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TRUST BUILDING AND FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM FOUR VISEGRAD COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT:

There is an important need in the literature to explore the effects of social media use on young people's behaviour. The main purpose of this research is to explore which factors of users' gratifications are associated with using social media by university students from four Visegrad countries in Central Europe. Online communication on social media may be affected by a variety of factors that affect the development of mutual relationships. Thus, research is also focused on trust building on social media. The research team conducted qualitative research aimed at the deeper understanding of students' opinions on trust and social media and their view on the phenomenon of "fake news". Conducted focus groups in four countries showed that university students, who are frequent users of social media, are inclined to trust certain pages they like but generally, they do not trust social media. They use social media primarily for maintaining relationships and they believe people who are connected to their network. It is obvious that students use social media to satisfy their needs, especially in the field of entertainment, partly also for obtaining information. The findings show that expected gratifications of students are built on their practical experience with media.

KEY WORDS:

focus groups, social media, trust building, university students, Visegrad countries

Introduction

Nowadays, social media include user-friendly technologies that allow students to rapidly update, analyse and share information, as well as ideas. It is supposed that students frequently and intensely work with computers, mobile devices and the Internet. The rapid growth and common availability of computers, mobile phones and other devices facilitate web browsing by allowing young people to access social media and support their everyday communication.

Online communication on social media may be influenced by a variety of social factors that affect the development of mutual relationships. A key indicator of human interactions is trust. There is wide consensus that trust and trustworthiness are fundamental assets for economic development and also for civic engagement and political participation.[1] Having trust in social media is a very timely but difficult area to research. We still have limited knowledge on how much young people trust social media, which are an important tool for social interaction in this user group. Thus, it is important to know students' opinions on trust and social media and their view on the phenomenon of "fake news".

As argued by Newman, Flechter, Kalogeropoulos, Lewy and Nielsen,[2] the key term "fake news" is both *"poorly defined and highly politicised"*. The current research addresses the gap by exploring how university students perceive the phenomenon of "fake news" on social media and how they trust social media.

The study is organised as follows. First, the phenomena of social media and trust and research on this topic are presented. This is followed by a brief review of the uses and gratification theory which explores students' motivation to engage with specific types of social media. Next, the results obtained from the focus groups conducted in four countries are analysed by taking into consideration the current knowledge about social media and their use by young people. Finally, in the discussion section, some suggestions are discussed and implications for both research and practice are outlined.

Literature Review

Social media have rapidly grown in popularity over recent years. They have been defined as particular consumption in digital environment that provides a mechanism for users to connect, communicate and interact with each other through social networking and its main function is *"to develop and maintain mutual relationships through effective communication"*.[3]

Social media enable the easy creation, transfer and consumption of information and entertainment.[4] Social media applications influence peoples' lives from several aspects.[5] Generally, there are three modes of communication: interpersonal communication, group or team communication and mass communication. Social media sites can *"support all those three communication modes simultaneously"*[6] and contribute to the improvement of social relationships.

In 2017, 87% of households in the EU had access to the Internet, compared with 70% in 2010. The important factor determining differences in the use of the Internet is considered age. In 2016, smart phones were used by almost all younger Internet users aged from 16 to 24 (94 %) in the EU to surf the Internet.[7] The leading social networks are usually available in multiple languages and enable users to connect with friends or people across geographical, political or economic borders.

There are now more than 3.8 billion social media users around the world, representing 49 percent of the world's total population. *Facebook* was the first social network to surpass 1 billion registered accounts and currently stands at almost 2.45 billion monthly active users, followed by *YouTube* (2 billion), *WhatsApp* (1.6 billion), *Facebook Messenger* (1.3 billion), *WeChat* (1.1 billion) and *Instagram* with 1 billion monthly active users.[8]

The most popular social media for college students in the Visegrad countries are *Facebook* and *Instagram*.[9] Approximately 30% of *Facebook* users are aged between 25 and 34 and most *Instagram* users are between 18 to 29 years of age.[10] Some studies have found positive correlations between social networking website use and college student engagement.[11] On the other hand, some studies[12] warn of potential technological distractions and their influence on academic performance. So far, we have only limited knowledge about problematic and non-problematic users' behaviour on social networks.[13]

The preliminary research[14] focused on ICT competences of university students from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland confirmed that there are no differences among participants from a national point of view, but that students use ICT in different ways. Eurostat reported similar features for Visegrad countries in the use of ICT at work[15] (the same applies to university students)[16] and households with Internet access or Internet use by individuals in the last 3 months. Thus, from this point of view, university students from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary are a homogenous group.

A key indicator and the basic prerequisite for successful human interaction is trust.[17] Trust is the foundation of all human communication; it plays a significant role in digital communication as well. The psychological perspectives of digital trust and trustworthy behaviour on the Internet are relatively new phenomena within human behaviour research.[18] Trust is considered an important indicator of relationships and high levels of trust can facilitate online communication.[19]

Trust is becoming one of the important factors showing the maturity of network media users. Researchers are aware that both the offline and online spheres are characterised by limited trust.[20] This is an acceptable and normal phenomenon. However, too much limiting of trust is a symptom of the need to diagnose such a state.

For successful online connections between people trustworthy communication via social media is very important. On the other hand, we live in an age where distrust is rife. Thus, we need to have a better insight into how trust evolves in human behaviour digitally because online communication on social media may be affected by a variety of social factors impacting the development of mutual relationships.[21]

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4　PALISZKIEWICZ, J., KOOHANG, A.: *Social Media and Trust: A Multinational Study of University Students*. Santa Rosa : Informing Science Press, 2016, p. 3-78.
5　ALALWAN, A. A. et al.: Social Media in Marketing: A Review and Analysis of the Existing Literature. In *Telematics and Informatics*, 2017, Vol. 34, No. 7, p. 1177.
6　CHENG, X. et al.: Understanding Trust Influencing Factors in Social Media Communication: A Qualitative Study. In *International Journal of Information Management*, 2017, Vol. 37, No. 2, p. 26.
7　*Digital Economy & Society in the EU*. [online]. [2019-10-30]. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/ict/2018/index.html>.
8　*DIGITAL 2020, GLOBAL DIGITAL OVERVIEW*. [online]. [2020-03-30]. Available at: <https://wearesocial.com/digital-2020/>.

9　*Digital Economy & Society in the EU*. [online]. [2019-10-30]. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/ict/2018/index.html>.
10　STOUT, D. W.: *Social Media Statistics 2020: Top Networks by the Numbers*. [online]. [2020-03-30]. Available at: <https://dustinstout.com/social-media-statistics/>.
11　See: CHOU, C. H., PI, S. M.: The Effectiveness of Facebook Groups for e-Learning. In *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 2015, Vol. 5, No. 7, p. 477-482; GAUDREAU, P. et al.: Canadian University Students in Wireless Classrooms: What Do They Do on Their Laptops and Does It Really Matter? In *Computers & Education*, 2014, Vol. 70, p. 245-255; PHU, B., GOW, A.: Facebook Use and Its Association with Subjective Happiness and Loneliness. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2019, Vol. 92, p. 155.
12　For example, see: FLANIGAN, A. E., BABCHUK, W. A.: Social Media as Academic Quicksand: A Phenomenological Study of Student Experiences In and Out of the Classroom. In *Learning and Individual Differences*, 2015, Vol. 44, p. 40-45.
13　Compare to: KIM, C., YANG, S-U.: Like, Comment, and Share on Facebook: How Each Behavior Differs from the Other. In *Public Relations Review*, 2017, Vol. 43, No. 2, p. 441-449; MARINO, C. et al.: Objective Facebook Behaviour: Differences between Problematic and Non-problematic Users. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 73, p. 541-546; TOMCZYK, Ł., SELMANAGIC-LIZDE, E.: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among Youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Scale and Selected Mechanisms. In *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2018, Vol. 88, p. 541-549.
14　EGER, L., KLEMENT, M. et al.: Different User Groups of University Students and Their ICT Competence: Evidence from Three Countries in Central Europe. In *Journal of Baltic Science Education*, 2018, Vol. 17, No. 5, p. 851-866.
15　EUROSTAT: *Science, Technology, Digital Society. Digital Economy and Society*. [online]. [2019-30-11]. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>.
16　EGER, L. et al.: Facebook and Public Relations in Higher Education. A Case Study of Selected Faculties from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 2019, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 7-30.
17　NIETO, J. et al.: Marketing Decisions, Customer Reviews, and Business Performance: The Use of the Toprural Website by Spanish Rural Lodging Establishments. In *Tourism Management*, 2014, Vol. 45, p. 115-123.
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19　CHENG, X. et al.: Understanding Trust Influencing Factors in Social Media Communication: A Qualitative Study. In *International Journal of Information Management*, 2017, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 25-35.
20　PYŻALSKI, J. et al.: *Polskie badanie EU Kids Online 2018. Najważniejsze wyniki i wnioski*. Poznań : Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2019.
21　See: PINJANI, P., PALVIA, P.: Trust and Knowledge Sharing in Diverse Global Virtual Teams. In *Information & Management*, 2013, Vol. 50, No. 4, p. 144-153; CHENG, X. et al.: Understanding Trust Influencing Factors in Social Media Communication: A Qualitative Study. In *International Journal of Information Management*, 2017, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 25-35; See also: NEWMAN, N. et al. (eds.): *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018*. [online]. [2019-09-01]. Available at: <http://media.digitalnewsreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/digital-news-report-2018.pdf>.

McKnight and Chervany[22] argue that trust is a highly complex and multidimensional phenomenon. For example, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman[23] and Colquitt, Scott and LePine[24] found in their research the following dimensions of trust – benevolence, integrity and ability. Integrity means fairness, righteousness and fulfilment of promises (whether the person does what they say). Benevolence means the willingness to help others. Ability falls within the skills and competence of a person.

In this research trust is operationalised according to Warner-Söderholm et al.,[25] more specifically, as the understanding that an online second party, whom we are in contact with or share news with, will perform actions that are beneficial or at least not detrimental to us. Thus, in a social media context, trust is defined as an individual's confidence in persons or platforms of social media and research tools using the following sub-dimensions of trust: Benevolence, Integrity, Competence, Identification and Concern. The way we communicate with others is a primary way we build trust. Thus, in the conducted research we are also looking for answers to whether students trust communication on social media or not, what minimum confidence is needed and if it exists from the students' point of view.

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) has become a popular theoretical framework for understanding why and how users actively seek the use of a specific medium to satisfy their needs.[26] The current study has utilised UGT in context of social media use by university students from four countries in Central Europe. Conducted qualitative research has attempted to explain why and how students engage in social media activities.

As an influential theory in media research, the uses and gratifications theory assumes that the audiences use certain media that fulfil their needs.[27] According to this theory people use media to gratify their social and psychological needs,[28] and their gratifications strongly influence how they use and behave toward the media.[29] The starting point is assumption that an individual audience member is an active recipient who has the option to select the types of media they want to use.

Researchers usually combine five gratification factors: information, convenience, entertainment, self-expression and social expression. In this research we follow Dolan, Conduit, Fahy and Goodman who argue that *"social media content can be categorised into four main group factors based on its level of information"*,[30] remunerative and relational content, and also research conducted by Choi, Fowler, Goh and Yuan who focused on five gratification factors: information, convenience, entertainment, self-expression and social interaction.[31] The degree to which students actively use social media in communication can be explained by their needs and expectations using traditional uses-and-gratifications approaches. Expected gratifications of selected target

groups are often built on practical experience with media.[32] Therefore, a better understanding of gratifications derived by students in their interaction with information resources on social media is a partial objective of the conducted research.

Objectives and Methods

The study provides answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: How do university students perceive the phenomenon of fake news?

RQ2: How much do university students from the Visegrad countries trust social media?

RQ3: How do selected characteristics of communication via social media influence their behaviour?

Study Design

The research team conducted qualitative research using focus groups (FG) to gather information about the students' opinions on trust and social media and about the phenomenon of "fake news". Thus, the emphasis was on how focus group participants make sense of the key phenomenon of "fake news" in terms of the experience they have picked up over recent years. The purpose of the conducted focus groups typically emphasises a specific topic that is explored in depth. Also, the method allows researchers to develop an understanding about why people feel the way they do.[33]

The research method of the focus group interview is a formalised process in which a small group of people discusses a joint topic or concept as a team in an interactive way. Exploratory FGs help to define the research problems and generate formal statements.[34] Based on the discussion with a selected panel of respondents under the leadership of an expert moderator we gain information about the opinions of the panel members on the selected topics and issues.

The focus group usually consisted of 6 – 12 people whose discussion was chaired by one trained moderator and lasted for approximately 1.5 hours. The focus group approach was prepared on the basis of a literature review.[35] The moderator informed participants about the purpose of our research and the focus group method. Ethical aspects of our research were emphasised.

The scenario for the preliminary research was drafted in the research by an international team during a workshop in March 2019. Questions were primarily focused on assessing current students' perception of the phenomenon of "fake news", their level of knowledge and competence to distinguish between reliable and fake news, their experience about this topic at school, their readiness for evaluating information gathering via social media, and their opinions on trust on social media. The international team also prepared rules and recommendations for FGs administrators and moderators with the aim to support the standardisation of the process for FG application in each country.

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29   GAO, Q., FENG, CH.: Branding with Social Media: User Gratifications, Usage Patterns, and Brand Message Content Strategies. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2016, Vol. 63, p. 868-890; KIM, B., KIM, Y.: Facebook Versus Instagram: How Perceived Gratifications and Technological Attributes Are Related to the Change in Social Media Usage. In *The Social Science Journal*, 2019, Vol. 56, No. 2, p. 157; TASKIRAN, B. H.: Uses and Gratifications Approach, Social Media and Personal Branding: A Study on Social Media Users in Turkey. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 142-155.
30   DOLAN, R. et al.: Social Media Engagement Behaviour: A User and Gratification Perspective. In *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 2016, Vol. 24, No. 3-4, p. 263.
31   CHOI, E. K. et al.: Social Media Marketing: Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory in the Hotel Industry. In *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 2016, Vol. 25, No. 7, p. 777-799.

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34   See: GRAY, D. E.: *Doing Research in the Real World*. London : SAGE, 2019, p. 233; HYMAN, M. R., SIERRA, J. J.: *Marketing Research Kit for Dummies*. Hoboken : Wiley Publishing, 2010, p. 254.
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Sample Characteristics and Procedure

In the pilot phase, five focus groups were carried out between May and June 2019. Face-to-face focus groups were held in the Czech Republic (1), Slovakia (1), Poland (1) and Hungary (2). The participants were university students studying on different study programmes. All participants used some form of social media. The focus groups consisted of 8 – 12 participants and usually lasted for 60 to 90 minutes. Each focus group was mixed in gender. All the focus groups were facilitated by one moderator who had received training in focus group moderation and one assistant moderator. At the beginning of each focus group the moderator informed the participants about the purpose of the focus group examination and the research. Then, the moderator used the prepared questions given below to guide the session. All focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim. To allow the interpretation of focus group data, a qualitative content analysis was conducted. The purpose of the pilot phase was to demonstrate to researchers whether the interview schedule works in real focus groups and the first scenario sufficiently meets the topic of the research.

Based on the pilot phase, the research team prepared the final scenario for the focus groups (team meeting in September 2019) and also the final version of recommendations for administrators and moderators with the aim of applying the same procedure of FG in each country. The international research team decided to use the more structured approach to questioning recommended when research compares findings between the sessions conducted in the different countries.[36] The main sub-topics and questions in the conducted focus group research were prepared as follows (scenario):
- Sub-topic 1: What do you think important news is?
- Sub-topic 2: Do you trust social media?
- Sub-topic 3: What do you think fake news is? Where can we encounter this phenomenon?
- Sub-topic 4: What is your level of knowledge and competence to distinguish between reliable and fake news? How do you do it?
- Sub-topic 5: Imagine that you see some information on social media. What is the most important thing to decide whether it is true or false? Illustrate with some examples.
- Sub-topic 6: What has to happen to completely lose trust in social media?

In the main phase, 20 FG examinations were carried out in October 2019. Face-to-face focus groups were held in the Czech Republic (5), Slovakia (5), Poland (4) and Hungary (6). Participants were once again university students studying on different study programmes. Every project partner started conducting their own focus group research in their respective countries.

The main purpose of this part of our research was to learn about the students' views, reactions and opinions on the topic, as well as to gather information from group members in relation to trust and social media and the phenomenon of "fake news". To address the above-mentioned topics, we did not only conduct focus groups at national levels but also, we compared results from the four Visegrad countries and drew international conclusions.

Results

In Table 1 below, results in relation to questions from the scenario are presented. Table 1 provides a brief overview of the findings for each sub-topic and provides evidence of discussion in focus groups with important and interesting statements by participants.

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36   BRYMAN, A.: *Social Research Methods*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 511.

Table 1: FG results and information that contain relevant details to selected sub-topics

Sub-topic 1, Q 1: What is important news? What are you interested in on social media?
- The importance of information depends on the receiver's interests.
- World events, world news.
- Events in the surroundings (region, city) – cultural events.
- Sports, movies, music, new trends, science, travel information...
- They use SM for communication, e.g. *Facebook* for connection with school and other students.
- They are interested in people, brands, products, humour, employment...
- They use SM to know how friends are or keep in touch with them.
- Some of them are not interested in politics as it is boring and sometimes fake news.

"Something I can use in my daily life."

"I use social networks for culture in my city."

"I am looking for fun things that I enjoy."

"When you open *Facebook*, you do not have to look for anything, everything is there."

"First, I read the title and if it refers to my interests, then I read the whole news; if not, I just ignore it."

Sub-topic 2, Q 2: Do you trust social media?
- Not a primary source for information retrieval.
- They trust social media partly and with suspicion. They read about an event as much as they can, rely on different media sources and try to filter out the truth.

"It is only a means; we trust the sources and authors more."

"SM cannot be fully trusted."

"Young people know they can't trust them, but older people sometimes don't understand."

"We would rather not believe, with the exception of the messages where there are trusted sources."

"When friends write to us, it is important for me. When I see it is my best friends, I open it immediately."

Sub-topic 2, Q 2A: How important is information seeking on social media for you?
- Half of them consider SM important. However, it depends on events and context.
- SM were created to join people into communities. This is the role most often emphasised by the students who use SM to search information about other people.
- For many students, SM are valuable repositories of information about other persons, their hobbies, biographies or marital status.
- Few students use social media only for information seeking.

"Few people watch TV, newspapers and magazines are not bought; everything is already on the Internet."

"When we meet someone and we need or want to find out more about them, we usually don't ask that person but kind of stalk them on social media."

Sub-topic 2, Q 2B: How fun and entertaining are social media for you?
- Absolutely yes – videos, pictures, jokes, political satire...
- Jokes, curiosities, humorous, funny videos.
- YouTube
- Funny pictures, comedians.

• Entertainment is connected with multitasking. Students very often switch between many popular SM.
"I use SM for amusement."
"There is a better programme than on TV."
"When I wake up in the morning, I check out *Instagram*."
"Others often recommend different movies on *Facebook*. Latest releases. They post information on *Facebook* and then I check on *Netflix*."
"Memes are funny or relevant if they reflect our situation in life."
"Sometimes articles are read because of the connected comments."

Sub-topic 2, Q 2C: How important is self-presentation for you on social media?

• Feedback is only important from close ones.
• A lot of them don't share their private life on social media.
• They mostly post pictures on *Instagram* (If I present, i.e. express myself, it is on Instagram).
• Nowadays it is important but depends on individuals.
• The students emphasise that sharing information is the main behaviour of many SM users.
• According to some respondents, misunderstood self-presentation may result in e-threats like stalking or cyberbullying.
• Job search = it is important to present yourself in a good light.
"When we are 24+, we do not share that much information on social media anymore."
"While the young share their happiness, the elderly create posts to show their sadness."
And opposite: "We usually share positive things, for example when we achieved something. We never share our failures."
"Posts should not be too individual; they should rather give a general picture."
"For some friends it is even too important. Self-presentation often hides the real person."
"A personal presentation can be important when looking for a job, sometimes an employer also views a profile on a social network."

Sub-topic 2, Q 2D: How important is using social media for creating and maintaining relationships with others for you?

• Most of them keep in touch with old friends and acquaintances and do not use social media to make new contacts.
• With friends we don't see that much anymore.
• Making new friends only in person.
• They discuss school stuff (group messaging, *Messenger, Viber, Instagram, My VIP, Skype*, etc.)
• According to some students, that is what social media are for.
"I do not create new contacts without a previous face-to-face meeting."
"We do not want to meet unknown people via social networks."
"They definitely make life easier because we do not always have time to talk to someone, but we can always message them."
"Sometimes teachers create groups on *Facebook* to share pictures of the class, events or topical issues (homework)."
Some of them: "We follow influencers and latest fashion trends."

Sub-topic 3, Q 3: Are you familiar with the term "fake news"?

• Fake, artificially created messages.
• The goal of fake news is to influence people and their behaviour and reactions.
• Fake news is everywhere.

• Reports (messages) from unverified sources.
• Used for harming competitors.
• Fake news typically comes from sites that specialise in bogus or sensationalised stories.
• At present, the role of fake news is also to attract greater audience to a website or a post. This is defined as click-baiting.
• Spam or hoax.
"They are fraudulent messages that someone created to influence someone."
"Sometimes there is also truth in them."
"It is misleading news that influences our opinion."
"Fake news is too positive or too negative, going into extremes, e.g. news related to global warming."
"Interviews are manipulated by making them shorter."
"Well, it is information which aim to mislead the receivers. And can also manipulate them."

Sub-topic 3, Q 4: Where can we encounter this phenomenon?

• Politics, migration, agriculture, cheap magazines, influencers, celebrities...
• There are websites specialising in generating fake information, images, headlines intended the make the users laugh rather than mislead them.
• Everywhere, anywhere: social media, the press, the media (TV), newspapers, *Facebook*, posters...
"Fake news can be everywhere."
"It is also semi-true information, rather tabloid information."
"Often it is a marketing gimmick."
"Gossip portals, they post much fake information, for example about celebrities."
"Fake news is typically about death rumours, advertisements and ticket sales."
"Sometimes it is hard to identify fake news."

Sub-topic 4, Q 5: What is your level of knowledge and competence to distinguish between reliable and fake news?

• It is difficult to distinguish but sometimes it is common sense.
• Based on feedback, comments or what we know, our knowledge.
• Some people look for it to find out while others believe everything.
• They know that some webpages and news portals tend to spread fake news in order to manipulate people.
• The students emphasise that the level of knowledge depends on the age.
• The students vary in the evaluation of their own competence related to online manipulation.
"If I'm interested, if I care about something, I try to verify the message if it is true or false."
"It depends on the portal and the area we know much about."
"It depends on the subject..."

Sub-topic 4, Question 6: How do you do it? Please, give us some examples.

• They analyse *Facebook* profiles or search for and check other sources.
• They check it on *Google*.
• They ask acquaintances and those who understand it.
• The respondents stress that today, it is hard to directly identify reliable sources of information. Both traditional and digital media are at risk of manipulation.

• Another proven method is talking to another person about the reliability of the given information.
• They check the spelling, the writer, the webpage, etc.
"Sometimes we can see it is fake news from the title, key words, too many grammatical or style mistakes, misspelt words, repeated words, not adequate professional terms."
"I read comments and control links to other sources."
"It is best to compare competing/different newspapers."
"We discuss things in the family."
"I think that the same information in different sources means the information is true, I guess."
"I check whether they talk about it on television or not, because usually there is a connection between the TV and the Internet."
"Or, for example, some reliable magazines are a good source of information, too."

Sub-topic 4, Q 7: Where did you learn this technique?
• They did not learn it at school, just by themselves.
• Everybody learns how to deal with fake news on their own from their own mistakes.
• Experience, intuition, feedback (discussions with family, friends, at school …).
• The process they commonly use – search engines and connections with friends.
• This question was the most challenging for the respondents. In many cases students highlight the importance of self-learning and lifelong learning.
"Unfortunately, these skills are not taught at schools."
"Everybody learns how to deal with fake news on their own from their own mistakes."
"Election taught me to recognise fake news. I learned to question things."
"Are there any techniques at all?"

Sub-topic 4, Q 8: How much have you heard about it at school? If so, please give us some examples.
• Some of them heard something at university. The minority in high school during social science seminars.
• Most of them said they heard nothing about fake news at school.
"Teachers gave us rather general advice not to trust in everything. Also, not to share everything. Not to write to strangers because one never knows who is on the other side of the screen."

Sub-topic 5, Q 9: Imagine that you see some information on social media. What is the most important thing to decide whether it is true or false? Illustrate with some examples.
• The students have a range of proven techniques allowing them to quickly evaluate the reliability of information. Here is a list:
○ Author who shares the message
○ Grammar
○ Style
○ Level of graphics
○ Links + resources
○ Level of expression of the author[38]
○ Level of comments below the text
○ Text style
○ Number of shares

○ The degree of aggression by which the information is presented
○ Neutrality of communication
○ Occurrence of information on multiple portals
• Author's credibility + checking of the profile.
• If there are comments from experts either in the information or below the text.
"Who published it?"
"Who said it and where?"
"We do not believe in news that begins with: "According to British scientists…""
"I read the comments below the post on social media and see if there are contradictory opinions/things."
"Information gathered from well-known websites is much more reliable than news from little known newspapers or services."

Sub-topic 6, Q 10: What has to happen to completely lose trust in social media?
• They do not trust social media. They only trust certain pages they like. Loss of trust is connected to those pages.
• Repeatedly spread false messages.
• Loss of impartiality.
• Theft of social media account or theft of data from social media site.
• Social media scandals (Cambridge Analytica).
• To see fake news on the portal they trust.
"We are already more sober in this regard – social media are not trustworthy."
"The loss of trust would mean we have had some trust in them."
"I would lose trust if, for example, some of our photos leaked out."
"If we found out that some of my important data leaked through *Facebook*."
"If someone stole my personal data, it would be a big problem. But I would rather limit my personal data whenever possible to minimise the risk."

Source: Own processing

As the results suggest, social media have become a central source of news for many people. For students, SM are user-friendly technologies that allow them to rapidly update, analyse, comment and share information with friends and other people. The results of FGs show that the main function of SM platforms is to maintain and develop relationships through effective online communication.

Trust is the foundation of all human communication; it plays a significant role in digital communication as well.[37] Building trust in the community on SM is of critical importance for effective communication in certain or selected communities. This study contributes to the literature on trust factors in online communities from the students' points of view.

Sub-topic 2 was focused on trust in SM. Respondents, university students from four countries, partly trust social media and approach them with suspicion. Some of them state that they do not trust social media at all.

As we have mentioned before, people use media to gratify their social and psychological needs[38] and their gratifications strongly influence how they use media including SM. In this study we follow Dolan, Conduit,

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37   See: CHENG, X. et al.: Understanding Trust Influencing Factors in Social Media Communication: A Qualitative Study. In *International Journal of Information Management*, 2017, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 25-35; WARNER-SÖDERHOLM, G. et al.: Who Trust Social Media? In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2018, Vol. 81, p. 303-315.

38   KATZ, E. et al.: Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual. In BLUMLER, G. J., KATZ, E. (eds.), *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*. Beverly Hills : Sage, 1974, p. 19-31.

Fahy and Goodman,[39] who argue that social media content can be categorised into four main group factors.

Question 2A was focused on information seeking on social media. Half of students consider SM important for this purpose, but they underline that "It depends on events and context". Few students use social media only for information seeking and they argue that SM were created to join people into communities.

Question 2B was focused on entertainment and social media. The use of SM for entertainment is connected with the organisation of free time, for example during trips by public transport. Some of them really search for jokes, curiosities, humorous, funny videos, etc. They often use the *YouTube* channel instead of TV; the role of *Instagram* has been growing in this area. This generation usually applies multitasking. Also, entertainment is connected with multitasking. Students very often switch between many popular SM platforms.

Question 2C was focused on the importance of self-presentation using SM. Students usually state: "Nowadays it is important, but it depends on individuals." Some of them state that they do not share their private lives on social media. It was important to them when they were young (teenagers). On the other hand, a lot of them post pictures on *Instagram*. Some of them use SM for job search and they know that the future employer will probably visit or check their profile(s) on SM. These students are aware that social media can be used for personal branding.[40] In general, it turns out that university students are mostly cautious and considerate how they will look on social media.

Question 2D was focused on the importance of creating and maintaining relationships with others on SM. According to students' opinions, SM were created to join people into communities. This role was most often emphasised by the students who use SM to search for information about other people. They use SM as a tool for quick communication with friends and other people. They use a number of the tools that social media offer them and that are user-friendly for them.

It is considered important by the research team that students are present on social media; however, they tend to show the nicest picture of themselves possible. However, the image they create and show of themselves on social media is sometimes biased and distorted, so personal accounts may be considered with caution and suspicion, since sometimes they may be fake. It is very rare that someone displays their 'real self', true attributes, characteristics and personality. Their 'ideal self', which may be slightly distorted, is presented on social media more often. This knowledge of the discrepancy between reality and presentation on social media certainly affects their trust in social media.

Regarding the topic of social media and trust, we have asked further questions to understand students' concern about "fake news" (questions 3 and 4). During the focus groups conducted in these four countries, we have noticed that students have relatively wide knowledge about fake news. Students are able to define the term "fake news". When students clarify this phenomenon, many of them list places and situations where they most often face media manipulation (very often pointing to popular gossip services). As declared by the respondents, they have a low level of trust of SM, and it will probably decrease even further.

The following question (5) was focused on their level of knowledge and competence to distinguish between reliable and fake news. The students emphasise the level of knowledge depends on age and many of them think they can judge whether the information is false or true and whether it is fake news.

Answers to questions 6 and 9 show us how university students distinguish between reliable and fake news in their everyday lives. On the one hand, the respondents stress that today it is hard to identify directly the reliable sources of information and on the other hand, they created a very useful list of how to do it. Among proven techniques, which allow them to quickly evaluate the reliability of the information is the level of grammar, style, author's credibility and their level of expression.

We can associate this topic with the question of where they learned it (questions 7 and 8). Respondents argue that they did not learn it at school, just by themselves. Received answers from students of all the four countries, unfortunately, show that the educational process at schools was not focused on it.

The focus group research closes with Question 10: What has to happen to completely lose trust in social media? Respondents argue that they do not trust social media. They only trust certain pages they like. Loss of trust in social media is connected to their favourite pages. For example, lack of trust is connected with abusing personal data on social media or with data leaked through social media or if the portal they trust starts publishing fake news.

Discussion and Conclusion

The unprecedented popularity of social media among young people leads to critical questions such as how they use social media in their everyday lives, how they trust news on social media and how they face fake news. This research tries to answer some of these questions using focus groups involving students from four countries in Central Europe. The results of our research showed that university students, users of social media, are inclined to trust certain pages they like, but generally they do not trust SM. This may suggest that students, who use SM practically all the time, trust their networks and news received within their groups.

They primarily use SM for maintaining relationships and they believe people who are connected to their private networks. It is obvious that students use social media to satisfy their needs. To maintain and develop contacts is very important to them, followed by entertainment and the information categories of UGT. It seems that their self-presentation on SM and follow-up feedback from other users are no longer as important to them as they were in their youth (when they were teenagers). University students have become skilled, experienced users who carefully share information about themselves on SM. The findings show that the expected gratifications of university students are built on their practical experience with media.[41] This finding is in line with Warner-Söderholm et al.[42] who argue that the reason why people are increasingly attracted to SM is associated with the need for connection and interaction with close people, friends and this context is influenced by trust issues.

The growing problem in human behaviour related to SM is to know when news is real. The key question is what is real news and what is fake news? The results of this research add to the existing literature on social media and trust building by imparting novel and important knowledge of how to see this topic and how to sort out this problem as offered by university students in the selected countries. Social media interactions now increasingly take place online, especially in the context of social networking sites[43] and influence how students build trust in relation to economic and societal development.

The finding is also in line with the study by Edelman[44] that shows differences in trust for NGOs, business, government and media. In all of the above-mentioned categories the study reports that the informed public (those college-educated with significant media consumption) has higher levels of trust in comparison to the mass population. One possible explanation is that people with higher levels of education, and in our case young students with higher levels of ICT competence, are able to better distinguish between real news and fake news than the general population and know better what they can expect from certain sources of information (see answers to questions 3 – 7 and 9).

Digital competence has become one of the key skills for today's citizens. With the development of information society, characterised by an explosion of information, there is a need to strengthen an important component of digital competence such as information processing skills.[45] The ability to distinguish between true and false information and opinions, manipulations and reliable communication becomes a necessary and

39   DOLAN, R. et al.: Social Media Engagement Behaviour: A User and Gratification Perspective. In *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 2016, Vol. 24, No. 3-4, p. 263.
40   Compare to: TASKIRAN, B. H.: Uses and Gratifications Approach, Social Media and Personal Branding: A Study on Social Media Users in Turkey. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 142-155.

41   LEINER, J. D. et al.: Functional Domains of Social Media Platforms: Structuring the Use of Facebook to Better Understand Its Gratifications. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2018, Vol. 83, p. 201.
42   WARNER-SÖDERHOLM, G. et al.: Who Trust Social Media? In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2018, Vol. 81, p. 303-315.
43   ANTOCI, A. et al.: Civility and Trust in Social Media. In *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 2018, Vol. 160, p. 83-90.
44   *2019 EDELMAN TRUST BAROMETER Global Report*. [online]. [2019-11-01]. Available at: <https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-02/2019_Edelman_Trust_Barometer_Global_Report.pdf>
45   ZIEMBA, E.: The Holistic and Systems Approach to the Sustainable Information Society. In *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 2013, Vol. 54, No. 1, p. 106-116.

undisputable element of increasing the level of digital security.[46] Taking into account the style of using digital media by students[47], i.e. increasing screen time, multitasking, media convergence, there is a need to focus on official educational programmes (also at earlier stages), on strengthening not only technical skills related to using the Internet but also on developing 'soft skills' that ensure digital security.[48]

As we have mentioned above, the Internet and SM have an increasingly important role for human behaviour in contemporary society. SM are becoming an increasingly important platform for maintaining and developing relationships among people, seeking entertainment, executing marketing and providing newsfeed updates. Social media provide us with wider and faster means of sharing information not only with students but also with the general public. The presented results give us a better insight into how university students use SM in their lives. The findings have several implications which help practitioners understand the role SM play in students' lives. For example, people, who are responsible for the communication of universities with the public, can use the results of this research for planning, developing and maintaining Public Relations using SM.[49] The findings also suggest that university students are able to use many tools to distinguish between reliable and fake news. They are interested in receiving support, but the schools do not provide it in this area. It is an opportunity for the educational institutions as students must be proficient users of all online platforms and they must be aware of all the positive and negative impacts of social media.

This exploratory study contributes to the existing literature on social media behaviour and trust building although it has some limitations. Firstly, the data is based on qualitative research using focus groups. This type of research is acceptable for an explanatory study. Future research should be extended to a number of respondents using a quantitative approach. Secondly, the research was conducted in four Visegrad countries. We suggest that further research in different cultures and countries is now necessary in the field of social media and trust building. We further remark that the university settings may not be indicative for the younger and older generations, either.

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46   For more information, see: TOMCZYK, Ł., POTYRAŁA, K.: *Wybrane zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa cyfrowego dzieci i młodzieży w perspektywie pedagogiki mediów*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, 2019.

47   EGER, L., KLEMENT, M. et al.: Different User Groups of University Students and Their ICT Competence: Evidence from Three Countries in Central Europe. In *Journal of Baltic Science Education*, 2018, Vol. 17, No 5, p. 851-866.

48   See: STOŠIĆ, L.: Parents Opinions of the Impact of Computers on the Social Behavior of Children. In *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education*, 2014, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 57-61; TOMCZYK, Ł.: Digital Literacy in the Area of e-Safety among Teachers (Second Stage of the Primary School) in Poland. In ROCEANU, I. et al. (eds.): *New Technology and Redesigning Learning Spaces: Proceedings of the 15th International Scientific Conference "eLearning and Software for Education", Volume II*. Bucharest : Carol I National Defence University, 2019, p. 130-135.

49   Compare to: LUND, B.: Universities Engaging Media Users: An Investigation of Quantitative Relationships between Universities' Facebook Followers/Interactions and University Attributes. In *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 2019, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 251-267; CHININGA, T. et al.: Facebook Communication and Marketing Influence on Decision-Making and Choice of University Student Representatives: A Student's Perspective. In *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 2019, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 7; PERUTA, A., SHIELDS, A.: Social Media in Higher Education: Understanding How Colleges and Universities Use Facebook. In *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 2017, Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 131-143.

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