

# Online dissemination of news in Nicolae Titulescu University

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## Abstract

*“Traditional” websites are a very good method of disseminating information for students in online environment. We might think that with this new trend, people prefer to get information on a social network website, but actually for complex information the “traditional” websites are better.*

*Facebook social network is very used in Romania, mostly by young people. It is a common saying around here: if you do not have a Facebook account, then you do not exist. The Facebook account of the University was created in may, 2012. Since then it has been a powerful tool for disseminating information, but mostly for photos, short messages, links and videos.*

*YouTube and Twitter are not that used by students for finding information about their University, but during one year, I've recorded growth in number of followers.*

*In this paper I compare these four online methods of disseminating information for students (may 2012-may 2013 period of time).*

**Keywords:** *News, Website, Social Networks, Traffic.*

## 1. Introduction

For students in a University easy access to information is critical. Methods of disseminating information for students are through the University websites, forums or more popular now for students through social network websites.

Nicolae Titulescu University has a main website (www.univnt.ro) and many sub domains such as erasmus.univnt.ro (a website for ERASMUS program), cks.univnt.ro (a website for a scientifically conference) and other. It also has a forum, where students and others can talk and from some time now, it has social accounts like: Facebook; YouTube and Twitter.

Nicolae Titulescu University is very active in the online environment, posting new content and updating information on all websites. This is highly appreciated by students who have easy access through Internet to information. In order to keep in touch with students even more, the University is also present on social networks with daily updates and content of interest for students.

Social networks are a popular method for disseminating information to students [1], but a website can be better organized and information is easier to find. For example, on a social network is not so good to write long information, long text, because people want to read and see something fast there. Social networks are the best for sharing photos or videos.

By “traditional” websites, I understand the websites that are not based on a social network, sites that contain information and data and are free to access and read.

In this paper I analyze how students receive information and how they react to it. For monitoring the websites and the forum traffic, I used a software tool that generates advanced web, streaming, ftp or mail server statistics, graphically. For the social networks I gathered the date directly from the websites.

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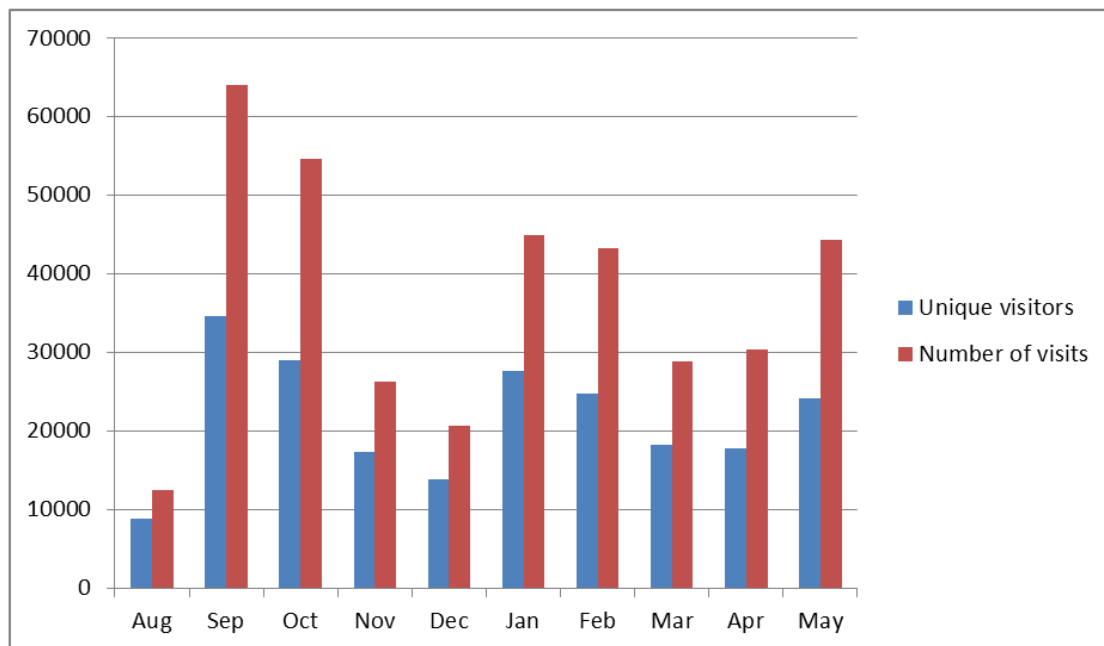
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## 2. Analysis of the methods and their results

### 2.1. Website – www.univnt.ro

The most powerful tool for disseminating information remains a website, even though social networks are gaining more and more people every day. This is determined by the high number of unique visitors and number of visits.

From the data gathered between August 2012 and May 2013, we can see that the number of unique visitors and the number of visits are lower only during summer break, but even then they still remain high comparing to the number of people that follow the University on social networks.



**Fig. 1.** August 2012 to May 2013

In figure 1, it can be observed that in September and October there is a very high traffic on the website. That is because a new academic year begins and everybody is visiting the website to get all the new information.

During the academic year, growth can be seen in the number of unique visitors and the number of visits in the exams period.

People visit the website to get information and updates. The University continuously updates and adds information on the website, so students can find information about timetables, exams, teaching staff and a lot others.

The website has an area only for news. Most of the news posted here can also be found on our social networks. In figure 2, it can be seen how many times the news section of the website has been viewed.

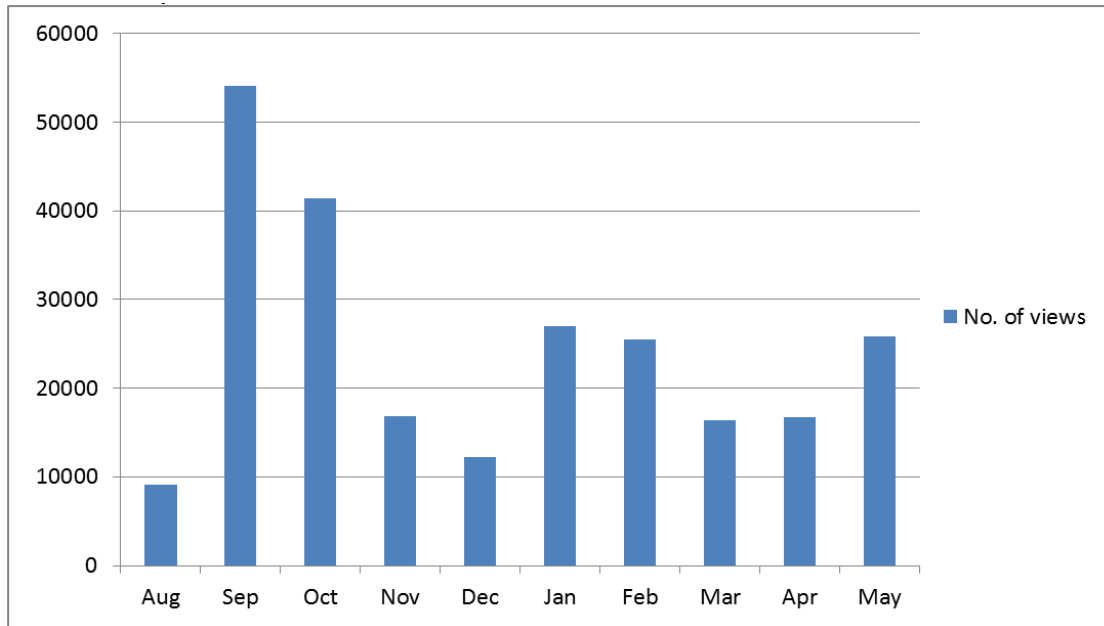


Fig. 2. News section in website univnt.ro

Comparing data from figure 1 and figure 2, it can be observed that most of the people that visit the website, also check the news area.

From the data collected it can be concluded that a website remains very visited and important. There is a high traffic on the website, this means that the students are interested in finding information, but also that the information on the website is valuable.

### 2.2. Forum – forum.univnt.ro

Although forums are losing ground to social networks and they become less popular, significant traffic is recorded on them.

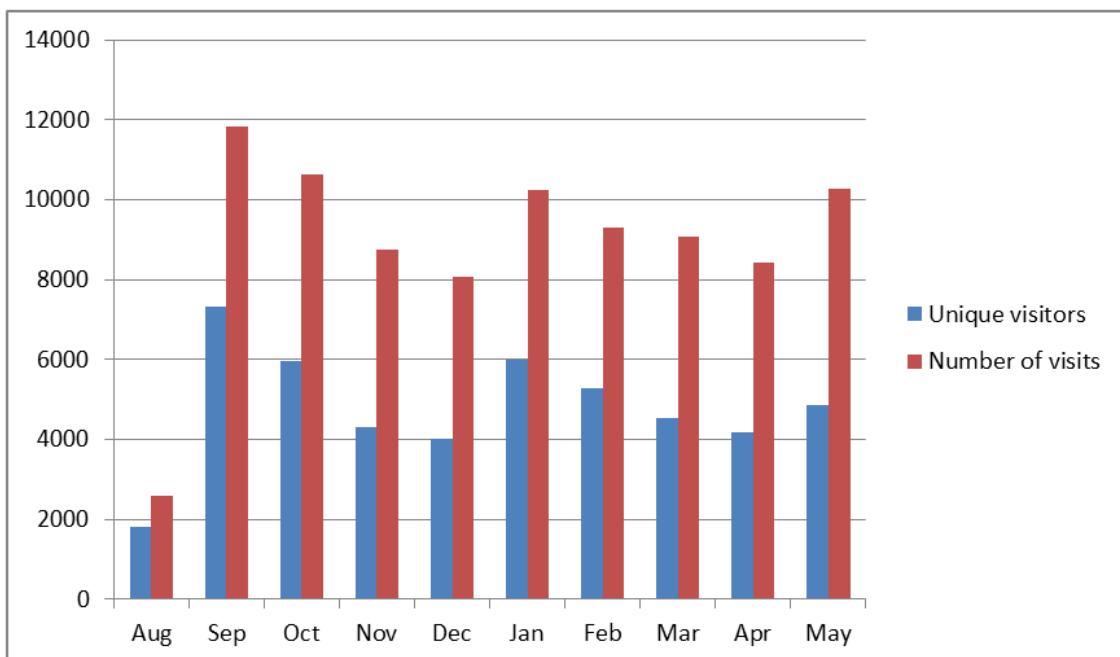


Fig. 3. August 2012 to May 2013 traffic on forum.univnt.ro

Usually people (students) use the forum to exchange information between one and another. The number of visitors and visits is significantly lower on the forum than on the website.

In my opinion, people will continue to move to social networks and use forums less. Comparing traffic between the website and the forum, it can be observed that the forums traffic is not even half of the websites traffic, but still people check the forum and exchange opinions on it.

An average of almost 5000 unique visitors per month is a high number and it is comparable to the Facebook account traffic.

### 2.3. Facebook

A new method of disseminating information is Facebook and it has a educational use [2]. Nicolae Titulescu University's Facebook account currently (may 2013) has 1,488 likes. This means that at least 1,488 people check the page on a regular basis and receive news and notifications on their wall page.

From the fact that the most viewed post of our page has a reach of 3,082 people (the number of unique people who have seen our post), we can conclude that not everyone that checks the University Facebook page has also clicked the "Like" button, so the University actually has more fans than "likes".

The account is mostly used to share important information about different activities in the University, such as conferences, meetings or opened lessons, but also for sharing information about exams schedule, admission in the University, new learning programs and many more.

Every time content is shared on the Facebook page, almost immediately reactions from the students appear. They press the like button, or they comment and sometimes they even share the content. This means that the interest is real.

Analyzing the gender of the people that liked the University Facebook page, it can be noticed that almost 70% of users are females.

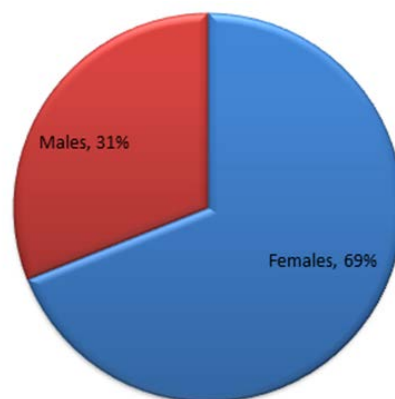


Fig. 4. Gender

Also, the age interval 18-24 is represented by almost 75% of people. The age interval 25-34 is the next most represented by almost 20% of people. So from this it can be concluded that most of the people that liked and follow the University Facebook page are actual students or recently former students. This is normal for an University page.

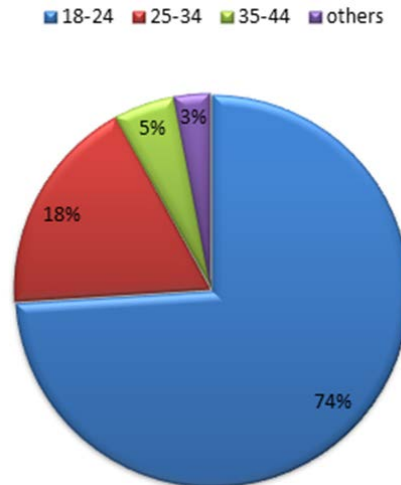


Fig. 5. Age

Most of the people that liked the University page are Romanians, that is because most of our students are Romanian and also the content is mainly in Romanian language. Due to International Scientifically Conferences and former students that currently live abroad, the University has a few followers from countries like Spain, Italy or Germany.

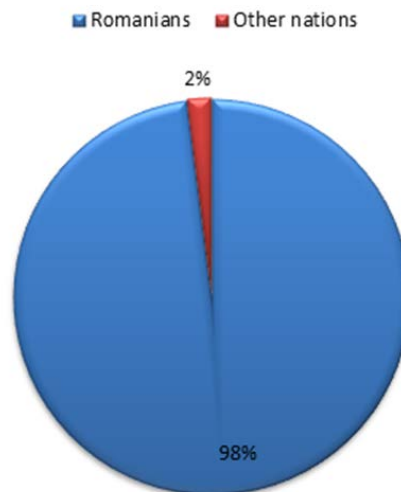


Fig. 6. Country

Even though the University promotes the Facebook account on external web pages and in the University, just a small percent of the people come from external sources, like Google search engine, the University web page: [www.univnt.ro](http://www.univnt.ro). Most of the people just search the University directly in Facebook or see the content on other people wall pages and click on that content, not using the direct link.

The University has currently 70 albums with photos of interest for the students. We can find photos from conferences, contests, workshops, library, seminars, different sports activities and others, all related to the University. These photos are public and everybody can see them, even if they do not have a Facebook account. I've noticed that most people have secured their Facebook profiles, so that their content is not public and they keep it just for their friends. This type of behavior, from the students, can be found also on the University Facebook account because there are not many tags in the pictures with the students, even though students press the like button on those photos, that is because once you tag yourself in a public photo, everyone can see your name in that photo and your privacy will be gone.

The University does not post videos directly on the Facebook account. It prefers to post them on the YouTube channel and then share the link on the Facebook page.

Getting more likes for the page is a way to see that students and not just them are interested in the content posted on the page. It has become clear that if you just have a page and you do not post content daily, than the interest from the students drops.

The first 500 likes were reached in September 19, 2012. Then 1000 likes were reached in November 27, 2012. Since then the University receives a couple of likes per day.

There are three types of methods to reach people on Facebook: organic, paid or viral. The organic number of people that were reached is determined by the number of unique people that saw the content on their news feed or came directly on the page (this includes people that liked the page or not). The paid number is determined by the number of unique people that saw an ad or sponsored story on Facebook. Nicolae Titulescu has never used, yet, the paid method to reach people. The viral number is determined by the number of unique people that saw content from the University in stories published by one of their friends. Stories include liking the page, posting on the University wall, commenting on a photo, tagging in a photo and other. Nicolae Titulescu has reached people mostly by the viral method.

### 3. The main ways and benefits of using Facebook in education

- information asking: students can ask for information on Facebook. They can ask the University directly or they can share information with each other. The University has more than 30 opened private threads of discussions with students. Also information is continuously shared directly on the page.

- materials sharing: students can get different materials for studying, posted by the University or they can share them on the University page;

- events: students can see the Upcoming Events in the University. The events option in Facebook is a powerful tool for disseminating information. Students can talk directly in the event Facebook page, they can choose an option that tells the University if they are going to the event or if they are considering it and many more options;

- promote books and articles: the University can promote a book or an article that might be useful to students. During the existence of the Facebook account, several books were promoted on the page;

- organize contests: the University can organize directly on the page different contests. On the University Facebook page are often organized contests with prizes;

- find more about students: the University can ask students what they like, what they do not like. [3]

Other benefits of using Facebook in education are:

- is a free collaborative learning tool where students can offer feedback to the University;

- it offers easy access to photos, posts, videos for students and other people. There materials are hosted by Facebook, so the costs for computer hardware for the University is zero.

Also, Facebook can be an excellent tool for future possible students. They can visit the University page in order to see what is like in the University.

Comparing Facebook social network to the University website and forum, the traffic is lighter, but on Facebook students tend to post and share opinions more often. They also talk to each other directly on the University Facebook page.

### 4. Other social networks and websites

Nicolae Titulescu University currently tries to disseminate information also on Twitter and YouTube, but these pages have a little less activity than the Facebook page.

On the YouTube account, about 20 videos can be found with a total of 1800 views and 17 followers. For 20 videos, 1800 views is a good number, considering that the content is from the University and academic.

On the Twitter account, 31 tweets of the University can be found and 13 followers, but this is also because Twitter is not that used in Romania as in other countries. So, YouTube and Twitter are still in an incipient state, but they are of value.

## 5. Conclusions

Information about the University, about activities and others related to the student life is important to students.

A “traditional” website is the most powerful tool for disseminating complex information. In a University with about 4500 students, the recorded traffic is more than good.

Facebook social account is a powerful tool for disseminating information. Universities must adapt to this type of communication with the students. A Facebook account brings more interaction with students and faster access to information. Nicolae Titulescu University is present on this social network and connects with the students. Only due to daily maintenance and updates, the Facebook page is followed by students. Facebook is a great tool for disseminating photos, videos and short news.

A major difference between posting on Facebook and posting on a website is that the Facebook post appears on the News Feed page of people that clicked the like button. On a regular website, like the University website ([www.univnt.ro](http://www.univnt.ro)), people must check periodically and see if there are new information, because a notification area does not exist.

A “traditional” website and social networks, in my opinion, complete each other. Each one has it's purpose.

In conclusion, online dissemination of news must be continuously done through all the methods that are accessible to students.

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