

Information Access in the Digital Era

Dalia Petcu, Vasile Gherheș
“Tibiscus” University of Timișoara, România
Ciprian Obrad
West University of Timișoara, Timișoara, România
Sorin Suciu
“Politehnica” University of Timișoara, Timișoara, România

ABSTRACT: With a fast evolution, a considerable number of applications and global accessibility, the internet is used, nowadays, to gather information from every field of interest, for business dealings, for establishing social relationships, for communications or relaxation. This article offers a series of information about the degree of using the internet at a global and European level as well as data about the most used websites in our country.

KEYWORDS: internet growth, internet statistics, websites users.

Introduction

In a continuous changeable world, under the conditions of passing from a production-based economy to an information based economy, the end of the 20th century is marked by the emergence of a new communicational technology which began to gain field: the interlinked computers networks (Internet) which made possible the exchange of information between people from different corners of the world, information that may be controlled, replied, and delivered easily.

It can be said that the final achievements from informational science and technology fields have changed the world, through the means of internet, into an “agora”, a place where ideas, new concepts and technologies are conceived and exchanged, where connections between people from any part of the world are not just possible, but they become reality.

“All these end with the electronic era, whose means replace the principle had to run everything with the principle of simultaneity. The movement of information almost with light speed has become, by far, world’s greatest industry. The use of information is, as well, world’s greatest consumption function. The world turned into an educative community and, regarding how tight the mutual relationships are, became a small village” [McL97]

1. Internet Evolution

For a better understanding of the evolution of internet, in the tables below is presented a series of statistical data regarding the number of internet users at a global level as well as among European Union countries and the results regarding the growth rate between 2000 and 2009 and the penetration rate among population.

Table 1. Use of internet at a global level

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS						
World Regions	Population (2009 Est.)	Internet Users Dec. 2000	Internet Users Latest Data	Penetration % (Population)	Growth % 2000-2009	Users of Table %
Africa	991,002,342	4,514,400	67,371,700	6.8	1,392.4	3.9
Asia	3,808,070,503	114,304,000	738,257,230	19.4	545.9	42.6
Europe	803,850,858	105,096,093	418,029,796	52.0	297.8	24.1
Middle East	202,687,005	3,284,800	57,425,046	28.3	1,648.2	3.3
North America	340,831,831	108,096,800	252,908,000	74.2	134.0	14.6
Latin America/Caribbean	586,662,468	18,068,919	179,031,479	30.5	890.8	10.3
Oceania / Australia	34,700,201	7,620,480	20,970,490	60.4	175.2	1.2
WORLD TOTAL	6,767,805,208	360,985,492	1,733,993,741	25.6	380.3	100.0

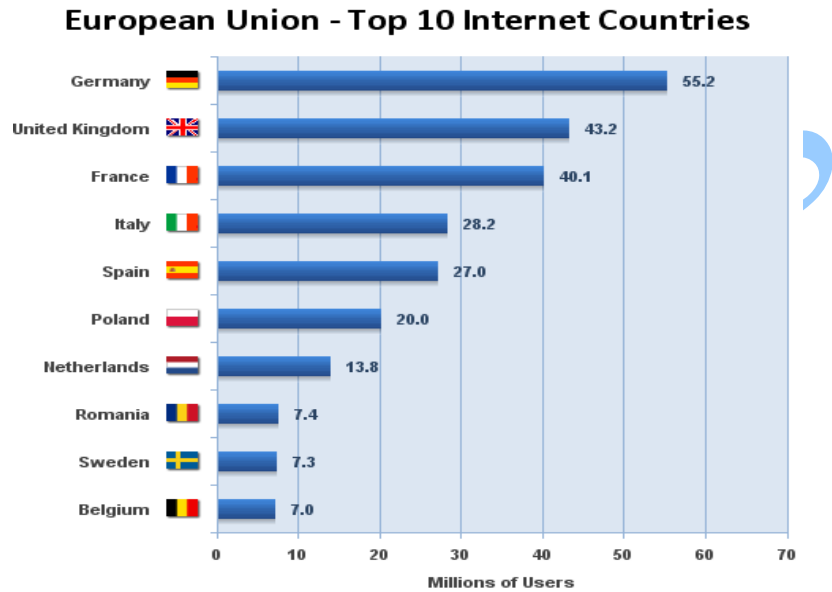
Source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com>

If the terms of comparison are still the continents of the world, we notice that the highest rate of penetration is in Northern America (74,2%), then Oceania/Australia (60,4%) and Europe (52%). On the other hand, the growth rate between 2000 and 2008 reaches the highest level in the areas where the penetration rate was lower in the previous years. There are areas that adjust the growth rhythm to the continents with the highest penetration of the internet. Thereby, the growth rate in the Middle East is 1648,2%, 1392,4% in Africa, and, in Latin America 890,8%. (Table 1).

When we refer to the use of internet in the European Union, the penetration rate among the population is 89,2% in Sweden, 85,6% in Holland, 84,2% in Denmark, 83,5% in Luxemburg, etc., countries where this rate is over the average rate of European Union – which has a value of

63,8%. Countries of European Union, where internet still has a low penetration power are: Cyprus (30,9%), Bulgaria (36,7.5%), etc. (Table 2).

It can be noticed that, at the end of the last year, in Romania, there were almost 7,5 millions of users of internet, which means a penetration rate of almost 33,4%, value still much under the average rate of European Union.



Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com
297,001,040 estimated EU Internet Users for December 2008
Copyright © 2009, Miniwatts Marketing Group

Figure 1. European Union – Top 10 Internet Countries

2. Websites and Romanian Internet Users

But which are the most used websites? According to www.alexa.com, at a global level we find google.com, facebook.com, youtube.com, yahoo.com, live.com, wikipedia.org.

In Romania, through the introduction by BRAT (Romanian Audit Bureau of Circulations) of the Study of Audience and Traffic on Internet (achieved according to a methodology at an international level, successfully used in countries like Austria, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland) at the beginning of this year the most visited websites were hi5.com, gsp.ro, sport.ro etc. (Table 2).

Table 2. Top Romanian websites by number of visitors

No	Category	Website	Pageviews	Visits	Exclusive clients
1	Social networks	www.hi5.com	2391450252	60904561	4652007
2	Sport	www.gsp.ro	34209940	9604367	1248354
3	Sport	www.sport.ro	30589348	8589783	1171578
4	Web services	www.trilulilu.ro	62831105	8420216	2801832
5	Tabloids	www.libertatea.ro	45322924	8228865	1550987
6	Social networks	www.neogen.ro	256401215	7634139	1138339
7	Tabloids	www.cancan.ro	37685226	7574943	1609635
8	Sport	www.prosport.ro	25006552	7320657	877638
9	General news	www.realitatea.net	25191850	6764226	1835724
10	Forum	forum.softpedia.com	20039416	6717025	2828908

Source: www.sati.ro

The most interesting information for Romanian internet users seems to be from fields like: social networks, sport, tabloids, general news. If we deepen the analysis we find other information of interest, fact resulted from the study of the most visited websites: jobs, free time, search engines and portals.

Regarding the categories of the most visited websites in Romania, an important place have the social networks where the most numerous visits are for www.hi5.com – a website with a tradition in socialization (the most visited website in Romania – 60 millions visits in January 2010, according to www.sati.ro).

Regarding the profiles of those who socialize on this website, the most numerous categories is represented by people between 20 and 29 years old – number resulted from the analysis after the search filters (see Figure 2). The distribution by sex of the visitors is very unbalanced.

The second website in Romania by number of visitors from the category social networks is www.neogen.ro, but is visited with 7,5 less than hi5.com (January 2010, according to SATI).

Another category of websites frequently viewed are those with sport information. In this category (sport) the most visited are, according to SATI, in January 2010: www.gsp.ro (9,6 millions of visits), www.sport.ro (8,6 millions of visits), www.prosport.ro (7,3 millions visits). Their market share, according to the number of visitors can be noticed in Figure 3.

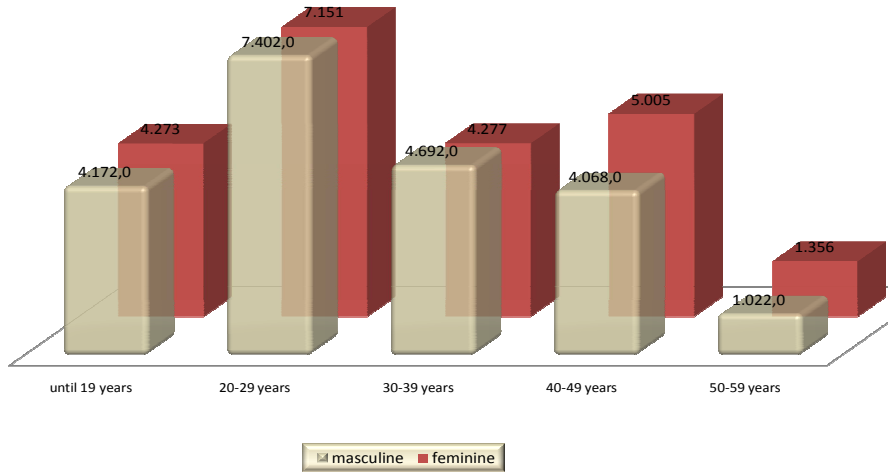


Figure 2. The distribution of www.hi5.com visitors by sex

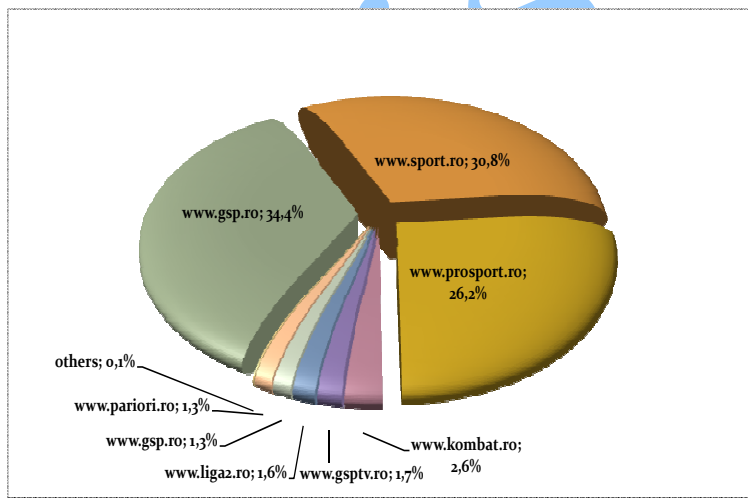


Figure 3. Market share of the main sport websites, January 2010

The websites audited by BRAT, from category tabloids, with the highest number of visits in January 2010, are: www.libertatea.ro (8,2 millions), www.cancan.ro (7,6 millions), www.click.ro (3,6 millions). Their market share is higher than that of other audited tabloids.

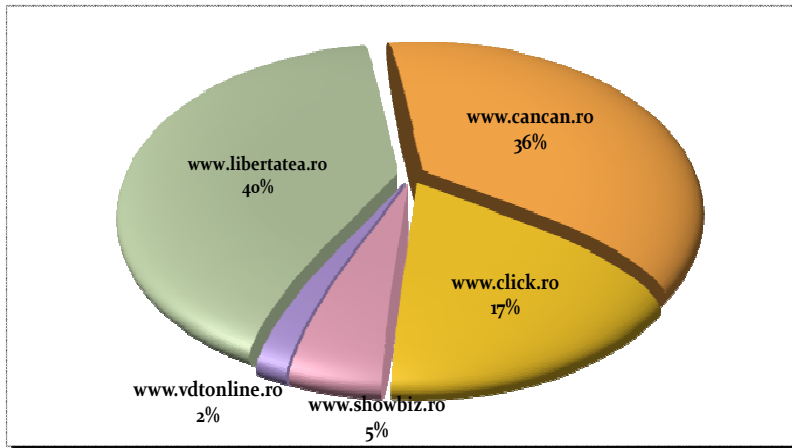


Figure 4. The most visited tabloids on internet

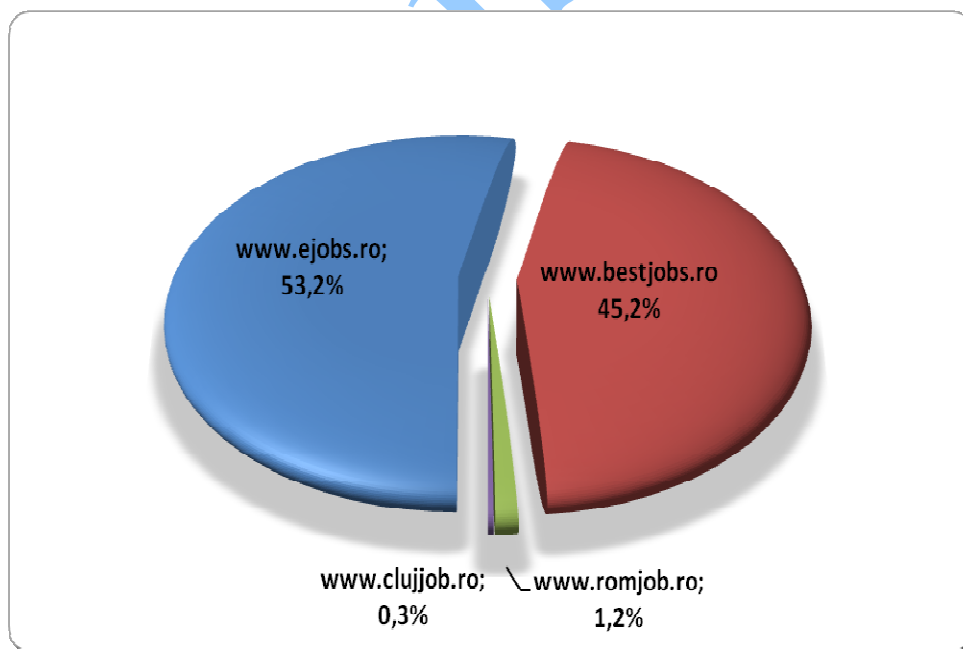


Figure 5. The most visited jobsites on internet

Beyond internet's leisure function noticed from the frequent visits on websites from areas like: social networks, sport, free time, is the utility function expressed by visiting websites from the jobs category. Searching this type of information is also due to the actual social-economical context. The most visited portals of this area are: www.ejobs.com (5,5 millions visits in January 2010, according to SATI), www.bestjobs.com (4,6 millions visits).

We must not forget the informational function of the internet which is of interest for those who have visited, in January 2010, websites like: www.realitatea.net (6,7 millions visits), www.hotnews.ro (5,7 millions visits), www.evz.ro (4,9 millions visits), www.stirileprotv.ro (4,3 millions visits), or www.antena3.ro (4,2 millions visits).

Conclusion

According to the data above we can clearly notice that the number of internet users has grown considerably in the last period and that the virtual field has become an alternative of the daily reality throughout a variety of given alternatives. We notice that Internet evolve into a global information infrastructure. It was hailed as a new engine of history that will change the sense of place, time and the feeling to be a part of a community.

References

- [DM02] E. Dennis, J. C. Merrill, *Media Debates. Great Issues for the Digital Age*, Wadsworth Group, Belmont, CA, 2002
- [Ghe08] V. Gherheș, *Comunicare mediată și comunități virtual*”, Editura ArtPress, Timișoara, 2008
- [Lev01] P. Levinson, *Marshall McLuhan în era digitală*, Editura Antet, București, 2001
- [Lov04] G. Lovik, *Cultura digitală. Reflecții critice*, Editura Idea Design&Print, Cluj-Napoca, 2004
- [McL97] M. McLuhan, *Mass media sau mediul invizibil*, București, Editura Nemira, 1997

[Pet08] D. Petcu, “*Spațiul public comunicațional*”, Editura ArtPress, Timișoara, 2008

www.internetworldstats.com, March, 2010

www.alexa.com, March, 2010

www.sati.ro, March, 2010

www.hi5.com, March, 2010

Tibiscus