

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POSTS ON THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE FACEBOOK PLATFORM

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ABSTRACT

Under the influence of rapid technological development and the growing pressure of social media, the Romanian Army has changed its approach of interacting with civil society. The Ministry of National Defense has constantly adjusted its messages to respond not only to informational needs, but also to the objectives of creating and maintaining an active digital community. In this paper, we analyze the general characteristics of the posts on the Ministry of National Defense’s Facebook platform in 2024, using content analysis methods applied through the NVivo program. The ministry’s posts are sober, neutral, predominantly informative and contain substantial visual elements. They convey the image of a modern army, deeply involved in both NATO and the social life of the country. Through these characteristics, the posts correspond to institutional requirements regarding online communication, presence, and behavior in the public space in a labor market dominated by Generations X and Y. However, since its future recruits are part of Generations Z and Alpha, the Romanian Army will have to adjust its online communication strategies to address their needs and digital consumption habits.

KEYWORDS: content analysis, Facebook posts, the Ministry of National Defense

1. The Ministry of National Defense (MND) and the Facebook Platform

In order to successfully participate in NATO missions, following its accession to the alliance in 2004, Romania has transformed, adapted, and developed its structures and military capabilities so that it can ensure interoperability with international partners. A continuous digitalization process has also contributed to the modernization of the army, which aims, among other things, to improve the organizational processes involved in the preparation and conduct of

military actions, in accordance with the Military Strategy of Romania (MApN, 2021).

The transformations within the army are reflected in the way it communicates with society. Due to the impact of rapid technological development and the emergence of social media, the army has had to change the way it interacts with civil society.

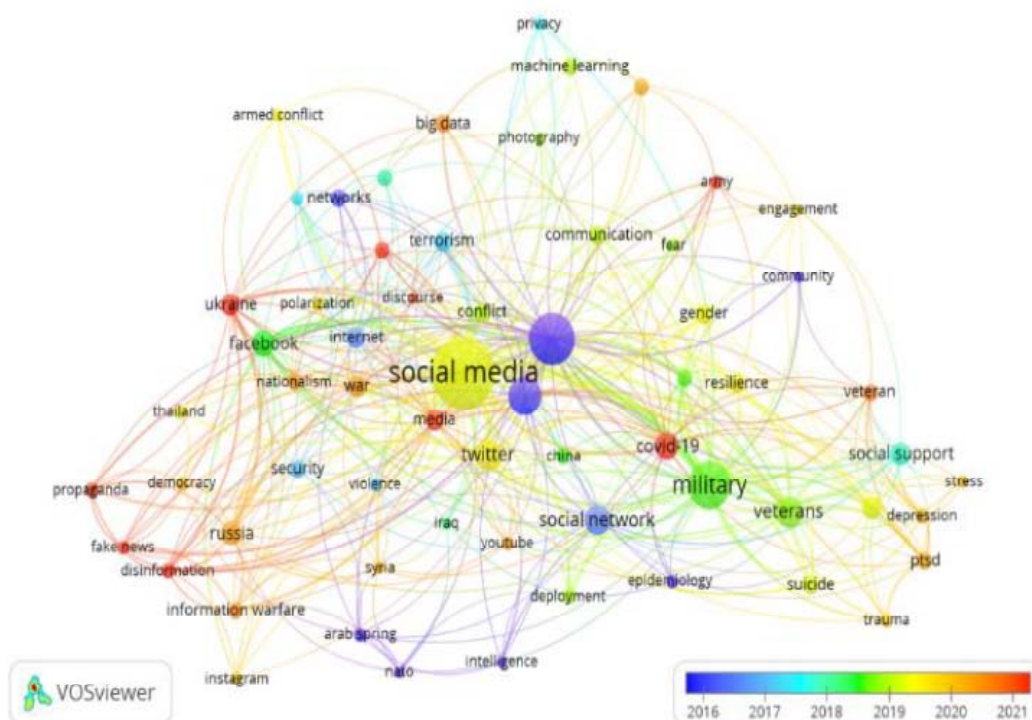
According to the document *Instructions on Information and Public Relations Activity in the Ministry of National Defense* (no. M.21/2020), “The information and public relations activity in

the Ministry of National Defense aims to establish, maintain, and develop relationships of trust between the military institution and Romanian society, to promote the goals and objectives of the military institution and to increase the level of information and understanding of issues associated with the field of defense". The Information and Public Relations Directorate (IPRD) within the Ministry of National Defense supports strategic communication (STRATCOM) through the use of modern channels, such as websites, social networks, publications, magazines, brochures, and online applications. IPRD plays an essential role in ensuring a continuous flow of information to the public, in a secure and controlled digital environment, while also contributing to the understanding of military issues and combating disinformation, in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission (Digital Services Act, 2023). These efforts are aligned with the objectives of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union to guarantee a safe and predictable online space, where the fundamental rights provided by the EU Charter are effectively protected, especially since the rapid advancement of communication technologies and the spectacular development of social networks have also resulted in the emergence of threats such as propaganda and disinformation, which influence the daily behavior of citizens and thus endanger the security of the country (Lupulescu, 2022). The risks are even greater for users located in areas of operations who, through inappropriate posts, may compromise information security (Danciu, 2024).

Nevertheless, following the analysis of the perception of 26 EU armies regarding the risks and opportunities associated with the use of social media platforms, Hellman, Olsson & Wagnsson (2016) found that *"perceptions of opportunities outweigh perceptions of risks, with marketing and*

two-way communication as the two most prominent opportunities offered by the use of social media. Also, armed forces in countries with a moderate to high ICT maturity emphasize social media as a good way for marketing purposes" (Hellman, Olsson & Wagnsson, 2016, p. 51).

The scientometric analysis conducted by Radzi, Abdullah, Ismail & Ghalib (2025) indicates a growing academic interest in social media as a critical tool in modern military operations from 2012 to 2024, with a significant increase in the number of articles published between 2020 and 2024, predominantly in WoS. Using VOSviewer, these authors generated a scientometric visualization of the relationships between prominent keywords utilized by authors who have studied the role of social media in various military contexts (Figure no. 1). They specify that in this scientometric visualization *"The size of the nodes corresponds to the frequency of each keyword, while the thickness of the connecting lines indicates the strength of their co-occurrence. Notably, central nodes such as 'Social media', 'military', and 'Twitter' emerge, underscoring their significant and frequent roles in research. The map reveals distinct clusters: 'Ukraine', 'Russia', and 'Facebook' are closely associated with terms like 'disinformation', 'propaganda', and 'information warfare', pointing to a substantial focus on geopolitical conflicts and their impact on social media. Another cluster, centered around 'veterans', 'social support', and 'PTSD', highlights the emphasis on mental health and community assistance within military contexts. Additionally, interconnected keywords such as 'COVID-19', 'resilience', and 'gender' suggest recent research trends that explore challenges related to the pandemic and gender issues within the military. The color spectrum, representing the temporal gradient from 2016 to 2021, demonstrates the evolving nature of these research topics over time"* (Radzi et al., 2025, pp. 113-114).



2. Research Design

The messages were subjected to content analysis, which was carried out in several stages:

2. Generating the main codes, measuring the frequency of their

3. Quantifying content elements (word frequency, hashtag frequency).

5. Integrating all information and drawing conclusions.

3. Results

In this stage, we carried out a systematic process of extracting relevant information from the chosen source. Specifically, we accessed the official Facebook page of the Ministry of National Defense (www.mapn.ro) and identified all posts published in 2024. We extracted the descriptive content from each post without including comments, reactions, or other forms of interaction. The collected texts were recorded into a Microsoft Word document. The collection process was manual.

The identification of keywords and the generation of the word cloud were carried out using the NVivo program. The word document with all the posts on the site was introduced into the program, the *stop*

The list of keywords and their frequency in the posts on the Facebook account in 2024 is presented in Table no. 1.



Figure no. 2: *The word cloud extracted by NVivo from the posts on the Ministry of National Defense's Facebook account in 2024*
(Source: Authors' own research – generated by NVivo)

The list of keywords and their frequency in the posts on the Facebook account of mapn.ro in 2024

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
NATO	254	History	37	Humanitarian	14
Training	227	Assets	35	Anniversary	13
Sports	215	Recruitment	28	Combating	13
Support	150	Cooperation	27	Celebration	12
Team	129	Sacrifice	27	Campaign	11
Students	120	Competition	26	Technology	9
Veterans	90	Hero	21	Performance	6
Military	76	Promotion	17	Disinformation	6
Security	68	Education	16	Woman	5
Career	50	Tradition	14		

This was done with the help of the AI assistant ChatGPT, which was asked to identify the main topics of the MND posts on Facebook in 2024. The suggested topics were the following:

1. International cooperation and strategic partnerships
2. Military training and tactical exercises
3. Military education and recruitment

4. Veterans, historical memory and gratitude
5. Technological modernization and military equipment
6. Civic involvement and community support
7. Sports and physical performance
8. National ceremonies and military identity
9. Public communication and military media

3.4. Generating Codes Based on Topics and Keywords

Based on the themes generated by ChatGPT and the word cloud generated by NVivo, a list of codes was established, and a coding scheme was developed. The established units of meaning were sentences. The next step was to code the content using NVivo. The previously

established codes were entered into the program, after which the posts in the word document were analyzed to identify the codes to be attached to each post. This course of action corresponds to *conceptual content analysis*.

The comparative representation of the codes together with their frequency in the posts can be found in Figure no. 3.

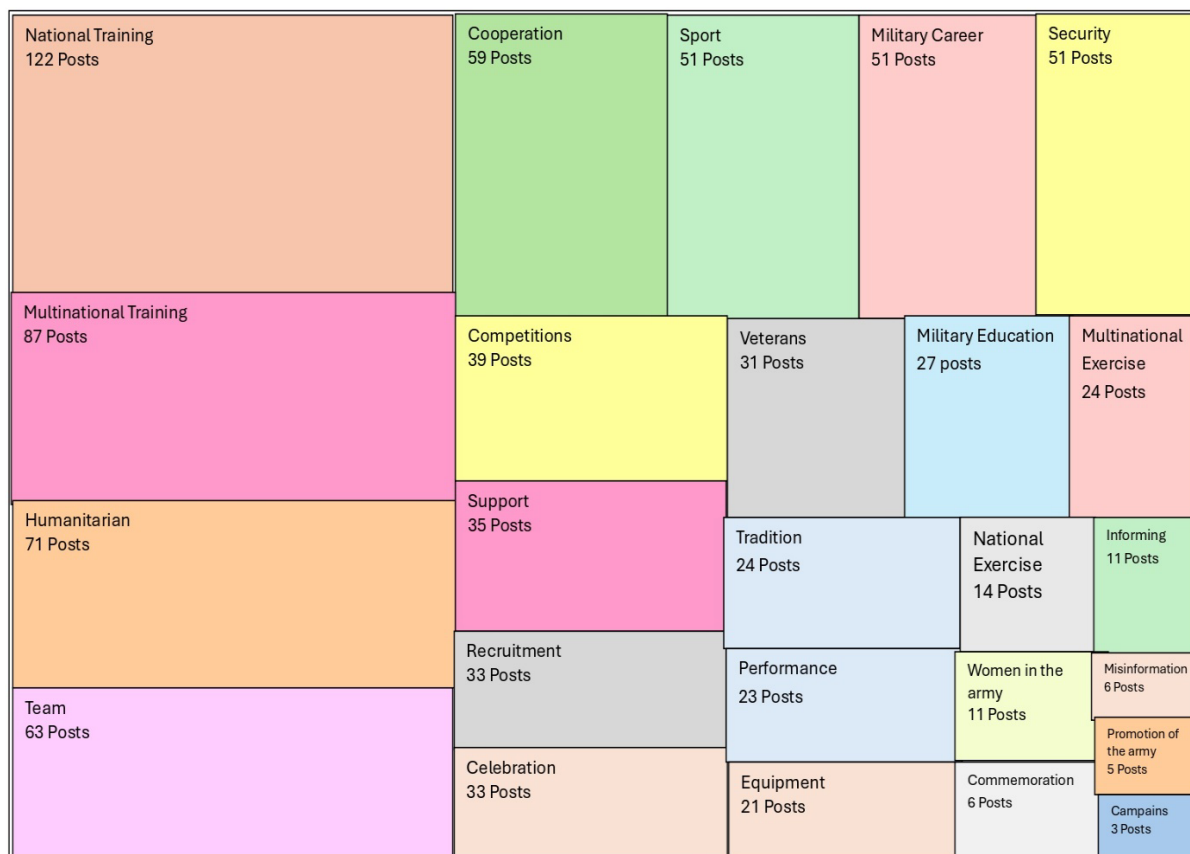


Figure no. 3: *Comparative representation of the codes used in content analysis based on the number of references in posts on mapn.ro in 2024*

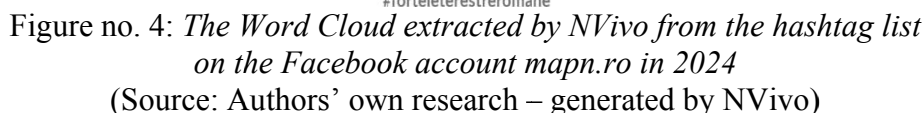
(Source: Authors' own research – generated by NVivo)

3.5. Hashtag Analysis

Hashtags help users find content that is relevant to them by organizing information and facilitating search. They make online communication easier to follow and discover, as they provide clues about the topic of the post. In addition to their orientation role, hashtags are also used to attract attention, express an opinion, reveal the author's identity, introduce humor, or support a cause. Their analysis

allows researchers to observe which topics are in the public's attention, track messages that spread quickly, and identify influencers in a particular field (Giannoulakis & Tsapatsoulis, 2016).

The word cloud extracted by NVivo from the list of hashtags on the Facebook account mapn.ro in 2024 is represented in Figure no. 4 and the list of main hashtags along with their frequency is presented in Table no. 2.



1.07%, had a negative emotional tone. They included criticisms or expressions of dissatisfaction, often related to sensitive topics, such as misinformation or misinterpretation. No posts with mixed emotional content were identified, specifically messages combining both positive and negative feelings. The

percentage distribution of the analyzed text units according to the feelings they express is shown in Figure no. 5.

The fact that the majority of the published messages have a neutral tone suggests clear, informative, and balanced communication.

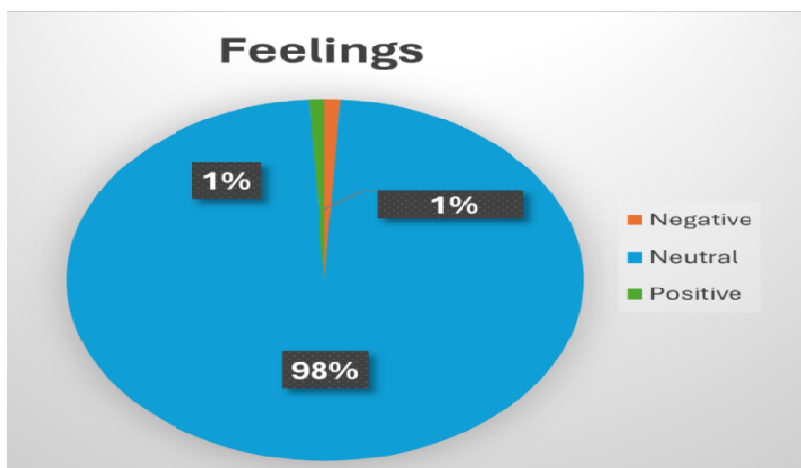


Figure no. 5: The percentages of text units according to the feelings they express
(Source: Authors' own research – generated by NVivo)

4. Discussion

In this research, the content analysis methodology was applied with the support of NVivo software, to examine the posts published by the Ministry of National Defense (MND) on its official Facebook page in 2024. The method used was that of *conceptual content analysis*, to which we added *feelings analysis*, a technique that is part of *relational content analysis*.

The posts on the Romanian Army's Facebook site support the image of a professional army, based on S. Huntington's conception, according to whom professionalism is characterized by "(a) *The necessity and willingness among military personnel to participate in international joint operations (expeditionary ethos)*; (b) *A strong instrumental focus, with emphasis on the conduct of operations, in particular the development and cultivation of combat skills (operational ethos)*; and (c) *A motivation to serve based on team cohesion and war*

comrade fellowship rather than on a desire to serve a superior cause (peer ethos)" (Johansen, Laberg & Martinussen, 2013, p. 863).

As can be seen, the posts presenting the exercises and specialized training of the military at the national level are the most numerous. As a professional military, the Romanian army is educated and trained specifically, through specialized programs (Paterson, 2019), and it continuously trains and prepares tactically, technologically and strategically.

The professionalism of the Romanian Army is manifested through interoperability and international collaboration (participation in NATO, UN or EU missions, capacity to operate in multinational environments, standardization according to Western models). A significant percentage of the posts refer to the participation of the Romanian Army in cooperation, support and training activities

together with soldiers and units of other armies, indicating the strategic orientation of the MND towards strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations, especially within NATO and the EU. The posts emphasize participation in joint exercises and interoperability projects, highlighting the role of military diplomacy in national security policy. The codes used for this topic included terms such as “Cooperation”, “Multinational exercise”, “Security”, and “Equipment” and the frequently encountered keywords were NATO, Cooperation, Security and Equipment.

The posts are apolitical, indicating the organization’s neutrality in political life but also reflecting its loyalty to the Romanian state. The posts also indicate institutional transparency through communication with the public within the limits of national security and responsibility by maintaining democratic and civilian control over the army (Brooks, 2021).

Another important dimension is the institution’s social involvement, reflected through humanitarian, ecological or community support campaigns. These actions contribute to enhancing the army’s image among citizens and strengthening public trust. The relevant codes for this direction were: “Humanitarian”, “Campaigns”, and “Support”.

Values related to history, identity and tradition were constantly promoted, through posts dedicated to veterans, heroes and the commemoration of historical moments. Thus, the institution affirms its continuity and respect for national values. The codes included “Veterans”, “Commemoration”, “Tradition”, “Celebration”, and among the most frequent keywords there were: Hero, History, Tradition, Sacrifice, and Anniversary.

Technological modernization is a topic regularly covered, highlighting the desire to adapt to current operational requirements. Posts about new equipment, digitalization processes and technological progress reinforce the image of a modern

and efficient army. The associated terms, such as “Equipment”, “Performance”, and “Team” were focused on concepts like: Technology, Performance, and Assets.

Therefore, it can be said that the MND effectively uses online communication to convey the values of the institution, to strengthen its public image, and stay connected with society. Considering the fact that in June 2025 the website www.mapn.ro had 723,000 followers and was following, in turn, 195 other social media account addresses, it can be stated that the Ministry of National Defense managed to achieve these objectives.

The varied subject matter, the predominantly objective tone, and the strategic orientation towards topics such as cooperation and technological innovation configure a model adapted to the contemporary informational context.

The main conclusion of our analysis is that the messages published by the MND contribute substantially to promoting the image of a modern, honorable and committed army.

This communication strategy is obviously successful in a labor market dominated by Generation X (1965-1980) and Generation Y (1981-1996), but will it remain equally effective for Generation Z (1997-2012) or Generation Alpha (2013-present)?

In Eastern Europe, technology penetrated slowly, after the fall of communism, and members of Generation X began using mobile devices as adults, when they already had life experience and professional, social, or family obligations, which made them more responsible in the way they use communication technologies and social media platforms. Their life experience leads them to approach technological innovation with pragmatism, skepticism, and even caution as they observe its effects and try to maintain a balance between technology and the way of life they prefer.

Regarding behavior on social media platforms, *“members of Generation Y not only work and play, but also actively generate content, share content, search for content, and consume content. [...] Millennials have a pattern of default behavior when it comes to social media due to the fact that current communication technology is an ever-present aspect of their lives and a main instrument through which they evaluate reality and everything they do”* (Manolică, Șorodoc, Faraonel, 2022, p. 626).

Kullolli and Trebicka (2023) found that platforms like Instagram and TikTok are more popular among Gen Z compared to platforms like Facebook and identified *“a clear preference among Gen Z for visually oriented platforms like Instagram and TikTok over text-based platforms”*. Gen Z prefers platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, and BeReal because they offer them authenticity, user anonymity, ephemeral content, and a more in-the-moment experience (Becker Digital, 2023).

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in the U.S. in October 2024, on a sample of 1,391 teenagers aged 13 to 19, shows that the majority owned a smartphone, used social media, and almost half of the sample members had a constant online presence. The platform with the most significant number of users was YouTube, followed by TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat. The use of Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) has had a steady decline in the last decade, this research shows: in 2024, only 32% of the teenagers surveyed used Facebook (a decrease from 71% in the period 2014-2015) and only 17% used X (a decrease compared to the period 2014-2015, when the percentage was 33% and compared to 2022 when the percentage was 23%). WhatsApp was used by 23% of the sample (a 6% increase from 2022) Reddit was used by 14% and Threads (from Meta) was used by 6% of the sample. The teens surveyed used one of these five platforms

daily: YouTube (73%), TikTok (57%), Instagram (50%), Snapchat (42%) and Facebook (20%).

According to DataReportal, in January 2024 there were 13.3 million active social media users in Romania; of these, 11.3 million were aged 18 and over (73.4% of the adult population). Of all internet users in Romania, 73.6% (regardless of age) had used at least one social media platform. At the beginning of 2024, Facebook had 9.05 million users in Romania while YouTube had 13.3 million users, Instagram had 5.3 million users, TikTok had 8.97 million users, Snapchat had 2.56 million users and X had 1.51 million users.

For Gen Z, social media is an integral part of daily experience because its members are highly connected to each other and to the entire society through it, which has many implications for their personal and professional lives. Regarding the military profession and career, members of this generation can use their social media skills and habits in a positive way, supporting the forces and missions of the armies they belong to, protecting their reputation, stimulating the recruitment process, and strengthening relations with the community. The development of advanced digital skills would allow Gen Z soldiers to achieve outstanding performance in their work within the military organization. On the other hand, there are members of Gen Z who lack digital skills or awareness of the effects of their activity on these platforms. Their actions can have a significant negative impact on the security of military operations. They can easily become victims of manipulation and disinformation through social media platforms, isolating themselves in insular online communities and echo chambers of personalized feeds, with direct effects on their behaviors at work and in society (Beker Digital, 2023).

Generation Alpha is still growing and developing, but its characteristics are already beginning to emerge. Its members were born in a period of rapid technological development and are therefore accustomed to using technology in everyday activities, in education, entertainment, connecting with peer groups, etc., which has already given them labels such as ‘*screenagers*’, ‘*digital natives*’, and ‘*connected*’ or ‘*wired generation*’ (Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2021). This central position of technology in their lives exerts both positive and negative influences on their development in various areas.

An online survey, conducted by Opinium Research, at the request of VISA, in August 2023, with questions about the behaviors of 500 Romanian children aged between 8 and 14, identified a series of trends within the studied sample, as follows:

- regarding expectations related to their future job, 88% of the children surveyed said that they want to start their own company or develop a small business or a secondary activity in addition to their main occupation, while only 6% want to work for an employer;

- 78% of the children had earned money on their own in the previous year, and 61% of them had used the following technologies to earn it: social networks (50%), online streaming platforms (24%), software design (14%), programming (11%) and AI (11%);

- 29% of children were convinced that AI and machine learning would be an integral part of their activities at work, while 27% of them expected to use virtual or augmented reality;

- 37% of children were convinced that they would use social networks at their future workplace, while 34% believed that they would use communication technologies (email or video conferencing);

- regarding financial and entrepreneurial education, children learned how to earn money from their family

(73%), from content creators (37%), from teachers (25%) and from friends (23%);

- as sources of inspiration, children in this sample indicated their own imagination (50%), social networks and content creators (45%), online games (43%) or discussions with friends (42%).

In summary, the VISA study anticipates for Romania an entrepreneurship-oriented Alpha Generation, strongly connected online, taking advantage of digitalization and artificial intelligence, convinced of the emergence of advanced technologies that will make their lives easier in many areas. These are some of the characteristics of the generation for which the Ministry of National Defense will soon have to adapt its messages and communication strategies.

5. Limitations and Future Work

This paper examines only the manifest content of MApN posts, exposing their visible, quantitative characteristics. Quantitative analysis allowed for a minimal interpretation of the conveyed messages. Further studies could analyze the latent content of these posts in order to highlight the deep structural meaning of the messages.

An analysis of MApN posts on other platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and X (Twitter) could also be carried out in order to create a complete picture of the military organization's social image and to analyze in depth the communication strategy it uses. Currently, Instagram is the app with the highest number of users, and the significant amount of time they spend on this platform has led many of the world's armies to communicate predominantly through it. Recent studies on the implications of the military's use of this application were conducted by López-Rodríguez and Castillo-Eslava in 2023. Previous studies have examined the activity of the British Army and the Israel Defense Force on Twitter (Leightley et al., 2020;

Stern & Ben-Shalom, 2021) and the activity of the US Army (Christensen, 2008) and the Canadian Armed Forces (Mirrles, 2015) on YouTube.

Assessing the impact of posts on different audience categories would also be of great interest to the Romanian army, as it would allow it to modify its communication strategies according to the trends identified within them (Falkheimer & Heide, 2014).

6. Conclusions

The posts on the Facebook page of the Ministry of National Defense are sober, neutral, highly processed, predominantly informative and with much visual content. Using a substantial amount of visual content ensures a high level of audience engagement: *“Most of the armies achieve higher engagement through the structure of the post, with photo carousels being the most engaging format”* (López-Rodríguez, 2023, p. 71).

The posts convey the image of a modern, committed and involved army, proud of its membership in NATO but also of its past and traditions. Through these characteristics, they correspond to the institutional requirements regarding online communication, presence and behavior in public space.

The Ministry of National Defense (MND) used the Facebook platform to

promote transparency, to convey public messages, and to build a clear and positive image among citizens. The MND Facebook page became not only a channel for disseminating information, but also a place for building public relations and consolidating the image of the institution in the public space by combining informative, inspirational, topical, or commemorative messages. The MND adjusted its messages to respond to information needs, and to the objectives of mobilization, involvement, and creation of an active digital community.

Social media consumption will increase in the coming years, and therefore, it is important for the military to encourage responsible use of these platforms, to regularly update its policies and regulations regarding their use, and to develop military-specific training programs to increase the level of digital literacy and awareness of its employees.

Since its future recruits are part of Generations Z and Alpha, the Romanian Army will have to adjust its online communication strategies to address their needs and digital consumption media habits. The simultaneous presence on several social media platforms, especially those popular among their members, and adapting the messages shared on these platforms is of critical importance.

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