

**SOCIAL NETWORKS - KEY TOOL
USED BY EMPLOYEES FOR
PROMOTING THE IMAGE OF
BUCHAREST MUSEUMS**

Abstract

Social networks are a strong instrument for promoting for free the image of a product, service or organization. The present study is aimed at determining the impact of social networks on attracting tourists to big museums of Bucharest city. Thus, the research carried out reveals that museum employees use social platforms for promoting the image of the institutions they represent, posting several information about (1) permanent or temporary exhibitions, (2) additional services (movie evenings, concerts etc.), (3) special events (A Different Kind of School, Museums Night, etc.). The study proves that museums' presence on social networks can positively influence visitors' number.

Keywords: museums, image, visitors, promotion, Internet, social networks

JEL CODES: L32, L82, M37.

**REȚELELE DE
SOCIALIZARE -
INSTRUMENT CHEIE
FOLOSIT DE ANGAJAȚI
PENTRU PROMOVAREA
IMAGINII MUZEELOR
BUCUREȘTENE**

Ruxandra-Irina POPESCU

Associated professor Ph.D., Administration and Public Management Faculty, Bucharest University of Economic Studies
E-mail: ruxandra.irina@gmail.com

Răzvan-Andrei CORBOȘ

Associated professor Ph.D., Management Faculty, Bucharest University of Economic Studies
E-mail: razvan.corbos@man.ase.ro

Laura MINA-RAIU

Assistant Professor Ph.D., Administration and Public Management Faculty, Bucharest University of Economic Studies
E-mail: lauramina.ase@gmail.com

Gianina Nicoleta STAN

Student, Administration and Public Management Faculty, Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Rezumat

Rețelele de socializare constituie un bun instrument de promovare gratuită a imaginii unui produs, serviciu sau organizație. Studiul de față și-a propus să determine impactului acestora asupra atragerii vizitatorilor spre marile muzee ale Municipiului București. Astfel, cercetarea a evidențiat că angajații muzeelor utilizează platformele de socializare pentru promovarea imaginii instituțiilor pe care le reprezintă, postând aici informații despre (1) expozițiile permanente și temporare, (2) ofertele lor adiționale (serii de filme, concerte etc.), (3) evenimentele specifice pe care le derulează (Școala Altfel, Noaptea muzeelor, etc.). În final, studiul a demonstrat că prezența muzeelor pe rețelele de socializare poate influența pozitiv creșterea numărului de vizitatori.

Cuvinte cheie: muzee, imagine, vizitatori, promovare, Internet, rețele de socializare.



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1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A socialization network is a network of people that share common goals, such as a network of students, politicians, doctors etc. On social networks people worldwide "meet" to rapidly communicate to each other, share various activities, emotions, communicate simultaneously to various groups of people, see each other, or even hear each other. Sometimes, socialization networks from the web are also called „social networks" (Aguenza, 2012, p. 22).

In the last 50 years, Internet and online communities have revolutionarily changes the way people interact to each other, both from an economic as well as social point of view and have offered the possibility to communicate in real time, overcoming distances and involving lower and lower costs. Social networks¹:

- Have become and *integrant* part not only of our *personal life*, but also of the *business environment* (Mansfield-Devine, 2008). Thereby:
 - *in Europe*, approximatively 90% of Internet European users² frequently use social media and over half of them access a social site on a daily basis³ (Racareanu, 2012);
 - according to studies, *in Romania*, approximatively 50% of the Romanian Internet users access social media on a daily basis (ordinarily Hi5, LinkedIn or Facebook), whereas over 75% of them use social networks to show their dissatisfaction with private companies' products or services (Racareanu, 2012).
- Have several characteristics: (1) accessibility, (2) rapid and exponential increase in the number of users⁴, (3) provision of instruments that enable the interaction between service users, (4) exceptional commercial exploitation and (5) tendency of offering free services (because they

¹ On Internet there are several social networks such as: My Space, Hi5, Myvip, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Netlog, Badoo, Google+, Pinterest etc., but by far the most known is Facebook. This website had over 600 million of unique users/day in 2012, according to a study carried out by Pingdom.com, which revealed that Facebook was followed by Qzone (China) with 45 million of unique users/day, Twitter (35 million of unique users/day), Odnoklassniki (Russia) (17 million of unique users/day), Orkut (de la Google) (11 million of unique users/day), LinkedIn (9 million of unique users/day), Flickr (approx. 3 millions/day), Myspace (2 million/day), Hi5 (1,5 millions/day) (Pescaru, 2012).

In the business environment, Facebook is a useful network in order to attract fans, receive feedback from consumers and build a brand image, Twitter is used for attracting fans and for communication, while LinkedIn helps finding business partners and consolidating brand or company image.

² It is anticipated that, by the end of 2014, the number of users will reach approx. 107.4 million persons.

³ Among users, over 45% have expressed their discontent related to private companies' products or services through comments posted on social networks.

⁴ Twitter has increased with 700% in one single year, reaching over 10 million users; in The United Kingdom, the increase rate was 974%.

include publicity materials that render businesses profitable) (European Economic and Social Committee, 2009).

- Represent *the most rapid and efficient method to distribute information, promote products and increase the number of potential clients*. Thus, in Romania, in 2011, 69% of companies have made use of promotion through Facebook⁵ and discussion forums (43%), according to a GfK Romania study (Ziare.com, 2012). In these circumstances, marketing on social networks appears to be the natural step all organizations should make, no matter their nature, public or private. The reason is simple: people like socializing and tend to privilege other people's opinions than what they see in a traditional advertise (Lee, 2013, p. 7).
- *Significantly influence consumers' behaviour*. The results of a study carried out by PwC indicate that 55% of online buyers, that were part of the survey, were influenced, in their decision to buy, by information provided by the online environment. On the other side, companies are aware that they must attract clients to online platforms, as the number of responders that visited social networks due to personalized promotions raised from 9% in 2012 to 21% in 2013.
- *Represent a marketing, sales and corporate communication opportunity*, according to a study made by Rentrop & Straton group (2012).

2. METHODOLOGY

The present study has three main research objectives:

- Analysing the way the use of online social networks by employees of the most visited museums in Bucharest⁶ contributes to creating / improving organizations' brand image;
- Determining the impact of networks use on increasing museums' visitors' number.

2.1. Hypotheses and variables

The hypotheses that underpin the present research are:

⁵ In 2012 already existing and well positioned channels, such as Facebook, LinkedIn or YouTube have witnessed a slight increase, but also a more intense interest for a larger scale use of Twitter and independent blogs (increase of 8%, respectively 6%). Thus, Twitter has become interesting for 19% of companies, while campaigns on independent blogs for 27% of companies (Ziare.com, 2012).

⁶ We used the number of visitors in 2013, according to statistics.

1. *Museum employees use in their activities social platforms, Facebook being the most popular one among museums' personnel.* In order to operate this hypothesis we identified the following variables:

- the frequency users connect to Internet in order to use social networks;
- social networks on which subjects have accounts and that they currently use;
- social networks subjects use most frequently;
- the frequency users post information on social networks;
- respondents age;
- the museum in which the respondents work (museum of origin).

2. *Employees use social networks to promote museums' image.* The variables used were:

- main reasons for which users access online social networks;
- type of information posted on social networks.

3. *Promoting museums on social networks can determine an increase in the number of visitors.* The variable corresponding to this hypothesis is: benefits brought by the use of social networks.

2.2. Research method

In this phase we present the main arguments that have led us to the choice of the research methods, as well as the way we used them within our research.

Investigated population:

- individuals, living in Bucharest, over 18 years of age;
- professional profile: employees of Bucharest museums;
- sampling characteristic: online social networks users.

Sampling:

- **Sample characteristic:**
 - *stratification* (sex, age, education level, position within the institution (management/execution) and museum of origin);
 - *probabilistic selection* (at the level of the questioned person).

- **Sample validity:** information related to the number of employees of each museum is mentioned on the museums' websites.
- **Sample volume:** 96 employees from 6 museums, holding both management and executions positions.
- **Period of data collection:** 7 February - 5 April 2014.
- **Method for data gathering:**
 1. *Survey is a specific method for direct research*, which has a scientific foundation that allows obtaining and collecting primary data through a questionnaire⁷ (data gathering instrument) administered to a representative sample of respondents (Balaure *et al.*, 2002). The questionnaire we used was:
 - directly applied (on telephone or through direct interview), but also indirectly (electronically send, on email, to be filled in by respondents);
 - is a semi-structured questionnaire, that contains 2 sections: (1) *respondents profile* and (2) *gathering information related to the three hypotheses of the study*;
 - contains closed (11) and open (2) questions;
 - information gathered through questionnaire was processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).
 2. *Documents analysis* (physical and online format), consisting in activity reports of the analysed museums, as well as official statistics of the Ministry of Culture. Thus, according to official reports, published on the websites of the six museums, the number of visitors' evolution can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF VISITORS EVOLUTION IN THE SIX ANALYSED MUSEUMS BETWEEN 2008 - 2013

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Visitors						
"Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History	115.000	Temporarily closed		90.300 (Sept – Dec)	117.500	119.200
National Museum of Art of Romania (NMAR)	98.000	99.500	105.600	105.800	107.100	109.000
National Village Museum "Dimitrie Gusti" (NVMGD)	102.800	103.250	103.500	107.000	109.300	111.000
National Museum of the Romanian Peasant (NMRP)	74.000	73.200	74.100	75.800	76.000	77.400

⁷ The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain sincere and objective answers to all questions, which were designed and addressed in order to lead to reaching the research objectives (Brace, 2008).

National Museum of Romanian History (NMRH)	67.000	66.500	65.700	67.200	69.000	71.000
Municipal Museum of Bucharest (MMB)	50.200	50.000	50.400	50.250	51.150	54.300

Source: data processed from the museums' activity reports, 2008-2013

According to Table 1, the number of visitors has registered an ascending trend in the analysed period of time. The questionnaires administered to respondent's tried to reveal to what extend social networks have contributed to the process of attracting museum visitors.

All six museums hold a Facebook⁸ account, which is the most popular social network among users. MNTR and MNSDG also hold a Twitter account.

The most „familiar” with Facebook are “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History (15.064 likes), MNSDG (7.746 likes) and MNAR (6.418 likes), all of them holding an account since 2008. Correlating this information with the evolution of visitors' number presented in Table 1, we could be entitled to consider museums promotion on this specific social network had a contribution to this phenomenon.

Also, special events, such as Museums' Night, were intensively promoted through social media, especially Facebook and Twitter.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the present study we chose to analyse the most relevant questions that lead to the hypotheses demonstration.

The profile of the respondents was:

- 34,4% males and 65,6% females;
- 37% of the respondents aged between 36 and 55 years of age, the rest of them were distributed as follows: between 25 and 35 years: 33%, over 55 years: 21%, under 25 years: 9% (figure 1);

⁸ However, on MMB and NMRH websites there are no links directing to the official page on Facebook.

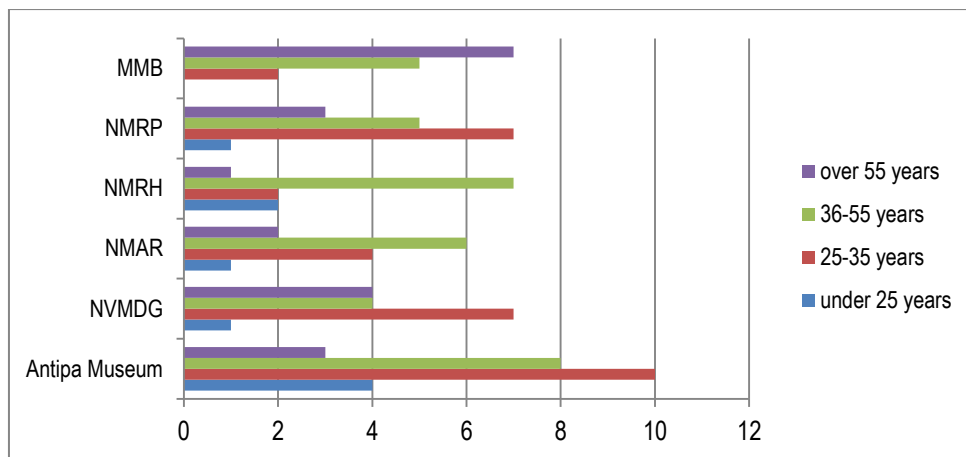


FIGURE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO AGE AND MUSEUM

As Figure 1 shows, Antipa Museum leads among institutions with young employees (approx. 80% of them are less than 36 years old), while at the opposite side MMB has approximatively 14%.

- 76% of the respondents hold higher education degrees, 24% have medium qualification;

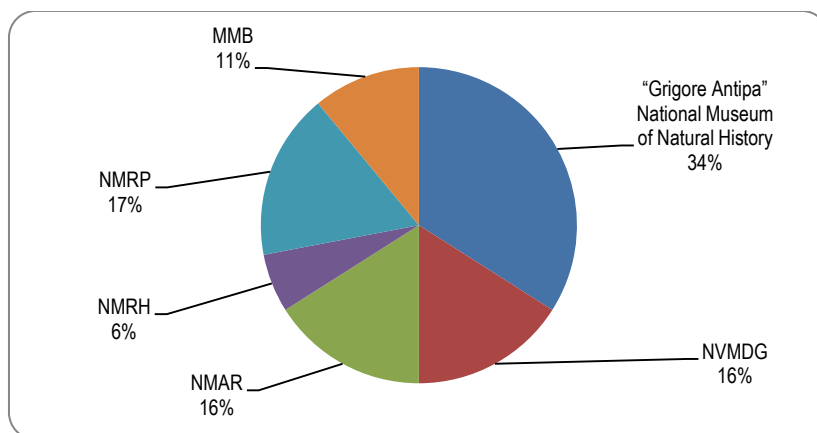


FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREE MUSEUM EMPLOYEES

Figure 2 reveals that "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History is the institution with the highest rate of employees holding an academic degree, one possible explanation being the fact that employees are young, as shown in Figure 1. Between the rest of the analysed institutions there are no major differences.

- 11,6% of the respondents have a management position, while 88,4% have execution positions;
- the distribution of the respondents according to the museum of origin, is the following:
 - "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History: 25%;

- National Village Museum "Dimitrie Gusti" (NVMDG): 17%;
- National Museum of the Romanian Peasant (NMRP): 17%;
- Municipal Museum of Bucharest (MMB): 15%;
- National Museum of Art of Romania (NMAR): 13.5%;
- National Museum of Romanian History (NMRH): 12.5%.

The following section will focus on analysing the most relevant questions that were targeted at demonstrating the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: *Museum employees use socialization platforms in their activity, Facebook being the most popular one.* This hypothesis was verified through answers obtained to the following questions:

- 91.3% of the respondents declared they *use social media* in their activity, while 8.7% said they do not use such instruments during their work programme⁹.
- As for the *frequency users connect to Internet to use social networks*, respondents declared (figure 3):
 - Daily or almost on a daily basis (6-7 times per week): 41.7%;
 - 3-5 times per week: 25.2%;
 - 1-2 times per week: 27.2%;
 - Do not know: 5.9%.

⁹ The reasons for not using social networks invoked by museum employees were:

- Not familiar with (55.6%);
- Does not represents my job's duty (42.7%);
- Not informed about the benefits of using social networks (63.1%);
- Don't find them useful; Consider them a waste of time (22.4%).

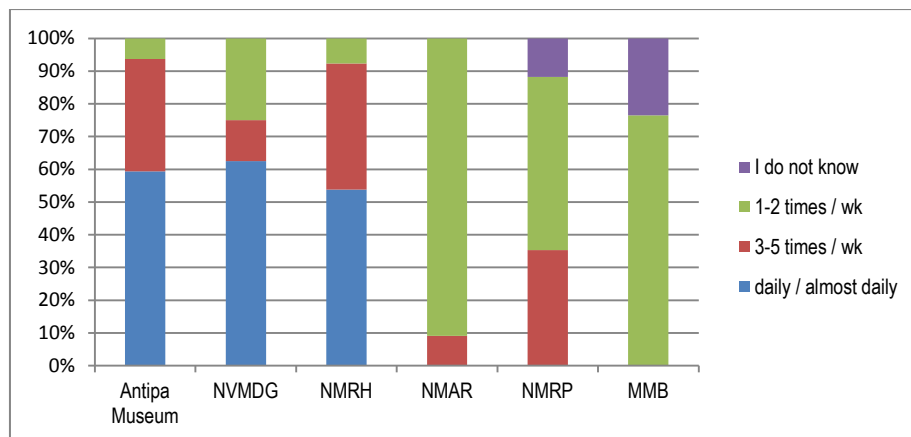


FIGURE 3. FREQUENCY EMPLOYEES CONNECT TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Figure 3 shows that “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History employees, MNSDG and MNIR connect daily or almost daily to social networks. Employees working in these three museums predominantly said they use social networks approximatively 1-2 times every week.

Figure 4 confirms what we all know: *young people* (under 25 and between 25-35 years of age) *use much more social media than people from other age category*. This result confirms that employees from analysed museums are a segment of population with the same characteristics than the rest of the population, fact that validates the hypotheses of already existing research in the field.

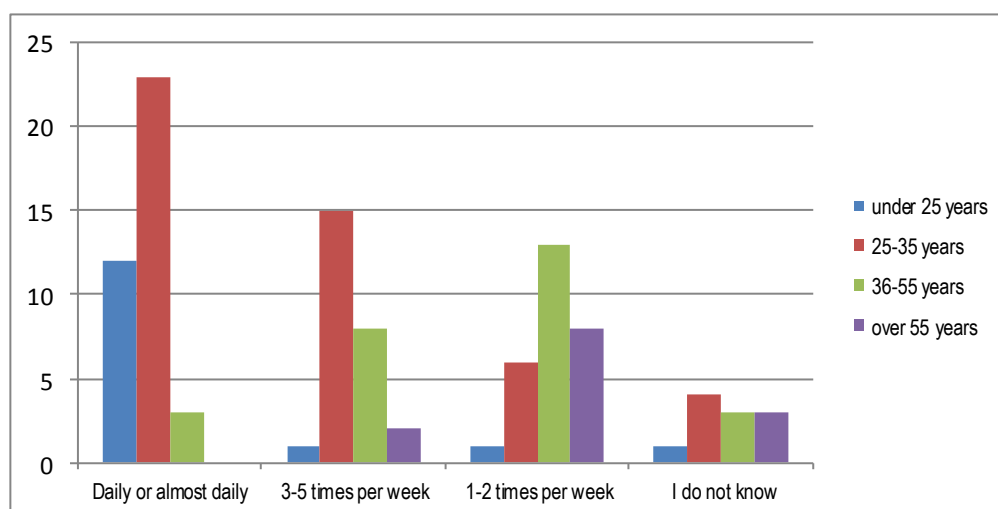


FIGURE 4. STRATIFICATION ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS AGE

- As for social media where the institution has (ever) / had an account /profile and that is most often used, the analysis demonstrated that Facebook is the socialization platform with the highest capacity of generating loyalty (97%).

After analysing the answers to these questions, **Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.**

Hypothesis 2: *Employees use social networks in order to promote museums' image.* This hypothesis was verified with the answers obtained to the following questions:

- *The main goals/reasons for which users connect to social media are:*
 - Promotion of the institution (75.6%);
 - Recruitment (6.9%);
 - Communication / client relationship (17.5%).

According to Figure 5, the main goal for which employees connect to social networks is promoting the image of the institution. This fact is valid especially for employees that use social media on a daily basis or 3-5 times per week. This correlation helps confirm **hypothesis 2**.

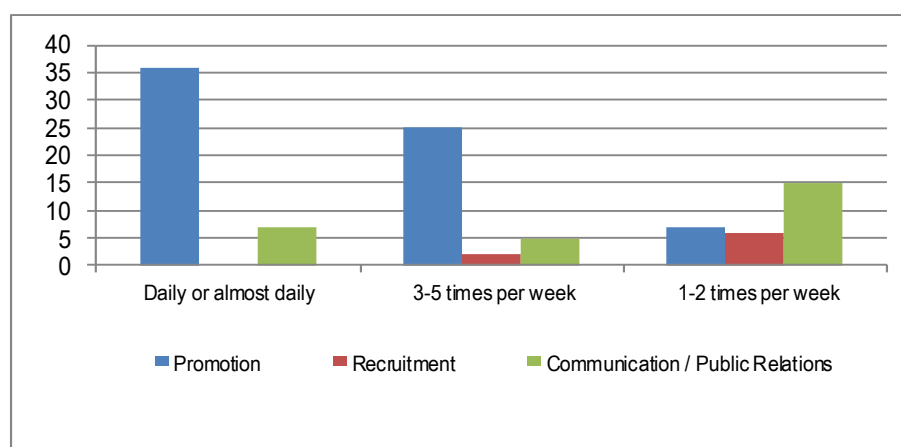


FIGURE 5. CORRELATION BETWEEN TIME SPENT USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE SCOPE FOR USING SOCIALIZATION PLATFORMS

- *The period of time for which employees have promoted the image of the museum using social networks is presented in table 2 and figure 6.*

TABLE 2. PERIOD OF TIME FOR WHICH EMPLOYEES HAVE PROMOTED THE IMAGE OF THE MUSEUM USING SOCIAL NETWORKS

More than 5 years	21.3 %
3 – 5 years	44.7 %
1 - 3 years	20.2 %
Less than 1 year	13.8 %

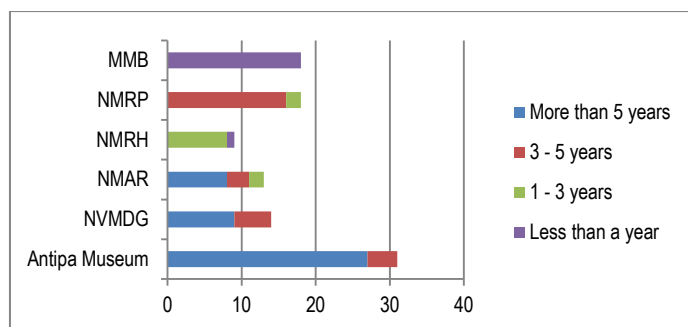


FIGURE 6. STRATIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE MUSEUM OF ORIGIN

According to figure 6, employees from “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History, NMAR and MNSDG have been using social networks for more than five years to promote the image of the museum among visitors. The correlation of information from Figure 6 with results gathered after documents` analysis, leads us to the conclusion that this activity has positively influenced the number of visitors evolution in the above mentioned museums (see Table 1), as well as the number of virtual visitors on Facebook (according to information gathered using the document analysis method).

Most MNTR respondents declared to be using social networks for 3 - 5 years within the activity of promoting the museum`s image and it seems that this fact had also had a positive effect on attracting visitors (according to statistics published on the official website).

- Regarding the *frequency of posting*, 41,7% of the respondents claimed to post on a daily basis, 27,2% every week and 9,7% every month. Analysed data reveals that employees that declared to connect daily/ almost daily on social networks, post information with the same frequency on such platforms. Therefore, it appears that “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History, MNSDG and MNIR employees are very active on socialization platforms and post information every day to promote the image of their institution.

- Information posted on social networks is about:*
 - Permanent exhibitions (42.6%);
 - Temporary exhibitions (79.8%);
 - Additional services (movie evenings, concerts etc.) (45.7%);
 - Particular event (A Different Kind of School, Museums` Night etc.) (51.3%);
 - Participation of the museum to international events (10.6%);

- Images and videos from various exhibitions (17%);
- Contests and promotions (11%).

The second hypothesis - *Museum employees use social networks to promote institution's image* – is **partially confirmed** because social networks are used for over five years to promote the institution and employees daily connect and post information only in three of the six museums analysed in the present paper ("Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History, MNIR and MNSDG). However, using the document analysis method we identified that other museums have also created (although quite recently) a page on Facebook – the most popular social network.

Hypothesis 3: *Promoting museums on social networks determines an increase in the number of visitors.*

- According to Figure 7, respondents consider that using social networks has as *major benefit the attraction of new visitors*, aspect on which both management and execution personnel agree. The second major benefit identified by respondents is *gaining visitors' loyalty*.

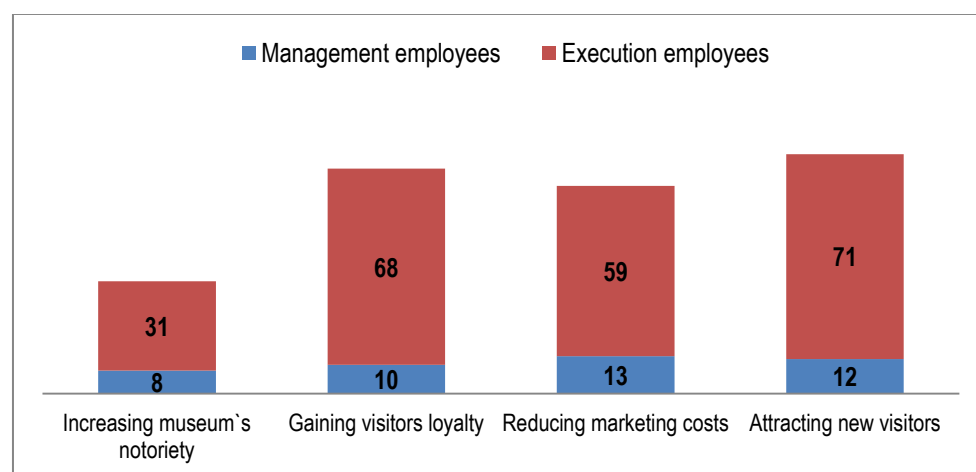


FIGURE 7 . CORRELATION BETWEEN BENEFITS FROM USING SOCIAL NETWORKS AND POSITION HELD BY RESPONDENTS

Interviewed managers consider that the main benefits brought by online social networks are:

- creating a positive image - 62.3% of the respondents;
- informing clients - 59.9% of the respondents;
- gaining new clients – 50.7% of the respondents;
- using online questionnaires - 50% of the respondents;

- relaxing employees – 48.9% of the respondents;

The last hypothesis – *Promoting museums on social networks positively influences the number of visitors* - **is also verified** based on document analysis and official statistics published by the analysed organizations in their official reports. Correlating statistics with resulted presented in figure 7, which highlight employees' perception on benefits of using socialization platforms, we can conclude that the third hypothesis is also true.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The research goals were achieved as **all three hypotheses were verified**. In table 3 we synthetically present the conclusions of our study.

TABLE 3. SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Systematic research conclusions	Highest percentage obtained
Period of time in which employees promoted museum's image on social media: 3-5 years	44.7%
Highest connection frequencies: 6-7 times per week	41.7%
Frequency of posting information on social networks: daily	41.7%
Most popular social network: Facebook	93.2%
Scope for using social networks: promotion	75.7%
Main information posted on social networks: temporary exhibitions	79.8%
Main reasons for not using social networks: "Not informed about the benefits related to social networks use"	66,7%
Benefits related to social networks use: gaining visitors loyalty	31.6%

At the end of our research, museum employees became more aware of the importance social networks play in promoting their organization and even brought proposals for raising museum's visibility on social media:

- training all employees in order to become familiar with using social network platforms;
- appointing one employee responsible with managing and updating social platforms;
- outsourcing such activities to a specialized company;
- creating an online marketing department within the organization.

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