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Fame, Fans and Facebook. Hungarian Celebrities and
their Admirers

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Abstract

Big Data presents the social sciences with an overarching challenge. Following many theoretical manifestos, we here present an empirical case study to demonstrate the new approaches that have become possible by using social media data in a specific field of cultural analysis. This paper reflects on changes in celebrity/fandom culture (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2015). The trend towards democratization was hastened by the spread of the internet, while the demotization of the process of celebrity creation became even more pronounced through web 2.0. Our study examines the relationship between the Hungarian celebrity sphere and social media fandom using quantitative research, including cross-sectional, network and correlation analyses. To illustrate the differences among the categories of celebrities and their fandom, we introduce two values—environmentalism and consumerism—which help to highlight existing patterns. Analysis of these dimensions can provide benchmarks for interpreting the thus-created proxies, and help us to reflect on the social roles of celebrities and their followers.

Keywords: Celebrity culture; Social media; Big data; Web 2.0; Network analyses.

1. *Introduction*

The recent explosion in digital data created by the use of social media holds a dialectical fascination for social scientists. As an increasing number of human activities migrate to the space of social media and therefore become hybridized, they create exciting research subjects for scholars. On the other hand, these digital data also call for new data-gathering, data-mining and data-processing techniques, and radically new methodologies. We call this fascination dialectic because these two dimensions—new research subjects and new methodologies—are obviously interrelated: they mutually and permanently shape the questions we ask, the answers we get, and the statements we articulate. Although this dialectical fascination with data-driven social science is felt by many, we believe it is justified only if this approach is able to meet two further expectations.

First, a data-driven approach is justified if it is able—or at least intends to—answer relevant questions (that is, it avoids asking irrelevant, boring questions which have no—or very little—social relevance). Second, it is justified if the methodology that is applied sheds light on social problems that cannot be answered better using traditional methodologies. This implicit critique—elaborated by others in detail elsewhere—posits that attempts to do data-driven social science can be self-referential, redundant and non-reflexive (Boyd and Crawford, 2012; Kitchin, 2014). Just because digital data are available does not automatically mean that they reveal a deeper understanding of social reality. The desire to address relevant social questions using new methodologies must not be confused with what Lazer and his colleagues call ‘big data hubris’—which refers to the use of such data without clarification of their validity and reliability (Lazer, Kennedy, King and Vespignani, 2014).

The empirical case described in this paper, the social media representation of Hungarian celebrities, is a legitimate research question in itself. However, it is our ambition here to prove the utility of our digital research methods. We claim that the analysis of digital social data allows us to ask and answer questions that could not have been asked or answered before. Following these considerations, we first outline the theoretical context of our empirical research, then introduce methodology and present findings.

2. *Theoretical context - Why are celebrities relevant?*

The reason behind the so-called ‘cultural turn’ is that in late modernity the role of cultural consumption and identity construction has dramatically increased (Giddens, 1991). Moreover, the gap or social distance between the ‘elites and masses’ has grown and is also being restructured (Bourdieu, 1984). Be they youth cultures, gamers, reality television audiences, trash entertainment aficionados, etc., the multiplication of media channels and the segmentation of media consumption has given rise to the increasingly pressing need to understand these new subcultures. In this situation, cultural studies are supposed to function like ‘inward anthropology’; that is, they should reveal and interpret hidden meanings within a given society. In light of the present crisis of legitimacy, growing populism within Western societies and the emergence of anti-elite movements, this can hardly be said to have been a successful

project so far. But the failure of the political project only emphasizes the need to better understand 'low', 'mass', 'popular' cultures and their consequences.

At the institutional level, this need led to the development of cultural studies. Later, it supported the proliferation of related sub-disciplines such as television and film studies, leisure and tourism, sports studies, etc. Then, following the logic of the specialization of scientific fields and related developments in social life, these disciplines were further subdivided into audience studies, celebrity studies and fandom studies. Our research contributes to the latter two fields.

From this interdisciplinary interest in studying mass culture, the issue of 'celebrity culture' has grown in importance (Rojek, 2001; Jenkins, 2006; Marshall, 2006; Holmes and Redmond, 2006; Turner, 2013; Couldry, 2015; Marshall and Redmond, 2016). As Chris Rojek argues, the emergence of celebrity as a public preoccupation is the result of three major interrelated historical processes:

'First, the democratization of society; second, the decline in organized religion; third, the commodification of everyday life. The decline in Court society in the 17th and 18th centuries involved the transference of cultural capital to self-made men and women. As modern society developed, celebrities have filled the absence created by the decay in the popular belief in the divine right of kings and the death of God'. (Rojek, 2001: 15)

Investigation of the development of celebrity studies—and the wider field of cultural studies—leads to the discovery of an odd contradiction. On the one hand, 'celebrity' has become a focal point of our culture, and there is a rising tide of studies about celebrity/ies. Indeed, in the last 15 years the number of pieces of research and the (rapidly institutionalized) interest in scholarly studies about the phenomenon of celebrity is clearly apparent. On the other hand, in 2010 in the newly launched academic journal *Celebrity Studies*, Graeme Turner, a leading scholar in the field, states that there is not a

'(...) great deal of depth or variety in academic writing and research on celebrity. Most of the readers and edited collections (and, significantly, there are many more of them than there are book-length studies) tend to work over similar subjects in similar ways. These subjects, in turn, tend to be drawn from a limited pool of individual celebrities or celebrity-related media "flashpoints" (...) and the mode of analysis is primarily textual and discursive. (...) Overwhelmingly, however, the field is populated with analyses of individual celebrities either as media texts interesting in their own right or as pointers to broader cultural formations or political issues; in either case, the focus of analysis is upon the details of their representation through the media.' (Turner, 2010: 13).

Although he finds textual analyses to be important and often valuable, Turner goes on to call for new approaches in celebrity studies:

'For my part, I think we need to do more to actively foster other approaches to studying celebrity. To do that, we need to remind ourselves that celebrity is not

only a category of media text nor merely a genre of media discourse. There are a number of ways through which we might define and thus approach celebrity that would help us account for other dimensions to its function and significance.’ (Turner, 2010: 13)

The author’s call to go beyond media texts and discourses is amplified by another major social technological trend that we call the ‘digital turn’. This term refers to the immense cultural impact of the diffusion and sedimentation of digitally networked technologies.

These new digital technologies and the social practices they bring about obviously change how celebrities are produced, and how they function and communicate in a transformed media environment.

One of the major features of this transformation has been a radical change in the information ecosystem, and a diminishment of the decision-making power of editors, producers and professionals.

For some, the way that media elites are losing ground as a cultural filter has an obvious empowering effect. John Hartley, for instance, describes these developments as ‘democratainment’; ‘the means by which popular participation in public issues is conducted in the mediasphere’ (Hartley, 1999: 209). Harvey sees this new form of celebrity as a form of ‘DIY Citizenship’ or ‘self-determination Semiotica’ - the construction of a new cultural identity through the process of media consumption. Clay Shirky, meanwhile, envisions a new era where potentially everyone is a media outlet (Shirky, 2008).

Although also articulating a critique of Hartley’s concept of ‘democratainment’, Nick Couldry similarly claims that ‘ordinary people have never been more desired by, or more visible within, the media; nor have their own utterances ever been reproduced with the faithfulness, respect and accuracy they are today’ (Couldry, 2003: 102).

However, Graeme Turner’s concept of the ‘demotic turn’ modifies this celebratory tone somewhat. The notion of the ‘demotic turn’ is also intended to capture the processes by which actors and celebrities created by the cultural industry are challenged by ‘self-made celebrities’. Although he considers the process to be generally positive, Turner prefers the term ‘demotization’ over democratization to avoid overblown assumptions that changes in the structure of a celebrity-dominated public sphere lead to political emancipation. The author contends, however, that a ‘demotic culture’ is emerging that raises social aspirations whilst reducing deference and breaching the barriers of gender and class. As a result, we are witnessing a new process of identity creation. ‘Celebrity itself begins to mutate: from being an elite or magical condition to being an almost reasonable expectation from everyday life’ (Turner, 2004: 84). New media genres and technological innovation such as reality television, webcams and social networking sites make these expectations attainable.

While Turner described this process in the context of reality television shows, the idea can be extended to the digital world where it seems to be relevant in two dimensions.

On the one hand, following the logic of digitalization, especially with respect to developments concerning social media, one can say that further decentralization of the

production of celebrities is taking place. In some cases, these new types of celebrities are the products of social media (involving multi-million downloads of videos from YouTube, Facebook or Instagram profile pages). Here one cannot always identify corporate image-building and marketing mechanisms, as was almost always the case in earlier times. But there is another feature of demotization; namely, the empowerment of fan culture. The low entry cost of the digitization of communication has fortified and expanded on the previously centralized forms of interest and attention which are essential to the construction of celebrity (Jenkins, 2006). Admirers and idolizing spectators were always, *per definitionem*, necessary elements of the construction of the concept of celebrities. Simply put, no celebrity exists without the appreciation and attention of an audience. The novelty of the new convergence culture, however, is that audiences and fans now have a much more active role in distributing information, in interacting with celebrities and their ‘back office’, and in the shaping of their public image (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, Ito and Boyd, 2015)

It is for these reasons that we accept Turner’s call for new approaches to celebrity studies. Our approach also reflects upon the immense changes induced by the digital turn. We focus on the social media ‘celebsphere’ in Hungary through a description and analysis of the digital footprints that celebrities have left on Facebook (in our dataset we use Facebook ‘likes’ on the public pages of these celebrities). One valuable component of this dataset is its relational character. By focusing on relations we neither investigate the self-proclaimed impact of celebrities or their impresarios, nor deal with the adulation of certain fan groups in isolation. Instead, through our data-based approach we show that we can identify meaningful patterns in the complex relations between celebrities and fans. As Raine and Wellman suggest: “Data mining, social network analysis, social computing studies and user-generated folksonomies.... will make the web easier to navigate and allow information now scattered in various places to be pulled together in meaningful ways” (Rainie and Wellman, 2012: 281).

In what follows, we first elaborate on the post-demographic paradigm as the relevant theoretical/methodological frame for our research. We then introduce our methodology, outline the research questions and present our dataset and analyses. By doing so, we intend to prove the relevance of the post-demographic paradigm that appears to be providing a unique opportunity for conceptualizing and articulating answers to pre-existing questions. In the meantime, our empirical findings are by no means intended to simply illustrate a theoretical standpoint, but also to shed light on certain parts of the complex relationship between celebrities and their fans in the age of social media.

3. Digital data and the post-demographic paradigm

There is a growing body of literature about the theoretical challenge presented by digital methodologies. Within this, the basic idea is that when ‘data-gathering instrumentations [change...], so will the social theories associated with them’ (Latour, 2010: 157).

Although the radical novelty of digital methodologies is often stressed by contrasting them with previously dominant survey methods, it is good to remind ourselves that surveys are also a historical product. The survey method gained

popularity and legitimacy because of its perceived advantage over observation-based methodologies. What is significant to note here is that any methodology paradigmatically creates an episteme—borrowing Foucault’s notable concept (Foucault, 1980). The main function of an episteme is that it marks the boundaries between what can and cannot be said in a given discourse (Rupert et al., 2013).

Therefore, we do not herald the coming of the digital age as a victory over old methods. Rather, we aim to describe some of the characteristics of knowledge-production by means of digital methods. In the present paper, the purpose is even more modest. We do not attempt to cover the whole vibrant debate about digital methodology (Rogers, 2009; 2013; Venturini and Latour, 2010; Marres, 2016), but instead only describe a number of the specificities and affordances of the digital data which are relevant to our research.

3.1 Granularity

Bruno Latour celebrates the collection, ordering and processing of digital data for epistemological reasons:

‘What we are witnessing, thanks to the digital medium, is a fabulous extension of this principle of traceability. It has been put in motion not only for scientific statements, but also for opinions, rumors, political disputes, individual acts of buying and bidding, social affiliations, movements in space, telephone calls, and so on. What has previously been possible for only scientific activity – that we could have our cake (the aggregates) and eat it too (the individual contributors) – is now possible for most events leaving digital traces, archived in digital databanks, thanks, let’s say, to Google and associates.’ (Latour, 2010: 159–160).

Latour argues that what the ‘digital deluge’ offers is the deconstruction of holistic and homogenous social concepts. These comprehensive and abstract concepts tend to determine our ways of thinking, even though holistic notions such as ‘society’, the ‘consumer’, ‘women’ or ‘voters’ are oversimplifications because they conceal the underlying diversity they represent. Nor is the situation much improved if we break these terms further down by using traditional concepts and terminologies. When we speak of ‘urban elderly’, ‘undecided voters’, ‘middle-class women’ or ‘college youths’, then these more disaggregated categories can be just as incidental and empty as the categories we started with.

It is obvious that these labels mask the conglomeration and networks of very different individuals. Ideally, and when properly employed, digital methodologies can help with capturing, interpreting and describing the diversity and complexity of such relations—and ultimately life itself—since they enable us to identify a large number of players and to shed light on the relations between them. This is what Evelyn Ruppert and her colleges called ‘granularity’:

‘There is a suspicion of aggregated properties that are derived deductively. Instead, the focus is on particularistic identifiers (...). In such processes aggregates may also be derived (as clusters of granular cases), but these are

inductively created and not ‘imposed’ onto data sources [...]. This focus on granularity drives forward a concern with the microscopic, the way that amalgamations of databases can allow ever more granular, unique, specification. This is part of a desire for wholeness, an embrace of the total and comprehensive which is never ending but which generates a politics of mash ups, compilation, and data assemblage [...].’ (Ruppert et al., 2013: 13)

3.2 Behaviorism

Surveys tell us about opinions. For the most part, these opinions tend to be epistemologically ‘messy’, and the picture they provide bears a tenuous relationship to reality at best. When undertaking survey-based data collection we may harbour serious epistemological doubts as to the validity of the answers we receive, even in the case of the most innocuous issues. Not because respondents deliberately want to mislead researchers, but because most often their positions about the given issue are not fully crystallised. Surveys in which respondents are questioned tend to produce answers that reflect respondents’ desires to comply with what they presume is expected of them. The results of surveys are also tenuous because they may generate obscure, often even non-existent views when respondents respond to questions about topics about which they had no definite prior opinion. By contrast, the methodology we employ fundamentally relies on digital footprints: the imprints left by user behaviour. If we are interested in someone’s political attitudes and preferences, then we do not need to obtain answers to questions such as ‘Do you visit the following pages when you surf the internet?’, as would be used in a survey. Instead, we may obtain a clear picture of their actual behaviour as manifested in the number of ‘likes’, ‘attends’ or group memberships of pages. Researchers thus may obtain clearer pictures of real preferences, decisions and activities than they would using traditional methods.

3.3 The sensuality of Facebook data

The traditional ‘social science apparatus’ also contains some biases that narrow the conceptual horizon of articulated social problems. Mike Savage demonstrates how survey methodology uproots individuals from their social context and relations (Savage, 2010). It can be argued that the enumeration and sampling of individual survey data creates an over-rationalized representation of reality. In other words, it fails to take emotions, pleasure and sensuality into account (think about the clumsiness of survey questions which deal with sexuality, for instance). We raise this issue because Facebook data represent the other extreme. In terms of Facebook emotions and things about which users may be enthusiastic, the effects of sensual stimuli—be they food, music, sport or ‘events of outrage and hope’—are over-represented. Therefore, when the research interest relates to these topics, Facebook may be a better source of data.

Although we have thus far focused on the characteristics of our Facebook database, these three factors—granularity, behavioural factors, and sensuality—define a very different landscape or episteme. As Ruppert et al. pointed out, in these fields,

‘the move to the digital is *a move to heterogeneity*... It is about factors, impulses, risk profiles, and circuits and the post-demographic as Rogers has suggested’ (Ruppert et al., 2013: 12).

Indeed, the concept of the post-demographic paradigm sums up what we have said so far about the specificity of Facebook data. This concept also underlines the compromise we must accept when we use this approach (just as we must make a Faustian bargain when using any other research apparatus). We have no chance of understanding the traditional socio-demographic components which are the starting points for all surveys which may have preceded our research. But we may still understand other things by being able to respond to some of the questions that were previously unanswerable. Rogers describes the post-demographic paradigm as follows:

‘Conceptually, with the ‘post’ prefixed to demographics, the idea is to stand in contrast to how the study of demographics organizes groups, markets and voters in a sociological sense. It also marks a theoretical shift from how demographics have been used ‘bio-politically’ (to govern bodies) to how post-demographics are employed ‘info-politically,’ to steer or recommend certain information to certain people (Foucault, 1998; Rogers, 2004). The term post-demographics also invites new methods for the study of social networks, where of interest are not the traditional demographics of race, ethnicity, age, income, and educational level – or derivations thereof such as class – but rather of tastes, interests, favourites, groups, accepted invitations, installed apps and other information that comprises an online profile and its accompanying baggage.’ (Rogers, 2009: 30)

This post-demographic approach is supported by the major sociological theory of individualisation (from Beck to Bauman, from Castells to Latour), as well as the everyday experience of empirical and marketing researchers; namely, that traditional socio-demographic categories have begun to lose their explanatory power.

Application of the post-demographic paradigm to celebrities seems promising due to the emotional attachments of their fans, which results in significant media activity. Also, focusing on fans’ social media activities rather than the posts and representations of celebrities themselves is useful in terms of avoiding the trappings of the content analysis of celebrities. As Hermes and Kooijman note, the ‘...every day use of celebrities is difficult to capture methodologically. Inquiring about celebrities, or analyzing the media texts that they appear in and often dominate, automatically assumes that celebrities are important and highly meaningful. Celebrities are, however, not always explicitly meaningful...’ (Hermes and Kooijman, 2016: 483).

We agree with Ruppert and her colleagues’ conclusion that ‘in relation to digital devices then, we need to get our hands dirty and explore their affordances: how they collect, store, and transmit numerical, textual, or visual signals; how they work with respect to standard social science techniques such as sampling and comprehensiveness; and how they relate to social and political institutions. To tease out these specificities and qualities it is useful to consider, in an historical register, how digital devices compare with other, older socio-technical devices, and consider the different affordances that they offer in a nuanced manner’ (Ruppert et al., 2013: 9).

The affordances of the Facebook data at our disposal, not to mention the legal and technological limitations, also delineate the range of possible inquiry. In other words, the post-demographic paradigm is relevant because this is the interpretative frame that the available data provide us with. Facebook does not make social demographic data available. Nevertheless, the application of the post-demographic paradigm to the subject makes it possible to pose relevant questions concerning the nature of the feelings of celebrity fans. In light of the aforementioned, we present the following research questions:

RQ 1 What is the basic topology of the Hungarian ‘Celebsphere’? Who generates the most activity?

RQ2 Can we observe a trend to ‘demotization’ in our list? If not, why?

RQ 3 Can we apply traditional typologies to the ‘Celebsphere’? Does it make sense to differentiate between ascribed, achieved and attributed types of celebrities?

RQ 4 Can we identify major value patterns among the supporters of celebrities? How do ‘green’ and ‘hyper-consumerist’ values occur in relation to the popularity of celebrities?

4. Methodology

The empirical research described here is based on data provided by Facebook. Facebook allows its users to officially obtain data from the platform through so-called APIs (Application Programming Interfaces). Our database is built on data accessed through API that was collected between January 1, 2016 and June 30, 2016. We collected anonymous user activity consisting of post ‘likes’ on pages. According to the official Facebook definition, ‘pages are for brands, businesses, organizations and public figures to create a presence on Facebook.’¹ Publishing posts on a page means that content becomes visible to anyone on the internet by default. Facebook users can react to these posts by clicking on an icon and ‘liking’ them (which we call post ‘likes’), a process distinct from what are known as ‘page likes’, which refers to ‘following’ a page.

Our database permits the individual profiling of each user, and the connections and schemata of these profiles provide the analytical background for the present research.

¹https://www.facebook.com/help/282489752085908?helpref=popular_topics Accessed: 25-03-2017.

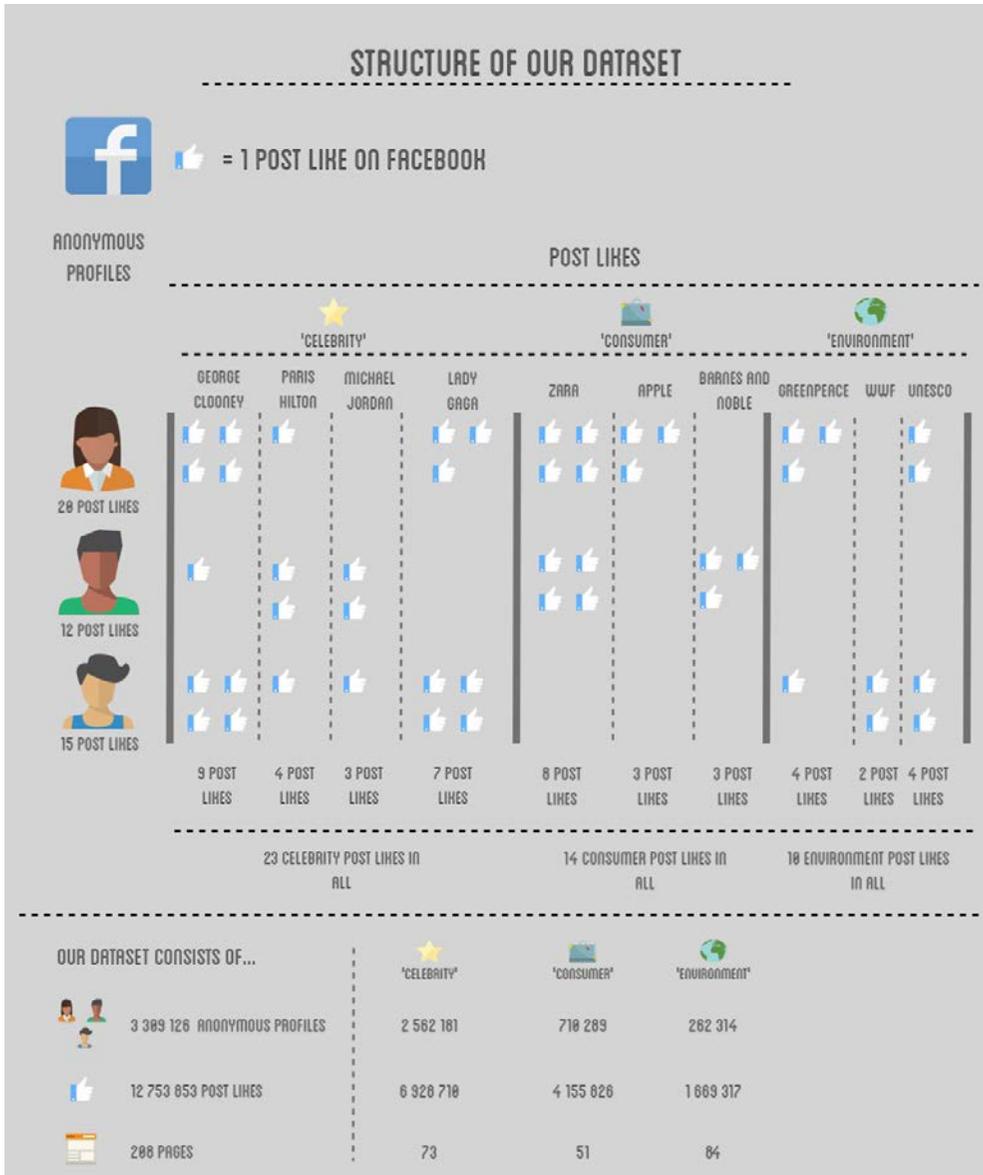


Figure 1: Structure of Dataset

As we can see in the infographic (Figure 1) for our dataset, the basic elements of the research are post 'likes'. These post likes are the Facebook activities that we examine. Every Facebook user in our dataset has liked at least one post, but most of them have liked many posts across many pages. The Facebook users used as an illustration in the infographic above represent three average users with post likes on different pages. The first user has 20 post likes on seven different pages, for example, and the second has 12 post likes on five pages.

As the infographic shows, these pages can be analysed according to thematic groups that distinguish pages based on the creator and the content. Using the

categorizations and lists of pages on Socialbakers.com—which is one of the biggest and most authoritative sources in the Facebook analytical industry, and which we also supplemented with our own system of categorization—, we divided the Facebook pages into three thematic groups. Using the group of celebrity pages we created the main research sample, while one group of consumer pages and one of environmental pages serve as sub samples for further analyses.

As the main topic is celebrities, the database focuses on the sphere of celebrities on Hungarian Facebook. The term ‘celebrity’ is based on the self-categorization (actor, model, TV personality, etc.) of public pages on Facebook.

Using the classification, 73 such Facebook pages consisting of pages that belong to the most famous Hungarian celebrities (e.g., musicians, bands, athletes, movie stars) were screened. Through this process we identified 2 562 181 people and 6 928 710 activities (post likes) in the celebsphere.

Second, we examined Facebook user preferences according to inclination to hold consumer values and environmentally friendly attitude. We posit that both consumers and environmentalists can be appraised based on the activity they engage in on social media platforms.

We used post likes of main shopping malls, brands and online stores (across all 51 pages) to identify consumers,² while the environmentally friendly group was compiled based on their association with one (or more) of a total of 84 pages which deal with environmental issues. An individual was deemed to belong to a 1) consumer, 2) environmentally friendly, or 3) celebrity audience group if they had liked at least one post (‘been active’) on the related pages during the period under investigation. For example, the first hypothetical user in Figure 1 is associated with a page by George Clooney or Lady Gaga (i.e. a celebrity group), and also belongs to all other groups. The second user is one of the celebrity audience of George Clooney, but not Lady Gaga, and belongs to two other page groups (not having ‘liked’ any of the designated environmental pages). The third user is similar to the second one (being associated with two groups of pages) but the groups are different: they include celebrity and environment.

The ‘environment’ group consists of 262 314 people and 1 669 317 activities, while the ‘consumer’ group consists of 710 289 people and 4 155 826 activities.

The distinction between ‘post likes’ and ‘page likes’ is significant. While liking a page may infer the intention to follow a certain issue, it does not necessarily mean that the user sympathises with the page issue or personality. However, ‘liking’ a post may be understood as specific statement of agreement with its content.

By applying Python computer language to the database, as well as creating cross-sections and testing correlations, we examined the connections between the different pages and groups.

This paper contains three network figures. Before we begin to interpret our findings and graphs (Figures 2, 3 and 4), we briefly review the process of their construction.

The network figures were created using Gephi, an open-source platform for network visualization and analyses. Every node in these figures represents a celebrity,

²The list of pages, groups and events is available on request from the authors.

while edges indicate the relationships between the celebrities. The thickness of the edges represents the intensity of the ‘common fandom’ of linked nodes. Returning to the infographic, we can define common fandom in an easy way. Two celebrities are said to have a common fan when a given Facebook user has liked at least one post on both celebrity pages. Using the example scenario (Figure 1) George Clooney and Lady Gaga have two common fans because the first and the third user liked at least one post on each page.

The structure of networks can be manipulated by so-called layouts, which are based on different algorithms. During the visualization process we used a layout called OpenOrd.³ OpenOrd’s algorithms made it possible to manipulate the figures based on the edge weights through a fixed number of iterations. At the end of the process we obtained a final illustration of a clustered network structure in which larger labels denote greater levels of fandom, and the proximity of nodes highlights cognate celebrities.

In the figures presented in this paper we have reduced the number of edges that are shown to facilitate understanding. The network illustrations thus created can be interpreted using three perspectives: size of nodes, degree of nodes, and clustering of nodes.

5. Findings

RQ 1 What is the basic topology of the Hungarian ‘Celebsphere’? Who generates the most activity?

Creating an activity-based comparison of the celebrity sphere was very difficult. The lack of a common interpretative frame inhibited or overly limited the number of comparable celebrities. Actors and actresses are judged by their movies, musicians by their albums, and athletes by the number of gold medals they have won. These achievements are either not comparable, or only remotely so, so there was no good answer to this question.

In the world of Facebook, where nearly all celebrities and public figures have a page, it becomes possible to create the missing interpretative frame by visualising the structure of Hungarian celebrities based on their fans. Selecting post likes as the main metric for our comparison, we created the dataset required for this analysis.

As we discuss later, determining a basic topology for the celebsphere is not an obvious or easy task. Most celebrities have a presence in different areas of the media and the public sphere, so it is unclear whether any appearance and role is meaningful or current.

To simplify the creation of our topology, we first tried to identify the main ‘celebrity factories’ in Hungary. Foremost among them are talent shows, other music-related broadcasts, and talk shows, as these have been the most successful TV programs over the past decade. Bands and sport stars are also parts of the celebrity sphere, even though they appear less often on TV (for the detailed distribution, see Table 2).

³ <https://marketplace.gephi.org/plugin/openord-layout/> Accessed: 25-03-2017.

Figure 2 is a detailed illustration of the Hungarian celebrity network. Each celebrity is connected to others based on common fandom. As mentioned earlier, common fandom refers to the number of people who have liked posts on two or more celebrity pages.

In the figure, larger name labels means greater fandom, and thicker edges indicate greater common fandom between two celebrities. As can be seen, nearly all of the celebrities with the greatest audiences have appeared on TV shows at some point in the preceding years, typically as members of a jury, anchors, competitors or cameo guests.

Furthermore, we can see from this figure that the most popular pages are mainly linked to each other with strong ties, while less popular ones cluster around some of the larger ones. From this structure—based on common fandom—we may assume that the larger nodes are the leading celebrity pages, while the smaller ones are the subgroups of the celebsphere.

Returning to the issue of the first appearance vs. the current role of celebrities, we can conclude that the most successful celebrities have a primary profession—usually singers or athletes, as can be seen from Table 2—and take advantage of TV shows and web 2.0 platforms to extend their follower fan base, thereby creating the largest celebrity sites on Facebook.



Figure 2: Hungarian celebsphere network based on Facebook fandom

RQ2 Can we observe a trend to ‘demotization’ in our list? If not, why?

‘Demotization’ in the present understanding means that, due to digital technologies and social media, there are many grassroots celebrities and amateurs who have achieved considerable visibility mainly through their online activity. However, after the above-described analysis of RQ1, we can conclude that on our list there are no such celebrities. How is this possible? It may be that such ‘demotization’ is not happening, and popular culture in Hungary is not following global trends. However, this is not the case. Simply examine the list of the most popular YouTube channels (Table 1).⁴

Table 1: Top 10 Hungarian YouTube channels (June 30, 2016)

Channel Name	Views	Subscriptions	Facebook page likes
Videómánia	156 835 055	555 133	304 381
PamKutya	103 847 505	417 791	207 411
TheVR	114 148 070	390 260	70 755
luckeY	86 667 372	371 123	66 362
UNFIELD	66 979 550	356 709	137 597
HollywoodNewsAgency	61 084 994	355 397	133 488
JustVidman	41 381 817	353 393	65 170
Peter Gergely	41 603 456	329 769	19 113
James ツ	76 735 880	285 240	24 797
GoodLike	30 026 030	255 633	103 452

Note that the names on this list do not overlap with those in the celebsphere identified in this research—but the owners of the video channels clearly receive a major share of public attention. Individuals who run video channels that have many tens of millions of views are obviously media stars, and potentially celebrities.

A second potential explanation is that these social media sites (in this case, Facebook and the Google-owned YouTube) maintain separation, not only technologically, but also in terms of celebrities and fans who maintain an almost exclusive loyalty to the respective platforms. This assumption also turns out to be unfounded. In most cases, YouTube’s fashion bloggers, preachers, rappers and comedians have a considerable numbers of followers on Facebook as well.

The reason for the surprising lack of stars of Web2.0 in our celebsphere network is due to the method of page identification. As mentioned earlier, we used the celebrity list from the authoritative Socialbakers.com, but it appears that this website largely ignores micro-celebrities, although they may have many followers. We can only assume that Socialbakers defines celebrities in relation to their appearance in

⁴<http://stamnetwork.hu/youtube-statisztikak/youtube-top100-hu/> Accessed: 25-03-2017.

the mainstream tabloid media, and that micro-celebs just do not crossover to these channels.

Based on these facts we conclude that although the demotization of the celebsphere (the emergence of grassroots celebrities) may be a genuinely relevant issue, we cannot demonstrate the phenomenon using our dataset—so we leave it for later research.

RQ 3 Can we apply traditional typologies to the ‘Celebsphere’? Does it make sense to differentiate between ascribed, achieved and attributed types of celebrities?

There have been a couple of attempts in celebrity studies to distinguish between different sources of fame. James Monaco, for instance, distinguished between the Hero, whose fame is established through their achievements; the Star, whose fame has developed through their public persona; and the Quasar, the accidental hero whose fame was created when they became the focus of attention (Monaco, 1978).

Rojek’s often-quoted typology is slightly different, although the author also defines three ways of achieving celebrity-status. *Ascribed celebrity* status is based on lineage (for instance, being a member of the royal family). *Achieved celebrity* status is based on achievement and competition (great artists and athletes belong in this category). Finally, *attributed celebrity* status primarily refers to gaining attention through cultural mediation (e.g. the protagonists of reality television shows) (Rojek, 2001).

No doubt these are ideal types in the Weberian sense; i.e. as intellectual constructions that simplify a complex reality, and as such they may be useful. However, applying them to our Facebook celebsphere is rather problematic.

At first sight it is obvious that in our sample we cannot identify either quasars or ascribed celebrities as these individuals do not attract a sufficient number of active followers on Facebook. What is theoretically much more meaningful, though, is the difficulty of applying the categories of ‘achieved’ and ‘attributed’ fame, which appear to be rather meaningful distinctions.

Consider as an example two people from our list who may be regarded as the extremes of achieved and attributed celebrity: Katinka Hosszú and Regina Dukai.

Katinka Hosszú is a three-time Olympic champion and a world-record swimmer who has 438 thousand followers on Facebook. Using Rojek’s categorization, she would belong in the category of achieved celebrities. However, she has also created the ‘Iron Lady’ brand, and carries out a well-designed and managed process of communication, both on social and mainstream media. The Iron Lady webshop sells goods such as clothes, vitamins, dietary supplements and Hosszú’s auto-biography. She is even the star of a comic book series based on the superhero concept of the Iron Lady. Hosszú can be compared to Danuta Kozák—a five-time Olympic champion and 11-time world champion kayaker who is not even on our list of celebrities, having five thousand followers on Facebook. Both of them are obviously world-class athletes, but Kozák has not built a public brand and lacks Hosszú’s marketing acumen.

At the other extreme of the celebsphere is Regina Dukai, a so-called model who is an obvious candidate for the description media-attributed fame, and a good example of a celebrity who is ‘famous for being famous’. However, according to her

Wikipedia-page, Dukai has also publicly performed some songs, appeared in a movie and was an anchor on some television shows. This complicates our analysis because there are certainly singers and actresses, even on our list, who one would be inclined to call achievement-based celebrities. Although in the case of Hosszú and Dukai the application of achieved and attributed categories appears to be relevant, reality is not that clear-cut, even in these extreme cases. Unless some kind of normative system of classification is introduced, it is very difficult to say that specific pop singers, football players, actors or DJs are the creation of the media, or have won their fame through achievement. In other words, saturated media representation is so essential to our culture that, in the case of celebrity, achievement and media attribution are often inseparably interwoven.

RQ 4 Can we identify major value patterns among the supporters of celebrities? How do 'green' and 'hyper-consumerist' values appear in relation to the popularity of the celebrities?

In the research described in this paper we sought to identify the different patterns that exist between celebrities and their fandom. By examining their professions, the source of their fame and the links among them, we now compare the related pages to values not directly linked to the celebsphere.

As described earlier, one important feature of post-demographic measurement techniques is their use in addressing questions that were earlier outside the scope of analysis. The relationship between the Hungarian celebsphere, on the one hand, and different values such as environmentalism or consumerism, on the other, is such a question.

In the methodology section we have described the construction of the environmental and the consumer groups which are connected to different public pages. For example, user activity on Greenpeace Hungary's page was considered an indication of environmental interest, and grounds for classifying that user into the environmental group, as illustrated in Figure 4. The consumer group was created using the same approach. Celebrities can be examined through these groups; or, more precisely, the set of values that exist among the celebrities' fan groups. If a celebrity is described as 'low' on consumerism, this indicates that the given celebrity's fandom is less attracted to consumerism on average (i.e. only a small segment of fans like both the celebrities' page and a consumer-related page).

We sought to identify patterns through examining the proportion of environmental and consumer groups among the celebrities' fandom to lead us to a deeper understanding of celebrity culture and the different subcultures within it.

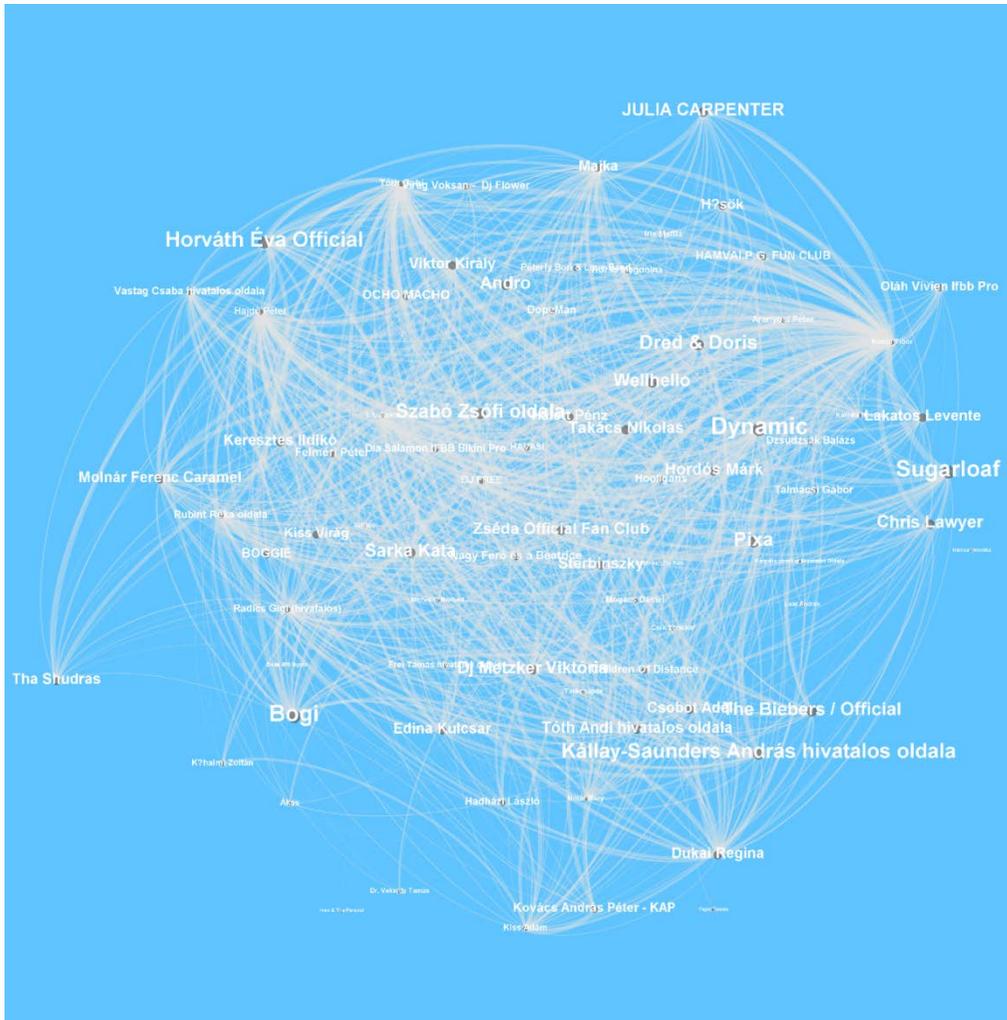


Figure 3: Network of Hungarian celebsphere based on the proportion of fans with consumer values

Figure 3 illustrates the network of shared celebrity/consumer fans. While the edges in Figure 2 represent common fandom (i.e. all the fans) of the linked nodes, in Figure 3 the edges represent shared *celebrity and consumer* fandom. For example, there may be 1276 common fans of two celebrities that potentially can also be classified as consumers—Figure 2 illustrates this situation. Imagine that there are only 697 fans out of the 1276 who can be classified as consumers. The edges of nodes in Figure 3 represent just these 697 consumer/celebrity fans (i.e. non-consumer fans are omitted).

It is clear from the illustration that the different nodes are larger compared to those of the first network illustration (Figure 2). Based on this observation and correlation analysis we conclude that there is a weak negative correlation between the size of a celebrity’s fandom and the proportion of consumer followers.

This situation does not support the hypotheses that a positive correlation exists between these two factors, but highlights the fact that the celebrities with the greatest fandom are ranked lowest (in the last 20 places)⁵ in terms of the proportion of shared ‘consumer’ fans (Table 3). Examples of such celebrities include Tibor Kasza, Péter Hajdú, and Mary Nótár.

We may interpret this finding as a consequence of the heterogeneity of the major fan groups. Such heterogeneity is primarily due to the frequent appearances of celebrities in the mainstream tabloid media, and their nationwide fame, which go hand in hand.

As can be seen, the fanbases of some celebrities (with smaller fan groups) are also listed among the last 20 in terms of consumer inclination. This suggests another explanation for the phenomenon based on homogeneity instead of heterogeneity. Such celebrities—for example, Quimby, Andás Laár, Tamás Pajor, and Csík Zenekar—have a well-defined subcultural fan base whose values are pronouncedly anti-consumerist and pro-environmentalist, as discussed later.

Turning to examine the top 20 celebrities according to the shared consumer fanbase ranking (Table 3), another pattern becomes clear. This group mainly includes DJs, rappers, and pop music-related celebrities in leading positions. In music videos which are associated with these individuals, consumerism is often promoted, as well as in the celebrity milieu more generally.

In terms of the environmentally inclined followers of celebrities, the first and most important observation is that there exists a strong and negative relationship between the number of followers in all groups and the proportion of environmental followers. A similar relationship can be identified between consumer and environmental values among celebrity fans. The more followers a celebrity has, the less pro-environmental their audience is, and the more consumer followers a celebrity has, the less environmental their audience will be. The analysis uses proportions rather than the absolute numbers of followers, so these relationships could be explained by the heterogeneous fandoms of the biggest celebrities, but the present authors suspect that subcultural influences play a role, as is also the case with consumer inclination.

Data illustrated in Table 4 reinforce this idea. Most of the celebrities in the pro-environmental top 20 are celebrities who can be classified as belonging to the alternative culture (typically musicians and bands who are less well-known among young audiences but who are successful among younger and older adults), which explains why their Facebook fandoms are smaller. As a result of the negative correlation between environmentalism and consumerism, we find similar celebrities in the environmental top 20 (Table 4) and in the bottom 20 of the consumer list (Table 3); Csík Zenekar and Gyula Bill Deák are good examples of this phenomenon, as is Katinka Hosszú, who appears both in the bottom 20 of the consumer list as well as in the environmental top 20, in spite of the massive size of her fandom (partially overturning our conclusion about the existence of fandom heterogeneity).

⁵ These rankings are based on the percentage of existing consumers (Table 3) or environmental (Table 4) fans of celebrities. We assigned a percentage to all celebrities – calculated as the number of consumer or environmental fans / number of all fans – and used these to rank them. On the left side of Tables 3 and 4 we display the celebrities with the highest percentages (and on the right side, the lowest).

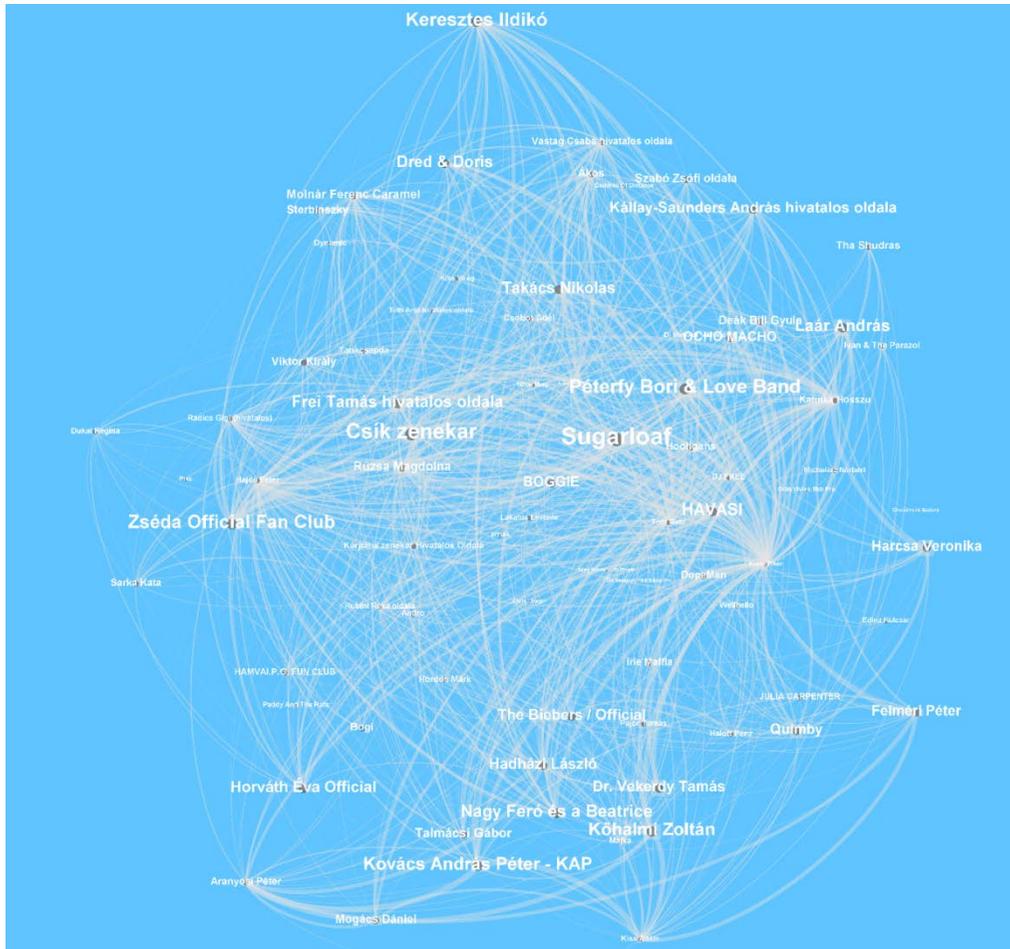


Figure 4: Hungarian celebsphere network based on the proportion of fans with environmental values

6. Conclusions

In this paper we have outlined some of the characteristics of the Hungarian celebsphere. In addition, we sought to prove that social media data in the era of the post-demographic paradigm can be very useful. Despite all the differences with traditional methodologies, the use of post-demographic digital methods opens up the opportunity to pursue new approaches. In the empirical part of the research described in this paper we addressed four questions which could not be answered (or not well) using traditional methods from within the demographic paradigm. The first question concerned the basic topology of the Hungarian celebsphere and activity generation. We provided a network illustration of the most well-known Hungarian celebrities within which big hubs and small subgroups could be identified (with hubs playing the leading roles). The conclusion was that most of the celebrities with the biggest Facebook pages have been successful due to TV appearances and have a very a structured Facebook presence, which is indispensable in terms of their fame.

The second question dealt with ‘demotization’ which relates to the role and presence of grassroots celebrities. We consider the phenomenon of demotization to be a genuine and important issue, although it could not be incorporated into the present research. The third question related to how to typologise the celebsphere. We categorize named celebrities based on the typologies of Monaco and Rojek. As mentioned, their theories are limited when it comes to dealing with current Hungarian celebrities, but by using interpretable categories we introduced a typology through examples.

The final research question dealt with different values such as environmentalism and consumerism from the perspective of celebrity fandom. We conclude that the size of celebrity fandom and the proportion of consumerist followers is negatively correlated, which may be due to the heterogeneity of fans. Celebrities with the most environmental fans tend to be a part of alternative culture.

A yearning for fame, as Andy Warhol observed, seems to be a universal characteristic of our time. The structural reasons for the development of a culture of celebrity are deeply rooted in our late modern societies. One explanation is that the commodification inherent to capitalist economies always needs new celebrities to stoke consumer desire. Another argument is that the need for celebrities stems from the fundamental flaws of liberal democracy. Democracy suggests equality—and the formal provision of equal political rights. In reality, however, social roles and the individuals who play these roles are rather differentiated and hierarchal from a material, symbolic and power perspective (Rojek, 2001). This tension between the declared ‘rhetoric of equality’ and the ‘reality of unequal life possibilities’ may be the basis for a longing for the extraordinary: the cult of celebrity. Whatever structural features explain our celebrity culture, it seems certain that it will remain a dominant force after whatever fragmentation and decentralization of the cultural sphere occurs due to the growing importance of social media.

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Appendix

Table 2: Celebrity Facebook page - Like rankings

LIKE - top 20 celebrity	Category	LIKE - last 20 celebrity	Category
Kasza Tibor	singer	The Biebers / Official	musician
L.L. Junior	singer	Sugarloaf	musician
HajdúPéter	broadcast star	Kovács András Péter - KAP	actor
Tóth Gabi	singer	Ivan & The Parazol	musician
Nótár Mary	singer	BOGGIE	musician
RubintRékaoldala	sport star	Bogi	singer
Radics Gigi (hivatalos)	singer	PajorTamás	singer
KatinkaHosszu	sport star	KárpátiazenekarHivatalosOldala	musician
DJ FREE	DJ	IrieMaffia	musician
Vastag Csaba hivatalosoldala	singer	Dynamic	musician
Majka	singer	DiaSalamon IFBB Bikini Pro	sport star
Kiss Ádám	actor	HAVASI	musician
Rúzs Magdolna	singer	Oláh Vivien Ifbb Pro	sport star
Molnár Ferenc Caramel	singer	Paddy And The Rats	musician
Dukai Regina	fashion star	OCHO MACHO	musician
Children Of Distance	musician	FelmériPéter	actor
Akos	musician	ViragVoksan - Dj Flower	DJ
CsobotAdél	singer	PéterfyBori& Love Band	musician
HAMVAI.P.G. FUN CLUB	singer	Hadházi László	actor
AranyosiPéter	actor	HordósMárk	sport star

Table 3: Celebrity Facebook page - Consumer fandom ranking

CONSUMER - top 20 celebrity	Category	CONSUMER - last 20 celebrity	Category
Dynamic	musician	Paddy And The Rats	musician
HordósMárk	sport star	Ivan & The Parazol	musician
Pixa	musician	PajorTamás	singer
Horváth Éva Official	broadcast star	Deák Bill Gyula	singer
Sterbinszky	DJ	Nótár Mary	singer
Bogi	singer	Quimby	musician
Sugarloaf	musician	L.L. Junior	singer
Sarka Kata	fashion star	KárpátiazenekarHivatalosOl dala	musician
Kiss Virág	sport star	LaárAndrás	musician
Kállay-Saunders Andráshivatalosoldala	singer	Tankcsapda	musician
SzabóZsófioldala	actor	KatinkaHosszu	sport star
JULIA CARPENTER	DJ	Csíkzenekar	musician
Wellhello	musician	BOGGIE	musician
Andro	DJ	Radics Gigi (hivatalos)	singer
DJ MetzkerViktória	DJ	Ákos	musician
Chris Lawyer	DJ	Tóth Gabi	singer
The Biebers / Official	musician	Michélsz Norbert	sport star
Oláh Vivien Ibb Pro	sport star	Rúzsza Magdolna	singer
Hősök	musician	Kasza Tibor	singer
Molnár Ferenc Caramel	singer	HajdúPéter	broadcast star

Table 4: Celebrity Facebook page - Environmental fandom ranking

Environmental - top 20 celebrity	Category	Environmental - last 20 celebrity	Category
Csíkzenekar	musician	ViragVoksan - DJ Flower	DJ
LaárAndrás	musician	DiaSalamon IFBB Bikini Pro	sport star
Frei Tamáshivatalosoldala	broadcast star	Chris Lawyer	DJ
PéterfyBori& Love Band	musician	DzsudzsákBalázs	sport star
Quimby	musician	Children Of Distance	musician
HAVASI	musician	Tóth Andi hivatalosoldala	musician
Kovács András Péter - KAP	actor	Nótár Mary	singer
Hadházi László	actor	Pixa	musician
Nagy Feróés a Beatrice	musician	Dynamic	musician
KeresztesIldikó	singer	DJ MetzkerViktória	DJ
Sugarloaf	musician	L.L. Junior	singer
Zséda Official Fan Club	singer	Hősök	musician
Rúzsza Magdolna	singer	Oláh Vivien Ifbb Pro	sport star
Deák Bill Gyula	singer	Edina Kulcsar	fashion star
BOGGIE	musician	Andro	musician
KatinkaHosszu	sport star	Dukai Regina	fashion star
FelmériPéter	actor	Kiss Virág	sport star
PajorTamás	singer	Majka	singer
Ákos	musician	Wellhello	musician
IrieMaffia	musician	Bogi	singer