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## SHARE OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION TOPICS IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION OF ROMANIAN UNIVERSITIES

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### Abstract

*Aim.* The current study explores the prevalence of physical education and sport topics among other topics. Sport education is important to society, and significant efforts have been made to find the best sport-related curriculum in schools and universities (Houlihan and Green, 2006). Among several benefits of sport and physical education, the positive impact on affective and cognitive development, social integration, and the formation of a healthy lifestyle are the most important (Bailey, 2006).

*Methods.* Using content analysis on websites and social media communication channels of universities.

*Results.* Facebook was the most popular channel (29 universities); YouTube and Instagram were widely used (25, respectively 23 universities); not all universities had active social media pages.

*Conclusions.* The preliminary findings suggest that sport and physical education have a modest share in the overall content disseminated by universities in social media, and that there is much room to improve the reputation of this field among students and stakeholders.

*Keywords:* social media, instagram, facebook, websites, universities

### Introduction

Sport education is important to society, and significant efforts have been made to find the best sport-related curriculum in schools and universities (Houlihan & Green, 2006). Among several benefits of sport and physical education, the positive impact on affective and cognitive development, social integration, and the formation of a healthy lifestyle are the most important (Bailey, 2006).

Recent studies (Gerdin & Pringle, 2017; Ratten & Jones, 2018) have emphasized that physical education is unable any more to achieve its aims, and new public policies should be developed. While shaping new perspectives on physical education development, social media communication is one of the strategic aspects that need to be solved.

### Objectives

The importance of physical education for the intellectual performance of students is generally underestimated. Some universities with a different profile that sport offer to students a diversified sport curriculum, while others consider physical education an extracurricular activity. On the other hand, the infrastructure needed for sport practice (adapted fields and halls for trainings and competitions, materials, equipment) vary very much from one university to another. Finally, the presentation of sport practice and physical education to students and stakeholders in general varies from unimportant to interesting. This last aspect is the focus of this paper. The objectives are to explore the rank and importance of sport practice topics in the social media communication of universities in the general list of topics presented in postings. In addition, a secondary objective is to evaluate how physical education is presented and which category of universities places more focus on this topic.

### Methods

- Quantitative content analysis and secondary data;
- To analyze the content of the posts from the Facebook pages, a research instrument was developed based on the scheme of 17 categories used by Peruta & Shields (2018):
  - Facebook and Instagram accounts of 30 Romanian universities with various profiles (9 comprehensive, 5 technical, 4 medical, 3 agronomy, 5 arts, 1 sports, and 3 other); both the accounts and the content of posts were analysed; data analysed: content posted during May, June and July 2022; a total of 3.572 Facebook posts and 926 Instagram posts were included in the analysis.

#### Research Questions

1. What is the rank of sport and physical education among other topics in the social media communication of universities?
2. For which category of universities (excluding the sport universities) is the sport topic presented as more important?

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### 3. How is the sport topic framed and presented in the social media postings of universities?

#### Results

Facebook was the most popular channel (29 universities); YouTube and Instagram were widely used (25, respectively 23 universities); not all universities had active social media pages.

Facebook: the most frequent categories of postings were: „Promotion”, „Academic events”, „Admissions”; only 3 universities had content related to "Student organizations", this being the least popular category.

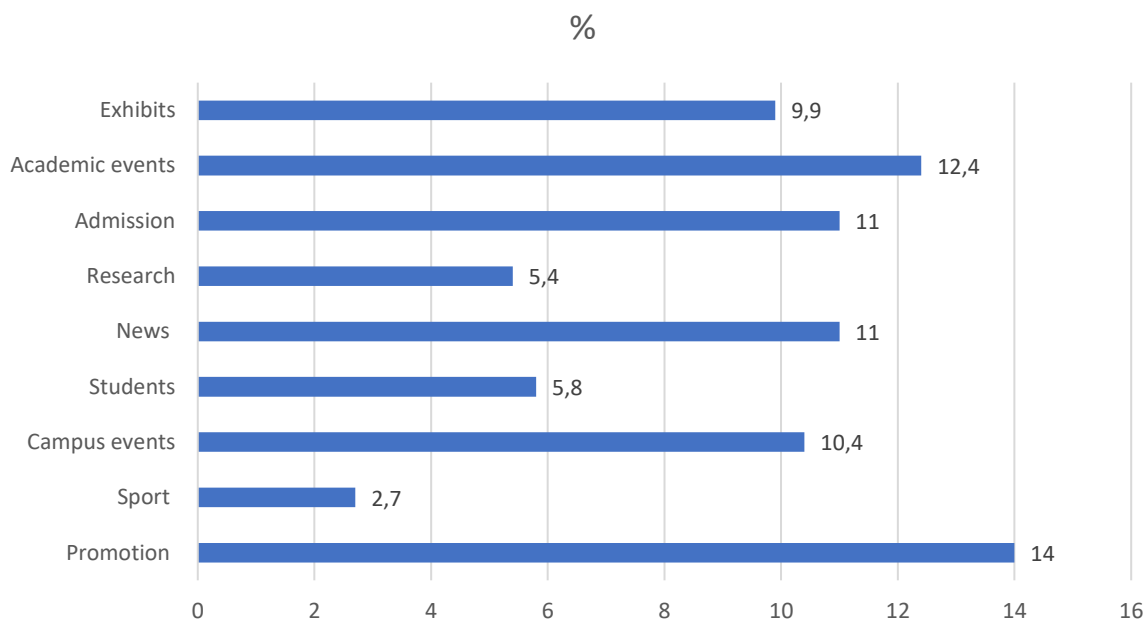


Figure 1. The most used categories of postings (average) on the Facebook pages of universities

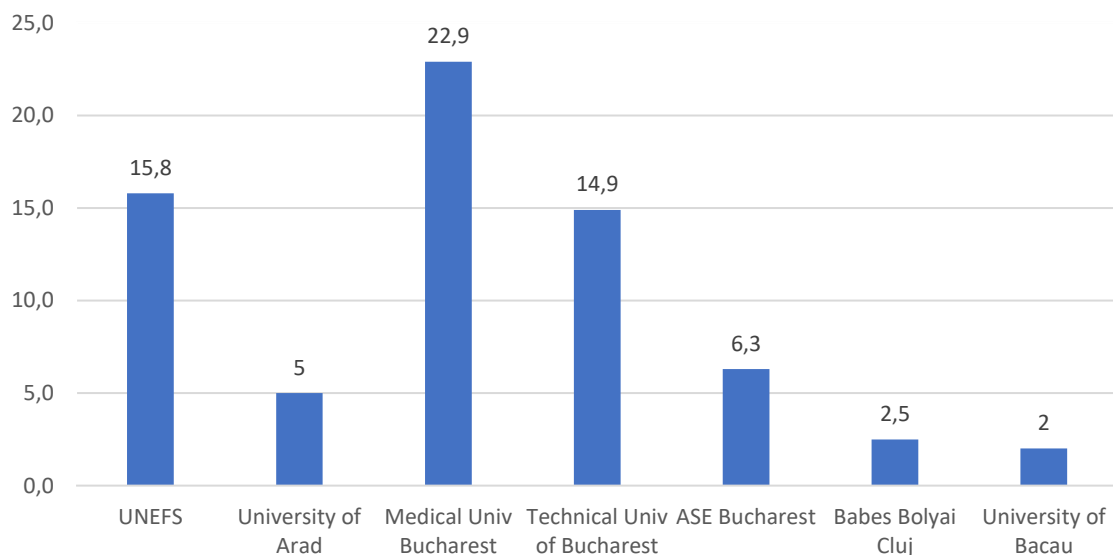


Figure 2. Facebook share of postings on the sport topic in the total topics for each university

Regarding the type of content, the postings on sport topics referred to competitions or results from sport competitions.

Instagram:

"Admission" posts prevailed, 3 universities allocating >50% of posts to this type: SNSPA (56.82%), University of Arad (66.67%), and University of Craiova (75%). The "Student organizations" type was the least represented (0 posts);

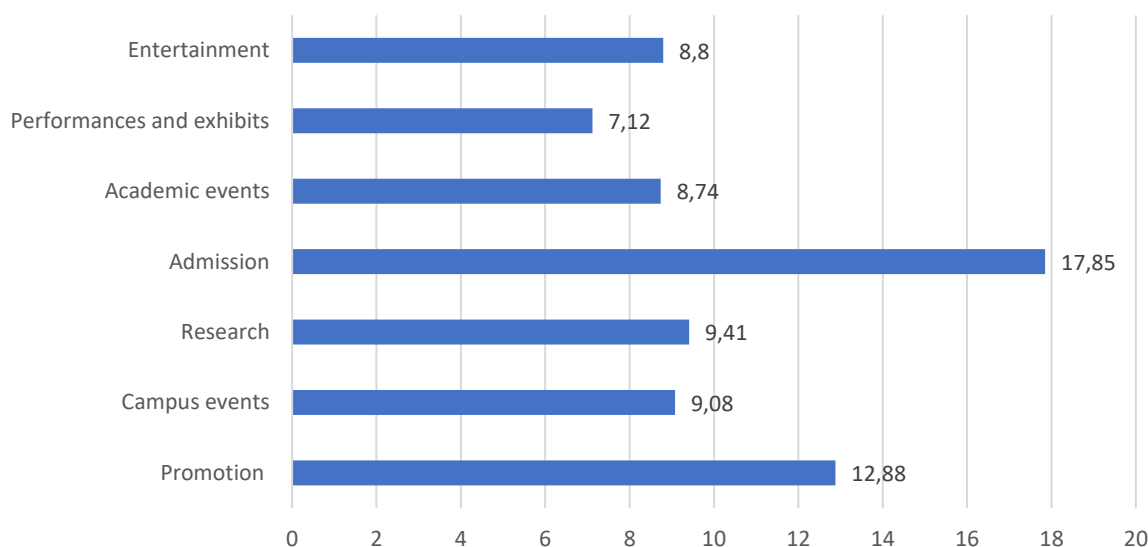


Figure 3. The most used categories of postings (average) on the Instagram pages of universities

Only the University of Medicine “Carol Davila” of Bucharest presented a share of 18.18% of the total postings on the sport and physical education topic. Also, the technical university “Gh. Asachi” Iasi and the University Dunarea de Jos of Galati presented a modest share of 3.3% and respectively 1.14 of the total postings.

Regarding the categories of universities, the art universities presented a total lack of sport topics on their social media channels, while the agronomy universities presented a very modest share of under 1% (average). At the same time, the universities of medicine presented an average share of 5.75%, while the technical universities presented an average share of almost 5%. The comprehensive universities presented a modest average share of less than 2% of the total postings. However, no homogeneous profile in this regard could not be identified for the universities. Thus, we cannot conclude that a specific category of universities was more focused on this topic in social media communication.

### Conclusions

The findings suggest that sport and physical education have a modest share of the overall content disseminated by universities in social media, and that there is much room to improve the reputation of this field among students and stakeholders.

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