PR practitioners in Australia predominantly measure outputs.

It can be concluded that the measurements of outcomes are not often in use, regardless of their inherent significance. Nevertheless, the evaluation of public relations is gaining in importance and has become the typical, continuous and systematic activity of PR services and PR agencies. Senior managers simply want to know what they are getting for the money invested in PR programs. Perhaps the best indicator of the growing importance of PR evaluation in the PR field is that the budget for these activities is on the increase. Thus, in the 1990s, the average PR program envisioned about 1% for its evaluation budget, while twenty years later, this percentage was five times higher, i.e. about 5% (Wilcox & Cameron, 2010).

### 2.2. Problems in the evaluation and measurement of public relations

Regardless of the fact that PR evaluation is both natural and logical, and at the same time very important (and becoming increasingly important), there are always certain problems in its implementation. This gives rise to the questions: what is actually happening with evaluation in public relations and why is evaluation in public relations the subject of numerous debates?

First of all, there is no general agreement on how and whether public relations can be measured (Huang, 2012; Thurlow et al., 2016). Black (1993) stated that the main problem in the evaluation of public relations is that it is very difficult to separate their effects from the results of the other services of the organization and external circumstances. It is true that the effects of the work of the PR department is very difficult to measure because they are influenced by numerous factors, such as internal (the work of the marketing department, product/service quality, organizational culture, previous results, etc.), as well as external conditions (competition work, the organization's image, consumer expectations, etc.).

Grunig (1983), indicates that PR practitioners are aware that evaluation is needed, but also that the situation is different in practice. One of the key reasons for this disproportion is the high degree of fear of PR practitioners that their work can be measured and evaluated in such a way. Kirban (1983) found that this feeling of fear was present in more than half of the respondents.

Foster (2012) lists the main limitations for the wider application of evaluation in public relations practice: human resources, time, finance, budget and lack of understanding of the significance of the evaluation. Similarly, Macnamara (2006) points to the main reasons for poor research and evaluation in the field of PR. In the US and the UK, the main reasons for this situation are: high costs, lack of requests (wishes, interest) for measurement and evaluation, lack of time, lack of knowledge on how to perform measurement and evaluation, lack of standards, concerns about the results and other. The same author points to another important reason, which is the way to approach the problem with measurement. Namely, most PR practitioners are trained and used to using rhetorical methods (words, images, sounds), but for research, measurement and evaluation quantitative approaches are needed (use of numbers, percentages, charts and graphs).

Macnamara (2006) stated that numerous studies indicate the importance of measurement and evaluation in public relations, but at the same time, a significant number of authors also point to the lack of a scientific approach in these measurements. Accordingly, Grunig and Hunt (1984) point out that most practitioners prefer to use intuition rather than scientific procedures in solving various problems in the field of PR. Lindenmann (1990) showed that most

PR measurements do not have a "scientific" character. Since practitioners conduct more informal than formal evaluations, Childers Hon (1998), proposes that PR planning and evaluation should be more systematic, regardless of resource constraints and other difficulties.

Bearing in mind the previous findings, the limiting factors in the evaluation and measurement of public relations can be divided into justified and unjustified. The justified factors are: the effects of the PR department interfere with the work of other departments in the organization, changing environmental influences, lack of money, lack of time, etc. The unjustified factors are: lack of interest in measurement and evaluation, lack of understanding of the importance of evaluation, lack of a scientific approach, lack of knowledge, fear of results, etc. Lack of money and lack of time may be unjustified factors, depending on the conditions in the organization. It is interesting that the lack of money and resources appears as a limitation in highly developed countries.

In terms of evaluation in public relations, some other observations should also be borne in mind. Among other things, the PR program evaluation must be worked on in advance, before its launch, and not when it is already in progress or has come to an end (Lindenmann, 1993). According to Childers Hon (1997) it is ironic that few scientific studies examine what public relations actually does for an organization. The evaluation of the PR is usually directed at measurements of the effects achieved on the target groups (opinions, attitudes and behaviour), while less attention is paid to the values that PR programs explicitly bring to organizations.

Finally, Lindenmann (1993) asks why many PR practitioners feel uncomfortable when they begin to think about evaluating their PR activities. He points out two things: firstly, PR measurement is possible, and secondly, PR measurement does not require too much money or time. Such a claim is probably the best end to the consideration of the problems involved in the evaluation and measurement of public relations.

### 2.3. Existing questionnaires in the field of PR

It has been previously concluded that evaluation and measurement in public relations is of great importance, and that there are a number of concerns and problems in this field. It is probably precisely this disproportion which has resulted in the existence of a significant number of papers dealing with this issue, both in theoretical and practical conditions. A number of questionnaires for certain measurements in the field of PR have been developed. These measurements are usually focused on evaluating two aspects:

1. The evaluation and measurement of relations and communication between the organization and the public (Organization - Public Relationship) (Huang, 2001a; Yang, Kan, & Cha, 2015; Childers Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001b; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Kim, 2001b; Penning, 2011; Shen, 2016).

2. The evaluation and measurement of public reactions to the PR program (outputs, outtakes, outcomes) (Lindenmann, 1993; Macnamara, 1992, 1999, 2002; Wilcox & Cameron, 2010; Zhang, 2016).

In addition, evaluation and measurement in the PR sphere can also be found in the following areas:

3. The measurement of the effects, objectives and degree of achievement of targets (Deatherage & Hazleton, 1998; Childers Hon, 1997; 1998; Zhang, 2016).

4. The measurement of the state, i.e. the measurement of what is done at the PR department (Huang, 2001b; Fleisher & Mahaffy, 1997; Huang, 2004).

5. The measurement of PR strategies (Huang, 2004; Laskin, 2012).

6. The measurement of employee satisfaction and the relationships between employees and organizations (Shen, 2011; Shen, 2016).

7. Measurements related to PR practitioners (Broom & Smith, 1979; Broom, 1982).

8. Measurements of revenues and costs arising from operations in the PR sphere (Huang, 2012; Kim, 2001a).

9. Other measurements in the field of PR (Lindenmann, 1990; Thurlow et al., 2016; Meng & Berger, 2013).

A growing number of scientists believe that public relations should be viewed as the management of the relationship between the organization and the public (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). As confirmation of such opinions, there are numerous papers dealing with this issue. For example, the questionnaire in (Huang, 2001a) measures various complex relationships between the organization and the public. Similar relations, like the relations between the organization and individuals/groups/the public are also measured (Childers Hon & Grunig, 1999, Huang, 2001b). The questionnaire developed by Yang, Kang and Cha (2015) focuses on organizational-public dialogic communication. Bruning and Ledingham (1999) dealt with the measurement of organization - public relations. An instrument was developed to measure organization - public relations, as well as the impact of this attitude on customer attitudes, aptitude and behaviour. The results show that the organization and key public develop three types of relationships: professional, personal and community. Also, there is a questionnaire for measuring the organization - public relationship (Kim, 2001b). The dimensions of this questionnaire are: trust, commitment, local or community involvement and reputation. Penning (2011) examined how stockholders (investors) value public relations communication. Investors value information from PR professionals (directly from a company) more than that from news media and other sources. The extension of the instrument for measuring organization - public relationship quality was carried out in the study by Shen (2016), where another dimension was added: distrust.

Deatherage and Hazleton (1998) developed a questionnaire to measure the overall assessment of how well the PR implements the creation of a positive image of the organization, followed by a general assessment of the success of the program in changing people's attitudes. Among other things, the following items were measured: the level of building understanding between the organization and the public, the organization's policies, the attitude of the public towards the organization, and the construction of positive publicity. It should be noted that the goals, effects and what the PR department should do were also measured here. Childers Hon (1997) presented a qualitative research through interviews. The results pointed out the significance of the PR program in achieving organizational goals, two-way communication, building relationships, disseminating the right message, communicating strategically, and good media relations to change behaviour. Childers Hon (1998) presented another qualitative study through interviews. Practitioners emphasize the achievement of the organization's priorities as the primary goal of the PR, while CEOs consider it to be the creation of a favourable image of the organization. Zhang (2016) showed various methods (seven ways) for measuring me-

dia reputation and application. Although all the modes have a positive correlation with corporate reputation, this correlation is statistically significant in only a small number of measures.

Huang (2001b) examines what is used and what is being done in public relations (which activities), and what the relationships between organizations and the public are. Fleisher and Mahaffy (1997) developed the new PR/C (Public Relations/Communications) approach to measuring performance using a balanced scorecard. Practically, various indicators representing the outcomes of the PR/C process are measured. These indicators show the status of certain aspects of the PR/C process in the organization. Huang (2004) presented research results in which three survey data sets were carried out, with three groups of respondents: legislators, congressional liaisons and PR practitioners. A multi-dimensional scale for measuring public relation strategies was developed for each group of respondents individually. This scale, inter alia, examines the following: how to communicate with the public (techniques, activities), social activities (presents, lunches...), how interpersonal communication is performed (personally, by telephone...), how two-way communication is achieved (whether evaluation, understanding and appreciation of other people's opinions is carried out), how symmetrical communication is used (what the impact of public relations is, consideration of the opinions of all the participants, taking into account possible negative effects).

Laskin (2012) proposed a measurement approach for public relations practice based on the critique of the public relations models (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and the dimensions of public relations (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002), which consists of five public relations scales: direction of communication, intended beneficiary, strategic nature, role and timeframe. We have placed this approach into the measurement of PR strategies group, but it may be classified in several of these areas in terms its scope. For this reason, this approach really seems logical, comprehensive and widely applicable. However, researchers and practitioners are left to define the items for the individual scales, which implies a high degree of subjectivity in further work, as well as reduced comparability of results.

Shen (2011) developed the questionnaire for measuring relationship maintenance strategies between organizations and employees (internal public). The questionnaire (dimensions and items) is aimed at examining the relationship between the organization and the employees, and the issues considered include employee information, career development, assistance in solving concerns, conflict resolution and similar. The paper (Shen, 2016) points to the importance of distinguishing between job satisfaction and satisfaction with the organization. In doing so, satisfaction with the organization plays an important role in the establishment of employee - organization relationship quality.

In some papers (especially earlier works), the focus is on investigating PR practitioners. For example, Broom and Smith (1979) examine how public relations clients view public relations practitioners and what they expect from them. The assessment of satisfaction with consultants showed that among other roles, the respondents are most valued by problem-solving process facilitation consultants. This research helps practitioners (consultants) to gain a better understanding of their clients' expectations. On the other hand, there was research where the respondents were PRSA members and evaluated four public relations roles: expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator and problem-solving process facilitator (Broom, 1982). PR practitioners find themselves in two roles: that of communication technician and a combination of the other three roles. Men mostly find themselves in the role of expert prescriber, while women see themselves in that of communication technician. Broom and Dozier (1986) practically continued this research. The respondents were the same,

and some of the conclusions are the following: in the PR practitioners positions, women earn less than men; PR managers earn more than PR technicians; satisfaction with the practice of PR practitioners grows over time regardless of whether they advance to managerial positions, or remain in the PR position; a higher percentage of men advance towards managerial positions than women. Therefore, advancement in the PR profession depends on both gender and professional roles.

Huang (2012) presented a questionnaire that has a general approach, examining among other things, organizational reputation, generating revenue and reducing costs. Kim (2001a) measured the impact and effects of public relations by taking into account the costs that result from the realization of certain PR activities. It was shown that the increase in public relations expenses has a positive impact on the company's reputation, and this in turn leads to a positive impact on the company's revenue. It may thus be concluded that with the increase in the cost of PR activities, there is also a rise in the effects of PR activities and the PR department.

There are also questionnaires which relate to different areas of PR. Thus, Lindenmann (1990) examines certain characteristics of current research in the field and practice of PR, then the degree of the respondents' involvement in certain types of PR research, the degree of use of certain research techniques in PR, as well as the prognosis for the importance of research and trends in the field of PR in the future. This research is focused on the practice and practical application of certain research types and techniques in the field of PR. Thurlow et al. (2016) developed an eight-dimensional questionnaire, which covers the problem of measuring public relations very well. (The impression is that there is a wider organizational and strategic approach here. Meng and Berger, (2013) presented a questionnaire for measuring excellent leadership in public relations. In essence, the study measures the leadership and quality of leadership in public relations.

## 3. The starting point for research

The previous review shows that there are a number of different instruments for measurement in the field of PR. Macnamara (2014) also points to the existence of a large number of metrics for measuring PR and corporate communication. The same author thinks that this is both good and bad: on the one hand, there is no unique formula that will successfully and fully answer all questions and dilemmas, but on the other, too many instruments may cause a certain degree of confusion among researchers and practitioners (Macnamara, 2014).

### 3.1. Summarizing and analyzing the deficiencies of existing instruments

All of the instruments mentioned in this paper (like many others), undoubtedly have a sound theoretical and practical significance. However, something seems to be missing, and this is no surprise in view of the problems with evaluation in the PR area. Therefore, the analysis of these instruments must be approached cautiously, but also very strictly and critically. In this way, certain shortcomings of existing instruments may be observed. These, conditionally speaking, shortcomings, can be summarized as follows:

– Wide approach. Access to certain existing instruments, as well as some items and dimensions, is sometimes broad and general.

– Approach by developed countries. Some questionnaires have been adapted to developed countries and successful organizations, where a degree of financial power, of both the organization and the user (public), is assumed.

– The indirect factors approach. The questionnaires sometimes examine elements, relationships and effects that are not exclusively the result of the PR department, but of certain internal and external factors.

– An informative approach. Some instruments provide information about the work of the PR department or approach to the implementation of a PR program. However, this information remains at the level of information (on what the PR department does), it does not show the degree of the quality of the work of the PR department, and therefore the potential benefits to the organization.

– Good goals don't mean good work either. The questionnaires often emphasize the role of the organization in achieving the effects of the PR program, but less attention is paid to the PR department itself. For example, what if the organization strives for good goals, but the PR department itself does not work well? It is not enough to have and want good goals, which are written down somewhere, the degree and quality of their realization is important, as well as the role of public relations in their achievement.

– Two-way communication does not mean good work either. This drawback is similar to the previous one. Almost all instruments positively value public research and two-way communication. This is very important, but it seems insufficient for a full and precise evaluation: if the organization explores public opinion, and if it declaratively appreciates their opinion, this still does not tell us how the organization and its PR department really work.

– Measuring effects without measuring way of work. Finally, a significant number of questionnaires, models, methods and techniques for measurement and evaluation in the field of PR are concentrated on the evaluation of results, consequences and effects. However, the results, consequences, and effects are epilogues, offering no information about how do we got there, how we know exactly what we did and how well in order to determine the results gained as good or bad.

### 3.2. Idea and goal: to measure the quality of the work of the PR department

As a consequence of all this, the impression is that the existing instruments do not substantially cover the basic question: how well does the PR department work, that is, how well are the PR activities performed? Macnamara (2014) asks: "Why are we still here after more than 40 years of intensive efforts unable to reliably and clearly demonstrate the *value* of PR and corporate communication?" It is precisely this which is important, it is simply necessary to measure the quality of the work of the PR department, i.e. the value of the work of the PR department. After all, according to (COI, 2009), the evaluation basically represents the process of assessing the quality and effectiveness of the process.

As stated in the introduction, the aim of this paper is to develop a questionnaire for measuring the direct quality of the work of the PR department in organizations. The idea is to measure what actually works, how it works and how well. This idea came about by identifying and analyzing the shortcomings of existing instruments, as described previously. We believe that it is important to take into account the quality of the work of the PR department, and the desired outcomes will result from this quality. Likewise, the effects of the work of the PR department often depend on a number of external factors which cannot be influenced.

That is why it is necessary to do what is possible, which means: to do the best and achieve the highest quality possible. In sport, it is important for the coach to set the tactics and for the team to play well, and the results will come sooner or later. The consequences are important, but we think that in PR, it is equally important for the measurement to focus on the assessment of the cause, and in this case, this is the quality of the work of the PR department and the PR activities.

## 4. Methodology

The methodological procedure for forming questionnaires to measure the quality of the work of the PR department in organizations consists of three phases:

Phase I - Defining the initial items for the process. These items are defined on the basis of considering a number of references, as well as interviews with several experts in the field of public relations. Some of the analyzed references are as follows (Thurlow et al., 2016; Yang, Kang & Cha, 2015; Meng & Berger, 2013; Laskin, 2012; Shen, 2011; Huang, 2001a; Huang, 2001b; Childers Hon & Grunig, 1999; Deatherage & Hazleton, 1998). In addition, in the process of defining the initial items, we began to question how to measure the quality of the work of the PR department, i.e. what does the PR department do and what are its activities? In this sense, when setting the framework areas for which the themes are defined, the titles and sub-headings that appear in certain public relations books were a significant help, for example (Gordon, 2011; Wilcox & Cameron, 2010; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006; Black, 1993). Finally, 56 items were created (Table 1).

Table 1. Initial 56 items (the items retained after the exploratory factor analysis are marked in bold; the items retained after the confirmatory factor analysis are underlined and marked in bold).

| |
|---|
| **Public relations successfully creates an opinion where there was none.** |
| **Public relations analyzes future trends in the environment and predicts their consequences.** |
| **Public relations establishes and maintains symmetrical, two-way communications between the organization and the target public.** |
| **Public relations contributes to the prevention of conflicts and misunderstandings between the organization and the target public.** |
| **Public relations contributes to understanding, trust and mutual respect between organizations and employees.** |
| Public relations contributes to attracting creative professionals into the organization. |
| Public relations contributes to the promotion of products and services. |
| **Public relations implements the required quantity and quality of the organization's presence in traditional media.** |
| **Public relations implements the required quantity and quality of the organization's presence in modern media.** |
| **Public relations provides good relations and cooperation with the media.** |
| **Public relations provides good relations and cooperation with journalists.** |
| **Public relations provides timely press releases.** |
| **Public relations successfully organizes media conferences.** |
| Public relations maximally uses all the effects of publicity. |
| **Public relations publishes quality and effective internal publications.** |
| **Public relations publishes quality and effective external publications** |
| **Public relations implements quality and effective sponsorship activities.** |
| Public relations organizes high-quality and effective special events. |
| **Public relations selects and organizes appropriate special events.** |

**Public relations provides a corporate image which contributes to building confidence in the organization in terms of fulfilling given promises.**
**Public relations provides a corporate image which contributes to building confidence in the knowledge and skills of organizations and the employees in the organization.**
**Public relations contributes to building an effective corporate identity for the organization.**
Public relations contributes to the creation of effective elements of the organization's corporate identity (corporate name, logo, trademark, characteristic colours, slogan ...).
**Public relations establishes high-quality and effective internal relations with the public.**
**Public relations establishes effective internal relations with the public.**
**Public relations chooses the appropriate channels of internal communication.**
**Internal public relations contributes to familiarizing employees with the organization's business policy, strategy and goals.**
Internal public relations contributes to increasing employee satisfaction and motivation.
Internal public relations contributes to building confidence in the organization's future.
**Public relations makes quality and effective plans for their overall performance.**
**Public relations respects the organization's vision, mission and strategic goals.**
**Public relations has an appropriate place in the organizational structure.**
Public relations, marketing and promotion work harmoniously and with understanding.
**Public relations is effectively organized within its department.**
**Public relations effectively uses available funds.**
**Public relations is familiar with the PR activities of the competition, as well as its own competitive position.**
**Public relations is appropriately used by PR agencies, if necessary.**
**The evaluation of public relations activities is carried out in a quality way.**
**The evaluation of public relations activities is done continuously.**
The evaluation of public relations activities is dominated by methods for measuring the attitudes and actions of the target audience.
The evaluation of public relations activities contributes to the perception of opportunities for the improvement of future actions.
**The evaluation of public relations activities contributes to the improved setting of future goals.**
**Public Relations tells the truth, and provides comprehensive and accurate information.**
**Public relations acts transparently, while respecting the public interest.**
**Public Relations protects the reputation of and confidential information about the organization.**
**Public relations does not give or receive bribes.**
**Public relations takes into account the honour and reputation of their profession.**
**Public relations works in accordance with the principles of social responsibility.**
**Public relations highlights and promotes successful corporate social responsibility programs.**
**Public relations acts in the direction of achieving business effects on the basis of the socially responsible behaviour of the organization.**
**Public relations focuses on socially responsible activities which are highly ranked at the local or national level.**
PR practitioners have the appropriate degree and type of education.
**PR practitioners have the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities.**
PR practitioners possess appropriate professional licenses and accreditations in the field of PR.
**PR practitioners are motivated for their work and provide the maximum in everyday activities.**
Public relations practitioners show empathy and sympathy in crisis situations.

Phase II - Exploratory factor analysis (EFA). In the second phase, the first research was conducted, which refers to the interviewing of experts in the field of public relations. The experts evaluated the **importance** of the initial 56 items by assigning them scores from 1 to 7. These public relations experts from Serbia, who are employed in organizations (PR managers and PR practitioners) and higher education institutions, were interviewed and answers from 189 experts were collected. Out of this number, 112 of the respondents are female and 77 are male, while the average age of the respondents is 35.34 years. The experts were selected so they come from organizations that have developed and relatively successful PR departments.

Within such PR departments, experts with at least five years' experience in public relations have been selected. Experts from higher education institutions were professors and assistants with at least five years of scientific and / or teaching experience in the fields of public relations and business communications. The data collected in the second phase were processed using exploratory factor analysis. On that occasion, the initial 56 items were reduced to 43.

Phase III - Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In the third phase, further research was conducted through more interviews with experts in the field of public relations. The experts evaluated the **significance** of the remaining 43 items and assigned them scores from 1 to 7. The interviews were conducted with public relations professionals from Serbia, who are employed in organizations (PR managers and PR practitioners) and higher education institutions. The experts were selected so they come from organizations that have developed and relatively successful PR departments. Within such PR departments, experts with at least five years' experience in public relations have been selected. Experts from higher education institutions were professors and assistants with at least five years of scientific and / or teaching experience in the fields of public relations and business communications. Responses from 261 experts were collected. Out of this number, 158 respondents are female and 103 are male, while the average age of the respondents is 34.62 years. The data collected in the third stage were processed using confirmatory factor analysis. On that occasion, the 43 items were reduced to 16.

The results of the exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis are given below.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Construct validity: Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

The exploratory factor analysis has been conducted in order to extract the factors of the PR department. The item analysis showed high scale reliability ($\alpha$ =.912) and item-to-total correlations exceeded the recommended .5 threshold level. In order to extract the factors, the principal component exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out, with Promax rotation and Kaiser normalization. Bartlett's test confirmed the adequacy of performing factor analysis ($\chi^2$ = 5610.944, *df*=406, $p$< .01) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy equaled satisfactory .852. All items (13) that didn't satisfy the factor loadings over .3 were excluded from the study (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Pallant, 2011; Hooper, 2012). Thus, from the total of 56 items, 43 items were included in Exploratory factor analysis.

Using eigenvalue criterion (larger than 1), we isolated seven significant factors with the total of 65.5% of variance explained. The results of the exploratory factor analysis are given in the Table 2.

Table 2. Pattern matrix – isolated factors of the PR department.

| **Pattern Matrix[a]** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Component | | | | | | |
| | 1. Ethical and responsible action (and contribution to gaining trust) | 2. Proactive and quality performance | 3. Strategic and effective action | 4. Media relations | 5. Effective action, planning and organizing | 6. Internal public relations | 7. Publications (and continuous evaluation) |
| Public relations successfully creates an opinion where there was none **(P13)** | | .628 | | | | | |
| Public relations analyzes future trends in the environment and predicts their consequences **(P14)** | | .602 | | | | | .467 |
| Public relations establishes and maintains symmetrical, two-way communications between the organization and the target public **(P30)** | | .371 | | | .600 | | |
| Public relations contributes to the prevention of conflicts and misunderstandings between the organization and the target public **(P15)** | | .671 | | | .482 | | |
| Public relations contributes to understanding, trust and mutual respect between organizations and employees **(P16)** | | .532 | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public relations implements the required quantity and quality of the organization's presence in traditional media **(P17)** | | .697 | | | | | |
| Public relations implements the required quantity and quality of the organization's presence in modern media **(P18)** | | .712 | | .311 | | | |
| Public relations provides good relations and cooperation with the media **(P26)** | | | | .574 | | | |
| Public relations provides good relations and cooperation with journalists **(P27)** | | .322 | | .585 | | | |
| Public relations provides timely press releases **(P19)** | | .619 | | .433 | | | |
| Public relations successfully organizes media conferences **(P28)** | | | | .641 | | | |
| Public relations publishes quality and effective internal publications **(P41)** | | | | | | | .693 |
| Public relations publishes quality and effective external publications **(P42)** | | .463 | | | | | .540 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public relations implements quality and effective sponsorship activities **(P20)** | | .913 | | | | | |
| Public relations organizes high-quality and effective special events **(P31)** | | .396 | | | .463 | | |
| Public relations provides a corporate image which contributes to building confidence in the organization in terms of fulfilling given promises **(P1)** | .500 | | | | | | |
| Public relations provides a corporate image which contributes to building confidence in the knowledge and skills of organizations and the employees in the organization **(P2)** | .539 | | | | | | |
| Public relations contributes to building an effective corporate identity for the organization **(P29)** | | | | .762 | | | |
| Public relations establishes high-quality and effective internal relations with the public **(P37)** | | | | | | .703 | |
| Public relations establishes effective internal relations with the public **(P38)** | | | | | | .714 | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public relations chooses the appropriate channels of internal communication **(P39)** | | | | | | .611 | |
| Internal public relations contributes to familiarizing employees with the organization's business policy, strategy and goals **(P40)** | | | | | | .507 | |
| Public relations makes quality and effective plans for their overall performance **(P32)** | | | | | .755 | | |
| Public relations respects the organization's vision, mission and strategic goals **(P22)** | | | .757 | | | | |
| Public relations has an appropriate place in the organizational structure **(P33)** | | | | | .726 | | |
| Public relations is effectively organized within its department **(P34)** | | | | | .619 | | |
| Public relations effectively uses available funds **(P35)** | | | | | .406 | | |
| Public relations is familiar with the PR activities of the competition, as well as its own competitive position **(P23)** | | | .726 | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public relations is appropriately used by PR agencies, if necessary **(P36)** | | | | | .566 | | |
| The evaluation of public relations activities is carried out in a quality way **(P21)** | | .740 | | | | | |
| The evaluation of public relations activities is done continuously **(P43)** | .416 | | | | | | .625 |
| The evaluation of public relations activities contributes to the improved setting of future goals **(P24)** | | | .542 | .375 | | | |
| Public Relations tells the truth, and provides comprehensive and accurate information **(P3)** | .944 | | | | | | |
| Public relations acts transparently, while respecting the public interest **(P4)** | .847 | | | | | | |
| Public Relations protects the reputation of and confidential information about the organization **(P5)** | .520 | | | | | | |
| Public relations does not give or receive bribes **(P6)** | .913 | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public relations takes into account the honour and reputation of their profession **(P7)** | .540 | | | | | | |
| Public relations works in accordance with the principles of social responsibility **(P8)** | .619 | | | | | | |
| Public relations highlights and promotes successful corporate social responsibility programs **(P9)** | .362 | | | .362 | .352 | | |
| Public relations acts in the direction of achieving business effects on the basis of the socially responsible behaviour of the organization **(P10)** | .453 | | | .385 | | | |
| Public relations focuses on socially responsible activities which are highly ranked at the local or national level **(P11)** | .601 | | | .327 | | | |
| PR practitioners have the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities **(P25)** | | | .479 | | | | .311 |
| PR practitioners are motivated for their work and provide the maximum in everyday activities **(P12)** | .767 | | | | | | |

The exploratory factor analysis isolated seven factors. The names and values of these factors are as follows:

Factor 1 - Ethical and responsible action (and contribution to gaining trust) ($\alpha$ = .832). This factor includes items related to the ethical and transparent work of the PR department, the disclosure of truthful information, acting in accordance with the principles of social responsibility, etc.

Factor 2 - Proactive and quality performance ($\alpha$ = .899). This factor contains items which indicate the level of proactive and quality action in terms of creating opinion, preventing conflicts between the organization and the public, as well as between organizations and employees, and the quality of the realization of sponsorship, evaluation, etc.

Factor 3 - Strategic action and perspectives ($\alpha$ = .755). This factor comprises items related to the strategic aspects of the work of the PR department (compliance with vision, mission, strategic goals, knowledge of the competition and own position), as well as the perspectives of PR functionality through the use of evaluation experiences for future activities and the existence of the knowledge, skills and abilities of the PR practitioners themselves.

Factor 4 - Media relations ($\alpha$ = .787). This factor includes items linked to the media: cooperation with the media, cooperation with journalists, and the organization of press conferences.

Factor 5 - Effective action, planning and organizing ($\alpha$ = .910). This factor, for the most part, relates to the planning and organization of the PR department, which is expressed through the effective planning of the overall operation, the appropriate place in the organizational structure, and the effective use of the available financial resources.

Factor 6 - Internal public relations ($\alpha$ = .901). This factor relates to public relations within the organization itself: the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of internal relations with the public, and the familiarization of employees with the business policy and goals of the organization.

Factor 7 - Publications (and continuous evaluation) ($\alpha$ = .750). This factor contains two items related to internal and external publications, and one item related to continuous evaluation. Because of this composition of the items, this factor shows the least consistency in its framework.

### 5.2. Construct validity: Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

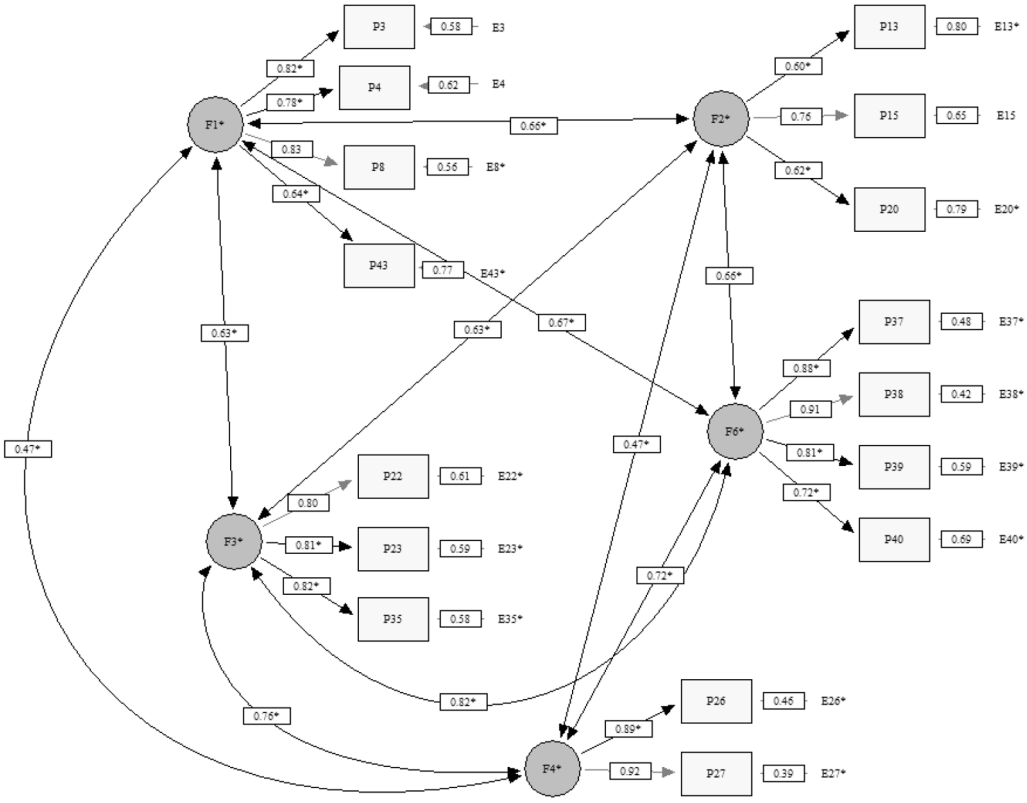
In order to validate latent structure of PR Scale from the first phase of research, CFA was conducted on a sample of participants from the second phase. Since value of multivariate kurtosis was over 7, robust method was used (according to Bentler, 2006). To determine a model fit, following indicators were calculated: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) which should be smaller than .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993), Bentler's Comparative Fit Index (CFI) which should be larger than .90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), Sattora–Bentler $\chi^2$ (S–B $\chi^2$) which should not be statistically significant and ratio $\chi^2/df$ that should be either lesser than 2 (Hoelter, 1983) or lesser than 3 (Kline, 2005). CFA was conducted by using EQS 6.1 software.

Initial tested model showed less than satisfactory fit indices (S–B $\chi^2_{(302)} = 1128.193$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 4.72$, RMSEA = .121 (.114 – .127), SRMR=.157, CFI = .790). LM test suggested that correlations between all factors should be inserted. After deleting the items suggested by Wald test including those that had saturation on several factors, the model was performed

again, which resulted in better but still not satisfactory model fit indices. After conducting analysis again, with deletion of items suggested by Wald, and those items that showed very low factor loadings, the model reached the satisfactory fit indices (S–B $\chi^2_{(94)} = 279.189$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.87$, RMSEA = .70 (0.63-0.79), SRMR=.054, CFI = .903).

From 43 items distributed in 7 factors in exploratory factor analysis, in confirmatory analysis remained total of 16 items in 5 factors. Final model is shown at Figure 1. Since Factor 5 and Factor 7 from initial model were excluded by CFA, initial Factor 6 is renamed to Factor 5 in the Figure 1 (F1 - Ethical and responsible action, F2 - Proactive and quality performance, F3 - Strategic action and perspectives, F4 - Media relations, F5 - Internal public relations). It can be noted that there were minor changes in the names of the dimensions. This was due to the overlapping of the items and dimensions in the Confirmatory factor analysis procedure.

Figure 1. Final model of PR scale with 5 factors.




Based on Final model from Figure 1, it is possible to present the final form of the questionnaire for measuring the perceived quality of the work of the PR department in organizations. The questionnaire consists of 16 items and 5 dimensions, the dimensions corresponding to the factors. When applying questionnaires, respondents evaluate the **state** of items over seven points Likert scale. It is important to mention that, in the process of applying the formed questionnaire, the respondents will be asked about the perceived reality at their own workplaces. The questionnaire is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Questionnaire for measuring the state of the perceived quality of work of the PR department in organizations.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **1. Ethical and responsible action** | |
| 1. | Public Relations tells the truth, and provides comprehensive and accurate information. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 2. | Public relations acts transparently, while respecting the public interest. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 3. | Public relations works in accordance with the principles of social responsibility. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 4. | The evaluation of public relations activities is done continuously. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| | **2. Proactive and quality performance** | |
| 5. | Public relations successfully creates an opinion where there was none. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 6. | Public relations contributes to the prevention of conflicts and misunderstandings between the organization and the target public. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 7. | Public relations implements quality and effective sponsorship activities. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| | **3. Strategic and effective action** | |
| 8. | Public relations respects the organization's vision, mission and strategic goals. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 9. | Public relations is familiar with the PR activities of the competition, as well as its own competitive position. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 10. | Public relations effectively uses available funds. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| | **4. Media relations** | |
| 11. | Public relations provides good relations and cooperation with the media. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 12. | Public relations provides good relations and cooperation with journalists. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| | **5. Internal public relations** | |
| 13. | Public relations establishes high-quality and effective internal relations with the public. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 14. | Public relations establishes effective internal relations with the public. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 15. | Public relations chooses the appropriate channels of internal communication. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 16. | Internal public relations contributes to familiarizing employees with the organization's business policy, strategy and goals. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Structure of the questionnaire

The exploratory factor analysis isolated 7 factors and 43 items. The meaning of these seven factors has been explained previously. At first sight, the sequencing of the items by factors is both logical and meaningful. However, a few of the items may be said not to best fit the factors to which they belong. These are the items: P29 - Public relations contributes to the building of the effective corporate identity of the organization (Factor 4), P30 - Public relations establishes and maintains symmetrical two-way communication between the organization and the target public (Factor 5) and, in particular, P43 – The evaluation of PR activities is done continuously (Factor 7). The other items can be said to be grouped logically.

The confirmatory factor analysis reduced the number of factors and items, so that there were 5 factors and 16 items remaining. Factor 5 - Effective action, planning and organization and Factor 7 - Publications (and continuous evaluation) were excluded. (Because of this, Factor 6 - Internal public relations was renamed to Factor 5 - Internal public relations.) Hence, the number of factors and items was reduced to a number that seems logical, justified, and reasonable. The final factors (dimensions) are as follows:

Factor 1 - Ethical and responsible action,
Factor 2 - Proactive and quality performance,
Factor 3 - Strategic and effective action,
Factor 4 - Media relations and
Factor 5 - Internal public relations.

On completion of the confirmatory factor analysis, there were some minor changes in the names of two of the factors. More specifically, Factor 1 - Ethical and responsible action (and contribution to gaining trust) was renamed Factor 1 - Ethical and responsible action, and Factor 3 - Strategic action and perspectives was renamed Factor 3 - Strategic and effective action. Although these changes are minor, such names seem more appropriate after the changes in the confirmatory factor analysis process.

Interestingly, one item from these excluded factors found its place in the remaining factors. Thus, the item public relations effectively uses the available financial resources, from the original Factor 5 - Effective action, planning and organization, moved to Factor 3 - Strategic and effective operation, while the item the evaluation of public relations activities is performed continuously moved from the original Factor 7 - Publications (and continuous evaluation) to Factor 1 - ethical and responsible action. Hence, it seems that those most important items from the excluded factors remained in the final model through their relocation to the appropriate remaining factors. The item public relations effectively uses the available financial resources is particularly significant in Serbia, where most organizations generally have minor or major financial problems. The item the evaluation of public relations activities is done continuously, obviously in terms of its importance, is predominant in relation to the remaining items from the original Factor 7, so it remained in the model.

Observed in terms of the dimension structure, i.e. the individual items which make up the dimensions, several items require a little more attention and a more detailed explanation. Firstly, this concerns the item the evaluation of public relations activities is done continuously, which is in Factor 1 - Ethical and responsible action. Of the initial 56 items (Table 1), five were focused on evaluation in public relations (the quality of evaluation, the continuity of evaluation, the dominance of the method for measuring the attitudes and actions of the target audience, the contribution to the evaluation by considering the possibility of improving future actions, the contribution to the improved setting of future goals). Of these five items, only that related to the continuous evaluation remained, which confirmed its significance (as previously noted). The position of this item in the dimension related to ethical and responsible action may be explained by the fact that the implementation of continuous evaluation is in fact an indication of responsible behaviour.

Secondly, consideration should also be given to the position of the item public relations provides quality and effective sponsorship activities within Factor 2 - Proactive and quality performance. Similar to the previous case, this item was retained in the model from the group of initial items (Table 1) related to the quality of realizing concrete public relations activities (the organization of press conferences, the organization of special events, the use of public-

ity effects, publishing publications, sponsorship). This in itself speaks of the importance of the quality realization of sponsorship activities in organizations in Serbia. Therefore, it is reasonable to retain this item in the model, as well as its positioning within a dimension that relates to proactive and quality performance. In addition, sponsorship activities require a proactive approach, perhaps more so than other activities.

Finally, an explanation should be offered for the item public relations effectively uses available financial resources, which is among the items in Factor 3 - Strategic and effective operation. The importance of this item for the conditions in Serbia and its retention in the model have been previously explained. The place of this item within a dimension related to strategic and effective action is logical: the effective use of available funds implies goal orientation, a planned approach and long-term orientation, which are definitely strategic attributes.

Any minor defects or inconsistencies remaining after the exploratory factor analysis were definitely eliminated in the confirmatory factor analysis procedure. In general, the formulated questionnaire with 5 dimensions and 16 items represents a logical and well-composed whole, in which, it seems, the most important factors and items are retained.

### 6.2. Implications

The formulated questionnaire may have practical and theoretical applications. In practical terms, the questionnaire can be used, first of all, to assess the general **state** of the quality of the work of the PR department within an organization. The following should be emphasized once again: in the process of research aimed at the development of the questionnaire (both surveys we conducted and presented in this paper), experts evaluate the **importance** of parameters, and later, in the process of applying the developed questionnaire, they evaluate the **state** of the items that make up the newly formed questionnaire (state for some specific organization).

In particular, it is sufficient for the organization to evaluate its own PR department and its activities, according to the set items and dimensions. This can be done by the head of the PR department, CEO, or other competent and objective person. Also, this quality of work can be tracked over time, so the research will be repeated after a while. This kind of repeated evaluation may be carried out at equal intervals (for example, once a year in May), and even after some characteristic periods, season, or PR program, depending on the specificity and needs of the organization itself. The questionnaire may also be used, in the narrow sense, to evaluate the quality of the PR department within a particular PR program or campaign. In this case, the assessment is performed for a specific, observed work segment of the work of the PR department. The formed questionnaire is applicable to all organizations that have a PR department, that is, carry out certain PR activities. In doing so, the size of the organization and the type of activity of the organization have no impact. Also, the questionnaire can also be used by PR agencies, when they are hired by an organization to implement a specific PR program at a specific time. PR agencies can then use this questionnaire to evaluate the quality of their work in that case: the quality of the implementation of a particular PR program for a particular organization.

In the theoretical (scientific) sense, the questionnaire may be used to measure the overall impacts of organizational culture, leadership and other organizational outcomes (for example, motivation, emotional intelligence, personality type, burn out, stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, satisfaction with PR practitioner communication) and different

factors (degree and type of education of PR practitioners, type of ownership structure of the organization, position of the PR department in the organizational structure of the company, appreciation by top management etc.) on the quality of the work of the PR department in organizations. The survey may focus on the opposite direction: the questionnaire could be used to measure the general impacts of the quality of the work of the PR department on financial performance, corporate credibility, and the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of PR practitioners and similar.

### 6.3. Limitations

The paper does not claim to offer a universal model (questionnaire) for measuring the quality of the work of the PR, which would be self-sufficient and universally applicable worldwide. The proposed model should first of all serve as a starting point for future research in this area, within which similar questionnaires will be formed. Thus, according to the proposed procedure, one can do similar research and develop a questionnaire adapted to other countries, regions or conditions (for example: USA, Spain, Turkey, India...). This is in line with what Le Roux (2008) points out: there is a need for adapting communication-related measurement scales in certain, specific circumstances and contexts, because a single scale may not be suitable for multiple different circumstances. In the meantime, the model (questionnaire) may be used with great reliability in the conditions in which it was formed, which means in the theory and practice of public relations in Serbia. Also, the model can be used in other countries, especially in those countries in transition, but also in all other conditions where researchers consider it to be useful and justified.

## 7. Conclusion

The paper presents the procedure for forming a questionnaire to measure the quality of the work of the PR department in organizations. The defined questionnaire consists of 5 dimensions and 16 items, which cover all of the most important segments of the work of the PR department in organizations. The structure of the questionnaire is comprehensive, complementary, logical and consistent. The questionnaire responds to a very important question: how well (quality) does the PR department work in the organization? By answering this question it is easy to assume what the results or consequences will be. By forming this questionnaire, the basic goal of this research is fulfilled.

The questionnaire can be widely applied, both in practical conditions and in a theoretical (scientific) sense. The basic practical application of the questionnaire involves evaluating the state of a given PR department according to the set items and dimensions. In this case, the respondents are actually employed in companies either as PR practitioners, PR managers or even CEO's. In a scientific sense, the questionnaire may be used to examine the relationships between different aspects of organizational behaviour and the quality of the work of the PR department, as well as the relationship between the quality of the work of the PR department and the organization's financial and organizational performances.

There are several ways to realize similar research studies in the future, especially in the stage of defining the initial items for the process (Phase I). The subject of the research may also have a significant influence on the final structure of the questionnaire, that is, the state

(conditions) in which the research in the second and third stages is carried out. Because of this, the special significance of this work lies precisely in the definition of a different approach to the problem of measuring the quality of the work of the PR department, as well as the very idea of forming a questionnaire for measuring the quality of the work of the PR department in organizations. Thus, this approach and the presented questionnaire may serve as the basis for future research in the field of the quantitative description and measurement of the quality of the work of the PR department, as well as public relations in general. The basic limitation of the research and the results obtained is, of course, that they apply, first and foremost, to conditions in Serbia. Yet, the questionnaire presented in this paper may be used in different conditions, especially in countries which share similar economic conditions as those in the country in which the survey was carried out.

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# Evaluating the Spread of Fake News and its Detection. Techniques on Social Networking Sites

## Abstract

The phenomenon of fake news has become a much contentious issue recently. The controversy regarding this issue has further been intensified by the openness of social media platforms. Via a systematic review, this paper offers a discussion on the spread and detection techniques of fake news on Social Networking Sites (SNSs). A total of 47 articles eventually fulfilled the inclusion criteria and were coded for the literature synthesis. The overall findings from the literature on fake news and social media have been extracted and synthesized to explore the creation, influence and popular techniques and dimensions used for fake news detection on SNSs. The results showed that various entities are involved in the creation and spread of fake news on SNSs, including malicious social and software agents. It was also found that early registered users, old people, female users, delusion-prone persons, dogmatic persons, and religious fundamentalists are more likely to believe in fake news than other groups of individuals. One of the major problems of the existing techniques is their deficiency in datasets. Therefore, future studies on fake news detection should focus on developing an all-inclusive model with comprehensive datasets. Social media users require fake news detection skills especially using linguistic approach. This study provides the public with valuable information about the spread and detection of fake news on SNSs. This is because SNSs are an important avenue for fake news providers.

**Keywords:** Fake news, social media, detection techniques, news content, social network

## Introduction

In the last few years, researchers have designed and developed a variety of models and techniques for fake news detection purposes (e.g., Wang, 2017; Granik & Mesyura, 2017; Ahmed, Traore, & Saad, 2017; Aldwairi & Alwahedi, 2018; Zhang, Cui, Fu, & Gouza, 2018; Papanastasiou, 2018; Yang, Zheng, Zhang, Cui, Li, & Yu, 2018; Reis, Correia, Murai, Veloso, Benevenuto, & Cambria, 2019). Their contributions focused on different dimensions of news characteristics including social context (Shu, Bernard, & Liu, 2019) using various linguistic

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and network-based approaches (Conroy, Rubin, Chen, 2015; Reis et al., 2019). Fake news detection on Social Networking Sites (SNSs) is an emerging research area with various challenges (Ahmed et al., 2017) particularly related to techniques and datasets.

Fake news in general is defined as misinformation intentionally fabricated and spread to mislead the audience for political and/or financial gains (Pennycook & Rand, 2017; Wu & Liu, 2018; Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018). Types of fake news include hoax, propaganda, trolling, and satire (Verstraete, Bambauer, & Bambauer, 2017). Fake news on social media is a transdisciplinary area of research interest adopted by science and social science researchers (Zhou, Zafarani, Shu, & Liu, 2019). The major challenge is how to develop a fake news detection technique that incorporates every news dimension such as news content, news sources, and social dimensions. Nevertheless, empirical research focusing on the design and development of models for fake news detection on SNSs is still limited and sporadic (Ahmed et al., 2017; Niklewicz, 2017).

The advent of SNSs has changed the manner in which people consume news and increased their exposure to a variety of news (Shu, Wang, & Liu, 2017; Flintham, Karner, Bachour, Creswick, Gupta, & Moran, 2018). There are currently over 3.2 billion social media users in the world, constituting about 42% of the earth's population (Oberlo, 2019). This situation has further intensified the spread of news articles containing false content intentionally created for a variety of financial and political purposes with potential detrimental effects on individuals and the society (Shu et al., 2017). This is because news readers often lack the knowledge required to interpret news critically. Detecting fake news is imperative to ensure that the audience receive credible information and help maintain a reliable news ecosystem (Shu et al., 2019).

It was found that studies on fake news generally focus on its effects other than causes, which suggest the need for further research incorporating the origin and causes of fake news (Dumitrache, 2019). Previous reviews on the current trends of fake news detection on social media focused on effects, solutions and process of manifestation (Campan, Cuzzocrea, & Truta, 2017) other than origin, formation and category of people affected by fake news. None of the previous reviews focused on systematic review of fake news studies on SNSs. Therefore, via a systematic review of studies on fake news and social media, this paper aims to explore the formation of fake news on SNSs, identify the category of news readers who are likely to fall for fake news on SNSs, and determine the popular techniques and dimensions of fake news detection on SNSs. The current study offers a comprehensive evaluation of the studies on fake news on SNSs, in view of its formation, potential effects, and various detection techniques. This is because detection of fake news on SNSs is an important phenomenon that requires scholarly attention (Ahmed, Hinkelmann, & Corradini, 2019).

## Approaches to Fake News Detection

There are two main approaches used by researchers to tackle fake news detection problem (Yang et al., 2018): linguistic approach and network approach. Linguistic approaches, such as natural language processing, focus on news content with particular attention to news patterns through analysis of underlying semantics. Currently, this method is supplemented by network approaches in the process of fake news detection (Zhang, Gupta, Kauten, Deokar, & Qin, 2019). First, various linguistic approaches were used, such as natural language processing techniques

(Mihalcea & Strapparvva, 2009), sentiment analysis, lexical and content similarity, as well as style similarity (Liu, 2012). Some researchers combined this method alongside other linguistic or network approaches (Feng, Banerjee & Choi, 2012). Other researchers paid attention to semi-supervised learning methods (Hai, Zhao, Cheng, Yang, & Li, 2016). Subsequently, some deep language structures, such as the syntax tree, were utilized (Yang et al., 2018). It was further discovered that even deep syntax analysis is often insufficient fake news prediction.

According to Feng and Hirst (2013), most fake news providers use language to mislead the audience. Though they try to control their communication, language "leakage" occurs. In this regard, linguistic approach examines such leakage occurrences within the news content. In data representation, texts are represented using the "bag of words" approach. In the bag of words approach, n-grams (individual words) frequencies are collected and evaluated to reveal deception signals (Markowitz & Hancock, 2014). In addition, semantic analysis extends the n-gram by integrating the features of profile compatibility to enhance classification performance (Feng & Hirst, 2013). Another way of detecting fake news is discourse analysis in which deception cues are found both in CMC communication and in news content, by identifying instances of rhetoric relations between linguistic elements (Potthast, Kiesel, Reinartz, Bevendorff, & Stein, 2017; Rubin & Lukoianova, 2015).

On the other hand, network-based approaches focus on the analyses of network structure and social network behaviors. With the advancement of knowledge graph, methods based on the knowledge graph analysis can achieve high accuracy. In addition, deep learning models are generally used for fake news detection. Recently, various deep learning models have been proposed based on the word vectors for QA and summarization (Yang et al., 2018). Network approaches, which are innovative and diverse, are meant to supplement linguistic approaches. This is because for researchers to investigate the value of "unstructured data", there is a need for robust fake news detection techniques (Zhang et al., 2019).

Generally, the features used in fake detection are obtained from two main sources: news contents and social contexts. News content techniques utilize features obtained from linguistic and visual information. Linguistic features aim to capture specific writing styles and sensational headlines while visual features identify fake images that are intentionally created to mislead the audience. On the other hand, social context techniques make use of features obtained from aspects such as user profiles, posts and shares as well as social networks. Features obtained from user profiles are used to measure characteristics and reliability of the users. Posts features characterize the user's social responses while social network features are obtained through certain networks, for instance co-occurrence network and diffusion network (Shu, Wang, and Liu, 2018a; Shu et al., 2019). This is one of the aspects taken into consideration in this article to identify the most popular techniques and dimensions of fake news detection on SNSs.

In summary, the aforesaid techniques and features are used for fake news detection on SNSs (Yang, Shu, Wang, Gu, Wu, & Liu, 2019). They are largely adopted in natural language processing, data mining, and machine learning with various tools and datasets. Fake news detection techniques adopt various news-related features, such as body text, headline, publisher, news sources as well as and social-related features including feedback, propagation paths and propagators (Zhou et al., 2019). They focus on differences in writing styles between fake and true news, information provided in news dissemination, and credibility headlines, publishers, source websites, comments, and users to detect fake news. The current advances in

news verification approaches attempt to address the rising demand for automated means of fake news detection (Rubin, Chen, & Conroy, 2015).

## Method

### Search procedure and inclusion criteria

A systematic review was carried out with multidisciplinary literature on the fake news and SNSs, using "fake news" and "social media" as keywords. An internet-based search was conducted to locate recent and relevant articles published between 2014 and 2019. Only articles that focus on detection of fake news in social media were considered. The articles were collected from online sources bibliographic databases. In the selection criteria, content relevance (empirical and conceptual papers focusing on fake news detection), year of publication between 2014–2019, and language (English) were considered. The search for literature was inclusive within the data pool consisting of empirical and conceptual papers in official science and social science journals, as well as refereed conference proceedings, refereed studies, and research reports that investigated the phenomenon of fake news on SNSs. This is because relevant and up-to-date information could be sourced through synthesis of articles from various sources. The following figure depicts information on the article selection process.

Figure 1. Article selection process.

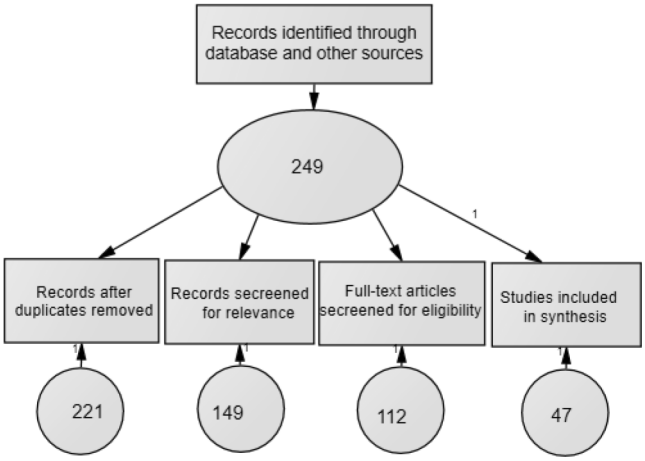



Figure 1 shows the article selection process used in this study. The preliminary online search of the above-mentioned data pool identified 249 papers. The abstracts and references were separately read and collected for decision. After eliminating the duplicates, 221 articles were considered for full text reading, after which 149 articles were screened for relevance. Subsequently, 112 articles fulfilled the initial selection criteria. Finally, 47 articles were selected and coded for literature synthesis. Studies on fake news fall into three categories, namely: occurrence of fake news within public discourse, effects of fake news, and detection of fake news (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). This review specifically considered studies within the aforesaid categories.

### Coding procedure

During the literature search and preliminary coding, special attention was paid to articles expected to form initial components of a systematic framework. Then, an initial coding framework was created to classify the articles based on the study purpose, approach, and major findings. The coding framework was revised as the process of analysis progresses. Considering the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin 1990), the data obtained from each article were continuously compared for reanalysis and revision of the framework. Three coders were used to achieve consistency, accuracy and validity of the findings and analysis during the process of coding (Creswell, 2012). The coding was conducted with the aim of identifying themes and patterns on the spread of fake news, users who are likely to fall for fake news, and the most popular techniques and dimensions used for fake news detection on SNSs. The coders reached 100 percent agreement on the final results.

### Results

To mitigate the spread of fake news on SNSs, it is imperative to ascertain how the fake news is created and identify an effective technique to tackle the problem. The first objective of this study was to investigate the spread of fake news on SNSs. It was found that fake news is more likely to spread faster than the truth. Identifying key constructors of fake news is highly necessary in developing an effective technique for its detection. It is evident in the previous studies on fake news detection on SNSs that fake news is co-authored and co-constructed by malicious users of social media, journalists, malicious software agents, and organizations. These co-constructors create fake news purposely for social, political and financial incentives (n=31). Fake news can be artificially or automatically generated, but human beings bear great responsibility for fake news creation. For example, software agents can mass-send fake news content to manipulate the opinion of a group of agents and users in the network (Niklewicz, 2017). Also, a social bot could generate and use a personal account by simulating the use of a Web browser programmatically to penetrate a group of users who are already engaged in conversations about a particular subject, thereby using them as spreaders of fake news to their extended subnetworks (n=6). Most fake news stories are intentionally created and are likely to spread through sequential sharing by social media users. According to Papanastasiou (2018), agents are logically more likely to share a story the more it has been previously shared by their peers, resulting in fake news content going viral.

The above findings indicate that journalism is in danger of being repressed by satirists who speed up the spread of falsehoods. It should be noted that fake-news related issues, such as the open circulation of malicious falsehoods and lack of effective fact-checking seem to pose a great challenge to the fundamental ethics of journalism (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). In this case, the mainstream media may use the internet to expose, at least, the most prominent fake news stories (Vargo, Guo, & Amazeen, 2018), since individual fact-checking is only possible by educated audience. Some SNSs, such as Facebook, have promised action to limit the spread of fake news, but other issues remain, including confirmation bias – the use of "likes" and information sharing with friends (White, 2017). This situation corresponds to the communication hypotheses, which presumes that audience are more likely to form their beliefs based on how the information is presented other than its sources. A such, providing an all-inclusive method for fake news detection is highly imperative.

The second objective of this study was to identify the category of people who are likely to fall for fake news on SNSs. Emerging themes from the previous studies suggest that early registered users, old people, female users, delusion-prone persons, dogmatic persons, religious fundamentalists and those who overly accept weak claims are likely to fall for fake news. In addition, identifying the potential groups of individuals who are likely to be affected by fake news on SNSs is useful for decision-makers to combat the spread of fake news. However, due to the large number of social media users, countering the spread of fake news could be quite challenging, especially because not every user has the ability to personally fact-check news. Individual fact-checking requires skills and time, and if possible, both the news content and the news source need to be verified. According to Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019), various factors could influence the decision of social media users on the authenticity of information, and therefore extensive verification is needed to avoid falling for fake news.

The third objective of this study was to identify the popular techniques and dimensions used for fake news detection on SNSs. This is because providing a well-developed web-based technique for fake news detection could supplement the individual fact-checking process. This study revealed that most of the previous studies (n=23) on fake news detection on SNSs utilized machine learning methods, focusing on techniques such as supervised learning (Reis et al., 2019), semi-supervised learning (Shu et al., 2017), reinforcement learning (Aymanns, Foerster, Georg, 2017), feature extraction (Zhang et al., 2018; Karimi, Roy, Saba-Sadiya, & Tang, 2018). stacked ensemble of classifiers (Thorne, Chen, Myrianthous, Pu, Wang, & Vlachos, 2017), nonnegative matrix factorization (Shu, et al., 2019), flat classification and hierarchical classification (Rajdev & Lee, 2015). Some studies utilized Bayesian approaches such as Bayesian network (Yang, et al., 2019), Bayesian inference (Kim, Tabibian, Oh, Schölkopf, & Gomez-Rodriguez, 2018; Tschiatschek, Singla, Gomez Rodriguez, Merchant, & Krause, 2018), Naive Bayes Classifier (Granik, & Mesyura, 2017), and a combination of Support Vector Machines and Naive Bayes (Chen, Conroy, & Rubin, 2015).

Some studies (n=6) combined machine learning with natural language processing techniques such as sentiment analysis and N-gram analysis (Atodiresei, Tănăselea, & Iftene, 2018; Rubin, Conroy, Chen, & Cornwell, 2016; Shu, Mahudeswaran, Wang, Lee, & Liu, 2018b; Ahmed et al., 2017. Natural language processing approaches in combination with machine learning could manage content directly through detection of language patterns (Rubin et al., 2016). Other studies focused on crowd sourcing as a knowledge-based approach (Saez-Trumper, 2014; Tacchini, Ballarin, Della Vedova, Moret, & de Alfaro, 2017; Sethi, 2017). Very few studies utilized data mining (Jin, Cao, Zhang, & Luo, 2016) and deep learning approaches such as convolutional networks (Azzimonti, & Fernandes, 2018; Yang et al., 2018). Despite the existing efforts toward fake news detection though various computational methods, lack of comprehensive datasets with various features needed for the detection of fake news becomes one of major challenges (Shu et al., 2018b). Various datasets, such as news content, news sources, social and temporal dimensions must be considered in mitigating the spread of fake news. The following table depicts the dataset information used for fake news detection techniques utilized in the previous literature.

Table 1. Popular dimensions used for fake news detection.

| *Themes* | *Feature* | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme 1 | Fake pages | 1 |
| Theme 2 | News content | 14 |
| Theme 3 | News content and user profile | 3 |
| Theme 4 | News content and number of story shares | 4 |
| Theme 5 | News content and readers | 6 |
| Theme 6 | News content, social context, and spatiotemporal information | 1 |
| Theme 7 | Users (believers and (fact-checkers) | 1 |
| Theme 8 | News sources | 2 |
| Theme 9 | News content, user social engagements, publishers' partisan | 1 |
| Theme 10 | Speaker profiles, topic information of the news articles | 1 |
| Theme 11 | Users, social engagements | 1 |
| Theme 12 | Networks and news articles | 4 |
| Theme 13 | User beliefs and network connectivity | 1 |
| Theme 14 | Headline and article body | 5 |
| Theme 15 | Users, responders, moderators | 1 |
| Theme 16 | News contents, user, user-news interaction, publisher-news relation | 1 |

Table 1 shows the features used for fake news detection in the previous studies. Most of the studies relied on news content alone (n=14), followed by studies focusing on news content and readers, headline and article body. Other features used for fake news detection are: fake pages, user profile, story shares, fact-checkers, user engagement, publishers' partisan, speaker profile, topic information, networks, moderators, and news sources. These features generally fall under two major categories: news contents and social context. According to Shu et al. (2018a), fake news detection methods generally focus on using news contents and social contexts. But in most cases, other important features are ignored, such as news sources. By detecting malicious information created by non-credible sources, fake news researchers can develop algorithms to mitigate the prominence of such information. Each feature used in fake news detection has limitation on its own (Shu et al., 2017), and therefore, every feature is essential.

Of the 47 articles coded, only three utilized some aspects of social context in addition to news content for fake news detection on SNSs (i.e., Shu et al., 2017; Shu et al., 2018a; Papanastasiou, 2018; Shu et al., 2019). News contents was exclusively utilized in 14 studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2015; Rubin et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2018; Atodiresei et al., 2018; Wu & Liu, 2018; Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018; Reis et al., 2019). Other articles relied to a large extent on features such as news headlines or social media pages alone. Only one study (Shu et al., 2018) included features such as content, social and temporal dimensions but did not take much consideration of the news sources, though to some extent, they tried to detect social bots

using Botometer. To achieve high accuracy in automatic fake news detection, the problem of dataset must be addressed first, though research on fake news is still developing (Aldwairi & Alwahedi, 2018).

Researchers have various options for fake news analysis. This study found that most of the current studies on fake news detection on SNSs paid particular attention to Twitter as an SNS (eg Rajdev & Lee, 2015; Thorne, et al., 2017; Atodiresei et al., 2018; Wu & Liu, 2018; Yang et al., 2018; Jang, Geng, Li, Xia, Huang, Kim, & Tang, 2018). Some researchers focus on Facebook as an SNS (eg Granik & Mesyura, 2017; Tacchini et al., 2017; Flintham et al., 2018; Tschiatschek et al., 2018). Nevertheless, in an attempt to widen the scope and context of fake news analysis on SNSs, some studies focused on more than one SNS, for example, Twitter and Face book (eg Shu et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2019), Weibo and Twitter (eg Liu & Wu, 2018; Kim et al., 2018), Facebook, Forex and Reddit (eg Aldwairi & Alwahedi, 2018), as well as Twitter, Sina Weibo, Facebook (Zubiaga, Aker, Bontcheva, Liakata, & Procter, 2018).

Some studies focused specifically on particular fact-checking websites such as PolitiFact (eg Long, Lu, Xiang, Li, & Huang, 2017; Wang, 2017; Zhang et al., 2018). Some of them considered PolitiFact and GossipCop (eg Shu et al., 2018b) while others combined PolitiFact and BuzzFeed (eg Shu et al., 2018a; Shu, et al., 2019). In addition, there are some studies that focus on particular geographical locations especially US and Canada (eg Conroy et al., 2015; Rubin et al., 2016; Allcott, & Gentzkow, 2017), focusing on political news per se. Some of the studies (eg. Liu & Wu, 2018) considered the situation of fake news in China, focusing on its early detection. Some of the researchers gave reasons for limiting their data to particular social media, stating that the field of fake news detection is a relatively new area of research interest.

## Discussion

The problem of fake news is not a new phenomenon, despite its complexity especially in the digital age when the detection of fake news becomes more challenging than ever before (Ahmed et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2018). Burkhardt (2017) asserted that increase in the means of spreading fake news is correlated with increase in the seriousness of its consequences. This study found that various parties are involved in the creation and spread of fake news on SNSs, such as journalists, users, and social bots. Research has shown that fake news is either deliberately created as pseudo-journalistic disinformation or used as a political instrument to delegitimize the news media (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). The creation of fake news can be socially, politically or financially motivated. Influential individuals and organizations, such as politicians and advertisers provide incentives for writers to create fake news. According to Verstraete et al. (2017), fake news is created and circulated by platforms motivated more by financial incentives than by journalistic norms. Generally, as pointed out by Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019, fake news is intentionally created to deceive its audience.

Understanding how fake news is created is an important step in tackling the fake news phenomenon on SNSs (Louni & Subbalakshm, 2014). According to Guille, Hacid, Favre, and Zighed (2013), analysis of information diffusion consists of modeling of information, detection of popular topics, and identification of influential users. To improve the flow of quality information and combat fake news on social media, it is essential to identify its origin and diffusion pattern (Campan et al., 2017; Jang et al., 2018). According to Mustafaraj and Metaxas (2017), steps in the spread of fake news on SNSs include creating websites to accommodate

fake news, creating anonymous accounts, identifying and following influential users, and targeting the users with fake messages. It is evident that internet bots are also involved in the creation and spread of fake news. They are social media accounts controlled by a computer algorithm and can be used specifically to spread fake news on SNSs (Shu et al., 2019).

The social media has made information disseminated faster, but they serve as a platform for the spread of fake news (Tambuscio et al., 2015; Tacchini et al., 2017; Shu et al., 2018a; Yang et al., 2018). According to Koohikamali and Sidorova (2017), perceived relevance and reliability of information must be considered when sharing the information. Nevertheless, few people seem to verify the reliability of news before sharing them with their friends. This might be due to decentralization of information provided by social media to a large extent. All users of social media are potential news sources (Tambuscio et al., 2015). The spread of fake news in social media affects the accuracy of online news content (Jin et al., 2016). According to Rubin et al. (2016), fake news in social media may mislead inattentive readers.

The effect of fake news on social media users could significantly extend to the offline society (Zhang et al., 2018; Shu et al., 2018a). Tackling the problem of fake news on SNSs could improve the quality of information, which will in turn decrease the rate of potential socio-political crisis in the society at large. This study found that the victims of fake news include early registered users, old people, female users, delusion-prone persons, dogmatic persons, and religious fundamentalists. This shows that fake news has significant influence in social media community and the society at large. It should be noted that fake news is consumed enthusiastically by readers for whom it reinforces existing beliefs (Verstraete et al., 2017). Users can be believers or fact-checkers (Tambuscio et al., 2015). The user's ability to fact-check news on social media is determined by their news verification skills. Readers who fact-check news might be skeptical about the news credibility. Chen et al. (2015) asserted that the ability to critically evaluate the quality of information is an essential skill, which is lacking in a large portion of the population. Rubin et al. (2016) argued that news readers often lack the literacy skills necessary for critical interpretation of news.

In addition, this study found that previous studies on fake news detection focused on using news content as dataset, which is considered ineffective (Shu et al., 2019). To curtail the spread of fake news, there is a need to incorporate various datasets beyond news content per se. According to Shu et al. (2019), various dimensions must be considered in fake news detection, including news content, temporal user engagement, credibility**.** There are various weaknesses in the existing models in relation to incorporating the information needed for accurate fake news detection, such as news content and user profile (Yang et al., 2019). In addition, very few studies incorporated semantic content (Sethi, 2017) while some analyses were performed on headlines only, arguing that users often share links they have not opened (Sommariva, Vamos, Mantzarlis, Dào, & Tyson, 2018). For example, one can verify news posted by bots by looking at the sentence construction, because automatic fake news creation could result in poorly constructed sentences which could raise suspicion (Wang, Angarita, & Renna, 2018).

It is shown that majority of the studies on fake news focused on Twitter while some studies focus, to a great extent, on Facebook as an SNS. Nevertheless, readers are possibly exposed to fake news in various SNSs other than Twitter and Facebook (Jin et al., 2016). Another issue is that in terms of geographical focus, most of the previous studies were conducted in the US and China. The phenomenon of fake news, being prevalent in several other parts of the world, needs to be addressed globally. Researchers, in different parts of the world, must

direct their efforts toward mitigating the phenomenon of fake news. This is because fake is likely to be understood within its specific context of production, because the journalism practices vary across the globe (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). In addition, approaches to the ethics of journalism among reporters differ across contexts. These instances signify the need to curtail the fake news phenomenon both in specific and general contexts.

Surprisingly, research found that fake news on SNSs is more popular than factual news based on their number of shares and likes (Howard, Bolsover, Bradshaw, Kollanyi, & Neudert, 2017). This shows how prevalent the phenomenon of fake news becomes in the digital age of communication. Therefore, fact-checking might not be much effective to counteract the problem of fake news on SNSs. Tracing the root of fake news is much significant in regulating its effects, but very few studies focused on news sources, particularly websites as potential source of fake news (Saez-Trumper; 2014; Aldwairi & Alwahedi, 2018). The original source of fake news on SNSs is difficult to track down especially due to the anonymity of its authors and lack of journalism ethical standard (Jang et al. (2018). There is a need for computer-assisted techniques to detect fake news, but research on automatic detection of fake news is still in its infancy stage.

In summary, fake news is co-constructed by various parties, such as social media users, journalists, malicious software agents, and organizations. It is created for social, political and financial reasons. Nevertheless, the datasets used in most studies on fake news detection on social media are deficient. Though news content is the fundamental means through which fake news can be detected, additional datasets such as user profile and social behavior of users on social media are needed (Shu et al., 2018b; Karimi et al., 2018). For example, comments by users, such as "this is fake news", could help in analyzing the news credibility. Therefore, it is necessary to utilize comprehensive datasets in face news detection on SNSs. Shu et al. (2018a) noted that the news ecosystem on social media involves news publisher, social media users and the news itself. In this regard, Mustafaraj and Metaxas (2017) asked a very important question "in the current context of the ubiquitous, web-based, socio-technical systems, what decisions should be made by humans and algorithms?" In order to tackle the problem fake news detection, both behavioral and social entities must be incorporated while knowledge and computer-assisted techniques need to be combined (Ahmed et al., 2019).

## Conclusions

This study has evaluated the spread of fake news and its detection techniques on social networking sites (SNSs). The spread of fake news and its various detection techniques for effective and improved quality of information on SNSs have been highlighted. Several fake news detection techniques were proposed in the previous studies. Nevertheless, the manner in which fake news spreads and the purpose for which it is created makes its detection challenging, especially by utilizing news content as dataset per se. One of the major problems of the existing techniques is their deficiency in datasets. This is because majority of the existing detection techniques focus on identifying clues from news contents, which are largely unreliable since fake news is often intentionally created by imitating true news. As such, misperceptions are simply formed through fake news. Researchers across the world must pay attention to the fake news phenomenon both in specific and general contexts.

This study proved that most of the current efforts to detect fake news on SNSs utilized features that control information from specific datasets. Therefore, future research on fake news detection should focus on developing an all-inclusive model with comprehensive datasets. The multifaceted nature of information on social media, with its potential effects, must be considered. The most important step is to ensure that malicious information is controlled, because this kind of content, if accessible, is sometimes used as a reference especially among the uneducated audiences (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). This could be achieved by developing an all-inclusive fake news detection technique that incorporates the news content and sources – such as malicious websites, alternative and partisan media – as well as social context. This recommendation requires a comprehensive computer-assisted network approach that is capable of capturing malicious information, supported by research on media literacy in general. This proposed technique, if developed with high level of precision, is expected to detect both intentional and unintentional fake news.

In addition, there is a need to safeguard the public from the potential threat of fake news. Hence, for social media users, knowledge and skills on fake news detection especially using natural language processing or linguistic approach are necessary. In addition, creating awareness amongst the public on the existence of fake news on SNSs is crucial in mitigating this phenomenon. This study provides the public with valuable information about the spread and detection of fake news on SNSs. The current findings are expected to broaden our understanding of the origin of fake news and its detection techniques on SNSs, which is necessary to enrich the quality of information the digital age of communication. This is because SNSs are an important avenue for fake news providers. To tackle fake news on SNSs, there is a need for collective efforts of researchers, journalists and professional bodies.

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Extended Essay

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# This time is different. The globalization of uncertainty

## 1. The antechamber of a great economic crisis

"Some warn that the disease will be remembered not only as a human catastrophe, but also as a geopolitical turning-point away from the West. Are they right?" (Minton Beddoes, 2020). Irrespective of the answer, this question raises the unsettling issue of the viability of the current international order. This is not a singular voice. For instance, Henry Kissinger unequivocally asserts that "The coronavirus pandemic will forever alter the world order" (Kissinger, 2020). Analyses focusing on the geopolitical impact of the current pandemic often employ apocalyptical imagery.

The pandemic is seen as *the antechamber of a great economic crisis*, larger than the Great Recession, comparable only to the Great Depression of 1929-1933. Some analysts even fear it might be the greatest in the history of capitalism. Because this is an ongoing process, prognoses are not useful. Current evaluations might be overturned by a new wave in the fall. What is certain is that economic contractions will range from single to double digits, more significantly for unsecure economies, which will only add to the geopolitical impact. The larger the gaps, the more unstable the economy, the true enemy of relaunch.

Of particular concern is *debt growth*. States strive to relaunch their economy using their own money or loans, that add to the already maximal debt. After the disease, the debt, warns The Economist. "Across the rich world, the IMF says, gross government debt will rise by $6trn, to $66trn at the end of this year, from 105% of GDP to 122%. Long after the covid-19 wards have emptied, countries will be living with the consequences" (The Economist, 2020). In economic terms, debt is a two-faced coin. It is a chance, if below 80% of GDP; loans are necessary to start an investment that ensures loan return and gains. Above 100%, it can delay relaunch and will be a burden in the medium and long term. Above 120%, growth rates will be diminished. As the emerging world has much lower debts, their recovery from the current crisis will be faster, which will add to the geopolitical impact.

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## 2. If not effective, the political answer does not exist!

The geopolitical debate is particularly relevant at the top, where the race involves the existing power and the contender. Many analyses have labelled this race the new Cold War, a war triggered by the pandemic. The allegations are certainly explosive. The US speaks about "a Chinese virus", blaming Beijing for hiding information at the onset of the epidemic and opening intelligence investigations. China has certainly given lower numbers, at least 30% lower, for deaths, and communication during the crisis has been deficient.

Beyond declarations and numbers, images speak for themselves. The severity of measures showed that the stakes were high. In February, Western radio and TV outlets were already speaking about "a Chinese Chernobyl" (Sisci, 2020) and announced the probable demise of the regime. In the US, the formula Soviet Union 2.0 was used. The global public space and the governing bodies were already aware of this new global challenge. The reaction of China's neighbours was also particularly telling. In fact, it has since become "standard reference" for this period. South Korea was successful in its response, followed by Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam. States in the region took over from neighbours and developed their own responses. It is not particularly relevant who scored the best results, but it is significant that no country in the region was surprised by catastrophic developments, because *they already had the exercise of being prepared to fight in a competition*, day by day.

Numerous interpretations and explanations can be found for the delayed reaction in most Western countries. It is however certain that the prevailing attitudes are: aloofness, overconfidence in the validity of their answers, even unwillingness to teach others or learn from others. This is the root of delays, indecision, syncopes and improvisations. In the political field, *answers need to be effective*, all the more so in times of crisis. The problem with liberal societies is that their stronghold – institutions – will be associated with failure, which will directly affect people's trust and could lead to an extremely harmful erosion from within. Such stigma will outlast the coronavirus crisis.

The contrast between the two types of responses is quite visible. Asia is now striving to restart the economy, Europe and the US are still fighting the virus. When the West wins, Asia, epitomized by China, visibly less affected, will have already consolidated its advantage.

Some authors find similitudes with other historical moments. The US may have lost a battle, but history shows that in long wars the slow start of the US is followed by mobilization and victory, proves Francesco Sisci. The question is whether this is December 1941, when "the Japanese appeared to have knocked out America in Pearl Harbour" (Sisci, 2020), or the beginning of a victory. Such comparisons with military battles are suggestive, but this is a geopolitical battle, which is equally economic, military, scientific and social. The context and much of the content of competition at the top has changed. Emerging technologies will influence everything, including how the pandemic is controlled.

In fact, if we are to speak about a new Cold War, we need to agree that it started before the pandemic and was triggered by China's leaps forward in economy and technology. Robin Niblet was right to say that the pandemic can be seen as an enabling context "to harden policies towards China, starting by blocking all Chinese investment into 5G infrastructure and breaking international dependence on Chinese supply chains" (Niblet, 2020). Globalization has ceased to be a mere exchange of merchandise. *Global supply chains* can be seen as dominance chains. The US used to control these supply chains, now China does, and disputes over dominance have been a reality these days. We find the following example particularly

relevant: "If Huawei comes to dominate global 5G, the Chinese government could exploit its access to the firm to tap into communications around the world, using new powers over the network against its rivals. Or to put it another way: China could do to the United States what the United States has already been doing to China" (Farrell & Newman, 2020).

## 3. "De-Westernization of the world"

Geopolitics is generally taken as an external vector, expressing the relationship between states, their power and their drive. This perception, albeit true, is totally insufficient, if it is not correlated with the fundamental truth that all this stems from internal data – geographical position, economic and demographic data, and, above all, leadership, which unifies them into a coherent perspective. The geopolitical impact of the crisis has been evaluated in various ways. For instance, Javi Lopez tells us that Europe "is addressing the crisis in a state of fragility", that this crisis "will be a huge test" that could result into the de-Westernisation of the world (Lopez, 2020). This is a perspective which cannot be ignored.

The evaluation of the possible geopolitical impact of the crisis cannot be discussed without a detailed analysis of the evolution of the US in the last decades, and the syncopes in this evolution, which have not been addressed in strategies. This has influenced the West. For some time now, the Western states have not looked in the mirror. In fact, *they have ceased carrying a mirror with them*. They have stopped asking whether the road is good, which is the reason why there are so many accidents on the way, why nothing seems to work. "When history ended and the Age of Imitation began, in 1989, the East fell in love with the West. Simultaneously, and partly as a result, the West fell in love with itself. Flattered by the desire of the East to remake itself on the model of the West, Western policy-makers lost any critical perspective on the shortcomings of their own societies" (Krastev, 2020).

The West has been slow to react to the medical crisis. In fact, the West has been delaying actions, has given half-answers, has been surprised by evolutions and has failed to address economic and social challenges for decades. The delayed reaction in the current crisis is, rather than the exception, *the standard attitude* of late. But because human lives are at stake, the scope is different and so is the geopolitical impact. A look back in time is useful at this point in our demonstration.

The crisis of 1970s triggered *the first structural problem* for developed capitalism. Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévi propose a relevant distinction between the Great Depression and the crisis of the 1970s: "Both crises stimulated waves of social confrontation between the same social actors. The antinomy is, however, remarkable between the two historical junctures, at a distance of about forty years. The outcomes – the contention of capitalist interests after the great Depression and their restoration after the crisis of the 1970s – were opposite. The first crisis was a crisis of hegemony and, the second, a profitability crisis" (Duménil & Lévi, 2011, 331). The same actors were involved in the conflict. But, while the result of the Great Depression was the control of capitalist interests by the state and society, the crisis of the 1970s marked the beginning of a special kind of restauration: capital took over the lead and inaugurated a new era, where *its interests became dominant*. Capitalism is generally sketchily associated either with the role of capital, the role of market economy, or with the existence of democracy and, implicitly, freedom. In fact, capitalism represents *the coexistence of these two pillars*. There is tension, even competition between them, but balance needs

to prevail. The imbalance first appeared in the 70s; the following years added to this asymmetrical relationship, coming from the very core of capitalism.

Various other contexts marked *successive victories of capital*. Neoliberalism became a quasi-official ideology, which consolidated the victory of capital. With the end of the Cold War, globalization promoted by the victor created the enabling context for the new epitome of success: economic and financial profit, indifferent to social costs. *The second structural problem of capitalism*, delocalization, appeared in this context. This is the process that directly influenced the decline of the West and the rise of Asia.

Delocalization led to fabulous profits. But in the long term the promoter of delocalization, the US, registered devastating loss. The US repatriated wealth, but left behind *the engine that produced wealth*, which is significantly more important than wealth itself. The rise of Asia, China especially, couldn't have been possible in the absence of delocalization. The social cost of delocalization for the US is huge. With delocalization, the US lost skills, jobs and production capabilities that had defined its success. Asked why he produced iPhones in China, Tim Cook declared: "China has moved into very advanced manufacturing, so you find in China the intersection of craftsman kind of skill, and sophisticated robotics and the computer science world. That intersection, which is very rare to find anywhere, that kind of skill, is very important to our business because of the precision and quality level that we like… And the tooling skill is very deep here. In the US you could have a meeting of tooling engineers and I'm not sure we could fill the room. In China you could fill multiple football fields." (Goldman, 2020)

The Great Recession could have turned into a significant moment in the evolution of developed capitalist society. The imbalance of previous years could have been overcome. The causes of the Great Depression and the Great Recession are strikingly similar: *the excesses of the financial-banking system*. But the responses were vastly different. During the Great Depression, Theodore Roosevelt had the courage to challenge the financiers and find the balance between economy and social life. For this, he needed to challenge what he termed the enemies of peace – commercial and financial monopoly and speculations. Organised finance treated the US government as an annex of their business, proving as dangerous as organised crime (Krugman, 2010, 73-73). When economy and social life were in balance, prosperity followed.

The Great Recession ushered in harsher regulations, but recovery was slow and disappointing, and social inequalities became more prominent, the middle class dropped in numbers, and institutional erosion became more visible. The health system in the US consumes 17% of US revenue but was still surprised by the evolution of the pandemic, a situation that analysts attribute to the administration. The health system was slow to react, while the public debate, which should have consolidated this crucial system for modern social life, focused on the dilemma whether to maintain the reform introduced by the Obama administration.

The US focus on profit in the last decades has encouraged the perception that this country is a mega-corporation, a conglomerate of businesses, rather than a state that needs to find a balance between various dimensions of society. "A great economy cannot just be an array of great businesses" (Takushi, 2020). The state is called to supervise the market and ensure the balance. Irrespective of their political allegiances, whether right-winged or left-winged, great politicians are defined by the fact that they are preoccupied with *the functioning of the whole society*. Roosevelt has a place in history not because he was a democrat, but because he opened up perspectives for the US, just as Otto von Bismark introduced the modern pension system because he wanted his country to be socially stable.

This decades-long imbalance in the US society made Jeffrey Sachs acutely remark: "Our political system for forty years now, since Ronald Reagan, has basically been dedicated to tax cuts, especially for rich people and corporations, and both parties – of course with the complete obsession of the Republican Party and maybe the semi-reluctance of the Democratic Party – have given tax cuts every two or three years since 1981… Well, after this crisis, we're going to have the fiscal crisis. We will, absolutely" (Chotiner, 2020).

The US needs a New Deal, which will strike a balance between economic life and social life, between market and the state, between economy and democracy. In the face of this second Cold War, it is relevant to ask whether the people, who are crucial in any confrontation, are content, determined, aware of their significance, as they were during the Cold War. In strategic conflicts, victory depends on how internal problems are solved. The coronavirus crisis has aggravated these problems. One in three people infected globally is American. One in five deaths is in America. Soon, there will be double-digit unemployment. The crisis is developing now, but the problems it has revealed are decades, if not a century, old.

## 4. The decade of radical global changes

This is just the beginning of the crisis, but the true *state of health* of states and multilateral agreements has already been unveiled. The sustainability of their evolution can now be assessed. Christian Takushi speaks about three phases of the current crisis: "So let me be straightforwardly open with you: This is just Chapter 1 of a long crisis. Chapter 2 will have to address the fact that the USA and most other Advanced Economies are unable to repay their outstanding debt and are even bankrupt. Chapter 3 may entail geopolitical conflict and war" (Takushi, 2020). Apocalyptical scenarios have one merit: they highlight otherwise ignored realities and point to evolutions that are not covered by a Plan B. Such projections can shed light on cardinal issues.

Public debates focus on the priorities of the moment: medical issues and holding on to a job. States that will rein in developments in these fields will be the winners. The medical issues may be more pressing, but economic issues are no less important. Failing to address them – for instance, the drought of biblical proportions announced by the UN – would have dramatic consequences.

Surprisingly, the countries that are preoccupied with the relaunch of economy are exactly the countries that have robust growth. Wolfgang Schäuble, President of the Bundestag and former Finance minister, pointed to the consequences of a prolonged shutdown, "fearing an overload of state capacities": "We must not leave decisions to the virologists alone, but must also weigh up the enormous economic, social, psychological and other implications. To simply shut everything down for two years would have terrible consequences" (Euractiv Network, 2020).

The pandemic is the embodiment of a global challenge. The answers, however, are invariably national. This is true of multilateral EU, as well. At the beginning of the crisis, answers were national. This will create a lasting impression about the EU. It also signals that the end of globalization as a political construct is a fact. Undoubtedly, exchanges and interdependencies will continue (the pandemic is a good example). But globalization as a political construct meant to address common challenges and give mutually agreed upon answers has ceased to exist.

This is happening at a time when the world is challenged by this very-little known pandemic, which requires the coordination of research and fight against the virus. Philistine attitudes are abundant. Despite talks about collaboration, the states strive to be the first to patent a medicine or a vaccine. In the history of humankind, only the arms race involved a similar ruthless competition. The saying: "Speech was given to man to disguise his thoughts" works here, just as it works in economy. In the face of the greatest economic crisis, the dominant discourse is: each for themselves. The countries of financial and economic means, that will fare better in this period, will encourage states to see to their own problems and will justify their positions in a moral key: it is but right for each state to carry its own burden.

The current decade will see radical global challenges. The medical crisis will not be the sole to blame. Changes will be triggered by the economic crisis, much worse than the Great Recession. To this is added a 20-year evolution: the spectacular rise of the emerging countries, and the digital revolution which added new vehicles for development. But this revolution ultimately favours strong, rich, and visionary countries. Public attention is focused on the competition between the US and China, which will undoubtedly influence everything. But this convergence of the medical crisis, the economic crisis and the accelerated progress of emerging technologies will generate *a geopolitical earthquake, globally*. Spectacular rearrangements and divisions will take place. Less-than-ready countries and indebted countries will pay a high price and will become marginal. International uncertainly will lead to (for the moment) unforeseen consequences.

Warning that frequent comparisons with the post-war period are not sustainable, and in fact the world is heading towards harsher realities, Richard Haass underlined: "Some analysts suggest that invoking the threat of China could similarly galvanize public support today, but a foreign policy based on opposing China is hardly suited to addressing the global challenges that shape today's world. Meanwhile, appealing to the American people to put tackling those global problems at the heart of U.S. foreign policy will continue to be a tough sell. Accordingly, the more relevant precedent to consider may be not the period following World War II but the period following World War I – an era of declining American involvement and mounting international upheaval. The rest, as they say, is history" (Haass, 2020).

## 5. Post-coronavirus period

Global problems seem to be pushed at the back of the political agenda, at a time when they are becoming more important and will directly influence future evolutions. Several phenomena characterize this stage: fractured international relations, discord among great powers, a decline in American leadership, which all discourage cooperation, when cooperation is badly needed. International life these days – marked by tension and disputes – is dominated by everyday problems, rather than medium and long-term perspectives, namely the post-coronavirus period. Many of the accusations thrown by the US, China and Europe at each other may be true, but they are eating away at the energy that should be focused on the future. By dwelling on yesterday's disputes, they are facing the past, rather than the future. With the world experiencing multiple crises, it is dangerous for societies to be found unprepared and in dispute over internal and international issues.

Economic recovery has some particularities. According to the IMF, the coronavirus crisis will last for 2 or 3 years, in successive stop-and-start moments, which may be costlier than

wars. Rivalries will accentuate the lack of perspective, which is fundamental for recovery. There is a risk that the world will have to fight an economic coronavirus: uncertainty, suspicion and stress will characterize the economy. Unlike people, economy cannot be isolated. Its very existence requires dynamism.

The fundamental role of demand is being reassessed. The alarming growth of debt will make the stimulation of demand necessary for recovery. Demand is now visibly in the hands of emerging countries. "Emerging economies have become the world's major engines of demand" (Lund, Manyika & Spence, 2019). This is a crucial reason for stimulating cooperation. The export engines in the developed world will put pressure on their states. Economy will encourage behaviours that the political life cannot ignore. It is all the more important for such norms to be in place now. Equally important will be to institute *social distancing from emotions* in this extremely difficult context. The emotional burden on long-term strategic actions needs to be avoided.

These emerging strategic rivalries should be preceded by a critical assessment of countries' own actions. The US could look in the mirror more often, rather than put the blame exclusively on China. Newt Gingrich was right to remark: "It is not China's fault that in 2017, 89% of Baltimore eighth graders couldn't pass their math exam…It is not China's fault the way our defense bureaucracy functions serves to create exactly the 'military-industrial complex' that President Dwight Eisenhower warned about…It is not China's fault that the old, bureaucratic, entrenched American telecommunications companies failed to develop a global strategy for 5G over the 11 years that the Chinese company Huawei has been working to become a world leader…" (Goldman, 2019).

Just as China needs to admit that its rise has taken place under the liberal international order. which pays an extraordinary compliment to this order. Its spectacular rise is the merit of the country, but the enabling context cannot be ignored. The country's evolution has been guided by the mantra of Deng Xiaoping: "hide your strength, bide your time". For some time, however, the Chinese external politics has become increasingly assertive. Deng's mantra, however, led to astounding success, so probably it hasn't entirely lost its charm.

Solutions are valuable when they are carefully prepared, with an eye towards a country's interest, but also towards the *common interest* of the world. When common interest is sacrificed, everyone is a loser, even self-proclaimed winners.

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# Book Symposium

*Antisocial Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy by Siva Vaidhyanathan: Oxford University Press, 2018, 288 pages*

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# Democracy and Deliberation in the Age of Facebook

In 2016, we witnessed two shocking political decisions in stable democracies: the election of Donald Trump as American president and the United Kingdom's referendum to exit the European Union membership. After the scandal of Cambridge Analytica mining Facebook data to influence the 2016 U.S. elections, a public conversation began to question the role of data use, surveillance practices, and especially of social media companies such as Facebook in shaping democracies. Siva Vaidhyanathan's book, *Antisocial Media. How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy* (Oxford UP, 2018), paints the larger picture of the logics by which Facebook operates. It encourages readers to understand not only political outcomes such as Brexit and the U.S. elections, but also the erosion of democracy globally (from India to Poland and Hungary) as the result of media logics of audience fragmentation, narrowcasting, and discursive polarization.

Vaidhyanathan explains the Facebook model of information gathering as extensive and non-transparent to users. Facebook traces our interactions with others through comments and location sharing. It maps relations among our photos, videos, ads, and profiles. It integrates that information with what we share on its core services like Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp. And it tracks data on other platforms (e.g. Spotify or Pandora) if users log in with Facebook credentials. What it creates is an impressive record of knowledge that can predict behavior. That information is sold to both commercial advertisers and to political campaigns and parties.

The author takes issue with a business model that allows political parties to address citizens the way companies address consumers: only about what they are interested. While, he explains, political communication has borrowed from private sector practices since at least the 1960s, the non-transparent collection of data that emerged in the 2000s and its normalization by Facebook warrant special attention (162). And that is because the company is "the most pervasive surveillance system in the history of the world" and is the largest global media actor, with two billion subscribers (57, 1). With such power, the commercial practice of segmenting users into precise market groups to be addressed with precise communication has great potential to undermine democracy (25).

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*Antisocial Media* draws attention to at least two discursive conditions of functional democracies: deliberation practices and the availability of public forums to host and cultivate such practices. Vaidhyanathan criticizes Facebook for depriving citizens of the autonomy of judgment needed for deliberation. The company allows political campaigners to drive audiences into "echo chambers" in which only few issues are discussed in ideologically predictable ways. Divergent voices that may complicate a citizen's understanding are made invisible both through the effort of political advertisers that run "[s]ingle-issue campaigns" where candidates speak only on one or very few issues, and through Facebook's algorithm that privileges in each person's feed ideologically-coherent content (164). Such monologism, Vaidhyanathan warns, at minimum limits deliberation and, at its worst, makes audiences vulnerable to misinformation.

If citizens are increasingly deprived of the multiplicity of voices that allows for perspective, afforded by earlier media environments, Vaidhyanathan suggests that it would make even more sense that the media corporations would pick some of the burden of checking the information they allow on their platforms. Yet, quite the opposite is the case. Mark Zuckerberg, as recently as the October 2019 Congressional hearings about his proposed monetary tool, Libra, continues to defend his company's unwillingness to fact-check political advertisements and take down misinformation for the upcoming 2020 election campaigns. The author criticizes Zuckerberg's justification—that all voices deserve an outlet and the citizen-consumer decides which to choose—as a naïve expression of a neoliberal ideology of consumer choice. Zuckerberg's rationale obscures both Facebook's capacity for influence as "the most powerful political platform in the world" (3). It also masks its financial interest in attracting political campaign dollars that, to unprecedented degree, can intentionally disinforms already polarized and ideologically isolated citizens. While Facebook continues to refuse fact checking political advertising, since *Antisocial Media* has been in the press, the company has taken a few tepid steps in curbing hate speech. In spring 2019 it banned right-wing extremists, such as Milo Yiannopoulos, Laura Loomer and Joseph Watson on both Facebook and Instagram and pledged to ban "praise, support and representation of white nationalism and white separatism" (Schwartz, 2019; "Standing against Hate," 2019). These belated steps are as needed as they are imperfect, critics argue: yes, extremist personalities and their organizations are banned, but comments by individuals praising them are not taken down (Lorenz, 2019). Vaidhyanathan has argued that Facebook is too big and complex of a company to be reformed at the edges, and he might see the current back and forth between regulators and the company over hate speech as missing the many other ways in which Facebook damages public discourse.

Indeed, what I appreciate the most about Vaidhyanathan's book is the comprehensive account of the complex ways in which Facebook shapes the media environment. It is an account that goes beyond a business model that encourages audience segmentation, and even beyond hate speech as the only kind of speech to be worried about. Thus, the author is quick to note that the platform's visual style is engineered to curtail multivocality. The Facebook webpage normalizes the single-issue, declarative, visual and approval or reaction-seeking style of communication in a few ways. By nesting comments only under individual posts, Facebook discourages participants from engaging with multiple interlocutors (8). By rewarding the most liked, shared, or commented posts, most of them visual, Facebook "ensures that the most inflammatory material will travel the farthest and the fastest" (6).The aesthetics of Facebook, thus, socializes users away from conversations with multiple interlocutors and into everyday declarations of clear ideological affiliation.

Furthermore, to compete for attention (and the same advertising dollars) traditional news organizations now routinely make editorial choices that fulfill the Facebook aesthetics of circulation, unintentionally driving readership even further into their ideological niches. Instead of generating and editing content with an eye at public service and newsworthiness, Vaidhyanathan suggests, traditional news media now also title, format, and pursue the stories that have the best chance of gathering reactions on Facebook (9). Such adaptation of old news media to social media further socializes readers into the choppy, short communication—a "click, a share, a comment, a like" that mark approval and indignation (165)—which enhances the habits of using communication to mark belonging rather than foster deliberation. Vaidhyanathan's proposition that Americans were readied for Trump's declarative, choppy, emotional, volatile and verbally underdeveloped style of communication by Facebook's normalization of that genre of discourse seems only logical (174).

While Vaidhyanathan condemns the model of narrowcasting for the prospects of a deliberative democracy, he is careful to note that, while it atrophies deliberation, it does not lead to political apathy. On the contrary, the new media model facilitates political mobilization precisely because it allows politicians and activists to reach their proverbial choirs with those messages most likely to move them to action. The author's examples of mobilization run from charitable fundraising campaigns to protestors around the world between 2007 and 2017.

Such mobilization is possible not only because social media is precise in directing issues of interest towards those audiences more likely to respond, but because it makes mobilization fun, engaging, and socially rewarding. Thus, chapter one, "The Pleasure Machine," discusses posting behavior on Facebook as a performance of identity and social belonging: what we post, defend, question, and criticize in our daily or weekly interventions online, he argues, "solidifies membership in a group" and "demonstrate group loyalty." (50) Such demonstration of group belonging and identity is engaging: whether expressed as anxiety, anger, or resentment, "Facebook attracts us, hooks us, encourages us to declare our affiliations, divides us, and tracks every single interaction along the way." (51) If Vaidhyanathan concedes some value to the political engagement fostered by Facebook–for instance, in coalescing anti-authoritarian movements—he is nevertheless consistently skeptical of its democratic promises. His analysis of the quick swings in power in Egypt, for example, from the hopeful demonstrations that overthrew Mubarak in 2011 to the current authoritarian dictatorship that got installed once again, makes a convincing case for both the value of Facebook in mobilizing anti-authoritarian protestors into a movement, and for its inability to sustain democracy in the absence of an established public sphere and its practices of communication and deliberation.

While I agree with the author's general evaluation that Facebook shapes deliberative habits of political communication, holding too much power for how little responsibility it assumes for shaping the public sphere, I am not yet convinced that Facebook holds a privileged place among the drivers of de-contextualization and misinformation, in our current media ecology. Nor that breaking up Facebook and using anti-trust regulation are sufficient, if they may be necessary, correctives of the current discursive polarization (25). At least in the American context, Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj's have extensively documented the rhetorical style which Facebook displays as dominant for the past thirty or so years. A profitable polarizing "rhetoric of outrage," has become dominant across media platforms in the U.S., as a consequence of the deregulation of media industries during the Reagan administration and the elimination of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987. Such changes placed news media under the pressures of profitability as opposed to the public service model. In search for differentiation,

audiences, and advertising venue, outrage rhetoric has attracted audiences, politicians, and activists alike and has been turning high profits by ideologically moving away from the center. The outrage genre displays the main faults that Vaidhyanathan has skillfully outlined for Facebook communication: provoking emotional responses through the use of overgeneralization, misleading or inaccurate information; sacrificing both rationality and deliberation, to the performance of verbal competition; being ideologically selective by ignoring or trivializing issues that are ideologically irrelevant to audiences, while prioritizing sure hits for greatest emotional impact with select audiences; engaging audiences and leaving them "feeling validated and virtuous for having participated;" and encouraging echo chambers (Berry and Sobieraj 7-8).

Understanding Facebook communication as a subcategory of outrage media prompts us to see the current crisis of public trust in the U.S. as more entrenched and pervasive, and Facebook as the latest comer to the industries of outrage, capitalizing on this genre just like television, radio, and bogs have done so far. Such perspective on the last three decades of media ecology nudges us to wonder whether anti-trust and pro-transparency legislation to regulate Silicone Valley companies such as Facebook are sufficient, as much as they are necessary, in changing the current discursive climate. It suggests that a richer industry-rhetorical picture may be needed. One that considers how the synergy between "the outrage industry," outrage rhetoric, a relatively recent business model of data mining and selling, and waves of deregulation of media industries started in the 1980s have created the perfect storm whose effects we are now living.

The biggest missed opportunity in *Antisocial Media* is an explicit and systematic treatment of the relation between democracy and deliberation. While the author is chiefly preoccupied with how fast and demonstrative performances of affiliation are replacing the slower processes of thinking and communicating required for democratic life, he is yet to articulate how good public deliberation looks like. The book is haunted by the specter of the Habermasian model of the ideal public sphere and its valorization of rational, fact-based, impartial and deliberative discourse. As an institution that actively disables the process of deliberation, Facebook embodies Habermas's idea of "distorted communication" (Habermas, 1970). And while *Antisocial Media* comprehensively catalogues the sins of Facebook as a 'bad' object, the mourned lost object is never fully and systematically named. If the tone of the book is marked by a nostalgic longing for a lost media ecology that predates Facebook, what does that model look like? Where, historically, is it to be found, if not in the past few decades already marked by an outrage industry? And if it is the kind of a Habermasian ideal speech situation, how would Vaidhyanathan square that preference with criticism leveraged against Habermas's model, namely, that it devalues and excludes the voices of the poor, non-whites, the foreign-born and women who may not follow its norms (e.g. Fraser, 1990). A discussion of the tensions between Habermas and his critics would have opened a rich conversation that recognizes both the power that social media gives marginal actors, and the ways in which certain forms of marginality (for instance, that of disaffected right-wing groups) has been most recently co-opted by the powerful conservative political machine and made dominant. An engagement with rhetorical scholarship might have also led Vaidhyanathan to draw a more nuanced distinction between fast thinking that can be easily manipulated, of the kind Facebook encourages, and its democratic opposite: not the "stop and think" mantra of Hannah Arendt (202), but practical wisdom as the capacity for informed and context-sensitive judgment that

rhetoricians since Isocrates and Aristotle have studied, a capacity cultivated by exposure to common issues (Schwarze, 1999; Schwartz and Sharpe, 2011).

My disciplinary wishes for a more explicit and systematic treatment of the relation between democracy and deliberation comes from an eagerness to assign *Antisocial Media* in Contemporary Rhetorical Criticism courses. Vaidhyanathan's book is a compelling read, one that current undergraduate students, especially the iGeneration (born between 1995-2012) steeped into current practices of media consumption, would do well to study (Twenge, 2018). Vaidhyanathan's prose is convincing and maps in detail the increasing dangers Silicon Valley companies present to our democracies and communication habits.

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# Thoughts on *Antisocial Media. How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy* by Siva Vaidhyanathan

The impact of social media on public affairs tends to be discussed with reference to specific contexts. Two prominent examples are the British referendum campaign in June 2016, and the successful candidacy of Donald Trump, concluded that same year in November. Recent research looking at such events identify them as clear examples of how social media "have transformed our communication, how we access, and engage with information" (Hänska & Bauchowitz, 2017, p. 27). The two particular unanticipated outcomes referred to above – among others – attracted numerous scholars in the attempt to find possible explanations. Currently, scholars from fields such as communication studies, political science, and tech studies have started to focus on unveiling potential negative effects of social media on society. Given the magnitude of events such as the Cambridge Analytica scandal in early 2018, after which Facebook usage has collapsed (Hern, 2019), this was to be expected.

Research interests in this area have revolved around illuminating the dark side of social networking sites (especially Facebook and Twitter). And the light thrown has at times been quite harsh. Here are a few examples of how Facebook has been being portrayed since 2016: "the biggest threat to our democracy", as Cambridge Analytica whistleblower Brittany Kaiser[1] says; "a digital gangster destroying democracy" (Cadwalladr, 2019); a tool which is "rotting democracy from within" (DemDigest, 2019); a "machine" which "disconnects us and undermines democracy". The latter are Siva Vaidhyanathan's words, and they make for a telling introduction to the analysis he develops in his 2018 book *Antisocial Media. How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*.

Vaidhyanathan's book is an ample response to "Facebook's toxicity", largely ignored by both experts and non-experts as recently as 2015 and 2016. The massive ignorance regarding the effects of Facebook could be associated with the fact that people had

> grown so accustomed to Facebook's effects that they stopped thinking about them entirely. Facebook disappeared from their consciousness. It happened in much the same way we don't think about the hum of our refrigerators, or central heating, or highways. Facebook was just there — a part of life. Facebook, however, differs from physical infrastructure in one important way: it doesn't occupy your kitchen or basement. Facebook occupies your brain (Horgan, 2018).

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It is in a timely book that this verdict develops into an argument, one which fits well into a socio-political paradigm in which "manipulation of our media environment by foreign as well as domestic actors is now the new normal" (Naughton, 2018). Probably guided by the relative weight of the networking sites, Vaidhyanathan highlights the potential dangers associated with the one that is currently used by most people, Facebook. While the topic is not novel, in my view, the novelty and significant contribution of the book resides in its critical perspective, which allows for personal reflection and interpretation.

A wide angle lens would capture the book as an attempt to offer a critical picture on Facebook's effects at the societal level. And this is a perspective which is rather absent from the literature to date on social media effects. There is a large variety of studies focusing on individual-level effects (e.g. on Facebook effects on loneliness, self-esteem, life satisfaction, self-reported depression, body image, etc.), while the "bird's eye-view" effects (i.e., the effects at the societal level) have been comparatively rarely addressed. Continuing Neil Postman's reflexive approach about another very pervasive mass communication medium – television – Siva Vaidhyanathan offers insights on how Facebook, as the most pervasive element within the current media ecosystem, can change the structure of communication "by creating new forms of truth-telling" (Silvestre, 2018).

My thoughts on the book were fueled mainly by my previous experience with media and communication research studies. Given this background, in my opinion, the book might be interpreted in the perspective of the currently dominant paradigm of media effects research: preference-based effects models. This paradigm combines elements from both weak and strong media effects research, while focusing on three characteristics that could explain the *power* of a media message: (1) narrowcasting information towards ideologically fragmented individuals, (2) a tendency among individuals to rely on self-selected information – often labeled echo chambers or filter bubbles, and (3) personalized news aggregators leading to narrower and narrower information tailoring based on both voluntary and involuntary user input (Cacciatore, Scheufele, & Iyengar, 2016, p. 19).

Within this recent paradigm, the author presents seven "machines" responsible for the potential harmful effects of social media. The *pleasure machine* is the concept used to refer to the array of sentiments associated with Facebook use – including anxiety, anger, and resentment. The pleasure associated with Facebook is what makes people come back or keeps them permanently connected. In fact, it is not real pleasure, but a combination of habit and addiction, which turns out to be rather noxious. There is then the *surveillance machine* – the description the author uses to characterize how Facebook is working within the current digital ecosystem, with strong emphasis on the ideas of privacy and dignity, which seem to be left behind. Vaidhyanathan continues with the *attention machine* – mainly the mechanism through which Facebook keeps people on the platform and makes them coming back. In this case, "attention feeds thought" (2018, p. 80) is the idea which might explain why some beliefs turn into attitudes and, then, into possible behaviors.

The *benevolence machine* explains the very beginning of Facebook and the philosophy behind its creation and development – it was initially created as a platform which gave voice to ordinary people, in the attempt to create a better world. A related idea is the *protest machine*, which exemplifies how Facebook and other social media networks play a role in social and political movements, especially in terms of making people more aware or sensitive to particular issues. The *politics machine* refers explicitly to the way Facebook is used for political purposes; tailored persuasion is referred to as one of the most successful ways of tar-

geting political messages in order to obtain certain outcomes – by manipulating and targeting information or propaganda. On a darker take, the *disinformation machine* is the concept Vaidhyanathan uses to describe the way Facebook is used "to undermine trust in the institutions that make democracy function, or to disrupt democratic deliberation" (2018, p. 180).

After disassembling these "machines" through which Facebook performs its work of disconnecting people and undermining democracy, the author suggests another diagnostic label for Facebook, namely the *nonsense machine*. It captures the claim that, when Facebook dominates people's sense of the world, they "become carriers of extremist nonsense" (Vaidhyanathan, 2018, p. 6), and, in my view, it is perhaps the strongest warning this book delivers.

The machines or machineries through which Facebook dominates whole populations, and in a sense the entire world, are presented in a friendly, yet very alarmist manner. The urgency, I think, is quite clear. We find ourselves in a context in which it is imperative, first, that we become aware of the challenges facing us, and then try to arrive at some solutions. Nevertheless, it is not as clear in the book who is, or better said, who should be held responsible for the chaos, pollution, or damage caused by the present media ecosystem.

Before going further with some thoughts about possible implications of the book, in the following lines I will refer to the concepts of *privacy* and *targeting*. Both of them are comprehensively discussed in this volume, and should be of importance for the expert and lay reader alike. Moreover, the author stresses the value of privacy in a memorable manner. Here is an example:

> Privacy is not a substance we can trade away. It's not a state of being that either exists or does not exist. And it can't "die", as too many people have declared. Privacy is a power we exercise – or hope to exercise – when we see fit. (Vaidhyanathan, 2018, p. 73).

Privacy is regarded as a "power"; indeed, only those who have enough power can afford keeping their lives away from Facebook. But how easy is to regain this power? Once online, it can be difficult to separate private and public life, online and offline selves (Burkell, Fortier, Wong, & Simpson, 2014; Ford, 2011). The main problem associated with privacy is who assumes responsibility for it. Here, the question is how individual is the privacy of each person as this is no longer a matter to be settled at individual level? And who truly succeeds in maintaining control over her privacy? A person who does not reveal personal details online? Or maybe one who gives false information about herself? Or only one who does not have a Facebook account?

Another important point tackled in the book is targeted or personalized persuasion. The evolution and large scale usage of social networks have brought important changes within the process of persuasion. The answer to the questions related to how difficult or easy is to persuade people with a media message nowadays is very provocative. One the one hand, it might seem easy to get access to people, and thus to persuade them; the multitude of communication channels and the instant reach through which they can be targeted seem to help. Furthermore, research in the areas of persuasion and propaganda is growing and people who want to create a persuasive message (no matter its goal) can benefit from it. On the other hand, it might seem more difficult to persuade someone mainly because of the wide access to information; it is very easy nowadays to get access to different sources of information (including opposing viewpoints about certain issues) and, as a consequence, to build less biased opinions and attitudes.

These provisos aside (they can be quite rational and predictable), one of the most important challenges brought by the evolution and acceleration of digital technologies is the rise

of *computational propaganda* – targeted messages distributed to certain groups of individuals, according to their personal characteristics and prior media exposure/ experience. The impact and effects of personalized media messages have been intensively studied during the last years (Hirsh, Kang, & Bodenhausen, 2012; Luong, Garrett, & Slater, 2019; Oyibo & Vassileva, 2019). Specifically, the outcomes of the US election and of the UK referendum in 2016, as well as the rise of "illiberal democracy" discourse mainly in Central and Eastern European countries, have attracted researchers from both political and media effects studies. Consequently, the academic literature on topics related to the influence and effects of social media (especially Facebook and Twitter) is impregnated with concepts such as *enhanced selectivity* of the audience, *ideologically-driven news*, *confirmation bias*, *filter bubbles*, *echo chambers* – all being related to some extent to the umbrella concept of tailored or personalized persuasion (Kushin, Yamamoto, & Dalisay, 2019; Park, Jang, Lee, & Yang, 2018; Spohr, 2017). The following is typical:

> One unique attribute of social media is enhanced selectivity. Social media afford users the ability to selectively interact with like-minded individuals and seek ideologically congruent opinions, which might contribute to forming echo chambers or filter bubbles where people attend largely to ideologically aligned content while shutting off cross-cutting opinions (Kushin, Yamamoto, & Dalisay, 2019, p. 2).

These concepts – most of which are also present in Vaidhyanathan's book – are of particular importance as they define certain aspects of the current media environment. However, they are rarely used in order to find strategies and solutions to the issues to which they refer. For example, in my view, these concepts could be used in order to define and design a strategy of media literacy (i.e. a strategy which could include both technical/technological development, such as fact checking techniques, but also some actual actions which could improve some personal skills, such as critical thinking or rational rather than emotional responses to some online issues) (Jones-Jang, Mortensen, & Liu, 2019).

One may have expected in this book, too, the discussion about the harmful effects of Facebook at the societal level to be followed by references to possible hints or solutions to be used by common people. In this sense, the diagnosis section of the book could be expanded with a prognosis one – maybe referring to the possibility of finding individual solutions to this societal issue, which the author successfully manages to describe, discuss and contextualize. Is closing down the platform the only viable (however improbable) solution?

Furthermore, it would be interesting to discuss the effects of social media (and Facebook in particular) in numbers. Specifically, within the book the impact of Facebook was mainly qualified, and not so much quantified. Again, with reference to what should be done to overcome the present "garbage" (Vaidhyanathan, 2018, p. 11) which is now on Facebook, a picture painted in quantitative terms may be a useful guide. And maybe it could also be a good idea to start with more accurate measurings of effects (at a societal level) in order to identify possible solutions.

All in all, *Antisocial Media. How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy* is a very well-documented book offering a version of the big picture of the (potential) negative effects of Facebook on communities and whole societies. By discussing the main areas where Facebook operates within society, the author puts together a comprehensive perspective about two important issues regarding Facebook, namely "how it works and how people use it" (Vaidhyanathan, 2018, p. 10). This is useful for both specialized researchers and the general readership. Moreover, by signaling the main negative effects of Facebook on democracy, the book contributes to the cultivation of public awareness towards how our opinions, attitudes, and behaviors are shaped in the present media ecosystem.

## Note

[1] https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/22/brittany-kaiser-facebook-is-the-biggest-threat-to-us-democracy.html

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Jakub JAKUBOWSKI*

# The Dark Side of F. Reflections on Siva Vaidhyanathan's *Antisocial Media. How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*

In media and communication studies, as in all humanities and social sciences, the research perspective, the paradigm adopted, and sometimes even ideology play a key role when answering the questions of what one wants to explore, and how to go about it. In thinking about the object of research in this way, science sometimes resembles art. If two people are requested to describe, photograph, paint or film an apple sitting placed on a table, two completely different images will most likely be rendered. The skills of the artists (researchers), their experiences, cultural roots, the context in which their work has originated, and their ways of thinking about the world differ.

Being aware of this inescapable phenomenon not only triggers reflections on the lack of objectivity, but also makes it utterly impossible to achieve. Therefore, researchers are expected either to get as close to objectivity as possible (losing their 'own perspective,' cultural accretions, beliefs, subjective choices, and so on - to the largest conceivable extent) or to honestly determine the perspective they are taking to shed a Popperian light on the object of their study (Popper, 2002, p. 402).

The author of the book *Antisocial Media. How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*, Siva Vaidhyanathan, chooses the latter path and does not hide in the slightest that he has taken a critical perspective, addressing seven 'machines' which exert a negative impact on our functioning in the world of the media.[1] In this way, he makes reference to the intellectual traditions of his master – Neil Postman, as well as to broader critical currents with a long tradition in Europe, pursued by Jürgen Habermas first and foremost. Yet, instead of continuing these traditions by examining cultural phenomena, television or infotainment, Vaidhyanathan takes a step forward by focusing on social media or, more precisely, on Facebook, as the most influential, largest and symbolic website which, without a shadow of a doubt, has an enormous impact on current society and politics. Although his attempt is not the first one (as evidenced by an earlier, interesting book by José Marichal, *Facebook Democracy. The Architecture of Disclosure and the Threat to Public Life*), it is one of the first comprehensive analyses of this type 'after Trump,' which is important in the context of the rapidly changing world of politics and the media.

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The book takes a natural and necessary direction on the path to the modernization of the critical tradition, choosing Facebook, which has provided numerous reasons to be criticized by the author of this book, and by others. After a relatively long stage of cognitive optimism which prevailed in the discourse on the internet and democracy,[2] this relationship has begun to be looked at with increasing caution and doubt (Loader & Mercea, 2011). With Brexit, Trump and several other 'phenomena' around the world, we have become disillusioned about the ability of the internet in its modern incarnation to help us rebuild a badly bruised democracy (Tucker et al., 2017). The book systematically identifies these illusions, accusing Facebook of exerting an adverse impact on social discussion, redistribution of goods, ??social relations and values, access to reliable information and so on. Using the concept of myth (cf. Barthes), the author argues that Facebook covertly constructs our vision of reality the same way television did in the past.

If Facebook and the stories told about it are a kind of myth, then the book demythologizes them. While often doing so in a brutal way, it nevertheless remains within the limits of what a researcher is entitled to do, looking at reality in a specific, individualized way. However, the question should be asked whether or not this demythologization is also a certain narrative framework which is not significantly different from the myth itself in terms of logic and schema. After all, myth builds a specific image of reality, a story that becomes the hard-to-take-off spectacles which give reality a specific color, like in Carpenter's famous film. Some name it a myth, others – an ideology, which we can only be saved from by taking these spectacles off. The book by Vaidhyanathan seems to be intended to remove our eyeglasses. But what if it merely offers to replace one pair of glasses with another?

Books that try to cover such a large area of ??our lives as our social media presence, by their very nature must choose a kind of narrative – a story about the world seen through the eyes of the author and taking into account his experiences, masters, opinions, cultural roots and so on, which have all molded him. This story can also take one of the interpretative perspectives which we often use when examining works of literature, art or film. The story can also be used as a tool to analyze reality, including our relations with the media. The story of Facebook could have taken various forms, such as psychoanalytical (Facebook as an embodiment of superego?), feminist (a tool of symbolic dominance?), postcolonial (a new form of subordinating the broadly understood South?), technological determinism (as the driving force of social change?), and so on.

The book is a combination of many forms, which can be considered its strength - or its weakness. In this way, it demythologizes Facebook in a comprehensive and multidimensional way, exposing its successive adverse impacts on how society and democracy operate. On the one hand, it could be argued that the author should have discussed even more problems (indicated by chapter titles). I myself have an idea for a few more stories that could take the shape of ecocriticism (Facebook's impact on increased demand for energy and the resulting environmental pollution), critical pedagogy (developing bad habits in young people by using Facebook in teaching, or failing to effectively point to the adverse outcomes of using Facebook, among other things), or artistic criticism (a unified interface killing the creativity of online graphic designers and creative individuality on the Web). However, even the criticism that the author does develop in his seven chapters generate two serious threats, namely locating the object of criticism in the wrong place (in the book, this is Facebook), and the danger of falling into dogmatism (exchanging one pair of eyeglasses for another).

Although the former problem is reminiscent of 'a chicken and egg situation,' it may apply to the diagnosis of the problem as identified in the title *How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy?* I admit that, at the beginning, the examples and mechanisms discussed by the author are clear and convincing. Beyond doubt, Facebook and other social networks often are the 'evil characters' during live broadcasts of terrorist attacks, playing the role of a transmission belt for spreading untruths, emotionalizing public life, and so on. While the author writes that one cannot resist the impression that he believes that the new media system that has been developing in recent years requires changes, among which Vaidhyanathan recommends, for instance, introducing regulations similar to those in Europe, or creating something like an anti-Facebook 'international.'[3] All these diagnoses and remedies to the problem concerned are interesting and worth considering (although one could doubt the effectiveness and actual outcomes of EU actions). But what if one reversed Vaidhyanathan' terms and asked: 'how democracy disconnects us and undermines Facebook' (or more broadly: media as such)?

> [t]his book does not argue that Facebook is the source of these troubles. Facebook is, however, the most pervasive and powerful catalyst of information pollution and destructive nonsense (Vaidhyanathan, 2018, p. 27)

The direction liberal democracy has taken over recent decades is as worrying today as the condition of the media, which to a large extent have obviously had an adverse impact on democracy (although one can easily find studies based on meta-data, whose authors, although with many caveats, essentially point to the positive impact of social media on civic participation; see e.g. Boulianne, 2015). What I mean here is democracy in a broad sense; not only as the influence of the public on the shape of political reality (the will of the people), but also as people being prepared for conscious participation (education), or the active implementation of the five 'sacred principles' of democracy, namely sovereignty of the nation, respect for minority rights, the separation of powers, the rule of law, and political pluralism. Let us consider, for example, the issues of civic and media education, the more so as young people are probably the most frequently studied and described group in terms of the hypothetically positive impact of social media on political involvement and participation (Loader, Vromen & Xenos, 2014).

In many countries (including Poland, which I am most familiar with in this respect), this issue is completely marginalized. Given the number of hours we spend using the media every day, communication education should be included in the core curriculum worldwide. During such classes, young people could gain knowledge and develop key skills in distinguishing between truth and falsehood, and learn about the algorithms of information selection in social media, phenomena characteristic of modern media (e.g. the filter bubble mentioned in the book), personal data security, and so on. In most countries worldwide this is not done at a satisfactory level.

One could optimistically assume that if societies were more aware of certain processes and phenomena, the role of the media in democracy would change. Such cases can actually be found. For example, Iceland, which values civic knowledge, has been able to constructively use social media to deliberate on a new constitution (Landmore, 2017).[4] Maybe it is the weakness of society and state institutions that empowers the media and gives them authority, allowing them to set the rules in fields where the state is absent. Vaidhyanathan presents this phenomenon very well in the example of Facebook charity collections, whereby the state is

denied the privilege of decision-making as to who needs what resources to improve the world (Vaidhyanathan, 2018, p. 77). This is just one example of where the state has failed and given in to private media companies, allowing them to shape their relations with the public as autonomous entities. The main, natural and primary task of these companies is to generate profit, with secondary concern for public interests. The question can be asked then of whether Facebook has really changed our democracy, or rather the weakness of this democracy has allowed private services to 'squeeze in' wherever tedious and procedure-governed democratic processes have proven to be inefficient. Would the regulations proposed by the author suffice or should more radical solutions be considered with academic seriousness, such as the nationalization of certain media companies, a solution which is increasingly often proposed by journalists and experts (see Srnicek, 2017; Raddi, 2018)? If we agree that in certain areas only the state can ensure guarantees (security, money printing, and in some countries education, utilities or transport), does not this sensitive and crucial area also cover services that have a real impact on the outcome of democratic elections and thus on all other areas of political life?

The second problem is posed by the danger of dogmatism in Vaidhyanathan's critique, which is easy to fall into when the narrative is strongly focused on a single evil character. This is a bit like accusing the inventor of the knife of contributing to manslaughter. Could a knife be constructed so as not to hurt people? It probably could, but its basic function would likely be lost, and it would no longer be a knife.

Facebook is only a tool, designed by its creators, but also used every day by other people. In this respect, the author's reflections on the numerous statements of Mark Zuckerberg are interesting. This brings part of the narrative down to stories about human ambitions, interests, and greed, often dispelling the illusions about mythical 'good intentions.' It should be borne in mind, however, that the people and groups described in the book are also mere cogs in a machine, and products of certain cultural and political phenomena. Facebook can also be understood as a business, an embodiment of the American Dream, and an emanation of ultimate American individualism, the Z generation, slackers, scenesters, hipsters and other present-day -ers, but also of new political movements referring to the tradition of direct democracy and the propagators of refuting ??political correctness. These and many other phenomena, to a greater or lesser extent associated with American culture, form the canon of the mutual impact of an imperfect media system on democracy, as well as of a democracy in crisis that has made its mark on the media.

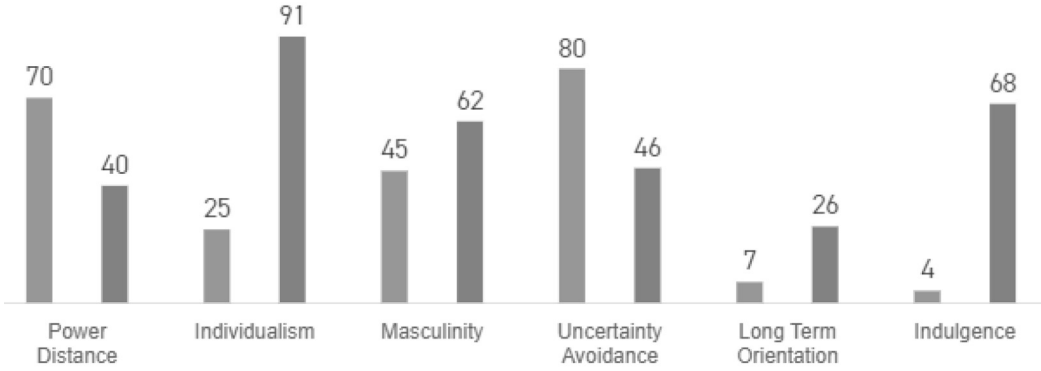
This last theme addressed in the book will be the final, and one of the most interesting topics that I would like to take up in my discussion. Setting the framework of his narrative, the author writes the following:

> While Neil (Postman – J.J.) focused his analyses on the mainstream culture of the United States and its dominant Western intellectual tradition, often deploying a universalizing tone, I prefer to view media ecosystems with an awareness of specific conditions around the world (Vaidhyanathan, 2018, p. 27).

This is an important declaration, further followed by numerous examples of Facebook's impact on society and politics, including in the Philippines, India, Arab countries, and the United Kingdom. This paints an extremely wide picture of the various interdependencies, expansion, interests and business tactics employed by the Silicon Valley giant. However, attention should be given to certain risks associated with a story told in this way. However non-insightful this is, it has to be said that, despite its narrative of goals, ambitions and con-

necting people on a global level, Facebook is a 100-per cent product of American culture and it is impossible to talk about it in any other way. Created by an American, originally for American students, it seems to be designed to 'service' American democracy, strongly personalized and associated with entertainment, where the borders between what is political and what is ludic and commercial are blurred (the final outcome of which is Donald Trump). Facebook's personalized interface, its timeline logical structure, its focus on low-context communication, and even the long-term, non-alternative and symbolic 'like' button that reflects American optimism, are just a few examples showing that this is the case. These elements make taking a global, intercultural perspective on the Facebook story extremely difficult. It is the more difficult the more immersed the one who tells the story is in a specific cultural area, including the political context. An example of that is what the author repeatedly mentions, namely the lack of deliberative and collective benefits for democracy from using Facebook as a modern agora. It is true that Facebook does not do this well. However, the reason does not necessarily have to be Facebook itself, but the cultural nature of society. After all, the parameters affecting the functioning of democratic institutions in the cultures of Egypt and the United States, mentioned in the book, are so radically different (see Figure 1) that using Facebook may be a matter of not only its morphology, but also its applications in specific cultural conditions or political contexts (Wolfsfeld, Segev, Sheafer, 2013).

Figure 1. Comparison of Egyptian (blue) and American (purple) cultural dimensions by Geert Hofstede.




**Source:** Culture Compass™, https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/egypt,the-usa/.

In conclusion, the book by Vaidhyanathan is an excellent, critical study of our contemporary media reality and its impact on how societies operate. Its unquestionable value is the enumeration of dangers through a coherent, consistent narrative based on the threats posed by social media in the world. It is therefore a serious warning for those who are still trying to look away from the problems generated by Facebook, despite the obvious evidence of its dysfunctions. Taking such a wide view was an extremely ambitious, but also provocative task because it encourages readers to answer questions themselves about the successive 'machines' resulting from their own personal experiences, cultural contexts and insights while using Facebook. It should be remembered, however, that this is only one narrative, a good story, which requires the researcher who wants to get a more comprehensive picture of the problem to reach for other stories told differently.

## Notes

[1] Many organisations dealing with this issue draw up such lists based on the most pressing problems in the modern practice of using the media. See, e.g. Six Key Issues by Deb, Donohue, Glaisyer, 2017.

[2] Social media and their specific nature have aroused an extensive range of social and political expectations, and have been seen as facilitators of pro-democratic, civil and deliberative activities. They frequently refer to the issues related to the democratizing function of the Web. This manifested itself for the first time in the 1990s, when the commercialized Internet was hoped to break the crisis of democracy based on the tabloidizing influence of traditional media (Wilhelm, 1999); in the early 21st century, when the new 'social opening' and enthusiasm of the new millennium aroused hopes for greater civil independence (Baciak, 2006); and after 2011, when the Arab Spring and the protests against ACTA demonstrated the mobilizing power of the Web (Lakomy, 2013).

[3] Many researchers of this issue and organizations deal with these matters, see e.g. Carr & Aaron, 2019.

[4] Although it was not eventually adopted due to the political power balance, it was proved that Facebook can be used constructively to achieve collective goals – a joint draft constitution had been worked out.

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# Responses to the reviews

It is a great honor to have my work examined with such depth and sophistication. Professors Jakubowski, Haliliuc, and Buturoiu have each offered the book generous praise, patient criticisms, and have offered both me and the larger field much advice for future work that can either correct for my book's weaknesses or extend my book's strengths.

I had hoped that this book would demythologize Facebook. I wanted readers to understand that Facebook is a complex collection of technologies, working mostly in concert, that all try to hook users on the experience. The prime motivation for Facebook is to get people to use Facebook. Ultimately, the goal is for Facebook to be the prime — perhaps default — medium for human communication around the world. By making Facebook essential to daily life in the early 21st century, Mark Zuckerberg hopes to manage significant portions of human activity for his own benefit. The trick, as I demonstrate in the book, is that Zuckerberg does not see a distinction between the interests of Facebook, the interests of 2.5 billion users, and the interests of Zuckerberg himself. Zuckerberg is an ideologue and an idealist.

Since early 2018, when reports of Facebook's promiscuous data-sharing habits and its potential influence on political movements around the globe broke out from the work of social media scholars into mainstream conversations, Zuckerberg has suffered from a kind of cognitive dissonance. He still wants to believe that what is good for Facebook is good for the world — and vice-versa. But the evidence is mounting that Facebook is just another company, only bigger and more pervasive than any such company we have ever seen in history.

Professors Jakubowski, Haliliuc, and Buturoiu encountered Antisocial Media at a moment when many of the issues the book explores are daily news. They were deft enough to focus on the deeper goals and themes of the book, avoiding getting distracted by the latest breaking news about Facebook and its effects on democracy. For that I am grateful.

Professor Alina Haliliuc immediately grasped the core theme of Antisocial Media: Facebook is perhaps the most powerful tool we have ever had for political and social motivation. But Facebook is not only terrible at hosting deliberation, its dynamic pressures on journalism has a corrosive effect on the quality of the public sphere and thus severely undermines quality deliberation. Democratic republics need both motivation and deliberation. Facebook amplifies the former and undermines the latter.

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Professor Haliliuc takes issue with the book's claim that Facebook plays a distinct and uniquely powerful role in the erosion of the public sphere, citing earlier studies of right-wing indignation and extremism pumped up through radio and television. Equating or even assuming prominence for other media forms merely because they have existed for longer misses the point, however, that they are now intimately connected to Facebook. The rhetorical style of right-wing extremists in the United States certainly honed itself via talk radio and cable news (Berry & Sobieraj, 2004), but it finds its loudest voice on Facebook now. Facebook reaches more than 220 Americans — almost 70 percent of the population. That's only exceeded by the 300 million citizens of India who use Facebook (already about one third of the adult population of India and rising fast). Citing studies of American extremist media to claim that Facebook's influence might not be as powerful as its reach implies ignores the fact that Fox News and Rush Limbaugh do not circulate in India, Brazil, Sri Lanka, or the Philippines, These places have suffered more acute assaults on civic culture and democratic norms than the United States, the United Kingdom, or Australia have. Rupert Murdoch wishes he had that kind of influence in his three home countries.

Beyond the fact that the phenomena the book tracks reach far beyond the American data, we should remember that these media systems are no longer separate. Facebook chooses for us which specific examples of audio, video, and text we encounter in our News Feeds. It's no coincidence that the top source of news in Facebook News Feeds is Fox News. Fox News structures its content to work well with Facebook's algorithmic bias toward sparking strong emotions. There is a constant feedback loop between extremist content from legacy media forms and Facebook. It's never either/or. It's always both.

Professor Haliliuc is correct and astute when she faults the book for being "haunted by the specter of the Habermasian model of the ideal public sphere and its valorization of rational, fact-based, impartial and deliberative discourse." The book offers no rich description of what a good deliberative platform would look like. It offers no sense of how we might build the norms, practices, laws, and technologies that would foster healthy deliberation. Professor Haliliuc's advice that I study rhetoric with more depth and care is certainly on point. I can only plead that I finished the book with those notions uncooked and I knew it. They remain uncooked even today, although I have been rather obsessed with this unsatisfying conclusion to Antisocial Media. Toward that end, I have been engaging in research projects to fill out a healthy, just, and diverse vision of a deliberative public sphere that gets beyond Habermasian nostalgia. I have devoted the work toward my next book to this very question. So I must thank Professor Haliliuc for certifying my desire to do better this time and for helping to guide my explorations toward the next project.

Dr. Raluca Buturoiu offers a full and generous analysis of Antisocial Media. Professor Buturoiu, requesting some glimmer of hope or a strategy forward, suggests that the diagnoses of the problems as outlined in the book could be used to generate and promote a media education agenda. Here is the problem. By the time I finished writing the book I had lost all hope. I had imagined various personal and policy responses, run scenarios through my mind, and found them all wanting. Almost all of them I found interesting, potentially helpful, perhaps even necessary, but far from sufficient.

I settled on two major areas of policy reform that I thought offered some sort of relief from the pernicious effects of Facebook. One was competition policy, or, as we call it in the United States, antitrust law. (Botta & Wiedemann, 2019) The second was data protection, or as we call it in the United States, privacy law (Ni Loideain, 2019). The European Union has

been deploying its much more expansive and aggressive competition law against Facebook and Google for almost a decade, with little or no long-term improvement in the behavior of those companies. They are just too big and too rich for meager fines to make a difference. Data protection offers a bit more hope. Since the General Data Protection Regulation went into effect in the European Union in May 2019 we have seen companies struggle to adjust to it, with the larger, richer companies managing more successfully. But we have not seen the full effects of the law, nor are we likely to for years until courts hear specific challenges to the practices of data gathering and use by companies like Facebook. It's too early to tell whether such comprehensive data protection in one large market like the European Union will alter the power structures that enable Facebook to exercise so much influence over us.

Professor Buturoiu suggests that media literacy offers one way forward. I recoil at this suggestion. First, it underestimates both the scale of the problem (how does one run media literacy training in more than 100 languages in countries that have no interest in improving their political or media culture?). Media literacy puts the responsibility for cleaning up the media ecosystem on the victims rather than the polluters. It also puts even more pressure on educators, who are already overburdened with high expectations and underfunded in their efforts to get basic education to billions. We have not even cracked basic literacy, let alone media literacy. Efforts to promote media literacy also misread the nature of the problem. People share outlandish, false, enraging content because it makes them feel good. It helps them declare their identity and affiliation. It reinforces views that comfort them. Education can't address that problem. In addition, media education is focused on the young. Young people are not the problem. Old people are. They are too far beyond any kind of education.

Professor Jakub Jakubowski asks the most insightful and powerful question of the text: "The book by Vaidhyanathan seems to be intended to remove our eyeglasses. But what if it merely offers to replace one pair of glasses with another?" Jakubowski warns that the book risks both "locating the object of criticism in the wrong place" (i.e. Facebook) and "falling into dogmatism (exchanging one pair of eyeglasses for another)."

Toward that end Professor Jakubowski suggests putting the critical lenses and the burden of reform on us — the users — rather than Facebook. He cites the healthy democratic political culture of Iceland, where citizens routinely receive substantial civic knowledge, and where citizens deployed social media to forge a progressive new constitution approved by voters in 2012. He suggests that the maladies we see in teetering democracies like Poland and the United States might be better understood as failures of civic culture or media education rather than failures of the media themselves, Facebook included.

"Facebook is only a tool," Jakubowski writes. Here Professor Jakubowski lurches dangerously close to a position of technological neutrality, or a full-throated endorsement of a theory of "social construction of technology," (Humphreys) one in which the specific affordances and powers of a technology play little or no role in how societies change. Tools are just tools, and people decide how and when to use them. The familiar chant of the National Rifle Association comes to mind: "Guns don't kill people. People kill people." Certainly Professor Jakubowski does not suggest such a simplistic position on the role of Facebook. But his approach does put the burden and blame on the victims — the citizens of democracies that have seen their media systems overrun with propaganda internal and external, and a consequent erosion of civic trust. That an Iceland, Denmark, Taiwan, or Estonia seems immune to the fate that has overwhelmed Poland, Hungary, Turkey, India, Sri Lanka, Brazil, the Philippines,

Italy, Ukraine and even the United States of America should not lead us to believe that these successful states will be either successful forever or role models for others.

To get a full and sufficient grasp of how a technological system influences the world, as I explain in Antisocial Media, is to avoid positioning technologies and societies (or "culture") as two distinct and separate spheres, either one acting with greater force ("determining") or the other. Technologies are socio-cultural and social and cultural forces are almost always technologically mediated. Given that technologies do bear the marks of specific design choices, and that designers, engineers, and the companies and governments that support them exert power within societies, it's imperative that we recognize those power differences and identify the particular affordances that important technologies display. This theory of technology often is called "social shaping" (Williams & Edge, 1996).

Facebook tends toward certain results by design. It amplifies some kinds of content over others — specifically content that has been shown to generate significant "engagement" (clicks, shares, "likes," and comments). That means content that Facebook can predict (by mining millions of previous posts and measuring reactions to them) what sorts of content is likely to generate strong emotions. Emotions move people to engage, to act. Emotions can be affirming, like the warm feeling of seeing a photo of a cute puppy. Emotions can be destructive, like calls to mass violence, genocide, or harassment of political enemies. The affordances of Facebook make some sorts of politics easier than others. Politics of fear, hatred, resentment, and indignation play very well on Facebook (Bucher, 2018).

That said, Professor Jakubowski concludes his comments with a strong and proper criticism of Antisocial Media, one for which I can only confess guilt. "After all," he writes, "the parameters affecting the functioning of democratic institutions in the cultures of Egypt and the United States, … are so radically different … that using Facebook may be a matter of not only its morphology, but also its applications in specific cultural conditions or political contexts." I could not agree more. I hope the book does not lead readers to a universalist conclusion. Facebook works differently in Turkey and Greece, in Russia and Estonia, and in Indonesia and Australia. Specifics matter. Contexts matter. History matters.

But Facebook matters as well. How and to what extent it matters differs across the globe. And it's up to future researchers to assess and compare the difference Facebook makes in one country or society compared to another. But with 2.5 billion people using more than 100 languages regularly engaging with a single corporate media system with such defined affordances, it's safe to say that Facebook matters in similar ways everywhere — just not to the same extent anywhere.

The sum of all the issues raised in these three important essays comes to one clear conclusion: Antisocial Media is neither the first nor the last statement on the influence of Facebook in the world and the world on Facebook. Much more research must emerge. The public needs a more sophisticated view of how media technologies work in concert with social needs and desires (Baym, 2016). Surveillance is just beginning to generate the attention it deserves. And polemics will get us nowhere. I hope that Antisocial Media and these comments can inspire a next wave of Facebook scholarship that can correct for my book's excesses, errors, and omissions. As far as the gloomy outlook with which the book concludes, I hope I am spectacularly wrong about the fate of democracy in a world so determined to view itself through Facebook.

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