THE NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF MODERN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES ON THE PRINTED PRESS

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Abstract

The use of new information technologies in the processes of conception and development of the traditional written press began to be more intensified at the beginning of the 21stcentury. Due to this fact, the competitive capacity of printed media has considerably increased, while the conflict with the accelerated rhythm of online media communication has been reduced. The intensification of the printing press activity has, however, not only positive but also negative consequences, because as a result of this process (due to the assimilation of new information technologies), the editorial model of the traditional printed press got several changes in the current operational practices, which consequently imposed new standards in journalistic activity. The new standards have facilitated and put production firstly, seriously affecting the quality of the journalistic materials, in particular, and the quality of the creation process, as a whole.

Keywords: *printed press, modern information technologies, creative process, journalistic product, blogs, social networks, media convergence, design, editorial style, periodical, mass-media.*

1.INTRODUCTION

The effects of journalism technology, resulting from the assimilation of new information technologies by the traditional media segments, may be considered strong, long-lasting and irreversible as they have changed the typology of the media system, which led to the reconfiguration of the relational framework of media inside. Considering these circumstances, media competition grew, determining the old elements of the media system to review their traditional activity practices. In order to be up to date and preserve their influence on the media market, they valued the opportunities offered by the online space, which generated conceptual and functional mutations on all the segments of the media system. Printed media was no exception, as it was forced to review its traditional principles of activity and adapt them to the new

exhibition conditions offered for journalistic products by the online environment.

The implications of new information technologies on the written media activity had both positive and negative consequences. The positive consequence may be found in the fact that the modern information technologies offerednew opportunities for press manifestations, connected, first of all, to the expansion of the speed and distribution channels for journalistic products, secondly to the inclusion of the multimedia content in the online versions of the traditional periodical publications and, thirdly, the interactivity of the end product. The negative consequences were determined, as a matter of priority, in relation to the print media content, because the intensification of the production rhythm, determined by the assimilation of the new information technologies, has considerably reduced the quality of the creative processand its results - the journalistic products. This reality, resulting from the negative effects of the implications of new information technologies on the traditional print press, will be analysed from now on as it represents the subject of the present research study.

2. CONTEXT

The useof the new information technologies in the processes of designing and producing traditional print media intensified at the beginning of the 21st century, being determined by the need of this media segment to resistin front of the increasing competition from the other elements of the media system, especially from the online press. Media analyst V. Gatov says that the new media came as a response to

the population's growing need for information, giving it everything that the traditional media could not give - speedy communication, filtering the flow of information, continuouscontent update or organizing discussions in the groups of interest. As a result, the traditional press was subjected to a profound identity crisis, both conceptually and functionally (GATOV, n.d.).

The traditional written press, in order to maintain its identity and its influence on the contemporary information market presented a number of functional changes, which contributed to the intensification of the human factor activity, involved in the journalistic production (especially newspaper reporters), and to increasing of the efficiency of the newspaper and magazine production processes. Due to this fact the competitive capacity of the printed press increased considerablywhile the conflict with the accelerated pace of online media communication decreased. The intensification of the printed press activity,however, had not only positive, but also negative consequences. The editorial model of the traditional printed press, as a result of assimilating new information technologies, underwent several changes in the current operational practices, which consequently imposed new standards in the journalistic activity. The new standards facilitated and putproduction on the first place, seriously affecting the quality of the advertising materials, in particular, and the quality of the creation process on the whole.

The first aspect related to the negative implicationsstems from the fact that modern information technologies have undermined the traditional status of the press, so far being an intermediary between the surrounding reality and the masses of people. Nowadays, journalists are using not only the reality informational space to identify new topics for their materials, but also the informational online space - social networks, sites, online forums, blogs, etc. Most of all, the online information space is used by journalists to identify new sources of information, find ideas for their articles, or find important news and scandals to process and include in the content of periodicals. As a result, an intermediary appearsbetweenthe reality itself and the media - the online realitythat

transforms the media from a source of information into an information consumer from blogs and social networks. This way, at present, mass-media, in general, and the printed press, in particular,no longer have monopoly on the status of intermediary between the surrounding reality and the general public, because it exploresthe online reality, together with the actual reality, the online becoming the object of its investigation. The reflection of events based on the information gathered from the online space, withoutthe journalist being present at the scene and during the development of the events, diminishes the role of the print press in the construction of social reality. In this case, the projection of media events does not only refer to the press institution providing this process, but also to those who spreadinformation online about these events, which the journalist uses as primary sources of information. In this case, the construction of social reality is subjected to a double deformation process, once by those who project the events online and, secondly, by journalists, who, based on the online information inform the public about these events with the help of the media.

The next aspect refers the mass process of producing and broadcasting information. The involvement of the public masses in the processes of information design and its dissemination did not have only positive effects on the print media, when it comes to the diversification of information sources and to the rapidityof information broadcasting, but also negative ones. The involvement of the masses in the processes of creating and distributing informational content through blogs and personal websites gave birth to the so-called "popular journalism", which substantially reduced the demands regarding texts, photos and video pictures placed in the online circuit. This has negatively influenced the quality of media products, in particular, and has levelled the status of journalism as a profession, in general. The researcher V. Bulicanu argues, in the study *TheEuropeanization of the Moldovan Media from the perspective of the information technologies,*the fact that the 21ˢᵗcentury presents extremely high requirements and standards regarding the speed ofinformation broadcastingand, unfortunately, less requirements regarding the quality of broadcasted

information, with particular reference to the editing and text accuracy process". (BULICANU, 2016)

The "popular journalism" also undermined the public's trust in the media, people often confusing journalistic products with those from social media sites and blogs. One should mention that the information placed on social networks and blogs does not correspond to reality all the time, sometimes being simple inventions, whose purpose is to increase the number of views. The authors of the research *The capture of the media and other means of public communication in the Republic of Moldova* claim that some blogs serve as a primary source for the dissemination of manipulative content and, in some cases, media fakes, which are afterwards taken over by television and broadcasted as credible information (MACOVEI et al., 2017).

A survey conducted to identify the journalists' perceptions about these new forms of communication shoed that professional journalists do not see blogs as real competitors for media institutions, since 68% of respondents believe that blogs will become more popular instruments among corporations that want to inform their customers, while 58% believe that blogs will remain an independent and informal way of disseminating information (PAVLIK, 2009). Journalists see the future of "popular journalism" as spreading information at the corporate level, functioning as watchdogs, or informally, often spreading opinions (and not necessarily facts), therefore subjective and less credible information.

Another aspect refers to the media convergence generated by new information technologies. The negative consequences of convergence are manifested in: (1) the universalization and standardization of the documentation and information gathering techniques; (2) "depersonalization" of end journalistic products; (3) concentration of media property.

The media convergence, which affected both the sharing of production missions between editorial offices of different types of media as well as the distribution of creative tasks amongst journalists from different platforms, negatively influenced the journalistic creation process itself, particularly the techniques of information gathering and of those of media events coverage.

As a result of convergence, reporters, doesn't matter what kind of editorial staff they represent or part of which they are for real, collect information for all types of media units of the press trust. This way, the universalization and standardization of information gathering techniques and tactics occurs, which in some way distorts the identity profile of the traditional elements of the media system.

The convergence also influences the ways in which events are reflected in the media. The media coverage of the same event may be different, depending on the platforms which the material will be put into the informational circuit through. Using one and the same information, journalists project the media event, using different journalistic content, adapted to the type of platform through which it will be broadcasted to the public. The journalistic content's adaptation to the distribution platform is usually done by a third person - the publisher and not by the journalist who was present during the event and collected the information at the scene. This fact "depersonalizes" journalistic materials and, in a kind of way, undermines the traditional status of reporters, changing them from authors of journalistic materials into simple information carriers. That is why cross-media limits the framework of action and significantly reduces the level of reporters' involvement in the journalistic production process.

However, the greatest danger is the total integration of all the journalistic production process operational practices. The entire creative process is subjected to convergence, because the reporters produce materials for all media types that a press trust contains. This model begins to escalate in that moment when convergence itself becomes a strategic objective of the press institution, when not only its managers, but also reporters begin to think and act convergent. The total integration, which becomes the media purpose, generates the paradigm change of the journalistic process, from newspaper production to multimedia production, a process that is completed with the full replacement of the print version with the online version.

At the same time, convergence, a phenomenon caused by the opportunities offered by the new information technologies, generated the media

tendency to concentrate ownership in the hands of a small number of people, a fact which led to the monopolization of the media-communicational field. The concentration of media ownership has bad consequences both for the freedom of press institutions, in general, and for the independence of journalists, in particular as well as for the pluralism of opinions, so necessary in any democratic society.

The researcher C.-J. Bertrand argues, in the study *An introduction in the written and spoken media,* that today there is a tendency for press institutions' concentration on the media market. As a result, the power to inform (or not to inform), the power to define major national debate issues, the power to "set the agenda" of the country gets into the hands of a very small number of media owners, people who are neither elected, nor very expert or preoccupied to serve the public (BERTRAND, 2001).

Starting with 2009, dozens of autonomous news platforms appeared in the informational space of the Republic of Moldova, which later became parts of some media trusts or which, because of their editorial policy, got affiliated to some interest groups. They soon changed their angle of approaching the social reality, but especially political one, adapting their editorial objectives and the style of media coverage to the specificities of media trust that they had been assimilated by. "Most of them seem to be close to the Democratic Party. Often, they play the role of a primary source of publishing compromising articles about certain politicians or public figures that criticize the government or the party leader, VladPlahotniuc. These texts are later taken over by the press, which is officially part of the media trust belonging to the DP's leader. The socialists have their own news portals as well, some of which are even recommended on the Socialist's Party website. Both sides have distributed in the campaign for presidential elections news that disadvantaged Maia Sandu, the leader of the PAS, who was the rival of the socialist, Igor Dodon, in the election campaign. The head of the state is supported by other pro-Russian sites. On the other hand, there are far fewer informational portals that have a balanced or at least partially balanced editorial policy." (DODON, 2017)

The analysis of the current situation with the media ownership in the Republic of Moldova demonstrates real signs of concentration of the press institutions in media trusts. The dominating positions of some media owners, who monopolize media institutions, is more visible especially in the audio-visual segment of the Moldovan information market, a segment which, according to opinion polls from the recent years, has the greatest impact on consumers.

The next issue refers to the methodology of the creation process itself. The use of new information technologies in the production of print press conditioned some mutations related to the reconfiguration of the methodological basis of both: reporters' activity and the activity of the editors, affecting the methods of information gathering, text editing and newspaper designing. The collection of information for journalistic materials from a dynamic process that always was made outside of the editorial offices became a static process that can be easily performed in the editorial room, using the services of online live events broadcasts. Until recently, the reporters were recognized as dynamic persons, constantly moving people who, for the most part, did their job outside the editorial offices, considering the fact that their duties include collecting information directly from the territory, directly from the event taking place. This definition no longer corresponds to reality. Reporters have ceased to be the people who legitimize their professional existence necessarily through their permanent effort to investigate reality and search for information on the ground. They are no longer defined as "nomad beings", always on the move, each time passing a very complicated route that stems from their production missions. Or, reporters, in an increasing number, write their materials in their offices, using new technologies for the reflection of the media events, in particular, technologies that provide online broadcasting.

The production itself of journalistic texts changed, and it is no longernecessary to locate it in the editorial office. Nowadays, reporters can produce journalistic materials at the place of the event and during it, and can deliver the already made materials immediately after the event ended or even till the end of the event. Thus, IT made possible to produce and broadcast

journalistic material from distance. By using new and rapidly accessible software and technologies, the editor's work is considerably simplified, and his work is done today not necessarily in the office, but wherever he considers appropriate (BULICANU, 2016).

The rapidity of writing journalistic materials also led to changes in the editorial style of printed publications, which borrowed elements of succinct and diverse style, specific to websites and blogs. As a result, some publications consciously began to make the journalistic content superficial, just to have it more accessible and easier to assimilate. The written press, being increasingly preoccupied with obtaining material benefits that may somehow reduce or minimize the effects of the crisis through which it passes, making very often, concessions with the dubious preferences of consumers of media products, focusing their editorial policy on the coverage of as many events as possible, written in simplistic expressions, usually very close to those in which entertainment information is presented. "Some of the journalistic products on the market are marked by superficiality and, implicitly, by the lack of quality. The problem appears when those who maintain the professional standards of journalism are forced to accept compromises and adapt themselves to requirements and rules imposed by an audience already influenced by a false image. A common question among journalists in the print media, highlighted by Peter Brielmaier and Eberhard Wolf, is the following: how will the tomorrow's daily newspaper look like? Will it become "printed television" or will the traditional form of the newspaper be kept?" (TOMPEA, 2011)

For the same purposes, the printed press makes the reality it reflects more spectacular. The spectacle of reality in the newspapers' pages takes place as a result of promoting the privilege policy in the content of the sensational news' newspapers and magazines, of the unordinary fact, of the scandal, of the dramatic event. The rush for profit makes the "interesting," sensational subjects to prevail over the useful ones, a fact which undermines the role of printed

media in building the social dialogue and in mediating social issues.

The design of printed press has also changed, and currently it is no longer dictated by the motto "the text dictates the design", but by the slogan "the image dictates the design". Thus, the relationship between text and image in a newspaper edition tends to be more in the images' favour while the place reserved for them is fully growing. Despite the fact that this approach provides publications with a pleasant graphic presentation, able to attract the reader's eye and make him buy them, it is neither the best, nor the most correct, because it greatly reduces the informational potential of print media, making the sustainable development of the press more difficult.

The problems related to the use of modern technologies arise when, on the one hand, the traditional design and layout rules are no longer taken into account, the result being a visibly disordered one and, on the other hand, when the design standardization takes place or it is minimized as a result of matrices' use, proposed by editing programs.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The implications of new information technologies in the print media's activity have both positive and negative consequences. The negative consequences are related to the fact that, as a result of large-scale implementation and use of modern information technologies, the print media reoriented its media production towards obtaining material benefits, a fact seriously affected the quality of the end journalistic product. At the same time, they are also related to the re-conceptionof the creation process in the printed press, which led to the universalization and standardization of information and its gathering techniques, as well as to the "depersonalization" of journalistic products. These changes, resulting from the implications of the new information technologies, reconfigured not only the methodological, conceptual and functional basis of the written press, but also its identity profile in the contemporary media context.

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