

**The influence of social networks
over the environment
or another type of Sun in Plato's
cave myth**

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Case study: How environmental activism is conceptualized and addressed in the medium of social networks in Romania?

Why this topic?

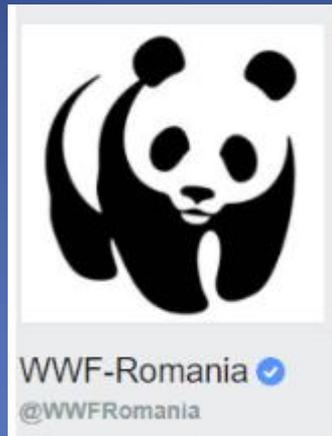
- Internet had become more and more popular and influential and gives the opportunity to implement in the virtual space any kind of activities, especially related to the concept of environment;
- Environmental movements are increasingly using social networking sites (SNS) to recruit new members, to fundraise, to promote their causes and to facilitate their campaigning activity;
- June 2018: Facebook = 2.2 billion monthly active users;
Instagram = 1 billion monthly active accounts.
- Young people have become more active in the online medium.

Advantages of using the social networks:

- Two-directional communication between organization and its followers;
- The circulation of information is accelerated, awareness is raised, discussion is facilitated, resources are mobilized, public attention gained and events organized;
- Campaigners and activists can share experiences, ideas, information;
- User-friendly and flexible forms of communication;
- Opportunities for learning;
- Collective action by the power of example.
- Online mediums can revolutionize offline social and political actions.
- Platforms for awareness.

Case study

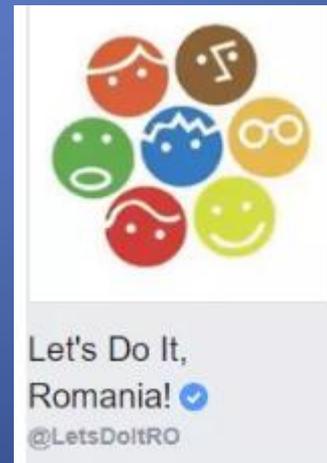
- Period of time: 1 month
- Targeted social networks: Facebook and Instagram.
- 7 Targeted Romanian NGOs and campaigns: Agent Green, WWF Romania, Let's Do It Romania, Greenpeace Romania, Ecopolis, Greeninitiative, #CleanRomaniaChallenge.
- Methodology: desk research and two types of surveys: Survey 1 addressed to the founders of the NGOs/campaigns/environmental movements and Survey 2 addressed to the followers of these NGOs or to different types of groups (student groups);
- Participants: both young and adult people.



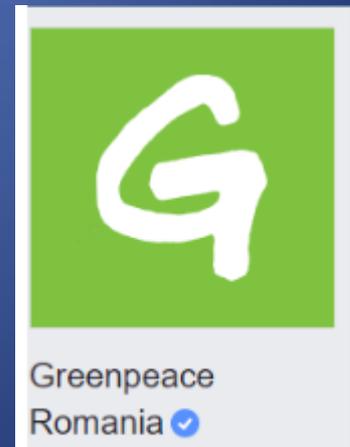
WWF-Romania ✓
@WWFRomania



Targeted Romanian NGOs and environmental campaigns



Let's Do It,
Romania! ✓
@LetsDoItRO



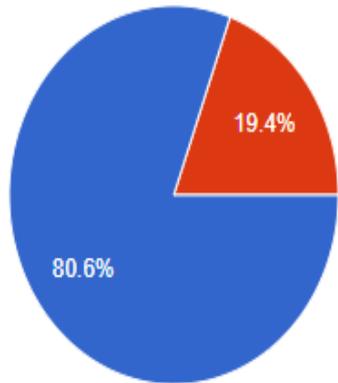
Greenpeace
Romania ✓

Survey 1 – NGOs' Opinion. Results

Problem identification: Lack of promotion of environmental activism in online mediums. (100% need for promotion)

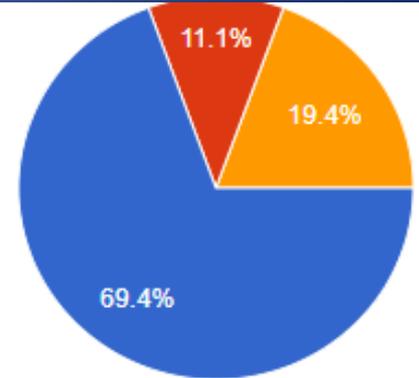
- Environmental protection / rehabilitation campaigns in the online environment raise the level of awareness, but only reach the people who are members in the social networking sites.
- **Influence:** 99% of the activities promoted in the online medium create street movements, environmental protests and contribute significantly to communication between organizations and causes.
- Why are social networks considered to be suitable for ecological movements? (Direct ecological messages, quantifiable effects and fairly predictable actions)
- By the power of example, social networks sites can bring changes in the collective mind about environmental issues, raise awareness, and give people an incentive to engage in environmental activism.

Survey 2 – Followers' opinion



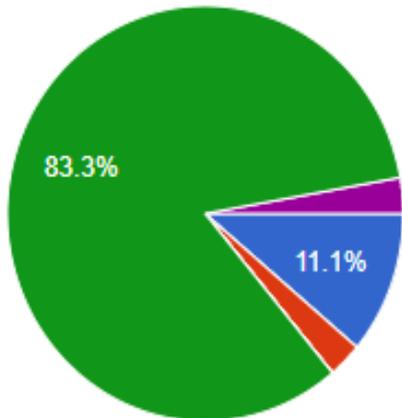
80.6% = familiar with environmental activism.

69.4% = interested in getting involved in an NGO / environmental protection association; Only 19.4% are not interested in this topic.

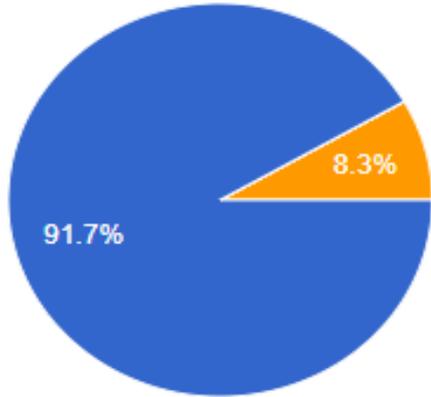


Most popular activities in which people got involved: material recycling, garbage collection, Let's Do It Romania campaign.

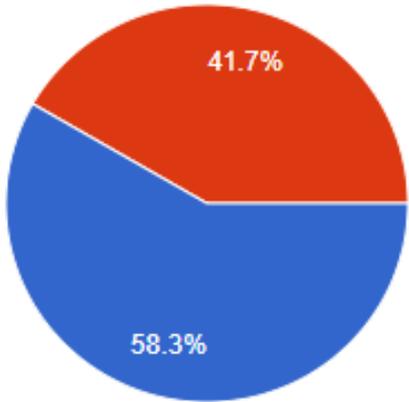
What determines people to take part in environmental activism: the desire to live in a cleaner and healthier world and the way in which the activity is promoted.



83.3% : Internet provides people with most of the information regarding environment and environmental activism; 11.1% take the information from television.



91.7% agreed with the fact that online campaigns need to be promoted more. Promoting them in the online medium raise the interest of the youth and its civic spirit, mostly because young people are the one populating the social networks.



58.3% think that the social networks are suitable for promoting ecological activities.

Easy way to get information through more efficient communication; online influencers, rich activity on social networks, the online medium as the most accessible source of information => environmental activism can grow in the online medium.

Can the social networks like Facebook or Instagram change the way we relate to environment? *Yes, because making this a "trend", we can awaken civic conscience in each of us and promoting through the most used social networks can have an impact on the masses.*

Conclusions

- The online campaigns revolutionize offline social and political actions.
- Social networks are considered by the most of the people to be eligible for spreading ecological messages and for promoting environmental activism.
- Bring changes in the collective mind, raise awareness and civic conscience.
- More than 83% of the ones interrogated agreed that social networks offer them the proper information about the environment and its problems, through efficient communication, photos and videos posted on the Facebook pages of each NGO which summarize their activity in the field of environmental activism.
- The young generation is the most active on the social networks, therefore students and teenagers are especially targeted.

Possible solutions

- Better and sustainable promotion in various and different groups (e.g. Students groups).
- Collaboration with known influencers who already have an important number of subscribers to promote them. Therefore, more people will have access to this type of activity.
- Podcasts and vlogs.