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Smart Communication: A Comparison between the Social Media Strategies of Cultural and Creative Cities in Romania

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Abstract

The process of increasing the number of inhabitants in cities is growing in all countries of the world. This leads to an increase in the challenges that cities will face in the near future. One of the identified challenges refers to the rapid communication between city halls and citizens. This challenge can be solved quickly, with the help of technology. The article aims to show how the city halls of cultural and creative cities in Romania, which have a population between 250,000 and 500,000 inhabitants, communicate through social platforms with city residents and whether this type of communication is useful. In this sense, this study presents how the cultural and creative city mayors have developed their communication process on the main social media channels, analysing the posts in terms of their number, comments, likes and shares.

Keywords: smart communication, social platforms, cultural and creative cities.

1. Introduction

Cultural and creative cities are urban centres that capitalise on industries and cultural heritage to foster community cohesion and local development. These cities are characterised by creative infrastructure, such as innovation hubs or artist spaces, and cultural institutions, such as theatres, museums or libraries.

Over the centuries, cities have played the role of driving centres of innovation and progress, where social evolution, creativity, technological resources and human development have been cultivated, leading to social and economic benefits. History has shown that urban progress is consistent with culture, which is reflected in traditions, customs, tangible and intangible heritage. Cities have been influenced by human creativity, which has led to their transformation into centres of

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innovation, where people from different social backgrounds come together with the aim of developing the economy.

Nowadays, the urbanisation process is advancing rapidly internationally. It is estimated that approximately 70% of the world's population will live in cities by 2050 (Delgado-Ramos, 2015). Cities are a place of interest for people who are looking for areas of comfort, security and stability. Cities offer opportunities for the development of commercial and business activities, which contribute to both local and national development. These opportunities lead to a rapid increase in the population in cities. One of the main problems that cities face due to accelerated population growth is the communication process between city halls and citizens.

In general, cities are an important element in the tourism industry, as they attract people who want to visit tourist attractions and get to know the specific culture of the place. The increase in technological impact and IoT has led to the rapid resolution of everyday problems. The rapid increase in the number of inhabitants and the demand for various resources have contributed to finding new solutions by decision-makers. The urban challenges faced by city dwellers are varied, such as the problem of smart mobility, water supply, communication between city halls and city citizens, green spaces, and city decision-makers must adopt various smart solutions to be able to face the challenges. A different method has been identified in the use of technologies to enhance the quality of life and for urban challenges, as a prerequisite for creating a smart city (Albino et al., 2015). Over the years, the relationship between citizens and public administration has undergone various transformations characterised by bureaucratic procedures (Jung et al., 2018). An important change in modern communication practices has been noted following the COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on increasing the quality of communication services to better meet the needs of citizens (Chan et al., 2021).

The local public administration in the cultural and creative cities in Romania has combined a mix of offline and online communication, after the pandemic, which includes both face-to-face interactions with citizens and communication through social platforms (Khasanov, 2022).

The development of ICT systems, as well as widespread access to the internet, has led to the emergence of new communication channels that allow the creation, transmission and publication of messages in the online environment, so that internet users can create and deliver messages. A new model of communication based on user content, characterised by social platforms and various information exchange tools, was established in the early 2000s and is known as Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005). Due to the fact that social platforms are accessed by numerous users, both public institutions and various other communicators use this type of communication, since the distributed information can quickly reach the general public. Social platforms are seen as "gatherings of the future" and were anticipated by Alvin Toffler (Toffler, 1970).

Romania has a population of 20.06 million inhabitants, a degree of urbanisation of 54.7%, 29.15 million mobile phone connections, 17.82 million internet users,

which means that 88.9% of the country's total population uses the internet, 13.5 million people are active on social media, respectively 67% of the population. The main social network is Facebook, with 9.55 million users, Instagram with 4.9 million users, TikTok with 7.58 million users, LinkedIn with 3.6 million users, Snapchat with 2.55 million users and Twitter with 1.25 million users (Datareportal, 2023).

In order to provide a high degree of satisfaction for both citizens and tourists or visitors, city halls must adapt to new socialisation behaviours. To address the knowledge gap in the specialised literature and in line with the goal of understanding the communication approach that city halls currently approach, our research highlights the impact of social networks on the development of the communication process within the city halls of cultural and creative cities in Romania, namely Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara, and Iasi. This study presents a review of the specialised literature from the point of view of the main concepts of cultural and creative cities and the role that new technologies have in the communication process on social media channels. Furthermore, the posts on the main social media channels were analysed, after which a SWOT analysis was performed based on the users' comments on the posts of the city halls.

Therefore, the main research questions of this study are:

- What are the main touchpoints that characterise the communication strategy of the city halls of cultural and creative cities in Romania?
- To what extent do city residents interact with the social media channels of city halls?

2. Literature Review

To address the main problem identified in this research, we conducted a brief review of the specialised literature, to highlight the main problems of communication between the city halls of cultural and creative cities with citizens, the role of social media and its impact on citizen satisfaction.

Cities are the core of social and economic development. As the creative role of the economy increases, opportunities for the development of this sector within cities are growing. In order to carry out strategies for urban development, many cities around the world use the concept of creative cities. City dwellers are the main resource that cities have, as they have creativity and imagination, and this leads to future success. (Landry, 2000).

The Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor is a tool that facilitates the adoption of public policies, by identifying strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, as well as comparing similar cities, using qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative component includes manifestations of the cultural and creative assets of cities that illustrate the quantitative components. The quantitative components include 3 sub-indicators, which are divided into 9 dimensions made up of 24 relevant indicators. The third edition of the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor includes 196 European cities, 22 more than the second edition in 2019 (Alberti et al., 2023).

In the field of public administration, researchers have followed the concept of the "good society" since Marx or Machiavelli, when public administration was characterised by wealth disparities, industrialisation and centralised planning (Frederickson et al., 2015). This vision is currently found in the concept of "smart governance" which characterises a governance of urban outcomes, resource efficiency through increased technological innovation (Jiang, 2021). The use of artificial intelligence (AI), new technologies and IoT within public administration has increased recently. Smart governance within public administration promotes cities and contributes to their development. It focuses on social well-being, on prioritising the redistribution of resources that increases and strengthens the transparency of public services, as well as on the development of digital platforms that contribute to the well-being of residents (Liang et al., 2023; Van Dinh et al., 2020). The integration of new technologies within public administration has contributed to increasing the inclusion of public services, security and safety (Farmanbar et al., 2019; Palumbo et al, 2023; Bibri, 2021). This system of governance requires data to improve government processes in order to increase sustainable development (Jiang, 2021; Palumbo et al., 2023; Kaiser, 2023). The process of introducing new technologies within public administration is under development and is expected to lead to the improvement of society in several areas.

Cities are settlements where technology is harnessed to improve living standards and public services, for sustainable development (Toh, 2002; Bibri, 2021). With the help of technology, cities aim to become more efficient, create sustainable urban spaces and be of increased interest to citizens. The concept of "smart governance" is part of the six dimensions of smart cities, namely "smart living, smart environment, smart mobility, smart people, smart economy and smart governance" (Albino et al., 2015). Smart governance in cities contributes to increasing the quality of life (Ahad et al., 2020), promotes social cohesion and stimulates the development of urban economies (Rosenzweig et al., 2018).

Cities should have an optimised and interconnected communication infrastructure to collect data from various external entities to build a solid foundation for sustainable local development and lifestyle (Bhati et al., 2017). With the help of data obtained from communication platforms, policy makers within local public administration can take certain measures to increase the satisfaction of citizens.

Social platforms offer a quick way to communicate between the mayors of cultural and creative cities in Romania and the citizens of the cities. When comparing face-to-face public communication services with digital public services in terms of citizen satisfaction, there are differences in experiences and perceptions. Electronic public services, also called e-government services, offer accessibility, convenience and efficiency through social platforms (Bernhard et al., 2018). With the help of social platforms, citizens can quickly access, regardless of their location, the information transmitted, and this leads to increased citizen satisfaction regarding the reduction of search time. Moreover, social platforms allow for quick

responses to problems identified by citizens, simplifying the communication process used before the pandemic (Prasad Lamsal et al., 2022).

Citizen satisfaction with a traditional public service depends on factors such as the time dedicated by civil servants to citizens, the competencies and qualifications of civil servants (Nguyen, 2010). Moreover, other factors have been identified that influence citizen satisfaction, such as reliability, integrity and the individualised approach of civil servants to the interests of each citizen.

Currently, citizen interactions with public administrations can be achieved through platforms, due to the successful implementation of the e-government process in the public sector, so citizen satisfaction is also influenced by the level of interactivity offered by new technologies (Elnaghi et al., 2019). Citizens prefer to use e-government services when they are governed by ethical principles, actively combat corruption and prioritise the protection of personal data. Moreover, the efficiency of interaction with public administration is quantified by the time in which the public administration responds to user requests.

Another important factor in calculating citizens' satisfaction with the provision of public services in the online environment is its functionality and ease of use of the content (Yuen et al., 2010). The functionality and ease of use of online platforms have a direct impact on citizens (Yang, 2018).

3. Methodology

To analyse cultural and creative cities, one should consider analysing the Cultural and Creative Cities Indicator (C3). This indicator is a composite one, which measures cultural and creative performance within 196 cities from 29 European countries. The quantitative information is gathered in 29 indicators, relevant to 9 dimensions, which make up 3 main components, namely cultural vibrancy, creative economy, and enabling environment, according to Table 1.

Table 1. Cultural and Creative Cities Index (C3) components

C3 Index – Cultural and Creative Cities Index	**D1. Cultural Vibrancy** **D2. Creative Economy** **D3. Enabling Environment**	D1.1 Cultural Venues & Facilities D2.1 Creative & Knowledge-based Jobs D2.1 Creative & Knowledge-based Jobs D2.2 Intellectual Property & Innovation D2.3 New Jobs in Creative Sectors D3.1 Human Capital & Education D3.2 Openness, Tolerance & Trust D3.3 Local & International Connections D3.4 Quality of Governance

Source: designed by authors based on the information from the "Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor", 2023.

The C3 index is a useful tool for decision-makers to adopt different effective cultural strategies (Alberti et al., 2023). Based on this index, numerous studies on culture have been carried out.

For a more detailed analysis, cultural and creative cities were divided into clusters, depending on the number of inhabitants, according to Table 2.

Table 2. Classification of cities according to the number of inhabitants

Cluster name	Cluster XXL	Cluster XL	Cluster L	Cluster M	Cluster S
Population (inhabitants)	> 1 000 000	500 000 – 1 000 000	250 000 – 500 000	100 000 – 250 000	50 000 – 100 000

Source: designed by authors based on the information from the "Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor", 2023.

In line with the purpose of the article, regarding the development of communication media established by the mayors of cultural and creative cities in Romania, this article presents a multi-level approach (Molina-Azorín, 2020).

First, it was necessary to track the main social media channels that can help citizen users to easily access the information transmitted by the city halls of cultural and creative cities in Romania. In this research, cities Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara and Iași were selected, which are in cluster L. The fact that all the cities analysed are part of the same cluster indicates that they are similar in terms of the number of inhabitants, and this allows for a truthful comparative analysis. Secondary data, in the form of comments on posts on social media channels, were collected through Facebook, Instagram and TikTok channels to assess the general satisfaction of users with regard to the efficiency of local public services. This part allows the identification of the most important strengths and weaknesses that characterise local public administrations, as well as the identification of their opportunities and threats. To ensure greater generalisation of the results, the collected data were coded according to the nature of the event, namely a normal working day, a weekend day and a holiday were analysed (Moradi & Vagnoni, 2018).

In order to answer the research questions and to estimate the evolution of the online activities of the mayors of cultural and creative cities in Romania, several indicators must be analysed, such as: number of posts, number of comments, number of likes, number of shares. In accordance with the purpose of the article, the authors considered it necessary to analyse the main social networks that could help city citizens to reach messages of general interest more quickly. In this regard, the authors decided to use a set of touchpoints for which the following indicators were used: number of likes, comments, shares and likes on official social media accounts.

The final stage of the methodological approach consists of conducting a SWOT analysis, based on the comments of the social media posts, to highlight both the external perspective (threats and opportunities) and the internal perspective (strengths and weaknesses) that characterise the local public administrations. The SWOT analysis is suitable for using policy-making practices to define strategies and to implement measures to streamline and improve local public

administrations. This provides a practical contribution to the future decisions of local public administrations.

4. Results Interpretation

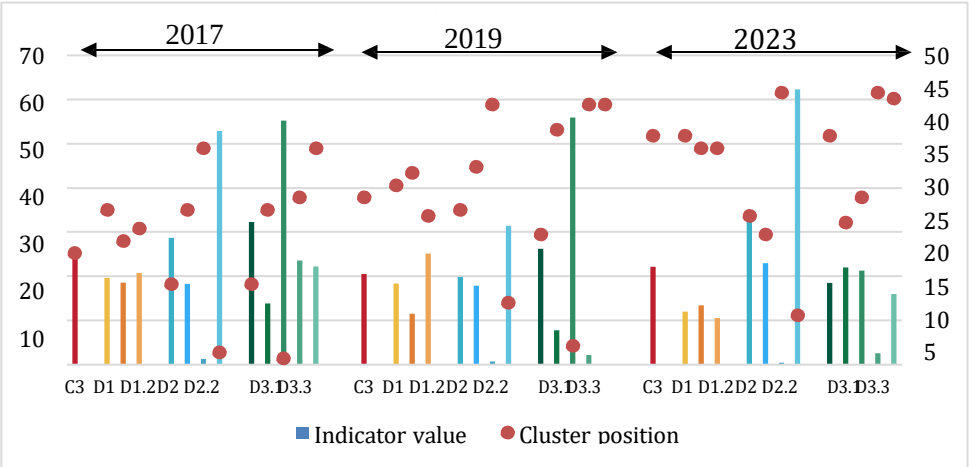
In this section, the main results from the cultural and creative cities in Romania, which have a population between 250,000 and 500,000 inhabitants, namely the cities of Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara and Iasi, are briefly presented. Each city is analysed from the point of view of the evolution of the cultural and creative index (C3 index), the component indicators, in the period 2017-2023 (the three editions of the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor). Moreover, the posts and comments on the main social networks of the mayors were analysed, following which the SWOT analysis was performed following the analysis of the comments, for each city.

4.1 Case Study Cluj-Napoca

The city of Cluj-Napoca is the second largest city in Romania, located in the North-West microregion and is part of the L cluster of cultural and creative cities. The city is placed in the second half of the C3 index hierarchy within the L cluster, due to the registration of the value of 22.17. This city is an important academic, business and cultural centre of Romania. Cluj- Napoca hosts a cultural diversity, as in the city there are Romanians, Germans, Hungarians, and Jews. In 2015, Cluj-Napoca was the European Youth Capital.

The following figure shows the evolution of the C3 index, indicators and sub-indicators of the city of Cluj-Napoca, within the three editions of the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor.

Figure 1. Comparative analysis of the C3 index and its components for the city of Cluj-Napoca, within the three editions of the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor



Source: processing of authors based on the information from the "Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor", 2017, 2019, 2023.

Regarding the evolution of the C3 index and the component indicators and sub-indicators, a decrease in the C3 index is observed in the period 2017-2019, which is followed by a slight increase in the period 2019-2023. Regarding the D1 indicator, a decreasing trend is observed in all three editions of the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor. The decreasing trend is also observed in the period 2017-2019 in the case of the D2 indicator, which subsequently experienced a slight improvement. Similar to the D1 indicator, a decrease is also observed in the case of the D3 indicator in the period 2017-2023. In the case of Sub-indicator D3.4, quality of governance, a subcomponent of indicator D3, a decrease is observed in the period 2017-2019, followed by an increase in the period 2019-2023, reaching 43rd place out of 44 cities within cluster L.

To better understand the concept and purpose of the communication strategy of the Cluj-Napoca City Hall, an analysis of posts and comments was conducted, which are presented in a SWOT analysis, with a focus on the number of likes and shares. The Cluj-Napoca City Hall has 43,004 followers on Facebook, 6,041 followers on Instagram and 14,108 followers on TikTok.

The following table shows the amount and type of data collected through social networks and then analysed to answer the research questions. The data was collected with reference to three different exogenous scenarios, representative of the most common types of days: a normal working day, a holiday, and a weekend day.

Table 3. Data collected through the social media platforms of the Cluj-Napoca city hall

Source	Nature	No. of records
Facebook	Posts	11
	Comments	207
	Likes	2099
	Shares	169
Instagram	Posts	4
	Comments	9
	Likes	811
	Shares	16
TikTok	Posts	2
	Comments	1
	Likes	33
	Shares	1

Source: processing of authors based on information from the social media networks of the Cluj-Napoca city hall.

The Facebook network is the most dominant social media network, both in terms of content volume and interactions. This social network is the most stable and diverse of all three social media networks analysed. The Instagram network has high potential, due to the high number of likes, but the activity on this social media network has not been sustained, as a small number of posts is observed.

The TikTok network has not been promoted sufficiently, as it has a low number of posts, likes, comments and shares.

After analysing the comments on social media posts, the following SWOT analysis was performed, presented below.

Table 4. SWOT Analysis based on smart communication comments/ Posts about Cluj-Napoca

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
- innovation through artificial intelligence - advanced digitalisation - use of technology - transparency through constant information	- poor management of complaints - lack of a communication strategy in crisis situations - lack of real dialogue
Opportunities	**Threats**
- creating a digital community - developing awareness and education campaigns - promoting the city internationally and nationally - strengthening dialogue with citizens	- cybersecurity - manipulation - disinformation - lack of legal compliance - loss of control over messages

Source: processing of authors based on comments on posts on social media networks of the Cluj-Napoca city hall.

The main strengths that characterise the communication of the Cluj-Napoca City Hall refer to innovation through artificial intelligence, advanced digitalisation, the use of technology for real-time information and transparency through constant information. The “Cluj Now” application provides notifications about works and events that affect traffic in the city, allowing citizens to be well informed. The Cluj-Napoca City Hall has introduced a virtual assistant, called “Antonia”, who is available non-stop with citizens, offering permanent support and directing their requests to the appropriate departments. Moreover, the Cluj-Napoca City Hall has implemented a program that allows over 300 administrative operations online, thus eliminating direct interaction with civil servants. Constant and transparent information is achieved through a monthly newsletter, which offers subscribers important information about topics of interest, city projects and the main upcoming events.

Regarding the weaknesses of online communication, the main arguments refer to the poor management of citizens' complaints, the lack of a communication strategy in crisis situations and the lack of real dialogue. The poor management of citizens' complaints consists in the fact that although citizens can submit various complaints online, these are registered but not resolved. In crisis situations, the Cluj-Napoca City Hall does not communicate on social networks in full about the case, and this can lead to a loss of trust in the institution and misinformation. Even if the city hall makes intensive use of social channels and networks, they are perceived as one-way dialogue tools, focused only on transmitting messages, without facilitating an authentic dialogue with the press or citizens.

The main opportunities for communication in the online environment of the Cluj-Napoca City Hall consist of creating a digital communiqué, developing awareness and educational campaigns, promoting the city at international and national levels and strengthening the dialogue with citizens. The creation of digital communities can be achieved on social media to support community projects by increasing online visibility, as well as local initiatives.

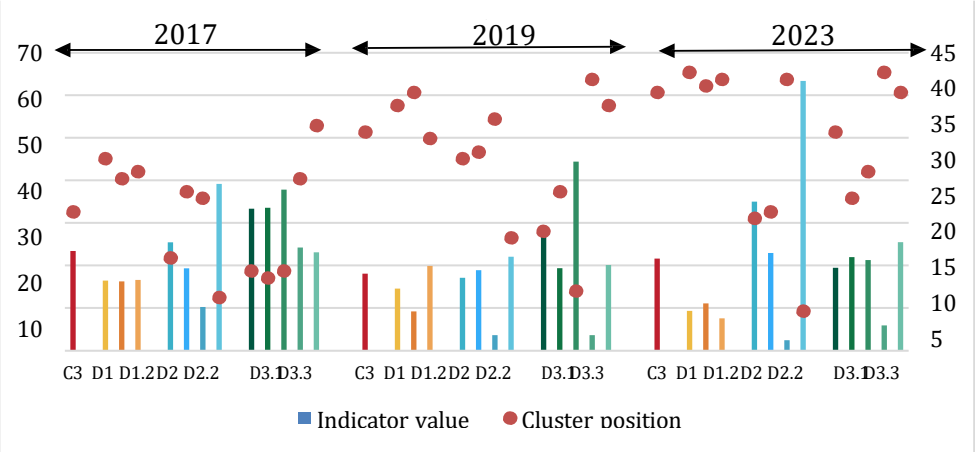
The Cluj-Napoca City Hall can use social media to launch thematic campaigns that promote health, road safety, as well as to explain administrative processes in an easy language. Social networks are important for promoting the city and its brand as a cultural and creative city, for positioning it as a regional leader in urban innovation, as well as for attracting investors and foreign tourists.

In terms of threats, cybersecurity is the main danger that citizens fear. Moreover, manipulation, disinformation, lack of legal compliance and loss of control over messages are other threats to communication between the city hall and the city's citizens on social media networks. The city hall's social media accounts can be compromised if they are not strongly protected, as well as the fact that false posts or comments can appear, which can create confusion among citizens. Failure to comply with data protection legislation can lead to sanctions if personal data is published without consent.

4.2 Case Study Timisoara

Timisoara is the second city in Romania to be part of the L cluster of cultural and creative cities. Timisoara is the main city in the west of the country, being an economic, cultural and social centre. The city is characterised by a multicultural atmosphere, as there is an influence of several cultures, such as Romanian culture, Serbian culture, German culture, and Austrian culture.

Figure 2. Comparative analysis of the C3 index and its components for the city of Timisoara, within the three editions of the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor



Source: designed by authors based on the information from the "Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor", 2017, 2019, 2023.

From the point of view of the C3 index, a decrease is observed in the period 2017-2019, which is then followed by an increase in the period 2019-2023, reaching 39th place out of 44 in 2023. From the point of view of the component indicators, namely D1, this indicator is on a downward trend throughout the analysed period. During the period 2017-2019, the indicator is decreasing, and during the period 2019-2023 a significant increase is observed, reaching 20th place within the hierarchy of cluster L. As for the D3 indicator, it is decreasing in the analysed period. The sub-indicator D34 is decreasing in the period 2017-2019, followed by a slight increase in the period 2019-2023.

To better understand the concept and purpose of the communication strategy of the Timisoara City Hall, an analysis of posts and comments was conducted, which are presented in a SWOT analysis, with a focus on the number of likes and shares. The Timisoara City Hall has over 29,417 followers on Facebook, 1,466 followers on Instagram and 4,457 followers on TikTok.

Table 5. Data collected through the social media platforms of the Timisoara City Hall

Source	Natura	No. of records
Facebook	Posts	5
	Comments	124
	Likes	1058
	Shares	51
Instagram	Posts	2
	Comments	0
	Likes	98
	Shares	0
TikTok	Posts	1
	Comments	13
	Likes	140
	Shares	7

Source: processing of authors based on information from the social media networks of the Timisoara city hall.

The Facebook social network is preferred in Timisoara, due to the interaction of the target audience. This interaction can be observed primarily in the number of likes on the analysed posts, but also in the number of comments and shares. We can see that the audience interacts constantly during the analysed period. The Instagram social network does not bring added value in its current form. We notice that there are few posts during the analysed period.

Moreover, the target audience did not leave comments on the posts, but reacted to them by likes. The TikTok social network is rarely used by the Timisoara city hall, since during the analysed period only one post was observed, which received quite a few comments. This social media network can be explored much more, since it can attract young people if it is posted frequently.

After analysing the comments on social media posts, the following SWOT analysis was performed, presented below.

Table 6. SWOT Analysis based on smart communication comments/ Posts about Timisoara

Strengths - promoting local activities and events - civic engagement campaigns - promoting the city's image - transparency and accessibility	**Weaknesses** - lack of timely responses to citizens' comments and questions - inconsistency in posting frequency - fragmented presentation of information - lack of targeting of messages
Opportunities - boosting civic participation - increasing public trust and transparency - rapidly managing emergency situations - building an active digital community	**Threats** - uninspired expressions or communication errors - misinformation or fake news - message overload and loss of public attention - public criticism

Source: processing of authors based on comments on posts on social media networks of the Timisoara city hall.

The main strengths that characterise the communication of the Timisoara City Hall refer to the promotion of local activities and events, civic involvement campaigns, promotion of the city's image, transparency and accessibility. Cultural and educational events, such as festivals taking place in the city, can be promoted on social media platforms, and in this way the city's residents will be better informed about their development and can actively get involved for a good development. Through civic involvement campaigns, such as volunteering, the city hall can promote various opportunities that encourage citizens to contribute or perceive an increase in the satisfaction level of the local community. The Timisoara City Hall can use social media networks to create a positive image of the city, by promoting cultural heritage, but also projects regarding modern development, such as innovations in technology. Through social media networks, citizens can ask questions and receive answers from local authorities, which contributes to better trust and greater transparency within local administration.

Regarding the weaknesses of online communication, the main arguments refer to the lack of quick responses to citizens' comments and questions, the inconsistency of the frequency of posts, the fragmented presentation of information and the lack of targeting of messages. City citizens who interact with the city hall's social media pages may be dissatisfied if they do not receive a quick response to their questions. In certain periods, activity on social media networks may be diminished, which may lead to an undesirable perception, respectively, of the fact that the city hall is not active on that social media network, which may lead to a

decrease in trust. The fragmented presentation of posts refers to the fact that important information may be distributed in several posts, which may create confusion for citizens, as they have to search for the desired information in several posts. Posts on social media networks are often generic, without considering the main groups of citizens (young people, seniors), and more targeted communication will help to understand the messages more clearly.

The main opportunities for communication in the online environment of the Timisoara City Hall consist in boosting civic participation, increasing public trust and transparency, rapidly managing emergency situations and building an active digital community. Social media platforms can become tools for public consultation, collecting feedback and participatory budgeting campaigns, especially among young people familiar with the online environment. Moreover, these platforms offer the opportunity to transmit in real time information on the development of projects and the spending of public money, which leads to increased public trust. On social media networks, real-time information can be transmitted on unforeseen events, such as floods, fires or traffic jams. Open, constant and empathetic communication on social media leads to the formation of an involved community, which feels listened to and encouraged to participate in the city's decisions.

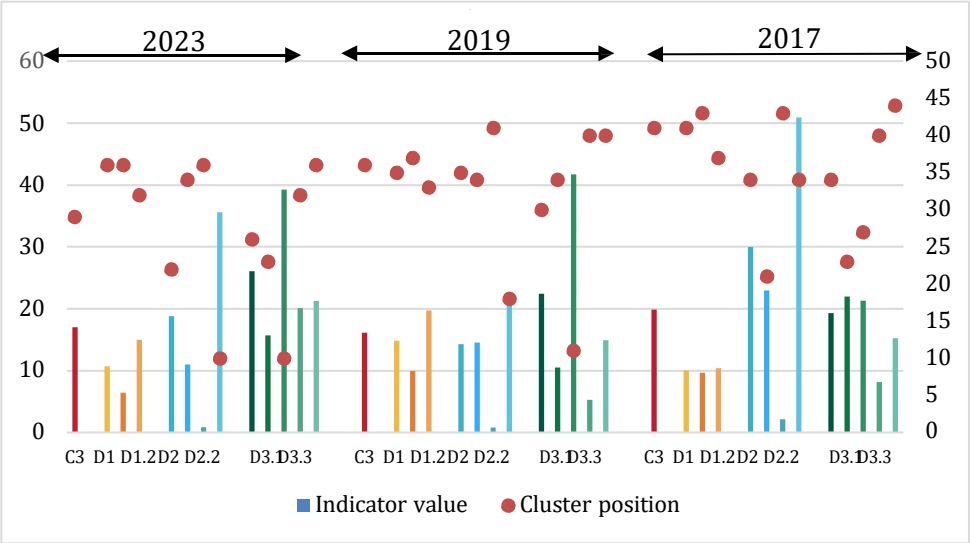
In terms of threats, uninspired expressions or communication errors, disinformation or fake news, message overload, loss of public attention and public criticism represent the main dangers of communication in the online environment. Ambiguous expressions and grammatical errors can damage the credibility of the messages transmitted, and information taken out of context or false information can affect the reputation of the local public administration, by losing notoriety. If the posts are too frequent or the content is too technical, citizens may ignore the messages transmitted. Social media networks are the place where citizens can express their dissatisfaction, and in the case of negative responses to comments, public opinion can become polarised.

4.3 Case Study Iasi

The city of Iasi is the third city in Romania to be in cluster L of the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor and is positioned in the second half of the hierarchy. This city is an important educational centre, being the largest city in the east of the country. Moreover, Iasi is an important commercial hub.

From the point of view of the evolution of the C3 index and the component indicators, it can be observed that in the period 2017-2019 the C3 index is in a slight decrease, followed by an increase in the period 2019-2023. In the period 2017-2019 an increase in the D1 and D2 indicator is observed, followed by a decrease in the period 2019-2023. The D3 indicator is on a downward trend in the period 2017-2023. From the point of view of the sub-indicator D34, it is in a decrease in the period 2017-2019, followed by a slight improvement in the period 2019-2023, when it ranked last.

Figure 3. Comparative analysis of the C3 index and its components for the city of Iasi, within the three editions of the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor



Source: designed by the authors based on the information from the "Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor", 2017, 2019, 2023.

To better understand the concept and purpose of the communication strategy of the Iasi City Hall, an analysis of posts and comments was conducted, which are presented in a SWOT analysis, with a focus on the number of likes and shares. The Iasi City Hall has over 74,634 followers on Facebook, 2,570 followers on Instagram and 1,164 followers on TikTok.

Table 7. Data collected through the social media platforms of the Iasi city hall

Source	Nature	No. of records
Facebook	Posts	9
	Comments	33
	Likes	365
	Shares	33
Instagram	Posts	5
	Comments	3
	Likes	66
	Shares	0
TikTok	Posts	1
	Comments	0
	Likes	6
	Shares	8

Source: processing of authors based on information from the social media networks of the Iasi city hall.

The social network Facebook is dominant, both in terms of the number of posts and the level of interaction. A stable rhythm of comments, shares and likes can be observed. The Instagram network shows modest results, as there is no effort to maintain an online presence within this network. The social network TikTok is superficially used, even though it has high potential among young people.

After analysing the comments on social media posts, the following SWOT analysis was performed, presented below.

Table 8. SWOT Analysis based on smart communication comments/ Posts about Iasi

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
- promotion of cultural and educational events - accessibility and transparency of information - promotion of sustainable development initiatives	- limited interaction with citizens - lack of a clear crisis management policy - lack of a communication strategy adapted to the digital environment
Opportunities	**Threats**
- accelerating the digitalisation of public services - increasing civic engagement - creating a digital community - promoting the image of the city as an academic and cultural hub	- overload with non-essential information lack of a clear crisis communication strategy - disinformation and online manipulation - human resources lacking digital skills

Source: processing of authors based on comments on posts on social media networks of the Iasi city hall.

The main strengths that characterise the communication of the Iasi city hall refer to the promotion of cultural and educational events, the accessibility and transparency of information, the promotion of sustainable development initiatives and the efficient use of visual materials. Due to the special cultural tradition of the city of Iasi, the city hall uses social media networks to promote cultural, educational and entertainment events that take place in the city. An important topic is the ability to provide real-time information about important public projects in the city, which is accessible to all citizens. Moreover, social networks can support projects regarding sustainable development, such as green public transport and renewable energy projects. Another important topic is represented by the efficient use of visual materials, such as infographics, photos or videos, which explain the city hall's initiatives.

Regarding the weaknesses of online communication, the main arguments refer to the limited interaction with citizens, the lack of a clear crisis management policy and the lack of a communication strategy adapted to the digital environment.

Communication on social networks seems to be predominantly one-way, with an emphasis on the transmission of information to the detriment of dialogue and the active involvement of citizens in the decision-making process. In the absence of a clear online crisis management policy, the city hall may encounter difficulties in addressing unforeseen situations from citizens. Although the Iasi city hall has an active presence on social networks, there is no clear communication strategy adapted to the specifics of the digital environment, which may lead to messages not adapted to the needs of citizens.

The main opportunities for communication in the online environment of the Iasi city hall consist in accelerating the digitalisation of public services, increasing civic involvement, creating a digital community and promoting the image of the city as an academic and cultural hub. Online communication can guide citizens towards social and digital platforms, which facilitate access to public services, and in this way reduce the bureaucracy of the public sector. Social networks can be used to encourage citizen participation in the decision-making process, by creating surveys and local public consultations. Through informative and educational content, the city hall can build a connected online community, interested in what is happening in the city. Due to the strong historical, cultural and educational identity, social media networks can become key tools for promoting cultural events that strengthen this image.

In terms of threats, overload with non-essential information, lack of a clear strategy for managing communication crises, disinformation, online manipulation and human resources that lack digital skills represent the main dangers of communication in the online environment. Irrelevant or frequent posts can lead to a decrease in people's attention. Lack of a structured action plan, the city hall can react incoherently, and this affects public trust. The rapid transmission of information taken out of context or false information negatively affects the trust of citizens. If the staff responsible for communication does not have digital training, specialised in social media, the management of online communities can suffer.

5. Conclusions

This article explored how the mayors of cultural and creative cities in Romania, which have a population between 250,000 and 500,000 inhabitants (cluster L) use social media platforms to communicate with citizens, with a focus on the impact, efficiency and strategic directions of this type of communication. The research presents in a comparative manner the communication strategy on social media networks, namely Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, of the cities of Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara and Iasi. Moreover, based on the comments on social networks, a SWOT analysis was carried out for the three cities analysed. The comments on social media posts reflect the dissatisfactions and wishes of citizens.

In terms of posts on the main social media networks, the Cluj-Napoca City Hall has the highest level of activity and interaction on Facebook. The Timisoara City Hall is active on Facebook, with a stable but reduced presence compared to the Cluj-Napoca City Hall. We note that the Iasi City Hall has an even lower

activity on Facebook, both in terms of the number of posts, comments and likes, but it has a high number of shares.

In all three cities analysed, it can be seen that Facebook is the most used network by the mayors, as they have the most posts. The Instagram network is underused by the three mayors of the cities analysed, but within the city hall of Cluj-Napoca a high interaction is observed compared to the number of posts. Within the TikTok network a low content is observed, but all three cities can benefit from a more active strategy.

The Cluj- Napoca City Hall is the overall leader in online presence, followed by the Timisoara City Hall, which has a more limited but constant activity, followed by the Iasi City Hall, which, although it has a reduced presence, can make up for the existing gap through well-targeted content.

One of the main limitations of this study is that this article is based on a limited number of messages/posts on social networks. Even though the data sample is not small in absolute terms (390 comments in total), in order to generalise the evidence obtained, additional evidence is needed to confirm the presented results. A future research direction could consist of a comparison with other European cultural and creative cities, from cluster L, using the same methodology.

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