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Perceptions and Policy Orientations of Generation Z in the Context of the COVID19 Pandemic. A Relationship Marketing Perspective.

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Abstract: This research delves into Generation Z's perceptions in an Eastern European country in a time of acute crisis caused by the COVID19 pandemic by studying their opinions and policy orientations in a crisis context. The research is the first of its kind in this field, and it is meant to shed light upon motivations, causes, and correlations in a qualitative, philosophical manner, paving the way towards improved policy responses of the public administration in periods of crisis. It applies a set of dimensions of relationship marketing in public administration to shed light on motivations, causes, and correlations of phenomena characteristic of Generation Z.

Keywords:COVID19 crisis response, public institutions, communication, policy recommendations, relationship marketing, Generation Z, Romania.
JEL: M31, M38, D73

I.   Introduction

During a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, public institutions have gained prominence and are invested with more power and responsibility. Keeping the crisis under control and maintaining citizen's trust in an era of disinformation and online media is a process that needs investment, attention, and strategy. However, it is a crucial process for preserving society's civic fabric and ensuring trust in its aftermath.

Institutions have been responsible for managing the crisis and deciding about the amount of information provided to the public, how it is transmitted, and the measures to be taken. A balanced outcome is hard to achieve, considering the need to issue safety measures, produce minimal harm to the economy and avoid creating panic while remaining trustworthy. The responsibility goes beyond providing credible information and managing the immediate risks. It also has to support education and foster change in health behavior (Tanner et al., 2013) and have in mind the coherence of measures and have strategic goals for the post-crisis period. Moreover, support for public institutions can fall abruptly whenever a reputation crisis occurs. Rapid responses, efficient communication, and taking responsibility are needed to diminish the disruption and help institutions maintain a stable position (Marland and DeCillia, 2020).

This research delves into Generation Z's perceptions in Romania by studying their opinions and policy preferences in the context of the COVID19 crisis. Qualitative analysis is applied to provide insight into the participants' perceptions in a previously unexplored field. A relatively large number of hypotheses is tested, based on several relationship marketing dimensions, to provide a comprehensive overview of the target group and an insight into their opinions and policy orientations.

II.   Literature Review

The public sector is like a living organism built by different institutions with diverse functions at legislative, executive, and judiciary levels, which are meant to build a unitary whole and present themselves as a homogeneous entity. To represent themselves, follow coherent principles, and work together to achieve a common goal, communication is the crucial factor that determines the successful performance of the institutions, both internally and externally, with citizens. The relationship between citizens and public institutions spills over to the other entities involved in society, from local to national and international level,

affecting sectors such as business, academia, and civil society, empowering them to define their role and represent their interests and rights (Uphoff and Krishna, 2004).

Loyalty, credibility, and fighting corruption are the founding dimensions on which public services are built (Dimant and Tosato, 2017). According to relationship marketing, these dimensions are influenced by an attitude component and a behavior component, such as trust and commitment (Mägi, 1999; Söderlund, 1999; Knox, 1998; Dick and Basu, 1994; Mowday *et al.,* 1979; Williams and Hazer, 1986; Lee and Zeiss, 1980; Day, 1969; Kiesler, 1969).

A further dimension on which public services are built is the level of involvement, called participatory level, which can be autonomous or controlled and increase mutual trust and loyalty (Chunxiao and Yandan, 2019). The motivation to get involved is triggered by various elements, such as seeking to learn skills, promoting self-growth, gaining career-related experience, expressing or acting on important values, strengthening social relationships, and protecting negative feelings (Clary and Snyder, 1999). As actions speak louder than words, citizens who act in society can be allies of the public system or, on the contrary, create powerful impediments. When people are aware of the result, are willing to obtain it, and act consciously, they will be less distracted by obstacles, be more tolerant, and more accurately assess the discrepancy between expectations and results (White, 1959; Bateson, 1985; Stott and Walker, 1995; Raaij and Pruyn, 1998). Putting effort in obtaining something, making a sacrifice, or investing time are factors that increase perceived value and generate commitment, as relationship marketing literature has revealed (Cialdini, 1988; Grusky, 1966; Kiesler, 1971; Söderlund, 1999; Kanter, 1968; Farrell and Rusbult, 1981; Lund, 1985; Rusbult, 1983; Salancik, 1977). Therefore, institutions need to develop tools and communication strategies to build a community foundation, credibility, and loyalty (Esposito and Besana, 2018) and, ultimately, increase citizens' participatory level.

Trust is fundamental to every relationship of any kind and a mandatory condition in creating long-term relationships that can survive in crises (Andrei, 2018; Verma *et al.,* 2016; Miquel-Romero *et al.,* 2014; Gummesson, 2008; Moorman *et al.,* 2006; O'Malley and Prothero, 2004; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Churchill and Surpernant, 1982). For societies scarred by past traumas, such as communism and abrupt economic transitions, we might give up the idea of fully-fledged trust and find support in the concept of "tempered trust," as defined by Kramer (2009) in the Harvard Business Review. Kramer recommends doing some small trusting acts, through which will trust and to meet halfway are communicated. These acts lead to positive interactions and manage risk intelligently, as they are incremental and based on reciprocity. Kramer's recommendation for building a trustful environment is to send strong and clear signals and to build a good reputation. He also recommends retaliating firmly, quickly, proportionately, and consistently when trust is breached. Trust is built in the same way that citizens' measures have to be transparent and unequivocal whenever trust is breached, such as in cases of corruption or failure to handle crises.

According to Surej (2019), public institutions are in a permanent process of building trust, and they need to regain citizen's approval periodically. Creating a relationship based on commitment enables parties to work together, as revealed by relationship marketing literature (Addison*et al.,* 2017; Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The information flow must avoid overload or vagueness, as both may create distrust (Bright et al., 2015; Sasaki *et al.,* 2015; Bawden and Robinson, 2009).

Trust, commitment, direct interaction, and perceived added value will increase positive word of mouth transmission in society (Goyette *et al.,* 2010) and reflect positively on levels of participation, as well as on the creation of recommendable public brands and political marketing (Chowdhury and Naheed, 2019). As postulated by the so-called "halo effect" (Nisbett and Wilson, n.d.), when institutions gain the citizen's trust, their decisions and measures are less questioned and receive more support from citizens (Teodorescu *et al.,* 2009). This is a matter of image, as a country's image consists of a real image and a projected image (Picazo and Moreno-Gil, 2017) and, ideally, the difference between the two should be shrinking while allowing for regional nuances (Margarisová and Vokáčová, 2016; Anholt, 2008).

A relationship is influenced by acquired psychological factors, such as trust and loyalty, and intrinsic factors, such as culture (Davis, Wang, and Windridge, 2008; Laroche *et al.,* 2000) and differences in perceptions (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). One of the most widespread frameworks for intercultural studies and analysis was developed by Hofstede (2011). Hofstede's model contains six societal dimensions, which explain the differences between national cultures (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010; Hofstede, 2011; Pelau and Pop, 2018): individualism vs. collectivism, long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation, avoidance of uncertainty, distance from power, masculinity to femininity and indulgence to restraint. These characteristics influence how public institutions are perceived and predict how prepared citizens are in front of a disaster of any kind: natural, epidemic, or political. For the cultural determination in Romania, the research conducted by David (2015) and Rădulescu-Motru (1998) is noteworthy. David emphasizes the pervasive lack of trust in Romanian society and low self-esteem, hampering creative potential development.

In order to better react to crisis and support citizens, popular psychology needs to be known in order to prepare citizens better and reduce vulnerabilities (Daellenbach, et al., 2018): what motivates and triggers people, which

are the strengths and weaknesses (beyond stereotypes), which are the segments, age groups, and social categories and what kind of messages reach those groups.

In times of crisis, communication can be divided into three stages: (1) instructive information, which gives people the needed knowledge to react, (2) adjustive information, which help people to cope with uncertainty; and (3) internalizing information, which helps an organization manage its reputation (Ozanne, et al., 2020; Coombs, 2015; Sturges, 1994). Crisis periods also see a surge in appeal to moral beauty (Linwan, 2019), namely the attempts to sensitize the public towards human suffering. During a pandemic, the people's moral salience is trained daily through the great amount of tragic content in media.

Globalization and technology have become an integrated conglomerate of everyday reality, making processes easier and more complex. Public institutions need to adapt and use the technology responsibly (Kushwaha et al., 2020; Henning-Thurau and Hansen, 2000). People are no longer influenced only by local leaders and local public institutions but also by international trendsetters. To maintain citizens' trust, public institutions must be able to fight false news, myths, and trolling, which contribute to a widespread anti-establishment mood in contemporary societies (Andrei, 2019) and boost education, including inter-disciplinary education (Zaharia et al., 2009).

Media is playing an important role herein. During the COVID-19 pandemic, media became the main binder between citizens and authorities, controlling the existing fear and panic (Gearhart, *et al.,* 2018). Journalists got to handle a two-edged sword: they could calm down the citizens or increase the fear (Thompson, 2019). Health reporting is different from normal reporting, as the health journalists' role was to forward the news, educate and induce behaviors. During the critical period, the media exerted a strong influence on the population (for example, regarding approval or disapproval of the public institutions' decisions, panic-shopping, wearing masks). Currently, the media has a crucial role in positioning citizens towards a vaccine, pushing the balance towards acceptance or hesitancy (World Health Organization, n.d.; Stekelenburg, *et al.,* 2020).

Bearing in mind all these considerations and, as shown in Figure 1, relationship marketing in public administration is determined by a set of dimensions, which can be categorized into founding dimensions, interpersonal dimensions, and technologically assisted dimensions. This research explores a set of selected dimensions from all three categories, which were selected by the authors because of being particularly relevant in a time of acute crisis and indispensable to bridge the way back to normality: (1) trust, (2) participatory level, (3) fighting corruption, (3) digitalization, (4) social media and (5) disinformation.

III.　　Methodology

The present research is of qualitative nature because it is the first of its kind. It is meant to shed light upon motivations, causes, and correlations in a qualitative, philosophical manner, serving as orientation for further quantitative evaluations and confirmatory studies. It uses semi-structured discussion, the technique of the interview, and the conversation guide tool. Qualitative assessment was furthermore chosen based on the prerequisite that it is challenging o measure concepts such as the degree of trust (Pop and Pelău, 2017) and that policy recommendation and nuanced opinions are to be collected and analyzed to reach the research objectives.

A fundamental literature review, including COVID related literature, was carried out starting with May 2020 and August 2020. Based on this theoretical foundation, a series of hypotheses were drawn and tested in preliminary qualitative research (Stăncioiu et al., 2020), which took place throughout September and October 2020. Building on this preliminary pilot study, the needs for further research were identified. The objectives of the current study were set

1. to delve into the perceptions of Generation Z members in Romania in a time of acute crisis,
2. to identify their opinions and policy orientations, and
3. to apply a set of dimensions of relationship marketing in public administration to shed light on motivations, causes, and correlations of Generation Z phenomena in Romania.

To this end, a series of hypotheses were developed and tested.

Several 100 members of the young generation in Romania were contacted and invited to participate in the study. Sixty-seven persons accepted to participate and answer the relevant questions from a conversation guide, using semi-structured discussion, throughout November and December 2020. The study's demographics are the following: 64 participants are between 18 and 25 years old, one participant is between 26 and 35 years old, one participant is between 36 and 45 years old, and one participant between 45 and 65.

Given the large majority of participants under 25 years old, the perspective obtained is characteristic of Generation Z in Romania, a cohort that comprises individuals born after 1995 (Dabija et al., 2017). The majority of participants are women. Most of the participants originate from Romania, Bucharest, Muntenia, Oltenia, and Moldova, in descending order. The overwhelming majority (more than four-fifths of the participants) reside in an urban area. The interviews were conducted online, with the help of e-mails and videoconferencing tools. Anonymity was guaranteed to the participants.

The participants work in the fields of marketing, tourism, financial services, consulting, retail, insurances, mass media, hospitality, and, in lesser measure, in fields such as public administration, event management, banking, accounting, human resources, medicine, agriculture, IT and logistics. Only a few participants, less than 20, do not have work experience.

The following hypotheses were tested:

H1: *The interaction between the Generation Z in Romania and public institutions depends first and foremost on trust (Stăncioiu et al., 2020) - linked to the relationship marketing dimensions of trust and fighting corruption;*

H2: *The Generation Z in Romania hasa high potential of participatory level, expressed in concrete policy orientations(extended from Stăncioiu et al., 2020) - linked to the relationship marketing dimension of participatory level;*

H3: *The Generation Z in Romania expects digitalization of public services as a matter of priority (extended from Stăncioiu et al., 2020) - linked to the relationship marketing dimension of digitalization;*

H4: *The Generation Z in Romania expects teleworking as the new norm after the COVID19 crisis (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD, 2020; Deloitte Global, 2020) - linked to the relationship marketing dimensions of digitalization, popular psychology and personalized interaction;*

H5: *From March 2020 until November 2020, the Generation Z in Romania have been influenced first and foremost by social media in their actions and decisions regarding the use of health services during the COVID19 pandemic (Muno M., 2020) - linked to the relationship marketing dimension of social media;*

H6: *The Generation Z in Romania is aware of the dangers of disinformation in the online environment and has at its disposal the tools for combatting it (extended from Stăncioiu et al., 2020) - linked to the relationship marketing dimensions of social media and information vs. dinsinformation.*

IV.   Discussion

Participants provided information about the most important aspects impacting their interaction with public institutions. Close to three-fourths of them emphasized that trust is the most important aspect of interaction with public institutions. Furthermore, approximately two-thirds of the participants pointed out that mutual commitment is crucial for this interaction, followed by growing and maintaining relationships. The interviews' core idea is that trust, reciprocity, and relationship-building efforts are the bedrock of good interaction with public institutions. A second tier of factors impacting the participants' relationship with public institutions is formed, in descent order, by direct interaction, personalized interaction, and the demonstration of the value-added value brought by the public institution concerned.

When asked about their view on the psychology of the Romanian people and how this affects them and their interaction with public institutions, an overwhelming majority of participants identified lack of trust and self-esteem bruised by negative historical-sociological factors main psycho-sociological features of the Romanian people. Participants generally considered trust as the bedrock for a healthy society and fruitful social interactions. The pervasive lack of trust was associated with negative thinking and an understatement of their fellow citizens' capacities. Several participants underlined that lack of trust undermines the necessary cooperation and solidarity necessary for building strong social institutions, such as education, health, economy, and social protection, and it ultimately undermines growing one's full potential. Lack of trust is self-protective, on one side, but on the other, it fosters frustration, suffering, and problems of interaction. A participant pointed out that trust has an inward growing function, as it helps self-development and goes beyond skepticism and cynicism.

Trust also appears to influence life choices with an impact on society. The decision to build together, cooperate, and abide by a common goal can be sustained only on a trust basis. Participants pointed out equally that people should trust themselves and not let mistrust ruin their creative potential. A significant proportion of participants emphasized that the communist past, followed by a steep transition to capitalism and a democracy profoundly characterized by unfulfilled promises, contributed to endemic mistrust in society and a rigid interaction between citizens and institutions. It was also pointed out that in-depth knowledge of things generates trust and cooperation. Trust is also seen as a generator of respect, loyalty, and tolerance, a cornerstone for overcoming adversity and taking risks to achieve dreams and success. On the other hand, mistrust generates frustration and powerlessness, a hostile vision of the world, and a victim mentality. Lack of trust was also identified as a factor for an individualistic attitude, particularly when coupled with exaggerated competitive thinking.

Some participants identified that Romanian is prone to self-blame and self-shame, underestimating positive thinking. An interesting theory was advanced by a participant stating that mistrust, skepticism, and cynical attitude are personal problems projected outside social relations through a mimetic phenomenon. Several participants defended a similar point of view, mentioning that lack of self-esteem is the prime foundation of lack of trust. Also, collaboration with others is firstly learned by achieving coherence and unity of purpose within oneself.

Participants discussed how to achieve a re-birth of mentality to wipe out the entrenched mistrust from the past. Keeping promises was identified as the number one factor in cultivating trust by public institutions. Prompt resolution of queries, more openness, and transparency would gradually change the population's level of trust, the majority said. Small steps for gaining trust were recommended in both the personal and public sphere: ethical use of private data; quality of goods and services; improved education, including education of skills, such as working with others and communicating in a respectful, patient, non-aggressive manner; trust is given to employees; self-discipline; improvement of self-image coupled with cultivating pride and gratitude; constructive view of competition and making room for partnerships and solidarity; fulfillment of political promises; trust in a capable judicial system, able to compensate for injustice; and trust engendered by addressing corruption convincingly. High importance was given to leaders and managers; their integrity, competence, and credibility are strongly linked with the image of the structures they lead. The positive message from many discussions is that trust can be earned and cooperation can be learned.

Participants were asked about the tackling of corruption and its impact on their level of trust, as well as about measures that they would propose to reduce corruption in order for them to increase their level of "tempered trust" mentioned above. The large majority, around two-thirds of the participants, emphasized the importance of tackling corruption for gaining credibility and trust. The most common measure proposed was the strengthening the role of the National Anticorruption Directorate, an independent judicial structure established in 2002, which operates within the Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice. Close to half of the participants proposed to improve the system for appointing civil servants and to improve the transparency regarding the actions taken by the Parliament following decisions having as object incompatibilities, conflicts of interests, illicit assets, etc. The role of Parliamentarians' integrity and ethics was emphasized by several participants, who mentioned lifting the immunity of parliamentarians targeted by investigations. It speedily resolved cases with a clear result and sanction instead of often stalling and postponement leading to prescription.

A relatively high proportion of participants, fairly more than a third, stressed the importance of improving the transparency of the Government on the decision-making process and improving the transparency of the Parliament on the relevant legislative activity (Criminal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, anti-corruption laws, integrity laws, etc.).

Furthermore, more than a third of the participants stressed the need to improve the conditions for an independent judiciary power, the system for appointing prosecutors, and the administrative side of the judicial system (increasing the number of clerks, allocating the workload, and reducing the time to draft decisions, etc.). The importance of selecting independent judges and prosecutors, who are both incorrupt/incorruptible and not vulnerable to blackmail, was emphasized by several participants. Around a fifth of participants emphasized the National Integrity Agency's role in its mission to assess cases of conflicts of interest and the National Agency for Public Procurement regarding the verification of public procurement procedures.

It became clear during the discussion that a vast majority of participants correlates fighting corruption and transparency with trust. The more corruption will be visibly tackled, the more trust of Generation Z in the public administration will increase.Based on the synergy of the above observations, we note that **H1is confirmed and consolidated**.

Participants discussed the tackling of the COVID crisis by the Romanian authorities and ways of improving crisis management. By far, the biggest request expressed was for digitalization. Almost a half of respondents placed digitalization at the forefront of the measures to be taken. It was proposed to use electronic counters and interactive websites to digitalize and personalize services. Great value was assigned to the possibility of taking appointments before going to a physical counter. Classic means as the phone should be used about citizens not having access to the internet.

The second most expressed wish was to carry out a better information campaign, with the possibility to actualize information in real-time. Speedy reactions and good communication with citizens were mentioned at this point. Caution was advised to offer too many viewpoints and action alternatives or randomly criticize the official decisions taken, as these actions promote chaos, mistrust, and panic.

Transparency and efficiency of administrative systems are considered very highly by almost a third of the participants, under various forms and benefits, such as access to information, clarity of procedures, understanding of notions, and policy motivations. Several participants emphasized the importance of public institutions cooperating and diminishing bureaucracy. They advised reforming the administration based on better managerial criteria and performance criteria.

A fifth of the participants mentioned trust in managing the crisis and assuming responsibility and eventual failures as the main way to foster trust. A generic recommendation was made to focus on decisions that respect people's needs and be consequent in implementing measures to foster trust and reliability.

Participants requested flexibility from the public sector, particularly in the form of telework permissions, finding solutions for involving people instead of personnel reduction, support in professional

reconversion in case of job loss, coupled with social support. It was also mentioned to reduce public expenditure and allocate resources more efficiently while focusing on increasing productivity and securing expertise through competent and ethical employees. Several participants recommended focusing on key sectors such as economy, health, education, and research and fostering partnerships for targeted fields such as the medical, hygiene, research, and invest financially in medical centers able to treat COVID19.

Participants gave particular attention to the support of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), local producers, and highly affected fields such as tourism. For the latter, it was suggested to support local tourism to propose destinations and activities accessible under the current safety and hygiene rules.

During the discussion, it became clear that almost all participants have a high participatory potential, and the vast majority of them would need a platform to express their policy orientations and manifest this participatory potential. The more Generation Z will be given the possibility to participate in a policymaking, the higher their satisfaction and desire to remain in the country and contribute to society.
To conclude, **H2is confirmed**and the respective policy orientations are spelled out above.

Asked specifically whether they prefer to go to a public administration counter, or to access that service at an electronic counter, an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated their preference for an electronic counter. In fact, only three respondents from the 18 to 25 years old age group indicated that they wish to go in person to a physical counter, while another respondent nuanced his answer stating that they prefer an electronic counter, but would be reassured to know that there exists a physical counter too.It became obvious during the discussion that the more Generation Z will be given the possibility to participate in policy making, the higher their level of satisfaction and desire to remain in the country and contribute in society will be. We therefore conclude that **H3is confirmed**.

When asked about teleworking's adoption, it became clear that a 3 days per week teleworking formula is most popular among the participants belonging to Generation Z in Romania, followed by 2 days of teleworking per week. A surprising outcome is that almost a fifth of the participants would opt for 5 days of teleworking per week, opting entirely for home working and not needing an office structure, as shown in the synthetized response data presented in Figure 2 below. None of the participants proposed to give up regular, weekly teleworking days. The answers indicated that teleworking possibility was strongly linked to the motivation of life-work balance; it is caused by the need to digitalize and detach from a physical location, thus gaining flexibility, and it is correlated with the feeling of freedom.
We therefore conclude that **H4** is **confirmed**, albeit in various degrees, with 2 to 3 days being the optimum amount of days.

Participants were asked to what extent they have been influenced by various sources of information in their actions and decisions regarding the use of health services during the COVID19 pandemic, more precisely from March 2020 until November 2020. As shown in figure 3 presented below, the strongest influence on the entire group of participants was reportedly exerted by electronic press and internet, followed by social media and TV news. A third of participants acknowledged TV news to have a high impact. However, the information obtained from TV had less weight and credibility than the electronic environment, such as the internet and social media. The lowest influence was exerted by the written press, with almost half of participants disclosing that written press had close to no impact on their information gathering and derived actions and decisions concerning the use of health services. We, therefore, conclude that **H5 is disproved**. The said group of people were first and foremost influenced by electronic press, such as electronic newspapers and the internet.

Given the rising importance of the internet to inform people, the participants were asked about the dangers of disinformation, particularly in the online environment, and the ways to mitigate it. An overwhelming majority of the interviewees confirmed the disinformation process's existence and commented on its negative impact on society, in particular emphasizing that it causes panic, confusion, uncertainty, and agitation. Interviewees mentioned having been subjected to disinformation, be it via spectacular titles unlinked to content, ambiguous formulations, unclear sources, as well as blatantly false information. Several participants mentioned the effects being amplified during a time of crisis, as a pandemic, putting pressure on the public, and leading to a dramatic social incapacity to discern valuable, possibly lifesaving information from wrong information, at the risk of causing serious health and safety consequences. It was mentioned that the spreading of unfiltered, wrong information might cause effects as serious as the virus per se. Much emphasis was placed on the need to filter when receiving information, either a systematic, public filter, like a network, body, or department fact-checking the data, or a personal, private filter based on each individual's intention and capacity to protect themselves. Caution was advised when sharing unchecked information, in particular to youngsters who are more vulnerable and impressionable. A strong expressed need to make content generators, who cross ethical boundaries, is responsible for their acts.

The answers indicated that the threat of disinformation is strongly correlated with educating from early on the population in discerning media content, learning critical thinking, counter-manipulation, and keeping at bay credulity. It is to be noted that all this requires a high level of education, investment in human potential, and

time. There is a dramatic change from the past perception of the "masses" being kept ignorant, in order to be manipulated, to the nowadays need of educating the "masses" in order for them not to become victims of malicious disinformation campaigns and drag the public system into chaos.

It became obvious that participants express a need for a form of control over the online means of information to curb the disinformation and raise the levels of trust and credibility. However, three interviewees were against deepened control of the internet caused by disinformation, favoring individual freedom and self-reliance for filtering and discerning online content. One of them pointed out the danger of having a censoring body going too far in their actions, being vulnerable to political pressures, or being overzealous in making the internet "politically correct" and, in the end, making it harder to report abuse.

The answers indicated clearly and overwhelmingly that there are not, so far, adapted tools for the dangers of disinformation. A policy orientation provided is to create voluntary online identification schemes to increase the traceability of the information, as it is currently done for physical goods. Respondents perceive it as essential to work in a concerted European manner and abide by fact-checkers' international networks. Several initiatives have already emerged in this area, noteworthy being the European Commission's impetus in 2018 to create an independent fact-checkers network, with members being selected among the EU members of the US-based International Fact-Checking Network (European Commission, 2018). In the meantime, several private initiatives were born in European media to safeguard against disinformation and build a curriculum unit on fact-checking within the journalism schools in Europe.

We therefore conclude that **the first part of H5** (the Generation Z in Romania is aware of the dangers of disinformation in the online environment) **is proved**,**while the second part** (and has at its disposal the tools for combatting it) **is not proved**.

V.   Conclusions and Recommendations

Unlike former generations, Generation Z highly relies on digitalization and expects massive progress in this area. They combine realism, pragmatism, responsibility with self-reliance, self-development, constant improvement aspirations, and a certain inclination towards a spiritual world vision. Trust will play a key role in nations' economic and social vitality with Generation Z's predominant workforce. Public institutions are invited to make use of trust gestures, reciprocity and make an active effort towards relationship building in order to obtain in exchange the benefits of good, functional relationships with citizens, including votes, confidence, altruistic community thinking, the decision to remain as opposed to emigrating, to name a few.

We recommend that trust is built upon anti-corruption measures and whistleblowing mechanisms. Direct, personalized interaction with the young generation, particularly through IT and electronic means, is a priority. The digitization of institutional processes should be a priority, and facilities in terms of teleworking, electronic counters, smartphone applications to make appointments with public institutions, an absolute must. Participation in the decisional process through online contributions, public consultations, appeals to moral beauty, and social responsibility increase this generation's trust and commitment.

Urgent intervention is needed in disinformation to prevent fake news fatigue from creating victims of resignation and civic withdrawal. Investment in new fields of economic and social education are recommended, such as teaching critical thinking skills and a tempered trust approach, in order to support this generation in one of the most difficult tasks they face: needing to trust, in order to function, but backing-up this trust with a "sustained, disciplined ambivalence and vigilance" (Kramer, 2009), in order to adapt swiftly to change and face the challenges of the contemporary world.

VI.   Limitations and FutureResearch

A quantitative analysis can be undertaken in order to refine and confirm the findings of this qualitative research. The analysis can be structured on public services and present ready-to-use recommendations for the public administration in those respective service fields.

A deeper sociological analysis could also be undertaken to see whether Generation Z in Romania shares similar features with their counterparts in other areas of the world. The historical and socio-cultural context might indicate similarity with post-communist eastern European countries.

The interviewees are youth with a high level of education and living predominantly in an urban area. A wider national study could be undertaken to obtain nationwide conclusive results involving the perspective of Generation Z members from the rural area. The gender balance of the study could be enhanced, if possible.

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Figure 1. Dimensions of relationship marketing in public administration.
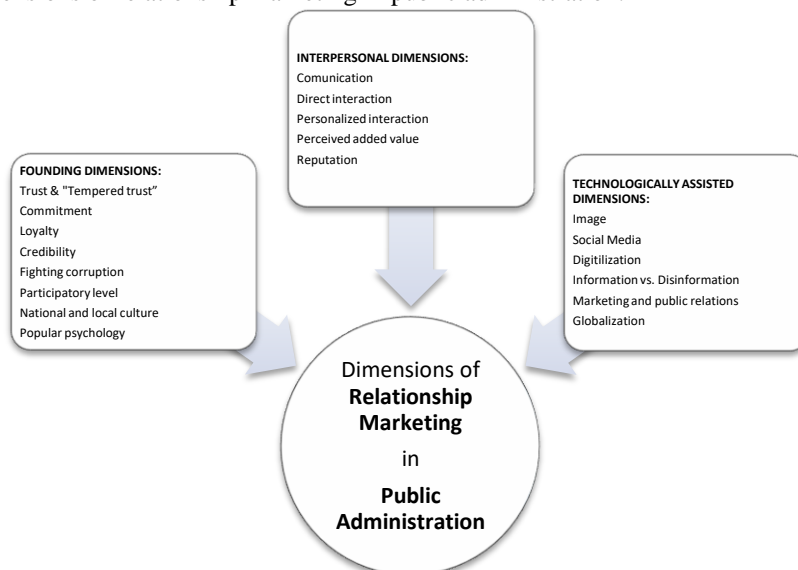
(Source: Author's own creation based on relationship marketing literaturesynthesis.)

Figure 2. Teleworking formulas and the preference of participants belonging to the Generation Z in Romania.
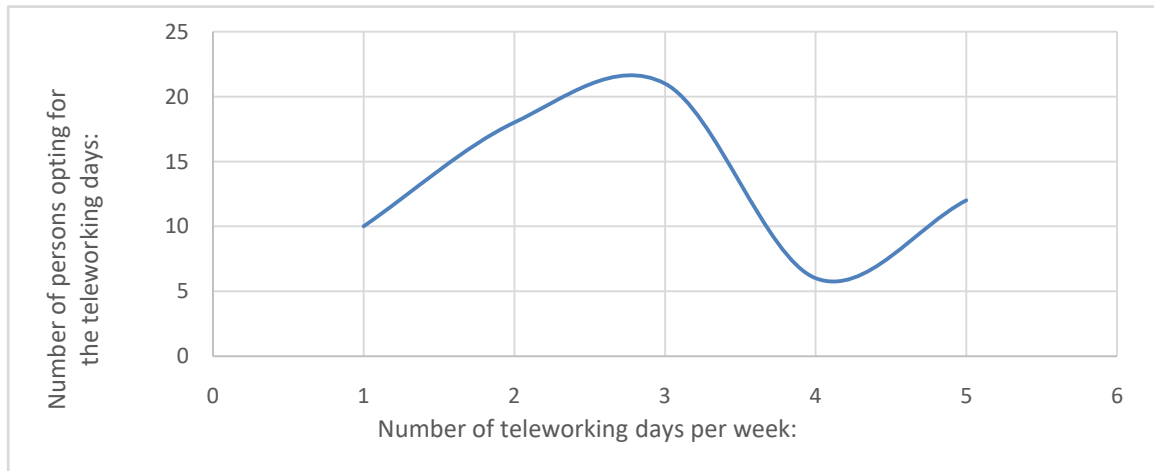
Number of teleworking days per week:	1	2	3	4	5
Number of persons opting for the teleworking days:	10	18	21	6	12

Figure 3. Impact of media types on actions and decisions made by Generation Z participants in Romania, regarding the use of health services during the COVID19 pandemic.