

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF MODERN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES ON JOURNALISTIC PRODUCTION. THE CASE OF WRITTEN PRESS

Georgeta STEPANOV¹

¹Prof. PhD, State University of Moldova, Republic of Moldova
Corresponding author: Georgeta Stepanov; e-mail:stepanovgeorgeta@gmail.com

Abstract

The technology based on new principles of journalistic production, as a result of the involvement of modern information technologies in the traditional operational practices, reconfigured the intra-media relational framework, projecting new action contexts and new forms of media competition. Traditional media elements, including the written press, consciously assimilated modern technologies and largely valued the opportunities offered by the online environment especially due to survival reasons and to maintain their traditional place and role on the informational market. The new possibilities of the written press, resulting from the implication of modern technologies in the journalistic creation and production, are firstly connected to the broadening of the speed and of the distribution routes of journalistic products, secondly to inserting multimedia contents in the online versions of the traditional periodical publications and thirdly to the interactivity of the end product.

Keywords: *written press, modern information technologies, activity principles, operational practices, journalistic product, periodical, online version, multimedia content, media convergence, interactivity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The era of the new information technologies decisively influenced all the fields of social life and human activity, including communication sciences. In journalism, the assimilation and capitalisation processes, on a large scale, of the new information technologies took place at a fast pace, generating changes in the relationship framework of the elements of the mass-media system, both inside and outside it. At the same time, technology also triggered changes in the present activity of the means of mass information. As a result, a series of traditional operational practices, underwent either essential changes or disappeared completely, being replaced by new ones, and this changed the concept of press

production and even the identity profile of the elements of the mass-media contemporary system.

The involvement of the new information technologies in the activity of the written press, despite the fact that it conditioned some conceptual and functional changes, had a positive impact on its development, as it created new manifestation conditions within the contemporary media context, and therefore it ensured stability and competitiveness on the contemporary informational market to this element of the mass-media system.

2. CONTEXT

At present, in order to preserve its traditional place within the mass information means framework system and to be successful, each media element, either written press, audio-visual, online or news agency, uses in order to conceive and develop its products the most advanced information technologies. In this connection, the written press makes no exception. The positive impact of the use of modern informational technologies stems from the fact that they offered the written press new manifestation opportunities, connected to:

- The expansion of the speed and distribution channels of journalistic products;
- The insertion of multimedia contents in the online versions of the traditional periodicals;
- The interactivity of the end product.

The expansion of the speed and distribution channels of journalistic products in the context of the involvement of the new information technologies in the activity of the press is connected to the

appearance of the virtual informational space, especially of the social networks. Written press first began to use the online space as an additional dissemination platform for the journalistic information, which offered possibilities to value the most important or interesting journalistic materials from the current editions of newspapers and magazines. With this purpose, periodical created sites and social network accounts, and they distributed some contents from their print versions. "The expansion of social networks and of other electronic mass information means was partially predetermined by the traditional elements of the mass-media system (newspapers, magazines, radio and television)" (GATOV, n.d.). Implicitly, the online space was used, at that moment, as means for content promotion and also to strengthen the image of the traditional periodical.

Subsequently, periodical, especially newspapers started to exist in two different dimensions: a print version and an online one. The technical conditions offered by the new space, especially the expansion of the speed and distribution channels of journalistic products, generated a migration for some traditional publications towards the online platforms, a situation which led, in some cases, to the replacement of the classical ways of conveying messages to the online ones and in other cases, to the appearance of autonomous online periodicals (which had never had a print version).

At present, projecting the contents of written periodicals in the online space is achieved in three ways. The first way implies the integral projecting of the contents of the traditional periodicals in the online space. In this case, the online versions are designed as simple archives of the print versions, acting as their clones. Usually, literary and scientific journals use this way of disseminating their contents.

The second manner involves the partial projection of the contents of the traditional periodicals in the online space. In this case, the online versions represent reduced versions of the print products, where only a few of the printed materials are posted. The partial projection is also performed by posting low volume journalistic materials. This is why, the materials for the online version are edited in such a manner so

that some very important details can be left out of the context. At the same time, the partial projection is achieved by simply posting the title of the articles, intros and their photographs, this technique being aimed at raising the viewers' interest for the subjects approached and to determine them to purchase the newspaper or the magazine. This manner of using the online space is specific to the local print press and to that specialized in entertainment. The online versions of print periodicals, unlike those of radio and TV stations, do not exceed the print versions, neither in terms of volume or when it comes to the number of materials.

According to the third manner, online media projecting of reality significantly surpasses the traditional media projecting, as the online versions are regularly completed with information, as new and new events appear, a principle which, in the virtue of special technical conditions cannot be applied to the traditional written press. In this case, the online versions substantially surpass, the print versions of the publications under a quantitative aspect and not under a qualitative one. Usually, all materials from the online version have an informative nature, while print versions include both informative materials (with analytic elements) and opinion materials. Certain analysis, comments and editorials ensure informational consistency to the print contents of periodical, which, in terms of the depth of reality approach significantly overcome the contents exposed in the online versions. It is worth mentioning that the online media projecting of reality, according to this approach, establishes a very close connection between the online versions of traditional periodicals and the concept of the news portals.

Inserting multimedia contents in the online versions of traditional periodicals. The new information technologies offered the written press the possibility not only to extend its content distribution manners, and to raise the speed of dissemination but also to diversify the ways of broadcasting realities by adopting the audio and video journalistic production techniques. This fact catalysed the media convergence process which, in a certain way, "universalized" the journalistic tools used in the creation process and

significantly diminished the existing differences between the techniques and tactics used in the production of different types of media.

According to its manifestation fields, media convergence is of two types: external and internal. External convergence refers to the merger between the operational practices specific to the different elements of the mass-media system, the different communication channels in one and "the meeting" between all the journalistic forms on a single platform. Internal convergence refers to the merger between the operational practices specific to a single element of the mass-media system and the redaction messages which belong to the actors in the process of journalistic production. The convergence phenomenon mainly refers to the merger between the technological and the economic aspects of the press activity. But that particular phenomenon cannot be reduced to a simple technological or economic change, as it changes not only the logic of the media industry (production technologies, the market, journalistic genres, the methodology of journalistic production etc.), but also the logic of the consumer when it comes to media, informative and entertainment products.

In the press of the Republic of Moldova, most frequently, external convergence appears only in the final phase of the media production process – the dissemination of the journalistic product, and it refers to the information distribution platforms. The specificity of this model resides in the fact that all information distribution platforms, that a press institution uses, are coordinated and managed by a single platform, while the editorial staff of the different types of media, part of the same institution, are autonomous, activating separately from each other. Cooperation in the production process of journalistic materials appears occasionally, sometimes even random.

Internal convergence changed, of course, the dates of the profession, including the journalists' involvement in the processing of materials, as well as the speed and the mobility of those who ensure the presentation of newspapers and magazines. The communicational roles, achieved with the help of journalistic and technical means, stopped being performed by certain well-defined categories of specialists. Modern technologies

offered journalists the possibility to assimilate skills and to gain new competencies, connected especially to the technical aspect of journalistic production. This fact generated new obligations, especially in the field of visualisation (drawing, image/photography, computer graphic), as well as in that of page layout. As a result, the merger between the roles and the creation missions of the actors in the process of the development of periodicals took place, which represent clear convergence signs of the production activity within an editorial staff. "A few years ago, journalists had a very well-defined role within an editorial staff and therefore there were few people who possessed any knowledge regarding page layout, since this contribution belonged to the printers. They had no connection with the production and conceiving of the actual journalistic text, but with the use of some layout rules, adapted to the style of that particular publication. Prior to the appearance and development of computer technology, these aspects were achieved with the help of typewriters or, if we go a long way back, with the help of industrial machines. It is important to possess very clear aspects regarding the effects and consequences of the evolution starting from lead processing and up to computerized typing. Technological development lead to the appearance of the so-called "universal journalism", which knows how to process some information for all media channels (written press, radio, TV, online) and to use all the means and mechanisms that one has at his disposal in order to broadcast the journalistic text to the public opinion. In the written press, the reporter is directly involved in the process of page layout. In the written press, the reporter is directly involved in the layout procedure of his own article" (TOMPEA, 2011). Under this aspect, media convergence resulting from technological changes, had beneficial effects on the evolution of the entire mass-media process, including the written press.

The practice of inserting multimedia contents in the online versions of periodicals has not yet been adopted in the written press from the Republic of Moldova, this particular opportunity being valued very rarely. Managers are not well enough trained or, more precisely, are not

interested in developing and implementing capitalization strategies for these opportunities, which, in their opinion, lead to the full integration of all operational practices in the journalistic production process, therefore emphasizing the existence of the traditional written press. Written press continues to remain an advocate of the traditional operational practices, using the online environment either as a promotion platform or as an additional distribution platform of the contents from the print versions of newspapers and magazines.

The interactivity of the product. The online versions of periodicals facilitate access to media contents and offer the public the possibility to appreciate and assess those particular contents by posting likes and/or commentaries. Due to these opportunities, the traditional status of the public undergoes essential changes and as a result the media consumer changes from a simple receiver of the media production into an active element of the media production. "Facilitating interactive dialogues with types of public depends on the use of mails or other online media. In this context, communication in digital networks, as well as those from the Internet or WWW facilitate the appearance of a two-way symmetrical communication. This fact represents an outstanding opportunity for journalists to communicate more efficiently and balanced with different types of public" (PAVLIK, 2009).

The perspective of having a well-trained target audience, capable of crediting or discrediting a media product and/or even a press institution, did not enthuse the journalistic environment at first. On the contrary, most of the press institutions were reluctant and accepted with great reservations these opportunities, but later on they understood that the comments that visitors make represent feed-backs which may be used to identify the perceptions of the public and, of course, its degree of satisfaction in relationship with the activity of the press institution. Therefore, the interactive character of the media products from the online versions of periodicals changed the traditional relationship framework between the written press and its public, the latter turning from a passive entity into an active and strong one, with an enormous influential potential over the press.

Modern informational technologies made it possible to transpose the contents of the traditional periodicals in the virtual informational environment and this facilitated the online access to this type of press. This situation "allowed the media product consumer to read the newspaper in any part of the world whenever he wishes, to look for the necessary information in the archive, to speak with the editor-in-chief and with the journalists, to offer them subjects for publications. At the same time, the online access made possible to download the newspaper into a single file (the file is compact, it does not fade and it does not break), to read and reread it at any time, as well as to redistribute the content of the newspaper to other people" (SMI.ACADEMIC, n.d.). Therefore, the interactivity offered the media product consumer, on the one hand the possibility to react to any subject reflected in the mass-media, in order to appreciate it, and, on the other hand, the possibility to interact with other consumers, in order to exchange opinions, initiate debates and even polemics regarding the existing media products. As a result, the media product consumer obtained a high degree of autonomy regarding the way in which he is involved in projecting the media agenda, in building the media reality and implicitly in building the social dialog and even a social reality.

Interactivity, which represents one of the distinctive signs of the digital versions of the press "changes the interaction between mass-media and the public: from a group without face the public turns into a conglomerate of individuals who force the media to build personalized connections in order to draw attention to its structure" (STUDBOOKS, n.d.). So, due to interactivity, visitors go online not only to read the information, but also to assess and appreciate them, therefore becoming part of the media processes. This fact allows the media product consumers to put forward a number of demands related to the provided materials and their power of influencing the products and the media processes increase significantly.

The journalist R. Iordăchescu suggests journalists to "cultivate open news" which offer readers the possibility to take part, to get directly

involved in the editorial process right from the early stage, contributing with suggestions, sources, images and points of view. Far from building a barrier in the editorial dynamics, interaction with the public represents a key element in gaining major popularity and success in this field" (IORGULESCU, 2012).

The new information technologies gave birth to a ubiquitous phenomenon – the social media which also includes "online interaction forums, largely accepted by the masses, which reproduce the real world without geographical boundaries" (ARENS et al., 2011) and which extend the public's involvement possibilities in the media projecting of the social reality. This fact "stimulates consumers' capacity to connect, create, contribute and share ideas, opinions and values" (RAPPAPORT, 2007) in relationship to the published media products, therefore influencing, together with the media, the perceptions of the social individuals about the subjects included in the informational circuit.

Among the advantages offered to the written press by the new information technologies one can also include the computerized practices of establishing the architecture of periodicals. The introduction of the modern technologies in developing the design, layout and make up (desktop publishing) represented an undeniable progress from an editorial point of view, as they simplified the development of the newspaper, substantially reducing the time necessary to produce it.

The influence and pressures (alternative) that the periodicals suffered from the audio-visual press in the 20th century and from the online one in the 21st century, made newspapers and magazines to look for new visualisation solutions, usually employing computerized practices and the services of "craftsmen" (designers, specialists in computer graphic etc.). "In the new context, manual layout does not represent a rule anymore. The layout can be done (and it is done) on the computer. It is essential to involve the new technological performances in increasing the perception and assimilation capacity of the posted message. But, we must agree, the message can never be a technological one; it will always possess the subjective nature of the communicator/editor.

Therefore, the structure of the layout includes informational elements that have to be carefully processed by a specialised staff (POPA, n.d.). At the moment, written press uses various information processing and paging programmes, such as: Page Maker, Quark x Press, Macromedia Publisher or Photoshop (for photos) etc.

The rapid development of modern information technologies generated important changes in the activity both of journalists and of newspaper designers from all around the world, influencing the entire production process of the print press. Technological changes shaped the job of the journalists in general, as well as the speed and the mobility of those who ensure the graphic design of the newspaper, in particular, a fact that generated the change of the identity profile of the print press in the contemporary media context.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The mass information means, in order to be competitive and maintain its influence on the media market, fully valued the opportunities offered by the modern information technologies, especially those offered by the online environment. This fact triggered conceptual and functional changes at the production level of all types of media products, including the production of newspapers and magazines. The effects of technology on the written press were strong, long and irreversible, as they changed for ever the journalistic creation and production activity, as well as the manifestation forms of the production. The metamorphosis resulting from the technology processes influenced both the activity principles and the relationships that print press traditionally establishes with the other elements of the mass-media system. At the same time, they also influenced the traditional relationships between the press and its public. Therefore, the latest change of the print press in the contemporary media context is due to the modern information technologies, whose role was essential in consolidating and activating the creation and production process of this media element.

References

- ARENS, W.F., WEIGOLD, M.F. & ARENS, C. (2011) *Contemporary Advertising, 13th Edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- GATOV, V. (n.d.) *Traditional media "raised" new mass media* [article in russian]. Available from: <https://iq.hse.ru/news/177665825.html> [11 November 2018].
- IORGULESCU, R. (2012) *Tendințe în presă-cinci sugestii ale specialităților pentru 2012*. Available from: <http://www.ziare.com/media/presa-online/tendinte-in-presa-cinci-sugestii-ale-specialistilor-pentru-2012-1142589> [10 January 2019].
- PAVLIK, J.V. (2009) *PR 2.0 și consecințele noilor tehnologii asupra relațiilor publice*. Available from: <http://www.pr-romania.ro/articole/pr-20/169-pr-20-i-consecinele-noilor-tehnologii-asupra-relaiilor-publice.html> [15 November 2018].
- POPA, D.T. (n.d.) *Conceperea și elaborarea ziarului. De la proiect la machetă. Repere comunicaționale*. Available from: <https://www.slideshare.net/radut/conceperea-sielaborareaziarului> [13 November 2018].
- RAPPAPORT, S.D. (2007) Lessons from online practice: new advertising models. *Journal of Advertising Research*, (47) 2, p. 135-141.
- SML.ACADEMIC (n.d.) *Encyclopedic dictionary of media. Internet and traditional media* [article in russian]. Available from: https://smi.academic.ru/101/%D0%98%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%82_%D0%B8_%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B5_%D0%A1%D0%9C%D0%98 [11 November 2018].
- STUDBOOKS (n.d.) *The concept and characteristics of traditional online media*. Available from: http://studbooks.net/724691/zhurnalistika/traditsionnye_internet [15 November 2018].
- TOMPEA, A.T. (2011) *Arhitectura ziarelor. Analiza principalelor elemente de accentuare*. Available from: <http://www.diacronia.ro/ro/indexing/details/V319/pdf> [13 November 2018]