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Banking Communication Practices in Human Resources Recruitment through LinkedIn

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Abstract. *Recruitment communication represents a significant objective for companies operating within the banking sector, to this end, online social networks serving a pivotal role. Each medium has specific requirements in terms of corporate communication, requiring tailored messaging which aligns with the sender's objectives and target audience. In this article, we present an analysis of online corporate communication through the LinkedIn applied to the main banks in the Romanian market. Furthermore, we provide a detailed examination of the communication practices of two of these banks. The findings of the study indicate that several factors have contributed to the success of communication which employs LinkedIn: posts are published frequently, but on few occasions within the same day, thereby maintaining a constant presence; the published content does not frequently reference the product catalogue; appealing visual elements are employed with great frequency; posts have been observed to encourage interactivity.*

Keywords: recruitment communication, online promotion, Bank marketing, LinkedIn, Romanian banking market.

Introduction

Launched in 2003, later acquired by Microsoft in 2016, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network, available in over 200 countries and territories worldwide. Its activities are diversified, with revenues coming from member subscriptions, advertising sales, as well as from the recruitment tools offered (LinkedIn, 2024). In 2023, after 20 years of activity, LinkedIn reached 1 billion members (LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, 2024), over 4 million of those coming from Romania (LinkedIn Pressroom, 2024). In terms of age distribution, the 25-34 age bracket is the largest segment, accounting for over half the users, followed by the 18-24 age bracket (24.5%) and the 35-54 age bracket (21.2%). The smallest segment is the over 55 age bracket, accounting for 3.8% of users globally (Dixon, 2024).

Just as Facebook is the top social media platform for B2C marketers, LinkedIn ranks as the top preference for B2B marketers, being the first choice for 48% of professionals in January 2023 (Dencheva, 2024). By 2024, more than 67 million companies and organizations will have LinkedIn profiles (LinkedIn Pressroom, 2024).

Corporate communication is a promotional strategy by which companies intend to communicate information about their brand and convey messages (values, mission, vision, outlook on their business). Its purpose is to emphasize the strength of the company as a whole, rather than to promote particular products. Its main function is to generate and enhance trust among consumers, as well as in the business community (Tănăsescu, 2015, pp. 103-104). In the case of banking

DOI: 10.2478/picbe-2025-0328

institutions, the brand is of particular importance as it helps differentiate the offered services from those of the competitors (Soca, 2012, p. 204).

In that light, LinkedIn is not only useful for recruiting, but also helps in connecting with a wider B2B audience: its reputation as a platform for professionals lends credibility to any company using it. LinkedIn provide generous networking opportunities (groups, participating in discussions, contacting connections directly). If the company has a well done LinkedIn page that consistently posts valuable content can increase brand visibility, leading to attracting new clients and boost credibility in the eyes of potential partners. What's more, the vast array of information provided by users allows a level of targeting that ensures the right audience is reached with ease. Then, the likelihood increasing of generating qualified leads, improve the conversion rate of posts (Van Rensburg, 2024).

LinkedIn is a channel used by companies to share content that reflects organizational values, but research shows that these values can also be reflected through employee user profiles, where employees are seen as vital third-party supporters. From a strategic communications perspective, on LinkedIn, the secret to creating shareable content is to adopt the right tone and consider the needs of employees (Gustavsson & Steinbock, 2019).

LinkedIn leverage in online organizational communication -a literature review

The interest for online media in recruitment communication of services providers

When it comes to service providers, the following resources are essential to success: human resources, financial resources, company's organizational capabilities, geographical location, physical building, and technologies employed. Of those, the most important category is that of human resources, due to its decisive role in the process of creation and delivery of services, which ultimately determines their quality (Nicolau, 2019, p. 29).

Banks are service providers, which mean their products are not only immaterial, but they are also created at the same time they are being delivered. These characteristics that distinguish them from product marketing transform the supplier from a mere employee of the bank into a tangible component of the service provided. Dissatisfied employees are easy to spot, and their dissatisfaction can reduce the perceived service quality. It is therefore essential that staff is seen and treated as internal customer of the company. This is why some service providers argue that their first priority is the satisfaction of their own employees, thus motivating them in delivering quality services and satisfying the company's external customers (Adam, 2011, pp. 25-27).

A 2016 study conducted by LinkedIn found that a US company with a bad employer reputation must provide salaries 10% higher than competitors which enjoy a good reputation in order to be able to hire for any open positions in the organization. Half of the respondents reported they would turn down an offer if there were questions regarding the job security, the quality of leaders, or the operability of teams (Burgess, 2016).

In his book published in 2021, Șupeală argues that a deep concern with attracting, retaining and motivating staff will lead to increased profitability and is a mandatory concern for the stability and continued growth of businesses. Consequently, he proposes the use of Employer Branding practices. This new field of academic research, less than 25 years in the making, representing a niche, multi- and interdisciplinary strategic activity, whose specific concepts, structures and paradigms are still being developed. According to Șupeală, "Employer branding is the ongoing execution of an employer reputation building strategy that positions the organization in the labor market through differentiation with the goal of attracting the best professionals and motivating them to achieve long-term performance within the organization" (Șupeală, 2021, p. 42, 46-47).

The brand identity thus created needs to be communicated to the target audience, taking into account not only potential employees, i.e. external audiences, but also existing ones. Internal communication campaigns usually focus on four main aspects: differentiation, affinity, satisfaction and loyalty. *Differentiation* involves the recognition of a distinct and superior position in relation to the organization's competitors. *Affinity* is about the pride of being part of a team, the feeling of belonging to a human group. *Satisfaction* is the fulfillment of one's own needs and desires which gives mental and emotional comfort. Last but not least, *loyalty* is the active and explicit desire to continue working for the company (Șupeală, 2021, pp. 47-48).

The most significant activities that belong to the sphere of communication with potential employees are recruitment-related practices. Recruitment is the most visible human resource management practice outside the organization, both among candidates and the general public, and its manifestations are often tangible. The main objectives of the recruitment process are to inform the target audience about available job opportunities, to generate enthusiasm for the open positions in order to motivate potential candidates to apply, and to project a favorable image of the organization (Stegăroiu & Florea, 2013, pp. 64-65).

Online recruitment involves marketing and promotion efforts aimed at recruiting candidates through fast electronic means such as the internet, SMS, e-mail, etc. The main advantages of this channel include minimizing costs (both for the company and the candidates), streamlining the recruitment process, reaching a larger number of candidates (outside the usual time and geographical limits), as well as reaching those passive candidates who might be interested in online recruitment advertisements. Moreover, online recruitment can have a positive effect on staff retention - studies suggest that when candidates submit their CVs online by themselves, they are more likely to stay with the company for a longer period of time (compared to other recruitment channels) (Stegăroiu & Florea, 2013, p. 93, 110-111).

LinkedIn's use in raising brand awareness

Brand awareness makes people become brand ambassadors even if they are not customers. Good brand awareness has been shown to increase perceived brand value, reduce the cost of acquiring new customers and improve a company's overall financial situation. Raising awareness is a long-term strategy, but the effects are significant, particularly in times of economic instability (Timmerman, 2024).

Up to 95% of business customers do not plan to make any purchases most of the time. On average, businesses change their main bank or law firm every five years. As a result, most B2B companies' promotional efforts run up against potential customers who won't be making a purchase in the near future. Therefore, the main function of B2B communications is to build and refresh brand-relevant memories in the minds of potential customers (Dawes, 2024). Once again, we are faced with the importance of brand awareness.

One affordable way to maximize company awareness is to implement a content strategy. Due to all the reasons listed above, LinkedIn proves to be a valuable platform that can be used to this end (Timmerman, 2024).

LinkedIn support the brand awareness of the company in the context of the recruitment strategy by: presentation of news published in other media; posts signed by experts; presentation of the company's successes; organizing social responsibility events and recruiting staff for this purpose; generating traffic to the company's website and maintaining readers' interest by initiating a debate on topics of interest; involving employees in the online community and using them as brand ambassadors (Lipinska, 2019; Almeida & Duarte Santos, 2020).

As with any marketing activity, the first step in optimizing LinkedIn strategy is to set a goal, identify the target audience and tailor the content and tone to attract attention. Practitioners have advanced some opinions regarding the optimization of LinkedIn communication: the exploitation of all the features made available by the platform (LinkedIn data shows that full pages receive 30% more views per week); updating the cover image of the page at least twice a year; sharing valuable content consistently (by using eye-catching visuals - images, videos or infographics, sharing industry-related news and trends, engaging with content created by other users through comments and likes, and using hashtags) (Macready, 2024).

Audience response needs to be tracked and the strategy adapted accordingly over time. The platform provides tools not only for seeing at a glance how audience interacts with certain posts, but also to visualize the exact structure of your followers.

Since LinkedIn is use for employer brand building, one of the most compelling ways to show organizational culture is to harness the enthusiasm of existing employees. One tool to support employees in this endeavor is to facilitate the sharing of company-approved content with their networks. Businesses could also add a gallery of popular employee posts to their LinkedIn company page, using associated hashtags. Research by LinkedIn shows that employee networks have, on average, 10 times more connections than the number of followers of a company. In addition, employees' posts tend to receive twice as much engagement as their organization's pages. Furthermore, from a recruitment perspective, it is important to note that employees tend to have connections from their areas of expertise in their personal networks - when they decide to share available recruitment ads, they will reach a more targeted audience. That's why it's important that the company's personal employee profiles are included in the overall LinkedIn promotional vision. LinkedIn is akin to a digital networking event - as well as posting the own content, it's important to interact with others' posts. By replying to comments, congratulating colleagues on their achievements and showing support for job seekers, companies can build relationships with the community they are a part of, building a positive reputation over time (Macready, 2024).

Online communication overview of Romanian banks through LinkedIn

On LinkedIn, there are 20 profiles belonging to banks operating in Romania [Data collected on 31.03.2024. Names reproduced as they appear on each individual LinkedIn profile]. In descending order of *followers*, they are: *Banca Transilvania* (164,774 followers), *ING Romania* (114,265 followers), *BRD - Groupe Societe Generale* (92,761 followers), *Raiffeisen Bank Romania* (82,541 followers), *BCR* (78,266 followers), *UniCredit Bank Romania* (45,915 followers), *OTP Bank Romania* (42,763 followers), *Alpha Bank Romania* (35,493 followers), *Libra Internet Bank* (31,516 followers), *First Bank SA* (22,190 followers), *Garanti BBVA Romania* (21,073 followers), *CEC Bank* (18,002 followers), *Exim Banca Romaneasca* (14,952 followers), *CREDIT EUROPE BANK (ROMANIA) S.A.* (12,918 followers), *Patria Bank* (9,158 followers), *Salt Bank* (7,151 followers), *Intesa Sanpaolo Bank Romania* (5,462 followers), *ProCredit Bank Romania* (4,151 followers), *Vista Bank Romania* (2,313 followers), *TechVentures.Bank* (1,926 followers).

In order to study the Linkedin communication of Romanian banks we used *the content analysis method.* Out of the 20 profiles mentioned above, we chose to include in the sample the top five profiles (in descending order of the number of followers). The criteria followed in the analysis of the profiles were: color scheme, profile picture, profile banner, headline and profile description. Below are indicated only the synthetic finding of the content analysis that facilitate a comparison of LinkedIn profiles.

Banca Transilvania
Following the rebranding in 2016, BT decided to emphasize the bank's "nationality" and Romanian values by adopting a color palette of yellow, red and blue. It has kept the shield element in its logo - a warlike, medieval-influenced element, specific to the Transylvanian area and its historical evolution - symbolizing BT's fight for affirmation, while also evoking the sense of protection, important for a bank's customers. Its positioning is "Bank for Entrepreneurs" - according to the institution, 1 out of 3 Romanian entrepreneurs choose Banca Transilvania (Petrehuş, 2020). The three national colors can be found in the logo of Banca Transilvania, used as a *profile picture* and representing a shield placed on a white background. *The banner* uses the same palette, combining the colors in a creative and playful way and featuring yellow text on a black background with the message: "Do you know everything there is to know about money, or do you just think you do? (Find) the answer in Finance for Everyone. A fit BT initiative". We notice, therefore, that the cover photo promotes the national financial education program FIT launched by Banca Transilvania in November 2023. It is dedicated to children and young people aged between 7 and 20+ (Banca Transilvania, 2024a). *The* LinkedIn *headline* ("Everything starts and moves forward with respect for people and their aspirations. More than banking") reflects BT's values as a "bank of enterprising people" and evoking a welcoming, serious and accessible banking institution. The text in the profile is predominantly *in Romanian*, but also contains words taken from English. In the *description*, BT has chosen to elaborate on its vision of banking, arguing that it is not just about money, loans and deposits, but rather about people and trust. The partners mentioned come mainly from the world of sport, but events such as TIFF (Transilvania International Film Festival), Untold and Electric Castle are also listed.

Analyzing the elements of the profile, we can conclude that, on LinkedIn, Banca Transilvania's positioning strategy is to emphasize its quality as a Romanian bank, targeting, first and foremost, young people. The language and stile used evoke the idea of innovation and dynamism, while the communication has a more subtle promotional touch.

ING Romania
The ING Bank color palette used on LinkedIn is based around orange and white. *The profile picture* incorporates these colors, with the ING lion hatched in white, the background wearing the same orange color. Both the ING lion and its orange color evoke the institution's native homeland - the Netherlands - as national symbols (ING Bank, 2024). *The banner* depicts images of people enjoying nature, in dynamic poses and surrounded by flowers. Both the cover image and *the* headline convey a simple message: "do your thing". This tagline (used globally) is part of the brand direction launched in January 2020, which aims to articulate the bank's purpose of providing its customers with opportunities for growth in both their private and professional lives, facilitating the freedom to make their own decisions by offering smart, personalized experiences (ING Bank, 2020). The profile *description* is written in *English*, suggesting the international orientation of the company; it contains a brief description of the organization, a review of its history and reminds the main benefits provided to ING employees in Romania, as well as a link to the local ING Bank website. It features modern design and communication focused on promoting independence, expressing individuality and encouraging bold decisions. ING Bank's national origins are reflected not only in the institutional values adopted, but also in the characteristic visual elements - the orange lion being the most obvious example.

BRD – Groupe Société Générale

The BRD-SocGen color palette of red and black, enhanced by white, creates a striking visual impact. *The profile picture* is the company logo, consisting of a simple rendering of the company name in black, next to a half-black (bottom), half-red (top) square graphic element, joined by a small white space in between, with the background being entirely white. The effect is strong, the modern look suggesting stability, seriousness and professionalism.

The headline is missing, but *the banner* is the slogan of the new brand campaign: "Invest in new thoughts. Invest in yourself". The text is written in white against the background of the campaign's promotional image who comes from the new brand campaign, launched in early 2024, with the motto "Invest in the future". The message positions the company's offering beyond the immediate horizon of financial goals, delivering the prospect of personal achievement, regardless of age, arguing that the most important thing is that all our intentions follow the same "red thread" (Dorombach, 2024). The LinkedIn profile *description* is written in *English*, reviewing the history of the organization and its main achievements. The LinkedIn profile contains references to the institution's website, but no BRD-SocGen platform contains references to its LinkedIn page.

Raiffeisen Bank Romania

Raiffeisen Bank has chosen as its representative colors the combination of black (for text) and yellow (for background). *The profile photo* is the company logo used internationally and originates from the gables of country houses in Austria, where tradition says that for good luck, the two beams at the end of the roof must cross. The Raiffeisen symbol is a cross with horses because it is said that if the two beams are crowned with a horse's head each, the occupants of the house will be kept out of trouble (Raiffeisen Bank Romania, 2024). *The banner* is a promotional image highlighting Raiffeisen's new approach - Banking 1:1. The slogan displayed on LinkedIn is: "Come let us build a financial plan designed with and for you". The actress representing the Raiffeisen Bank consultant wears the company's iconic yellow and presents the Smart Finance tablet to a client; the image create the impression of a relaxed, natural and friendly interaction between the bank and its customers. *The description* is written in *Romanian*, presenting the history of the group in Romania and the existing network. It also contains references to the institution's websites and telephone numbers. Moreover, the profile's *headline* is a simple link to the bank's main website, on which there is a reference back to the institution's LinkedIn profile.

BCR

The BCR palette includes blue and white. *The profile photo* is the company's logo, consisting of a simple rendering of the name "BCR" followed by the symbol of the Erste Group. The *banner* uses a photo of an interior, with a woman in the foreground with a dog, both wearing friendly expressions on their faces. The associated text, in white lettering, is the slogan of a promotional campaign which says: "Choose well for yourself (with George and) BCR limited edition". *The* headline is an urge to access BCR's financial education materials: "Learn more about Financial Intelligence: www.bcr.ro/inteligentafinanciara". *The description*, written in *Romanian,* reviews the company's most important achievements and catalogues its services. In addition to the link in the headline, the LinkedIn profile also contains the address of the institution's main website, the two platforms promoting each other.

Methodology of comparative analysis of LinkedIn communication

At the end of 2020, LinkedIn was hosting a head-to-head battle between several local banks, with ING Bank at the top of the leaderboard (around 70 thousand followers) and Banca Transilvania in second place (around 52 thousand followers). The other three banks in top 5 – then, as well as now – BCR, BRD-SocGen and Raiffeisen Bank had between 45 and 50 thousand followers at the time (Dinu, 2020).

ING Bank is the sixth largest bank in Romania in terms of number of customers, with more than 1.7 million Romanians as customers (Dinu, 2023). Following the expected consolidation of the banking industry in 2024, the bank is expected to remain in the top seven banks with a minimum market share of 10%, benchmark the bank is fast approaching. Romania's top seven banks by assets are forecast to account for around 90% of the entire banking market, with ING Bank competing with Raiffeisen Bank for the sixth and seventh places in the ranking (Dinu, 2024).

Compared to four years ago, by mid-2024 Banca Transilvania had tripled its number of followers (173 thousand) (Banca Transilvania, 2024b) This makes it the clear leader on LinkedIn, overtaking ING Bank by more than 56 thousand followers (ING Bank Romania, 2024).

Although ING Bank Romania has been surpassed, its profile page now has almost doubled its number of followers and is still the second most popular on this social network (Dinu, 2020; ING Bank Romania, 2024; Banca Transilvania, 2024b). This is a remarkable achievement, especially considering the fact that ING is a bank of average popularity in Romania.

On the basis of these considerations, we set out to analyze the activity on LinkedIn of the two main banks on the Romanian market, in terms of the popularity of their profiles on this network: Banca Transilvania ("BT" for short) and ING Bank Romania.

The research used the *structured observation method, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis* and falls into the category of exploratory studies. For each LinkedIn profile (BT and ING), two *observation sheets* were used (one for job vacancy postings and one for the regular posts) – four in total.

In terms of duration, we chose to look at content posted during a single calendar month, and for the observation period, we chose May 2024. Since LinkedIn does not show the exact time a post was made, we used a tool that can extract this information (available at https://ollie-boyd.github.io/Linkedin-post-timestamp-extractor/). Unfortunately, it only works for regular posts (those in the “Announcements” section). Therefore, we considered that the most optimal way to analyze the recruitment announcements (found in the “Jobs” section) is to collect the data at the end of the month (June 1, 2024). This is justified by the fact that we can deduce from the approximate dates of the ads that they were all created in May. The information presented in the “Community Profile” section was extracted from the “People” menu, also on the 1st of June, 2024 – we can assert that we have captured the result of one month of activity, but most likely the changes that occurred in such a short period of time are negligible.

The observation sheets for Banca Transilvania were constructed using data extracted from its LinkedIn page (https://www.linkedin.com/company/banca-transilvania/). One of the sheets recorded the recruitment advertisements posted on the bank's LinkedIn page (in the "Jobs" section) as they appeared on June 1, 2024, and the other observation sheet contains coded information about the job postings made between May 1 and May 31, 2024 (which can be viewed in the " Announcements " section).

The observation sheets for ING Bank Romania were constructed using data extracted from its LinkedIn page (https://www.linkedin.com/company/ing-romania/). One of the sheets recorded the recruitment advertisements posted on the bank's LinkedIn page (in the "Jobs" section) as they appeared on June 1, 2024, and the other one coded information about the postings made between May 1 and May 31, 2024 (in the "Announcements" section).

The observation sheets in the "Jobs" section had nine headings (items): advertisement title, job activity sector, advertisement date, job location, working model, working hours, level of experience required, number of applicants, language of advertisement. The "Announcements" observation sheets also contain nine headings: post type, date, topic, hashtag, number of likes, number of comments, number of shares, number of votes in a poll, and summary of the post.

In order to analyze the LinkedIn community profiles of both institutions, the data in the "People" sections were compared. These profiles were evaluated on June 1, 2024.

The objectives established as research questions and the hypotheses of the study were:

1st Objective: What are the main features of the banks communication on LinkedIn?

H1.1. Communication is based on constant posts (every few days).

H1.2. Banks announcements highlight their activities and success stories.

H1.3. Most posts are built on images.

H1.4. Banks posts rely on the experiences of employees.

2nd Objective: What type of posts have garnered the most engagement?

H2.1. Interactive banks 'posts are among the most popular.

3rd Objective: What practices should be improved in the banks' recruitment communication on LinkedIn?

H3.1. There are no major differences between the analyzed banks regarding communication practices on LinkedIn.

Research findings

Comparison of "Jobs" sections

A) *Number and frequency of posts:* Banca Transilvania's LinkedIn profile totaled 24 recruitment ads, grouped in the "Jobs" section - 4 had been posted four days before, 6 one week before, 5 two weeks before and the remaining 9 three weeks before. Of these, 7 were reposted ads. We observe an average of five ads posted each week, with the exception of the first week of May, when the number is roughly double the usual rate. ING Bank Romania's LinkedIn profile totaled 13 recruitment ads, grouped in the "Jobs" section – 2 had been posted two days before, 1 three days before, 1 five days before, 2 one week before, 4 two weeks before and the remaining 3 three weeks before. We can consider that in the month of May 2024, the institution posted 3-4 advertisements each week.

B) *Location of promoted posts:* Banca Transilvania posts offers for Bucharest (54.2%), and Cluj-Napoca (45.8%), but many of the headlines in the recruitment ads indicate a possibility of choice between the two cities. In case of ING Bank Romania the vast majority of job offers were in the Bucharest area (76.9%). The exceptions are the positions for managers available in Arad, Ploiești and Târgu Mureș (7.7% for each one).

C) *Working models and working hours:* All offers of Banca Transilvania were full-time, with the majority (91.7%) being hybrid. The ING Bank Romania offers were also all full-time and the working model was hybrid for almost all jobs (69.2%).

D) *Level of experience required:* The overwhelming majority of jobs posted by Banca Transilvania required medium-level experience (87.5%) and 12.5% were for associate-level positions. ING Bank Romania posted recruitment ads for trainees (7.7%), for beginners (7.7%), for associates (7.7%), for mid-level experience (38.5%) and for managers (38.5%).

DOI: 10.2478/picbe-2025-0328, pp. 4263-4281, ISSN 2558-9652 |
Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Business Excellence 2025

E) *Language utilized for posting:* Banca Transilvania used both languages – Romanian (58.3%), English (41.7%). ING Bank had 69.2% posts in English and 30.8% in Romanian.

F) *Activity sector indicated:* Banca Transilvania indicate as business sectors banking (21 ads), financial services (6 ads), IT services and IT consulting (4 ads), business consulting and services (3 ads), investment banking (2 ads), accounting (2 ads), telecommunications (2 ads), loan intermediaries (1 ad), computer and network security (1 ad) and legal services (1 ad). ING Bank Romania indicated the bank sector for all its ads and also the sectors of consulting and business services (2 ads), one financial services (1 ad), and software development (1 ad).

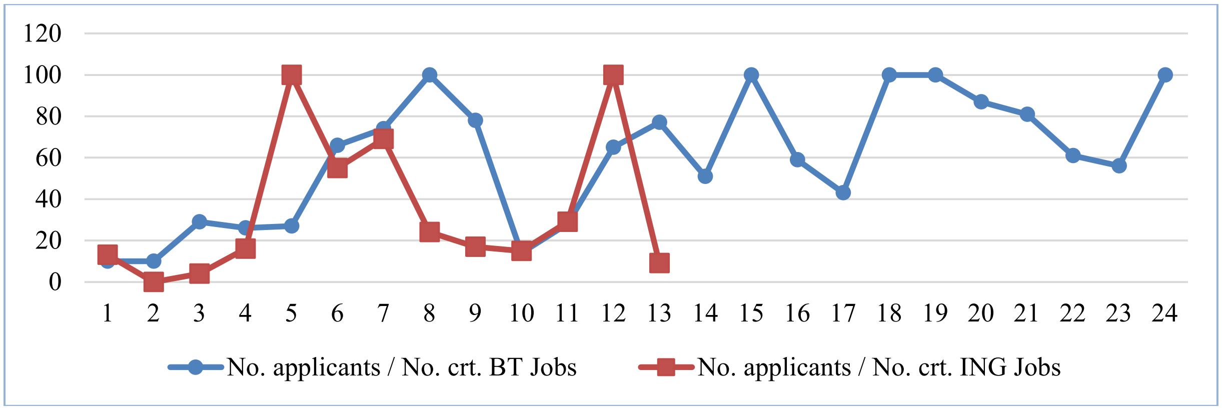

Fig.1. Number of applicants for jobs promoted on LinkedIn by Banca Transilvania and ING Bank Romania (as of June 2024)

Source: authors' analysis.

G) *Number of applications received:* Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the number of applications received and the time of posting. Note that in constructing the graph, advertisement no. 1 is the most recent one, while advertisements 13 and 24 are the ones that have been posted the longest by ING bank and Banca Transilvania (BT) respectively. Since the first 4-5 ads spent less than a week in the public eye, we can deduce that it takes about a week for potential employees to send in their applications. If we ignore the top five ads, considering that they still need time to attract attention, and we approximate the applications received by the most popular ads to 100, we deduce that the average number of applications received by a recruitment ad of Banca Transilvania on LinkedIn is 70.5 applications / recruitment ad.

H) *Most popular recruitment advertisements:* Banca Transilvania' ads that attracted the most interest (over 100 applications) were "Middleware Administrator (ReDHatSSO/Keycloak/IBM MQ) - (Bucuresti/Cluj-Napoca)", "Business Analyst Financial Analysis (Bucuresti or Cluj)", "Manual Testing and Business Support (Cluj-Napoca)", "Product research specialist (Cluj-Napoca)", "Corporate Loans Specialist".

In case of ING Bank Romania, The recruitment offers that attracted the most interest (over 100 applications) were "Office Manager @ING Bank" in Bucharest, a director position and "QA Engineer with Automation | Payments Area @ING Bank", also in Bucharest, a position for medium level experience. Next in terms of popularity are two mid-level experience positions, the first being "Sr. Digital Marketing Specialist | Daily Banking, Savings & Investments (Retail)", followed closely by "DevOps Engineer | Wholesale Banking & Generic Services @ING Bank". In comparison, the remaining advertisements had moderate to low success. The phenomenon can be partly explained by the fact that potential employees had not yet had sufficient time to apply, by the location outside the capital, by the need for advanced skills or by the disadvantageous offer of a temporary contract.

Comparison of "Announcements" sections

A) *Number and frequency of posts:* Between May 1 and May 31, 2024, Banca Transilvania had 42 LinkedIn posts (can be viewed in the "Announcements" section). These were made during 20 separate days, with an average of 2.1 posts per day of activity. The day with the most individual posts was May 17, totaling five different announcements. In the same period, ING Bank Romania had 38 LinkedIn posts (can be viewed in the "Announcements" section). These were made on 24 separate days - averaging 1.6 posts per active day. On most active days, one or two posts were made - with the exception of May 24, when three announcements were posted. But there is a good reason for this – the date marked the start of the campaign celebrating 30 years of ING Bank in Romania.

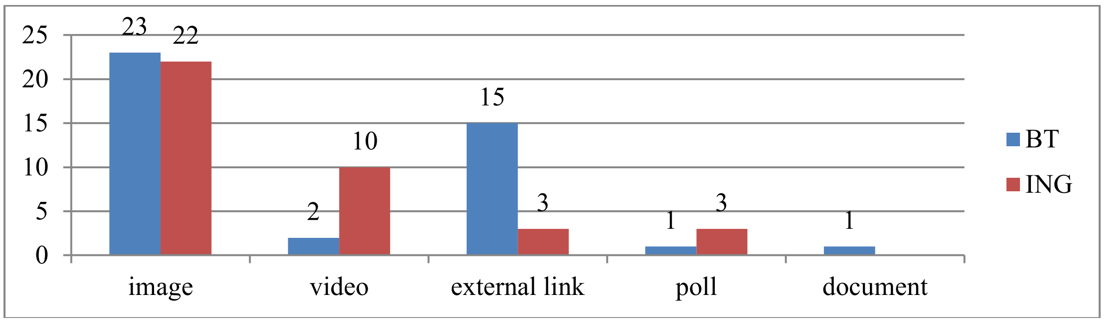

Fig. 2. Posts type: BT versus ING (no.)

Source: authors' analysis.

B) *Type of posts:* In structure, Banca Transilvania' posts were based on images (54.8% of the total) links to external sources (35.7%) video media (4.8%), LinkedIn document (2.4%), and survey (2.4%). ING Bank Romania preferred, like BT, to use posts built around an image (57.9%), but the second place is occupied by those using videos (26.3%), followed by polls and external links (7.9% each one) (figure 2).

C) *Topics covered:* Almost all of Banca Transilvania's posts talked about the institution's sponsorships and partnerships (RAD Art Fair, U-Banca Transilvania basketball team, Via Transilvanica, the "10 km doctor" charity run, etc.), its product catalog (BT Mic, BT Pay, BT Go, etc.) or the company's awards and achievements (recent business results, awards received by the company). There were 2-3 ads addressing the subject of articles published in the press or financial education, but Easter celebrations were not mentioned. The direct promotion of the catalogue of services is often subtle (e.g. BT's agricultural funding, in the promotion of which the emphasis is more on support for farmers), but frequent and constant.

ING Bank Romania directly promoted its *product catalog* four times. But the most frequently promoted topics were the various *programs sponsored by ING* (the mentoring program dedicated to women entrepreneurs "She's Next", the activities dedicated to the protected urban natural areas in Bucharest, etc.), *the bank's awards and achievements* (the institution's 30th anniversary was celebrated this month, being mentioned in 6 different posts - awards and achievements may be mentioned more often depending on the time of the year) and *financial education* (dedicated information campaigns, but also through the promotion of the InBusiness blog). Discussions about entrepreneurship permeated multiple posts, but the topic was largely monopolized by She's Next communications. Some employees were mentioned in award announcements. There were posts on the theme of national holidays, focusing on available vacation days and spending them together with loved ones.

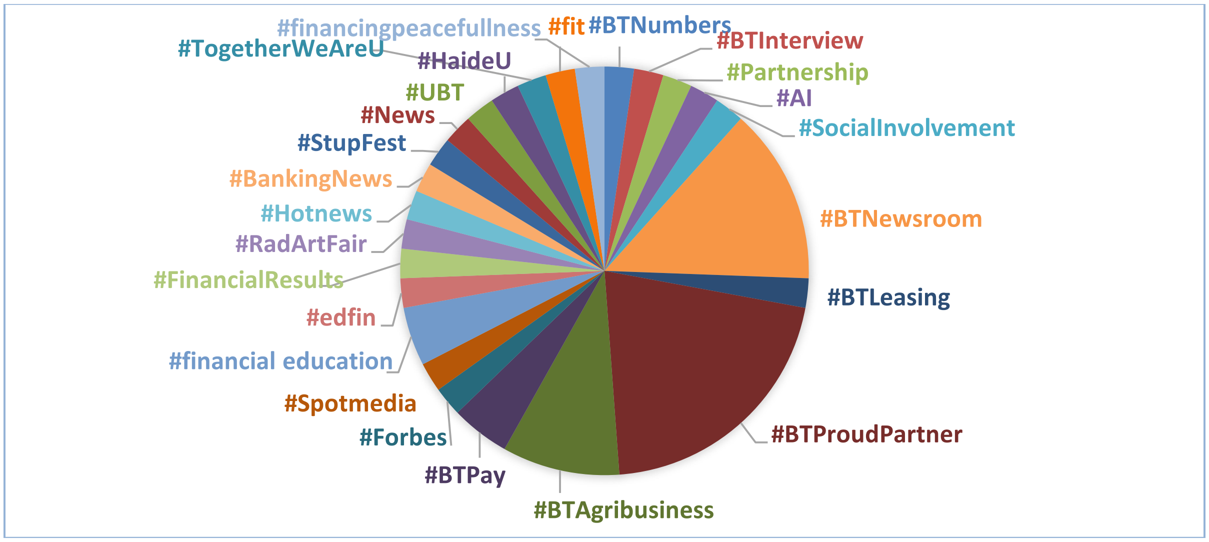

Fig. 3. Hashtags used in BT posts (no.)

Source: authors' analysis.

Note: In two cases the hashtag is actually #Agribusiness. It is unclear whether the choice is intentional, but we decided to calculate them together since the subject and post structure is generally the same.

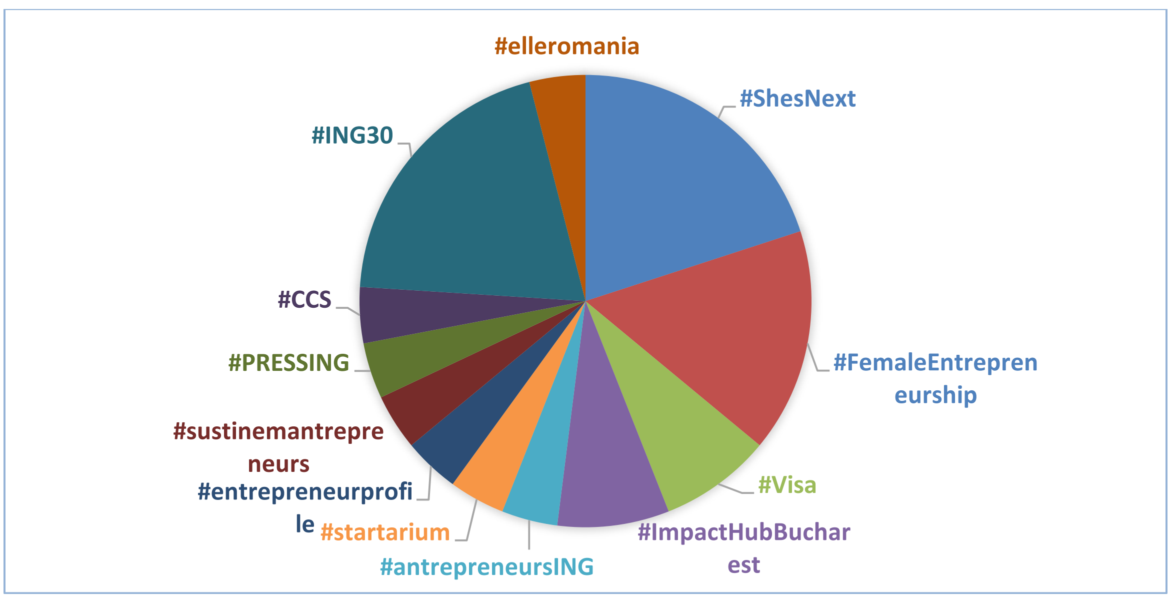

Fig. 4. Hashtags used in ING posts (no.)

Source: authors' analysis.

D) *Hashtags used:* Banca Transilvania use a wide variety of hashtags (figure 3): a total of 25 in a month - but 20 of these appear only once, two are used twice (namely #BTPay and #financialeducation), one 4 times (namely #BTAgribusiness), one 6 times (#BTNewsroom), the most popular being the hashtag #BTProudPartner, which is reused in 9 different posts. In total, hashtags were used 43 times. ING Bank used far fewer hashtags than Banca

Transilvania (12 in total), but those chosen were repeated more frequently. Tied, the most popular were #ShesNext and #ING30, each repeated 5 times, and closely followed by #AntretrepreneurshipFeminine, which is used 4 times. Two are used 2 times each (namely #Visa and #ImpactHubBucharest), with the rest appearing once (figure 4). In total, hashtags were used 25 times.

E) *Impact of posts:* On average, posts by Banca Transilvania received 65 likes, 1 comment and 2 shares in May 2024. The topic that aroused the most interest (number of comments) was BT's acquisition of the BRD Pensii fund. The most liked post is a press article talking about the implementation of AI technology in BT; it is also the second most shared post. The third most popular topic covered was BT's ranking third in the Brand Finance Romania 50 (third in terms of shares). ING Bank's posts received on average, 79 likes, 2 comments and 3 shares, but few were out of the norm. In terms of likes and shares, the most popular topics were the inclusion of ING Bank in a top 10 most desirable employers in Romania and the commercial that kicked off the celebration of ING's 30th anniversary in Romania. In terms of comments, two out of the three published polls prompted the most comments.

Community profile comparison

A) *Community size:* Consulting the "People" section of the LinkedIn page of Banca Transilvania, we notice that there were 6291 associate members, while for the LinkedIn ING Romania page, there were 1744 associate members.

B) *Community structure by geographical location.* It is difficult to determine the exact geographical location as the overlapping labels cannot be assessed using only the public data available on the website. However, based on information available, Banca Transilvania has the majority of members in Cluj (27%) and Bucharest (24%), followed by those from Brașov, Constanța, Bihor, Timiș, Iași and Suceava-Botoșani counties. The majority of ING Bank Romania community' members are in the Bucharest area (69%). The other important areas are: Ilfov County, very close to Bucharest, Iași, Prahova, Cluj, Timiș and Dolj counties.

C) *Community structure by occupation:* Nearly two-thirds of associate members of Banca Transilvania (58.5%) work in finance (966 members or 16.5%), sales (940 members or 16.1%), customer support (849 members or 14.5%) and information technology (668 members or 11.4%). The remainders have occupations in operations (7%), military and protective services (6.3%), administration (6.2%), business development (5.5%), engineering ((4.7%), accounting (4%), research (2.3%), law (1.7%), education (1.5%), human resources (1.1%) and consulting (1.1%). In case of ING Bank Romania community, the majority of associate members work in finance (16.7%), engineering (13.4%), customer support (11.7%), information technology (11.6%) and sales (9.7% of total). The remaining professions, representing around a third (36.9%) of the most popular ones, are in operations (6.3%), business development (5%), product management (4.9%), law (4%), administration (4%), accountancy (3.6%), military and protective services (3.3%), arts and design (2.1%), research (2%) and marketing (1.6%) (figure 5).

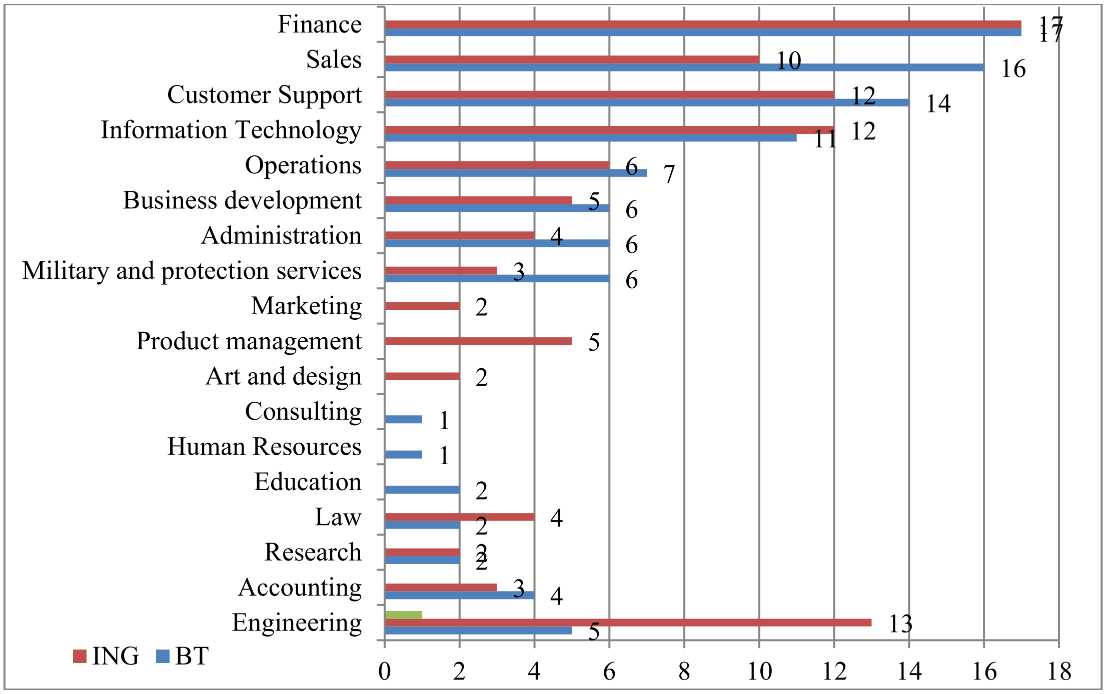

Fig. 5. Structure of LinkedIn communities by occupation (%)

Source: authors' analysis.

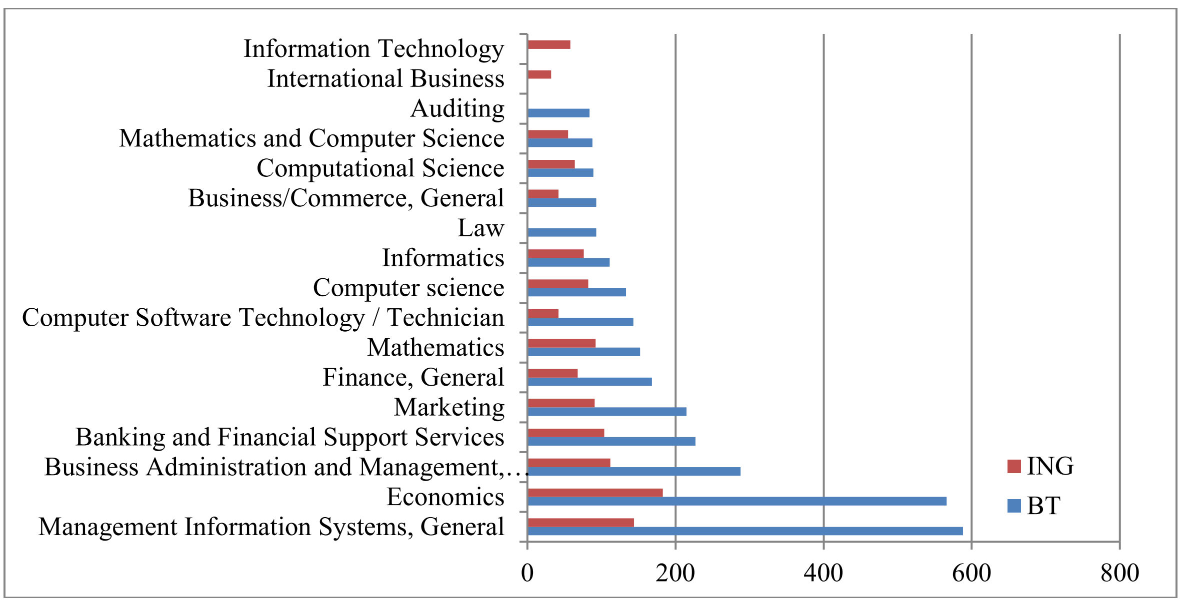

Fig. 6. Structure of LinkedIn communities by study programs (no. people)

Source: authors' analysis.

D) *Community structure by academic qualifications:* Nearly 40% of Banca Transilvania associate members studied information systems management (19.4%) or economics (18.6%). The remainder studied, business administration and management (9.5%), banking or financial services (7.5%), marketing (7.1%), finance (5.5%), mathematics (5%), software technology / engineering (4. 7%), information technology (4.4%), computer science (3.6%), law (3.1%), business (3.1%), computer science (2.9%), mathematics and computer science (2.9%) and accounting (2.8%). ING Bank members pursued the following degree programs: economics (14.7% of the total), information systems management (11.6%), business administration and management (9%), banking and financial support services (8.6%), mathematics (7.4%), marketing (7.3%), computer science (6.6%), computer science (6.1%), finance (5.5%), computer science (5.1%), information technology (4.7%), mathematics and computer science (4.4%), software technology / technician (3.4%), business / trade (3.4%), and international business (2.6%) (figure 6).[1]

E) *Community structure by university graduated:* The majority of BT LinkedIn associate members are graduates of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca (36.6%) or the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest (20.7%), followed by the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca (8.3%), the University of Bucharest (6.3%) and the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași (5.8%). These five universities provided the studies of more than two thirds of BT's associate members on LinkedIn, with the remaining one third coming from other institutions in Bucharest, Timişoara, Braşov and Constanța. The majority of ING Bank associate members graduated from the Academy of Economic Sciences in Bucharest (41.5%), the Polytechnic University of Bucharest (14.1%) and the University of Bucharest (13.7%). The remaining third (30.7% of the total) followed a variety of universities from Bucharest, Iași, Cluj-Napoca, Ploiești, Timişoara and Galați, as detailed in Figure 7.

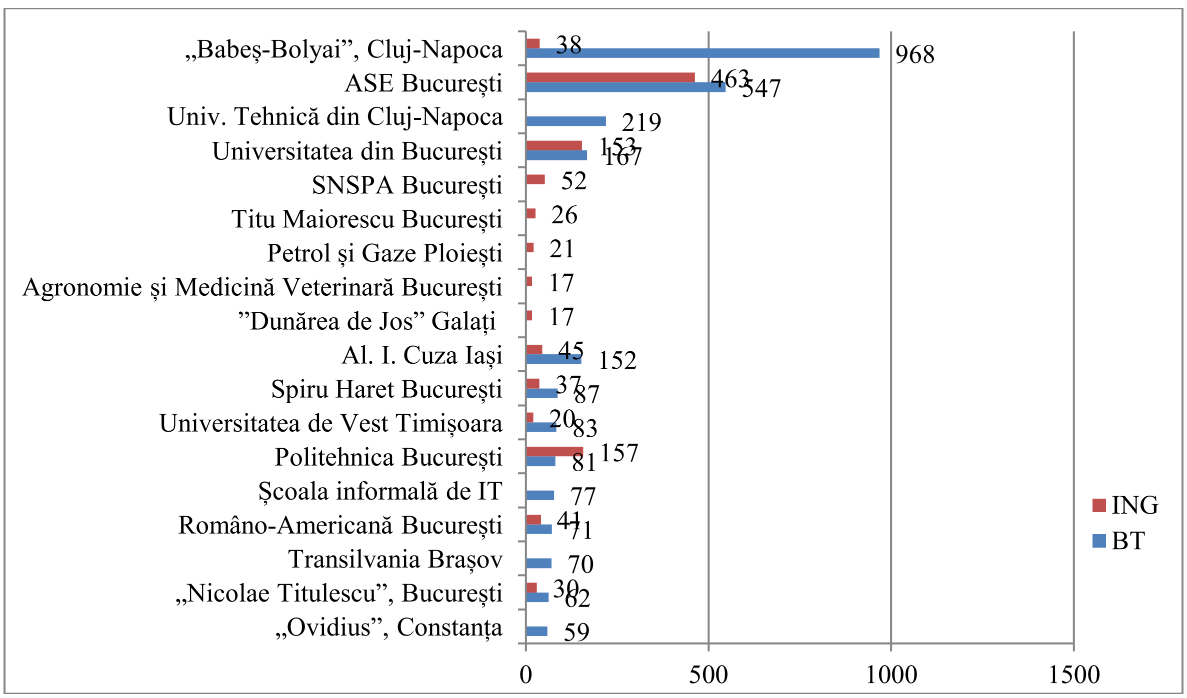

Fig. 7. Structure of LinkedIn communities by universities graduated (no. people)

Source: authors' analysis.

Results interpretation

Our analysis shows that *hypothesis H1.1.* is valid: in May 2024, both banks posted every few days consistently. However, we observe that Banca Transilvania takes a slightly longer break between

[1] On the LinkedIn website, even on the Romanian version, the names of the programs appear in English; the translations are approximations, as many of these programs do not exist or are not separate programs in Romania.

active days, and when it is active, it posts significantly more announcements in a single day (both in the case of recruitment announcements, as well as when it comes to regular posts). This trend seems even more pronounced in the case of recruitment ads - last week's ad posting data seems to indicate that BT posts all job vacancies on the same day, while ING Bank posts on multiple days of the same week.

Hypothesis H1.2. is also validated: most of the published posts talk about the activities and successes of the two banks, often mentioning the sponsorship campaigns carried out or the prizes won. The posts promoting the product catalog could fall into the category of activity carried out by the organization, being at least a related idea to the hypothesis. Financial literacy and holiday greetings are among the few topics covered that do not fall into the above categories.

Hypothesis H1.3. is also validated: more than half of the posts are built around an image medium (54.8% of all BT posts and 57.9% of ING Bank Romania posts). However, *hypothesis H1.4.* is not validated - employees are mentioned, but rarely and predominantly in the posts talking about awards obtained by the company. Employees' work experience is not brought up, except in the description of ING Bank, which reviews the typical benefits offered to bank employees.

We can state that *hypothesis H2.1* is valid. On average, the ING Bank audience interacts with the institution's posts more than the BT, although Banca Transilvania reaches more people due to its larger number of followers. It is possible that the tone used may influence these results (BT more formal, ING more playful). In general, BT "reports" news, while ING Bank directs questions to its audience. In addition, ING uses the survey much more often: two of the three ING surveys were in the top most popular posts. However, those celebrating the institutions' various awards or achievements tend to be more often among the favorites. But the culmination of great achievements happens occasionally, whereas engagement can be considered in LinkedIn communication on any topic.

In the last three years, Banca Transilvania has attracted more than one million Romanians, surpassing the 4 million mark and becoming the most popular bank in Romania (Dinu, 2023). With the acquisition of OTP Bank planned for 2024, the bank is expected to reach a market share of 25% in a relatively short time, some 10 percentage points ahead of its second-placed competitor (Dinu, 2024). It is difficult to determine how much of Banca Transilvania's LinkedIn evolution is due to its content strategy and how much is due to the company's overall growth. According to Banca Transilvania's marketing and communications director, a deciding element in the success of the organization's brand is its quality as a local brand. Speaking strictly from a marketing point of view, he mentions that some credit can also be given to the logic of the campaigns deployed - focused on trending media and tactically prepared a few days before launch, rather than going to traditional media with campaigns developed over long stretches of time (Matei, 2024).

ING Bank, on the other hand, is a medium-sized bank in the Romanian landscape. However, its LinkedIn profile has been very successful. And we can highlight a few best practices that it implements better than BT (*hypothesis H3.1.* being invalidated): posts are published more often, but fewer on the same day, maintaining a constant presence without becoming irritating; published content talks less often about the product catalog (4 posts about ING products vs. 14 posts about BT products); appealing visuals are used more often (84.2% of ING posts contain images or videos, compared to 62% of BT posts using images, videos or LinkedIn documents); last but not least, ING Bank posts tend to encourage more engagement through the use of questions (surveys are one such example, but not the only one).

Conclusion

With over 20 years of tradition and 1 billion members, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network and the preferred communication network in the B2B sector. But more than that, LinkedIn proposes a unique promotional environment, situated at the confluence between marketing communication and human resource management. Our paper focuses on banking recruitment communication through the LinkedIn. In theoretical discussion we have made a synthesis of the main advantages of this online network for recruitment communication in term of brand image and attracting valuable candidate for banking companies. From the point of view of the research method, we chose to implement the method of structured observation that allows recording the studied phenomenon exactly as it manifested itself. Combining the quantitative approach (recording in the observation sheets and quantification of items retained for analysis) with the qualitative approach (content analysis of each post to assign information according to the items) allowed the achievement of an exhaustive radiography of the communication made by the first two banks in Romania by the number of followers. It is thus possible to compare both the offer promoted by the two banks (as location, working hours, level of experience, activity sector), as well as the way they chose to present it (as frequency, type of information, mode of interaction), the interest of the public and the profile of the people who decide to be part of the community of LinkedIn members. Also, the use of this method offers banking practitioners an example of a tool to monitor and analyze their own communication in the LinkedIn,as well as some competitors, so that they can quckly integrate online communication trends in the sector.

The qualitative analysis of the profile of five Romanian banks shows a concern for communicating the origin of the institution (Banca Transilvania, ING and Raiffeisen have adopted a visual style that clearly emphasizes their identity as Romanian, Dutch and Austrian banks respectively) and targeting a certain public. BCR uses only Romanian, as does Raiffeisen Bank – both institutions seem to want to be closer to their audience in Romania. Banca Transilvania uses predominantly Romanian, occasionally punctuated by English words, thus combining its national identity with a modern, dynamic flair, suggesting innovation and aligning itself with youthful interests. BRD-SocGen has adopted the opposite strategy – predominantly using English, the banner is nevertheless written in Romanian. Thus, the geographical area of activity is immediately obvious, but the English text can also be easily consulted by potential foreign employees of the group. ING Bank has used only English in the wording of the profile components, providing easy access to potential foreign employees.

The practical contribution of the paper concern especially the communication techniques in the LinkedIn network that can increase the number of followers and strengthen the online community of the company, with application in the sector of banking institution. Among these techniques, we noticed that the use of visual elements is similar to both analyzed banks, emphasing images more than videos or infographics. Sharing industry-relevant news and trends is little applied, communication through hastags is not well articulated and resorting to posts by oneț s own employees is extremely fruitless. A a result, communication of the respective banks in the LinkedIn can be improved by: (a) Publishing posts on different days rather than multiple posts on the same day; (b) Repeating hashtags and inserting the bank's name in hashtags; (c) Diversifying content subjects in order to support community diversity or broaden the audience; (d) Adding posts about employees, their experience and achievements; (e) Ensuring balance between image, video and poll-based posts who are very useful in stimulating engagement; (f) Prioritizing posts about awards, distinctions, recognition of performance (e.g. Top 10 employers, Top Brand Finance Romania) because are highly appreciated by followers. Other posts that arouse interest are those regarding anniversaries, partnerships, mergers, as well as innovative actions (e.g. the use of new equipment or technologies).

These are proposals for the concrete application of the promotional techniques through LinkedIn in the case of banks, particularly of the analyzed ones.

The limits of our study are primarily given by the establishment of the research area only in the banking environment in Romania. Among the 20 Romanian banks existing on LinkedIn, only a quarter - the first five (in terms of number of followers) were included in the LinkedIn profile analysis and only the first two in the analysis of recruitment communication via LinkedIn. Also, the observation period was limited to one month, due to the large amount of information collected. Therefore, our research is an exploratory study that can be developed starting from the already recorded results. The continuation of the research would allow the expansion of the sample of Romanian banks studied for a more accurate picture of the way of communication on LinkedIn of this sector. Another direction of research is that of comparing the results obtained with the communication situation of the same banks at an international level, on markets with a profile similar to that of Romania or different. In addition, the research can be supplemented by an analysis of the public's perception of the banks' recruitment communication through the LinkedIn. Asking potential employees about the communication practices used by banks can provide banks practitioners with much wider feedback than the one resulting from interaction indicators on LinkedIn, including regarding relationship between LinkedIn posts and banks brand awareness, helping them to harmonize not only their techniques but also their communication strategy.

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