

## ASPECTS REGARDING THE INFLUENCE OF MASS MEDIA ON THE HUMAN PSYCHIC SYSTEM OF THE YOUNG CONSUMER FROM A MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** *The current work aims to present the impact of mass media on young people's behaviour from the standpoint of marketing, beginning with an analysis of this impact treated in the specialized literature and continuing with a verification study on a specific group of students. The topics covered in this paper, meant to be the first in a series of deeper investigations into this area, focus on the elements that have an impact on the young consumer's mental system and mass media influence factors, and a study on specific impact elements like video games, smartphones, and social networks, particularly TikTok. The mass media component will focus on both content elements and mass media supports, from their well-established perspectives, such as: television, radio, print, electronic, and Internet media, social networks, telephony, and video games. The target audience for the study will be young people, with a focus on young students from a faculty of economic sciences. The research will attempt to capture the influential aspects of mass media that this audience prefers to access, including the Internet, the most popular social networks, mobile phones, and other commonly used devices.*

**Keywords:** *young consumer, psychic system, mass media, marketing, social media.*

**JEL Classification:** *M31.*

### 1. Introduction

This article aims to delineate the principal components of mass media's impact on the human psychological system of young people. Among the direct influencing factors on the mental system are difficulties in writing, reading, thinking, creative thinking, memory, attention, irascibility, passive attitude, attention, concentration, mental states, social frustration, mental tone, and school performance.

From the standpoint of the research, these categories of factors can be grouped according to particular goals such as: the impact of mass media on perceptions and attitudes (Bandura, Albert (2009), the influence of the mass media on social behaviors and values, respectively on self-image and self-esteem (Perloff, 2014; Jan et al., 2017), the influence of mass media on emotions and affective experiences (Barlett and Gentile, 2015), the influence of mass media on cognitive

and emotional states (Reid and Reid, 2007), the influence of mass media on social interactions and communication (Walther *et al.*, 2010). Numerous examples of how the mass media affects people's mental health can be found in the specialized literature. Among the components of mass media with a direct impact on psychological phenomena and processes, the Internet plays an increasingly important role in terms of influences on behaviour (Babutsidze *et al.*, 2023).

Social networks, as a component of the online environment, can have a profound effect on people's mental health in terms of addiction and overload, social comparison, emotional distress, online harassment and bullying, the spread of false information, and negative effects on sleep and physical well-being.

Numerous studies have examined the effects of social media in the context of marketing, emphasizing its critical role in shaping human behavior and the psychological system (Alsaleh *et al.*, 2019, Chahal *et al.*, 2020, Jamil *et al.*, 2022). Also, among the components of social media, studies have investigated the general influences of Facebook (Luarn *et al.*, 2015, Clark and Çallı, 2014), Twitter/X (Cerasi *et al.*, 2023), Instagram (Torregrosa *et al.*, 2023, Ramdani and Belgiawan, 2023), YouTube (Dehghani *et al.*, 2016), TikTok (Meng and Leung, 2021, Wahid *et al.*, 2023) on behaviors and mental processes.

## 2. Research Methodology and Results

The aim of the study is to examine, from a marketing perspective, how young people interact with mass media and how this influences their behavior. Based on a survey with a 30-question questionnaire, the current study is descriptive in nature. The target population subjected to the research consists of students of the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea. After administering the questionnaire to 101 respondents, the sample ultimately comprised 99 respondents. The demographic and psychographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1. The research aims to achieve the following goals:

O1: Exploring how youth engage with and perceive mass media interactions

O2: Analysis of some aspects of young people's Internet behavior

O3: Defining broad characteristics of youths' interactions with social media

**Table 1:** Demographic and psychographic characteristics of respondents

Variables		No. of respondents	%
Gender (n=99)	female	74	74,75%
	male	25	25,25%
Age groups (n=94)	<21	13	13,83%
	21	19	20,21%
	22	20	21,27%
	23	16	17,02%
	>23	26	27,67%
Residential environment (n=98)	urban	57	58,16%
	rural	41	41,84%
Temperament type (n=98)	choleric	27	27,55%
	phlegmatic	14	14,28%
	melancholic	27	27,55%

	sanguine	30	30,62%
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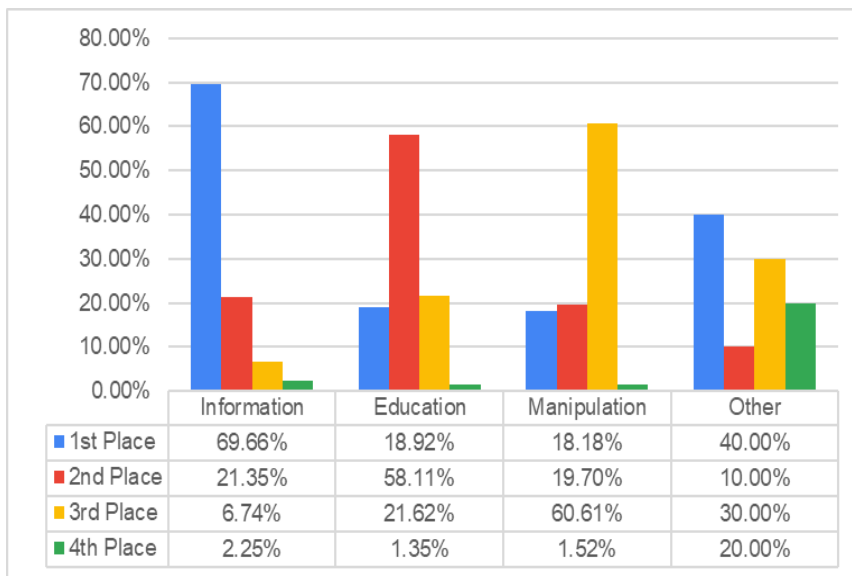
Source: Own research

O1: Exploring how youth engage with and perceive mass media interactions.

This objective seeks to explore how young people perceive the mass media's influence on them. To achieve the objective the questionnaire included four questions.

For the question "How much do you think the mass media influences your behaviour?", the score obtained is 3.18 on a 5-point scale, indicating that the perceived influence of the mass media is rather average. This result is consistent with the score of 2.83 obtained for the question "On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you rate the influence of mass media on yourself?", the variable was also measured on a 5-point scale.

In order to understand the influence of the mass media on young people, the respondents were asked to rank, in order of importance, the functions of the mass media in their activity (education, information, manipulation, other options). Using the rank order scaling, the resulting hierarchy indicated the information function in the first place (69.7% of the respondents placed the information function in the first place), the education function in the second position (58.11% of the respondents placed this function second), respectively manipulation appears third in the hierarchy (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Hierarchy of mass media functions.

Source: Own research.

The assessment of the usefulness of the information provided by the mass media indicated that 81.82% of the respondents appreciated this information as useful. We believe this value is consistent with the answer to the previous question, which valued information as the most important function of mass media among the three functions assessed in this study.

In the context of evaluating the usefulness of information found in mass media, we compared the respondents' perceptions of it according to gender (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Gender-based comparative analysis of mass media information usefulness

<b>Do you find the information provided by mass media sources useful?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Female	86.49%	13.51%
Male	68.00%	32.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81.82%</b>	<b>18.18%</b>

Source: Own research

Gender variations in the perception of information usefulness are noticeable at the sample level. Female respondents seem to appreciate the usefulness of information to a greater extent compared to male respondents. To be able to generalize the result at the level of the entire population targeted by the study, we used the t-test for difference in proportions that indicates a statistically significant difference between the two analyzed groups ( $P(F \leq f)$  one-tail 0.037, value which is less than 0.05). As a result, we can extrapolate the findings to the entire study population, with female students perceiving to a greater extent than male students that mass media information is useful.

The analysis of the mass media channels considered by young people as having the greatest influence on them (Table 3) indicates the following order: the Internet (40%), social media (39%), and only after them are ranked the traditional mass media channels (TV - 11%, press - 5%, and radio - 4%). We wanted to emphasize the influence of social media, so we decided to examine the Internet and social media separately.

**Table 3:** Which mass media channels influence you the most?

<b>Which mass media channels influence you the most?</b>	
Internet	40.40%
Social media	39.39%
Tv	11.11%
Press	5.05%
Radio	4.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Own research

#### O2: Analysis of some aspects of young people's Internet behavior

The results of the current study on aspects of young people's behavior on the Internet indicate the following:

- time spent on the Internet: the results of the study show that more than 70% of respondents spend more than two hours a day on the Internet. Of these, more than 28% spend more than 4 hours a day online (Table 4).
- the main reason the respondents access the Internet: Regarding the reasons why the respondents of the study access the Internet, we aimed to identify the main reasons (Table 5). Searching for information on the Internet is the main reason

for 44% of respondents. On the other hand, for 33% the main reason is to waste time.

**Table 4:** The time spent on the Internet during a day

<b>The time spent on the Internet during a day</b>	<b>% of total respondents</b>
under 30 minutes	2.04%
30 minutes - one hour	6.12%
one hour - two hours	19.39%
two hours - four hours	43.88%
more than 4 hours	28.57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Own research

**Table 5:** The main reason for accessing the Internet

<b>The main reason for accessing the Internet</b>	<b>% of total respondents</b>
to search for information	44.90%
to waste time	33.67%
to play	10.20%
for no particular reason	8.16%
for work	3.06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Own research

- study's objectives concern the addiction to Internet games or video games and the time spent on them. In terms of time spent on playing Internet and/or video games per day, more than 60% of respondents say they spend no time on these activities at all, and only about 13% spend more than two hours a day playing such games.
- regarding the degree of addiction to Internet games or video games, this variable was measured on a scale from 1 to 3, with variants from a low degree of addiction to a high degree of addiction. The score obtained is 1.25, which indicates that the respondents appreciate that they have a low degree of addiction to the Internet and/or video games. This result is in accordance with the value obtained in the previous question, according to which more than 60% of the respondents state that they do not play games on the Internet or video games.

### O3: Defining broad characteristics of youths' interactions with social media

An important objective of the research aims to examine some aspects related to the interaction of young people with social media. In this context, the following aspects were analyzed:

- the main device used to connect to social media (Table 6): the primary device used to access social media, according to nearly 90% of respondents, is a smartphone;

**Table 6:** The main device used to connect to social media

Main device used to connect to social media (N=99)	% of total respondents
Smartphone	89.90%
PC	5.05%
Laptop	5.05%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Own research

- social media addiction (as it is perceived by the respondents): According to respondents' perceptions, the degree of addiction to social media was 1.80, assessed on a three-point Likert scale. This value suggests that social media addiction is viewed as low to medium at the sample level (Table 7).

**Table 7:** The degree of addiction to social media

social media addiction (N=99)	% of total respondents
highly addicted	16.16%
moderately addicted	47.48%
low addicted	36.36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Own research

- the most searched topics in social media: regarding the most searched topics in social media, the results of the study show that the most frequently searched were those from the categories news (14 appearances), general information (13 appearances) and fashion (9 appearances) (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** The most searched topics in social media.

Source: Own research.

- the most accessed social networks: According to the results of the study, the top 3 most accessed networks are: Instagram (54% of respondents mentioned that Instagram is the social network they access most frequently), Facebook (32%) and TikTok (9%) (Table 8).

**Table 8:** The most accessed social networks

<b>The most accessed social networks (N=99)</b>	<b>% of total respondents</b>
Instagram	54.54%
Facebook	32.33%
TikTok	9.091%
Linkedin	2.02%
Pinterest	1.01%
Youtube	1.01%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Own research

Analyzing how the respondents refer to TikTok, the study shows that 42% of the respondents claim that they do not spend time on TikTok at all, and 13% spend approximately one hour a day on TikTok. This result is consistent with other findings related to the use of TikTok, namely: 58% of respondents say that the impact of using TikTok on them is rather negative, and in terms of the degree of addiction to TikTok, the score obtained on a scale of 5 levels is 2.14, which indicates that, on average, respondents rate that they are not addicted to using TikTok.

An aspect considered interesting to explore within the framework of this study is the evaluation of a possible relationship between the level of social media addiction and the temperament of the respondents, evaluated through the lens of how the respondents perceive these variables. The crosstab for the two variables was first created (Table 9).

**Table 9:** Cross Tabulation: Temperament type & How would you rate your time spent on social media in terms of addiction

<b>Temperament type</b>	<b>How would you rate your time spent on social media in terms of addiction? (N=98)</b>			
	<b>highly addicted</b>	<b>moderately addicted</b>	<b>low addicted</b>	<b>Total</b>
Choleric	3.70%	37.04%	<b>59.26%</b>	100.00%
Phlegmatic	21.43%	<b>42.86%</b>	35.71%	100.00%
Melancholic	<b>25.93%</b>	<b>55.56%</b>	18.52%	100.00%
Sanguine	16.67%	<b>50.00%</b>	33.33%	100.00%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16.33%</b>	<b>46.94%</b>	<b>36.73%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Own research

At the sample level, a possible correlation between the two variables could be observed. As shown in Table 8, a higher number of respondents with choleric

temperament rated themselves as having a low degree of social media addiction compared to the other temperament types. The chi-square test was used to examine the relationship between variables, but, at the level of the target population, we could not generalize this result ( $p=0.0677$ ,  $p$ -value greater than 0.05). So, we may conclude that, according to the current study, there was no significant relationship between the type of temperament and the addiction to social media.

## 5. In conclusion

The results of this study should be interpreted in the light of the fact that it was designed as a pilot project to open perspectives for further studies in the context of the topic addressed. The target population subjected to the research consists of students of the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea. According to this study, the students' perception of mass media influence on behavior is rated as moderate and a gender-based analysis shows female students perceive mass media information as more useful than male students. Regarding Internet behavior, it is worth mentioning that the main reasons for Internet usage are information search and time-wasting. Some interesting findings regarding students' Interactions with Social Media are: social media addiction is perceived by the students as low to moderate; the top 3 most accessed social networks are Instagram, Facebook, TikTok; and it seems there is no significant relationship found between temperament types and social media addiction. We appreciate that this type of research, meant to provide insights into young people's interactions with mass media in general, and social media in particular, can be a valuable resource for marketers interested in understanding the dynamics of young people's media engagement.

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