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Pag. 5-12

Abstract:

There are many Romanian professional journalists who have been and still are the pride of their profession, who strive for the accuracy and the reliability of their reporting. Two contrasting truths have been colliding head-on in a puzzling situation. The present research gave me the challenging opportunity to try and at least to attempt to find out why the good work of good professional columnists, reporters, correspondents and media outlets does not leave its mark on the public/audience of Romanian extraction living across the Atlantic.

Keywords:

Media outlets, accuracy, professional columnists, ethics.

THE ETHICS OF JOURNALISM – SOME CONSTRAINTS OF ACCURACY

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1. Introduction

While I served as permanent correspondent of the Romanian National Television in Washington D.C. American Romanians asked me, on several occasions, which was the most reliable media outlet in Romania. Hard to answer such a question and I wanted to discover why they were so concerned with reliability and trust.

One source of their concern might come from a later conclusion of Professor Peter Gross who wrote, "There are media owners, often politicians themselves or hangers-on to a political party who exert an inordinate control and manipulative power over journalism and journalists. The combination of political and economic power wielded over the heads of journalists has resulted in a Romanian journalism that is often, most particularly when involving controversial, socio-cultural and even economic issues of interest to politicians and government officials, decidedly unprofessional" (Gross, 2009, p. 4).

Such a somber and very perceptive conclusion left the American Romanians at a loss whenever they wanted accurate information about their country of origin and the things happening there to their relatives and friends. However, that did not make them better informed or less interested in Romanian current events. On the contrary most of those I had the chance to know and talk to tried sometimes even feverishly to get to the heart of the matter and identify the very source of accurate, reliable news from Romania.

On the other hand, there are many Romanian professional journalists who have been and still are the pride of their profession, who strive for the accuracy and the reliability of their reporting. Two contrasting truths have been colliding head-on in a puzzling situation. The present research gave me the challenging opportunity to try and at least to attempt to find out why the good work of good professional columnists, reporters, correspondents and media outlets does not leave its mark on the public/audience of Romanian extraction living across the Atlantic.

Whenever a controversial media product reaches the public, some ethical and moral values are quoted more often than not. Ever since the pamphleteers of the XVIIIth century, continuing with the realists of the XIXth century, ending with the objectivists of the recently demised XXth century, professional ethics and morals were either the support or the attack weapon in controversial media debates.

James A. Jacksa and Michael Pitchard devised a standard system to try to make sense of apparently confusing matters. They concluded, "Metaethics attempts to assign meanings to abstract language of moral philosophy. Normative ethics provides the foundation for decision-making through the development of general rules and principles of moral conduct. Applied ethics is concerned with using theoretical norms to solve ethical problems in the real world" (Jaksa & Pitchard, 1994, pp. 12 - 18). Nevertheless, media ethics cautions, remarked the quoted authors could not simulate the realities of the competitive market place, they can offer an intellectual moral foundation for future generations of practitioners.

Such an abstract tract of debate leaves out the very fabric of communication via the printed press, radio and television. Even at the time of the great digitalization and of satellite communications, geographical distances are still perceived by the above-mentioned American Romanians when they attempt to know accurately what happens "back home". Moreover, I think that this is the point where a remark is most welcome. It is true that some of the newly "naturalized" immigrants from Romania try to become true Americans as fast as possible, throwing overboard the good things that they have brought over from their ethnical extraction. Yet, there is a significant number of American Romanians whom I had the pleasure to meet who have become more and more interested in the events in their country of birth, once they settled, got a good job and saw their children set out to live the American dream.

2. The Romanian media responsibility

Under the circumstances, the Romanian media has a growing responsibility. First, it is read, listened to and watched by the American Romanians day and night via Internet. Second, most of the national dailies, the national radio and almost all the national TV stations, public or private, feed the production of their local American sisters for the Romanian communities, providing news and comments as a second reliable source. This implies, again a thorough respect of some basic rules of the trade itself. Because, as Daniel Berkowitz concluded, "In essence, the relationship between reporters and their sources has long been depicted as a battle for power over public opinion and public consent. Journalists end up in a role of protecting society from corruption, while officials in government and business

take on the tasks of protecting their own interests at all costs” (Barkowitz, 2009, p. 103).

As early as 1986, some years before the fall of the Iron Curtain and before Romanians both from Romania and the US could communicate freely, Louis W. Hodges concluded that “ethical situations are usually complex affairs in which a moral agent (the one making the ethical decision) commits an act (either verbal or non-verbal) within a specific context with a particular motive, directed at an individual or audience, usually with some consequence either positive or negative” (Hodges, 1986, p. 35).

Publications, radio and televisions programs produced in the US by American Romanian media outlets, have become exactly the moral agent that communicates but the problem is, again the truthfulness and the fairness of such communications. Usually, Romanian media providers from the US work on a very tight budget, and they cannot subscribe to the services of the major Romanian news agencies, Agerpres, and Medifax, so they fall under the umbrella of the Romanian mainstream media and take over stock, pack and barrel their production. There is an option, nonetheless. The US Romanian media local products could be shared among local newspapers, radio and TV studios that address a Romanian public in the Romanian language. Unfortunately, this has not happened too often so far. The unpleasant outcome is that such producers isolate themselves inside a limited community and reach few resources from advertising and commercial promotions.

For obvious reasons, media ethics cannot stimulate the harsh circumstances of competition grinding media outlets both in Romania and in the American Romanian communities. Ron F. Smith concluded that there should be at least five realistic and practical objectives:

- stimulating the moral imagination;
- recognizing ethical issues;
- eliciting a sense of moral obligation and personal responsibility;
- tolerating disagreement (Smith, 2003, pp. 385-400).

Such lofty guidelines may sound inspirational but the reality in the field is completely different. First because the American Romanian media operations work on very limited resources, most of them being a sort of romantic brainchildren of some prosperous businessmen. Second, they address a public/audience that is torn between becoming more and more American, eager to fall into pace

with fellow Americans at work and in society as a whole, and maintaining some sentimental links with its land of origin.

3. The ethics of journalism

The ethics of journalism has never been and is not even today an exercise in itself just for the sake of correctness and duty. The impact of ethical journalistic products reaches trust and objectivity, which are crucial for long-distance communication such as that between American Romanians and their country of birth. "Most people think that objectivity in journalism" Robert Parry wrote in 2010, "is an aim, not a method. And many citizens scoff at this intention, since they have little idea of the methods journalists might be employing. Yet the notion that the aim of objectivity is insufficient without unity of method to put it into practice is as valid as ever" (Parry, 2000, www.washingtonmonthly.com, accessed 15 may 2010).

Yet objectivity, no matter how cherished it might be in the news rooms and video-editing suites, becomes as elusive as ever as long as the basic means and standards of media production falls under the ax of commercial interest and advertising financing. This is all the more true in the case of American Romanian media outlets that have to rely on small business owners, lawyers, medical doctors, dentists, who, generally cannot afford large investments in promoting their products or services within communities with low buying potential. Should they stick to the old adage: 'poor but honest?' They could not be much worse if they did, but they highlight a fairer chance of remaining in the focus of American Romanian communities as reliable sources of information. All in all, such a relationship may prove a long trek up the steep slope of building the public trust. At least, in the case of video productions the very picture of the communicator, be he/she an anchor, a stringer or a moderator, works the magic of a two-ways relationship. As Mathew A. Kerbel put it, "trust is in your eyes. It's your ability to make eye contact through the camera with thousands of people you cannot see. Trust is in the way you look at people" (Kerbel, 2001 p. 69).

Structured interviews (Grix, 2001, pp. 76-78) and group interviews carried out in Chicago, Detroit, Hollywood-Florida, and San Francisco Romanian communities from June 2002 to 2005 and in Washington DC and New York areas from June 2010 to March 2012 revealed a certain pattern of trust that the Romanian-language

audience from the US place on different media from Romania according to age and occupation. Younger people tended to access mainly the on-line format of the main dailies and they showed more interest in the social news and the sensational stories rather than in editorials and comments. University undergraduates and degree holders preferred the American mainstream media and watched one of the Romanian language TV local programs not more than once in ten days. Most popular on-line publications were the supermarket-format tabloids for young people with lower qualifications who were also the most attracted by the new info-gadgets connecting them to music and gossip networks.

Older people (above 40) up to early retirement age preferred the tv channel that distributes (now via web, as well) ten major TV stations, including sports and entertainment. The public Romanian TV channel specially designed for Romanians living abroad, TV Romania International, proved to be most popular among seniors, out of whom a large majority had little or no knowledge of English and, therefore, had no abilities to watch the American channels, to read American publications or listen to American radio stations. Although it took off rather slowly, television for Romanian-speaking audiences developed in areas like Chicago, New York, Portland, Washington D.C. but their in-house production is extremely limited. A large part of the daily broadcast is covered by programs relayed from the major TV operations of Romania. News programs are less popular than debates and talk-shows but their influence in opinion-making is hard to establish, their popularity depending on the charisma of the person/persons anchoring such debates. Many of the people interviewed on the matter admitted that they were aware that the programs they liked most were biased but that did not matter much, once more, due to the personality of those anchoring them. One of the disturbing conclusions produced by the interviews was that mainly people in their 30s and early 40s were inconstant viewers who jumped from one Romanian TV channel to the next in search of novelty. That should have been a major concern for the producers of such channels because this habit could not provide a constant audience even for the best programs, they require a strong cross promotion to attract a stable audience and their advertising on several occasions were blank shots in the dark, translated in a drop in advertising revenues. It could also be interpreted as a sanction for a lack of consistency in programming and a loss, if there had been one, of ethical values. The ascendance of

facts and information over opinions could generate a new attitude of the Romanian-speaking audience from the US to accurate and reliable sources, but that may take some time, considering the superficial view people have on these media outlets. Political bickering and a search for editorial practices close to a sensationalist approach have eroded the trust in such providers that should find a common language for their productions addressing Romanians living abroad. Lee B. Becker and Tudor Vlad rightfully concluded that “a defining characteristic of news organizations is their need for story ideas, as these ideas are the raw material of news. The structure of the organizations and their routines result from this need, and these structures and routines, in turn, shape the final news product” (Becker & Vlad, 2009, p. 69).

Ideas alone do not stabilize an audience after years of swinging from one outlet to another. It is rather the moral standing and the ethical approach that, in my view, may bring back part of the audience that navigate among channels, columnists, correspondents, always in search of accurate, convincing journalism that might bring light on the confusing events from their mother country and from their immediate neighborhood.

Returning to professor Peter Gross, quoted previously I think that is best to acknowledge what he pointed out, namely that “readers, listeners and viewers have recognized what the journalists and the news media enterprises and their editors, directors and journalists continue to deny with growing vehemence: the news media and their journalism have become increasingly biased politically and socio-culturally; accuracy, completeness, fairness and balance, and opinion-free reporting are often lacking” (Gross, 2009, p. 5).

4. Instead on conclusions

Journalists not lead to abandon the standards that make good, reliable media. It is my belief that the trend detected by professor Gross is not an irreversible course and that a mature audience can be won back both by the Romania-speaking media in the US as well as by the mainstream media from Romania, once commercial and tabloid habits are substituted by professional ethics and the never-ending search for accuracy and truth.

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Abstract:

The following study sets its target on the identification of motives that leads the internet users in Romania to use Facebook online social network, the frequency of their login, the manner young men interact within Facebook and its implications in the process of socialization and self-image promotion of the Internet users in Romania. At the same time, a different goal of this research is to identify the relationship between at least two uses of Facebook social network, which is for socialization and for promotion of social image of the individuals.

Keywords:

facebook, brand, personal image, social media, survey, socializational

FACEBOOK, BETWEEN SOCIALIZATION AND PERSONAL IMAGE PROMOTION

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1. From self-image compilation to the management of reputation

By defining an image, we use „the representation of attitudes, opinions or preconceptions belonging to an individual, a group of persons or to the public opinion of the respective organization” (Taşnadi, Ungureanu, 2001, p. 89).

An image is a sum of factors, both physical and psychological that

- influences every type of social communication by filtering the information and orientation of perceptions;
- contributes to the formation of attitudes and behavior;
- determines the stability and the direction of representation, both positive and negative.

In other words, the Halo effect in individuals is a generalization of a person characterization beginning with a particular feature. If we say of somebody that he is good or bad with something, we may develop a tendency to proceed with similar evaluations. How often is Halo effect present? It can be found whenever a student is subject to evaluation, when a person takes part in the employment process, in sport competitions, when shopping for specific product etc. We draw conclusions and we are judging people according to the social groups they belong to (“Tell me who your friends are and I’ll tell you who you are”). Our first impressions on certain people strongly affect our future opinions of those people. Personal branding is needed to help us obtain more fans, improve success rate and indirectly, more personal benefits.

Beginning with the development of virtual public environment, the term of “public image” turns into “reputation” that is actually, the most visible and sensitive part of the public image, “in a phase where the audiences do not get the image with its multiple dimensions, but they only receive the key and most visible aspects (audiences become superficial, under the circumstances of informational overexposure)” (Cişmaru, 2012, p. 83). Diana-Maria Cişmaru replaces the concept of “image construction” with the “management of reputation”, “as a reflection of the “estrangement” and diversification of audiences and of the dynamics of the symbolic construction.” (Cişmaru, 2012, p. 83). Moreover, the reputation has a fundament that specialists refer to as “trust”, that can be in direct proportion to credibility and authenticity.

In the context of Internet development, characterized by lack of credibility and authenticity because of its numerous examples – it is even more difficult to efficiently coordinate one's image or reputation that is created in the new public environment which is the Social Media.

2. Social Media, the new public environment that sets reputation

Social Networks (as part of the Social Media) represents the online support for social interactions that is specific for each individual according to the interest to share ideas, pictures, videos etc, within a community. Social Media that includes Facebook, among other networks, accelerates communication among users, unlike traditional media that provides content but does not allow its viewers or listeners to participate to the creation or development of content. At the same time, these online platforms of socialization have led to reconfiguration of social relationships and the society in its whole, concurring largely to the acceleration of globalization process. These socialization networks (Hi5, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace etc.) are a useful instrument of the self-image management, online fun or support of various causes. Social Media was also called "a real revolution", where "the reader becomes producers, into a new public space, where our perceptions of reality are radically altered, the relationships are entering a new phase of evolution, to multidimensional communication" (Bădău, 2011, p. 11).

One more definition available online, retrived from <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/facebook.html>, specifies that "Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues". Facebook social network has been founded on February the 4th 2004 and it has a number of 906,895,580 members in 213 countries (retrieved from www.socialbakers.com on August, 28th, 2012). Thus, the site has been created considering at least five reasons, as it follows:

- The market – its members can post, read and respond to other posted messages;
- Groups – it allows the creation of virtual communities according to mutual interests of its members;

- Events – it allows its members to announce an event organized by them or by others, to invite their friends to this event and to monitor those that accept or decline the invitation.
- Pages – it allows its members to create and promote a public page (public person, politician, singer, company etc) which is built around a specific idea;
- Instant communication – it allows all its online members to instantly communicate by means of chat room.

By the end of August 2012, Romania was situated the 34th among world nations with approximately 5 million Facebook profiles (4,963,760 to be exact, according to data provided by facebrands.ro), and the rate of accession among general population is 22.58% and 63.68% among population with Internet access.

Demographically speaking, the gender approach is (50% men, 50% women), and the individuals aged 18-24 represent 30% of the total number of users, people between 25 and 34 years old - 30%, aged 35-44 represent 15%, aged 16-17 – 8%, aged 13-15 represent 8%, people aged 45-54 represent 5%, and people 55-64 represent 2% and over 65 years old - 1%. Thus, the young population segment between 13 and 34 years old represents 78% of the total number of Facebook users in Romania.

According to data provided by www.socialbakers.com we notice an increase of the number of users of the age segments 25-34 years old and 35-44 years old with more than 80,000 profiles created in the past 3 months for each segment and the segment 45-54 years old has approximately 40,000 profiles created in the past 3 months. Thus, we notice an “aging” of the Facebook population, in the context of insignificant increase of Facebook profiles of the segments of age 13-15, 16-17 years old and 18-24 years old.

From the point of view of social cohesion that can be the subject of political communication, a study performed by Tasente Tănase and Nicoleta Ciacu (2010), have proven the fact that in 2010, the social network of Facebook did not facilitate interaction of large groups, but of only its individuals, as members of large groups. (p. 185) Nonetheless, we may emphasize that Facebook has concurred significantly into reconfiguration of social communication in Romania considering the urge of its users to create and promote an image of themselves in this online community, to enlarge their group of friends and to interact with new ones. These aspects shall be developed further on in this study.

3. Methodological aspects

3.1. Study objectives

O1: Identification of motives that led the Internet users in Romania to use Facebook online social network and identification of frequency of their login.

O2: Identification of the manner of interaction of young people using Facebook and its implications in the socialization process and the self-image promotion of the internet users in Romania.

O3: Identification of the relationship between the use of Facebook social network and the promotion of individual self-image.

3.2. Hypotheses of study

H_{s1}: We suppose that the motives of using Facebook are socialization and promotion of self-image.

H_{s2}: Even if the declared scope of Facebook users is the socialization and creation of online communities with shared interests, we suppose that the self-image is more carefully promoted by women than by men.

H_{s3}: We suppose that a large part of the users like to point out their location by using Facebook Check-in Places application.

H_{s4}: We suppose that solitary pictures are prevailing and also those of groups of friends.

H_{s5}: We suppose that personal information shared by individuals on their Facebook page refer especially to their birth date and their studies.

3.3. Participants to this study

The research method used for the above mentioned objectives is a questionnaire applied in the online environment on the site www.tashy.ro/facebook2012, during June 1 – 30, 2012, on a sample of 303 respondents. The online quiz, entitled “Socialization and branding with Facebook 2012” has been promoted on several pages and Facebook groups of more than 1,000 members and on the blog page www.tashy.ro.

The collectivity of this research is represented by the Romanian Facebook users. This collectivity comprises the individuals that were available and completed this questionnaire. Thus, the sample was randomly constituted and not by default. The respondents were the

actual base of the sample and the results of the research can be extended to all Facebook users in Romania.

The research developed with a random sample made up of 303 individuals (147-48,5% men, 156-51,5% women) that had the availability to answer on-line to all questions of the quiz. Average age of the subjects was 28.6 years old. As regards their marital status, the majority were single (34%), followed of those in a relationship but still not married (30%) and those that were married (23%). The other participants have been included in other categories, their presence percentage being less smaller. (divorced – 9%, widower – 3%). The profession of quiz participants is different, and it varies from office holders, designers, economists, managers, medical care, with the largest part being represented by students.

3.4. Research instruments

The unit of observation sets the object of this investigation and the poll unit is the one that comprises the information. The unit of observation in this study is represented by the Facebook users in Romania and the poll unit is represented by those that filled in the quiz.

The online quiz contains 13 questions according to three major approaches such as:

- **The context of Facebook development** in Romania, modalities, frequency of login and connection means. (Questions: 1. *What year did you star your profile on Facebook?*, 2. *What was your reason for joining Facebook?*, 3. *Do you see Facebook as a means of socialization, self-image promotion, business promotion, cause promotion, other scope?*, 4. *How often do you sign in to Facebook?*, 5. *What is the means you use most to check your Facebook account?*)
- **The role of Facebook social network within social interaction** (Questions: 6. *How many friends do you have in your friends list on Facebook?*, 7. *What kind of friends do you have of your Facebook list?*, 8a. *Have you ever met in real life the persons you met on Facebook social network?*, 8b. *If yes, how many persons you met on Facebook have you actually met in real life?*, 9. *What followed next after your first encounter?*)
- **The role of Facebook social network in promotion of self-image of individuals**, as part of a virtual community (Questions: 10a. *To point out your location, do you use the application Check-in Places?*, 10b. *What are the places you usually check-in?*, 11. *How many*

pictures of yourself have you posted on your Facebook profile so far? 12. What stances were you in your most frequent posted pictures? 13. Which of the following personal data below have posted on your Facebook account?)

3.5. Collection and analysis of data

Data have been interpreted by means of individual analysis of each item as well as with the help of association tables.

The majority of participants in this study have a small history (2 years) as users of Facebook, part of them joined the network in 2012 (112 persons, 37%) followed by those with 3 years since first login to Facebook, 82 persons, 27.1%. The other respondents have either a small history too (1 year, account created in 2011, 21.5%), or older than 3 years (2008, date of account creation, that is 6.6%, 2007 - 2.3%, and 2006 - 2.3%). As concerns the Facebook version, 67% have stated to use the new version, Facebook Timeline, and 33% the classic one.

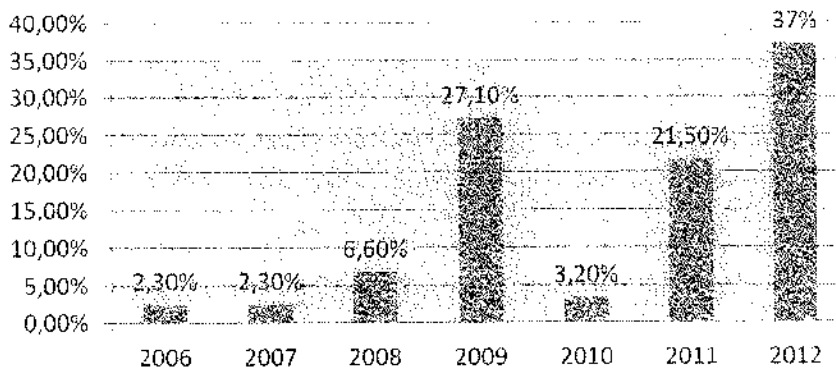


Figure 1. Users login history on their Facebook profile

The majority of users see Facebook as a socialization site (73.6%), while 11.9% of them use the site for self-image promotion.

The fact that Facebook is seen as a means of socialization is also supported by the motives that the users consider when logging in to the site, such as sharing: *"It was a trend and I had the opportunity to contact more persons that I did not meet directly", "to get in touch with friends, relatives etc.", "I left the country and I had to maintain contact with my family and Facebook was easy means to do it", "to get to know people and have more friends to communicate with", "It's a form of communication, available to almost anyone and these*

days everybody has a Facebook account" and curiosity "it was something new in Romania, different and more attractive than Hi5", "curiosity... I guess that it's as if you don't exist unless you have a Facebook account".

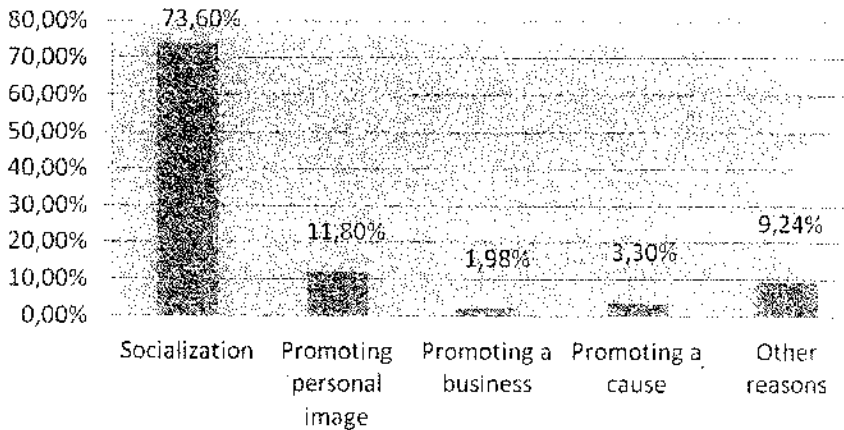


Figure 2. Reasons of using Facebook

Login to the site is performed daily, even several times a day, which is a fact confirmed by 73.3% of the users and those that use the site one a day 13.53%, those that use the site two or three times a week (10,89%) or one a week (0,99%), and the other users only login to the site rarely (several times a month or even monthly).

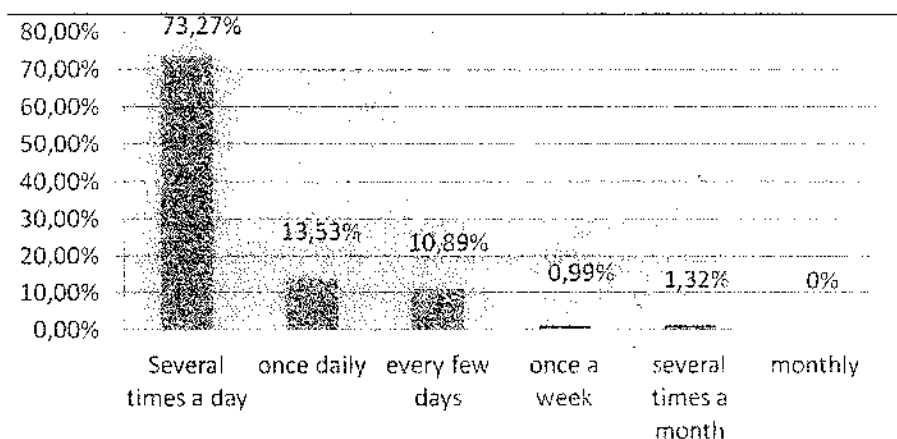


Figure 3. Frequency of Facebook login

The means the users have for logging in is their laptop (women – 52.2% and men - 47.8%), followed by their desktop (57.6% women and 42.4% men), facts that confirm the high recurrence of logging in to the site. Other respondents use their smartphone and a smaller group uses their I-pad.

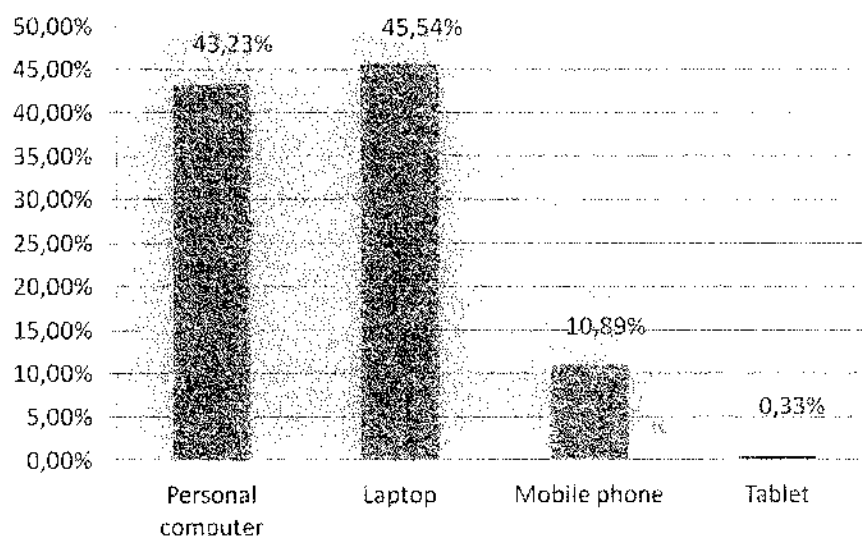


Figure 4. The most used tool for logging in to Facebook

Most of the Facebook users (60 - 19,8%) that took part in this study have a list of 300-500 friends. 18,5% of users have a list of 500-1000 friends, 18,5% have more than 1000 friends and less than

18% of users have less than 300 friends. In both men and women, their list of friends is approximately even listing both genders.

As concerns the frequency of face-to-face dating with persons the users have met on the site, this is larger in men (57,8% - yes), and women are less likely to meet such persons (63,8% - no). Both men and women have confirmed to have had other meetings, but few ever turned into relationships (54 in men and 45.9% in women).

To point out their location, only 33.3% of users turn to check-in-places application, most accessed being restaurants and cafes (29.04%), malls (15.51%), clubs (15.51%), universities (12.54%) and cinemas (10.89%). Airports and railway stations are less checked in (8.25%), so are theatres and museums (6.60%) and public markets (5.61%).

Promotion of self-image is achieved by users when posting pictures and video captures, most of them showing exclusively their image (40.6%). 38,9% of the pictures they posted on the site are of their group of friends, 15.2% represent their family and only 5% of the pictures are of their spouse or husband.

The most popular on Facebook are the pictures of singles that receive more than 38% appreciation with a "like", as well as those of group of friends (32%). However, the quiz evinced that the funny pictures are also appreciated (16%) as well as those representing nature stills (8%).

Moreover, as regards personal information, the most used reference made public by the site users is the date of birth (88.45%), their high school and/or college data (79.87%), their native place (77.23%), real name and surname (76.90%). The users' personal information that they made public in a smaller percentage is their political view (21.45%), phone number (17.16%) and actual address (13.53%).

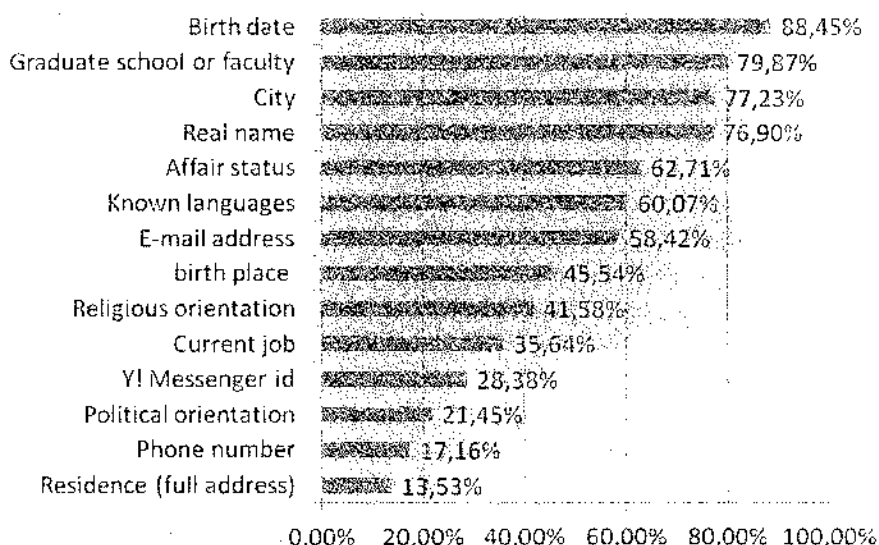


Figure 5. Personal information disclosed on Facebook

4. Conclusions

The main objective of this study, which has been previously set in the introductory section of this research, is referring to Facebook as an important means in the socialization process and a method of self-image promotion of the Romanian Internet users.

This study confirms its first hypothesis that is more than 73.6% of the users login to Facebook for the purpose of socialization, while only 11.9% are interested in promotion of self-image. Even if the declared aim of Facebook is socialization and creation of online communities with shared interests, the self-image is more likely to be promoted by women than by men.

The third hypothesis of the study confirmed only partially, thus, only 33.3% of the respondents like to point out their location by using Facebook Check-in Places, which is in fact conditioned by the means of Facebook logging in with a smartphone or I-pad. Users tend to let their friends know about their whereabouts when they correspond to their status and self-image. The most visited places by users in Romania are restaurants and cafes, malls and clubs.

The following hypothesis that confirmed following our study was that referring to self-image compilation and management and so,

more than 40% of the pictures posted on Facebook are the ones of singles and groups of friends.

The final hypothesis of this research confirmed entirely. Thus, most respondents can be found on Facebook by their personal data and correct information referring to education. Personal information that are disclosed by the least of the users are political orientation, phone number and residence address.

Facebook constitutes a large platform where anyone can build-up the "image of self". This site contains a search engine of individuals according to their age or e-mail address, which is an instrument used in many countries in the recruitment process of various companies. According to data made available on Facebook, any user may be looked up by scholars or managers, and for this reason the Facebook users have to create their page with care. Everyone should have their own strategy regarding self-branding on Facebook and should consider not just their usual network of friends, but also professional objectives, if possible. "On Facebook, you are what you post" and the first impression that comes while viewing one's personal page can be a match point.

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Abstract:

The paper approaches the implications and effects of the new media on the events considered of historical and worldwide importance, media events. Starting from the features of the media events defined by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz in 1992, the article analyses them in a recent media event, the royal wedding of Prince William with Catherine Middleton, in April 2011. The objective of the article is to evaluate the influence of the new technologies and establish the degree of fragmentation or amplification of the effect of television, considered by Dayan and Katz sole "performing agent".

Keywords:

new media, media events, royal wedding, television, social media

*THE ROLE OF THE NEW
TECHNOLOGIES IN THE
COVERAGE OF MEDIA
EVENTS. CASE STUDY
OF THE ROYAL
WEDDING OF PRINCE
WILLIAM OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM AND
CATHERINE
MIDDLETON*

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1. Introduction

For the first time in the history of the British royal weddings, the new technologies are involved in promoting and covering the event. The objective of the article is to highlight the influence of the new technologies on the event that apparently comes under the classical definition of the media events, the way it was created and developed by researchers Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz in 1992. The paper analyses the live broadcasts and the news stories on the royal wedding of prince William of Great Britain and Catherine Middleton in 2011, as presented by the public services of television in Britain and Romania, but also by online posts during the wedding day, before and after the event (the official BBC and TVR websites, Facebook, twitter, blogs). The hypothesis of the article is that the effect of television, regarded as sole performing agent of a media event by Dayan and Katz, is enhanced by the involvement of the new media.

2. Media events: classical definition

Media events are events of historical importance, broadcast live on television, powerful and influential to the degree of transfixing nations or population at a global level. Dayan and Katz regard media events as a distinct television genre, bearing distinct features, different from any other television programs. The *media event* breaks the broadcast routine, replaces the scheduled program of a television channel, and the public becomes both witness and a participant in a historical event. The event creates a monopoly, in the sense that all the channels turn to that particular event and broadcast live from the same ceremony. Another specific feature of the media events is also the live broadcast: everything we see on the TV screen is developing in front of the viewer without any editing or pre-recorded intervention; both the pictures and the commentary are happening live. As a matter of fact, the television channels are not at all involved in planning the media event, which is initiated and organized by public institutions, political actors or sports committees. The role of the television is of mere vehicle of transmission of the information. *Media events* are pre-planned events, previously announced and promoted, so that the public is prepared and anxiously wait to witness the ceremony. The

journalists, skeptical by nature, suspend their normally critical attitude and adopt a ceremonial, even reverential approach. The event is cause for celebration for families and friends gathered in front of the TV set of for individuals which never met each other before but celebrate jointly in public places such as parks or streets, where giant screens are showing the event. The message, the way impressive mass audiences receive it nationally or globally, is of reconciliation. The role of the message is to integrate societies in a collective heartbeat and restate a renewal of loyalty to the society and the legitimate authority (Dayan, Katz, 1992).

According to the narrative dimension, Dayan and Katz subdivide media *events* in contests, conquests and coronations. Any sort of competitions, from sports to political races fall under the definition of contests, conquests are triumphant missions, historical accomplishments of extraordinary individuals, while coronations mainly relate to rituals of passage such as weddings, coronations, funerals of personalities. According to Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, the division corresponds to the three types of authority defined by Max Webber: reason, charisma and tradition. Referring to the nature of these types of authority, Dayan and Katz identify two categories of media events: transformative and restorative. The first category refers to a radical change of the existing social establishment, and the public is called to support the transformation. Restorative events are "past events, remote or recent; they suspend the present and allow audience to relive the past, by experiencing ancient order and traditions which or long lost" (Coman, 2011, p. 21).

Among the researchers, the path opened by the theoretical model advanced by Dayan and Katz followed two major directions. One of the directions followed the critical evaluations, by which several authors analyzed, argued and added new ideas to the model identified by Dayan and Katz (Carey, 1998, Couldry, Hepp, 2009, Rothenbuhler, 2009). Researchers which adopted the types of media events developed by Dayan and Katz took used the specific features in analyzing different media phenomena (Coman, 2003).

3. Traditions and new technologies

The royal wedding of prince William of Great Britain with Catherine Middleton, in April 29, 2011, is a restorative media event, which falls under the definition of coronations. As a matter of fact, the

first major British media event was the marriage of Princess Mary, in 1912, when the newspapers, citing the Duke of York, named it “the royal wedding”, “the national wedding”, and even “the popular wedding”. Later on, with the help of the television, the monarchy was portrayed in fairytale colors at the coronation of the Queen Elisabeth II, when the British subjects participated at the royal event from their own living room (Cannadine, 1992). Sixty years later, the grandson of Elisabeth II, Prince William, weds his sweetheart, Catherine Middleton, and the wedding is announced and planned according to the classical protocol of the royal wedding. The communication department of Clarence House, the official residence of Prince Charles, the father of the groom, started to feed, on the official royal website and via the social network *twitter*, information about organizing the ceremony and the pre-wedding visits of Kate and William as fiancées. In order to keep the interest high and provide the news for those interested to joining the ceremony in the street or thorough media channels, the organizers, both the Royal House and the British Government, created an official wedding website, <http://www.officialroyalwedding2011.org/>.

The domestic and international media coverage went beyond the usual event from the engagement ceremony, in February 2011, and used every pretext to broadcast stories about the event they called “the wedding of the century”. The explanation for the unusual worldwide interest in the wedding lies both in the traditional and historical importance of the ritual of passage for a future British king and in the human interest raised by the love story of William and Kate. They marry for love, but cannot be united in front of God without a royal wedding ceremony, witnessed by the entire planet. In the case of coronation, the tension raises around the magic of the ritual: “will everything go according to the plan?” (Katz, 1992, p. 36). Before Dayan and Katz published their book on media events, Roger Silverstone pointed out that when broadcasting events which enthrall very large masses of audience, such as royal weddings or coronations, the television favors actions and heroes from the traditional tales (1988). Even if neither Diana or Kate are commoners (the first was part of aristocracy and the later comes from the upper class) the media, inspired by the popular culture model used in the case of Princess Diana, portray Kate as a modern Cinderella, brought to the world of the fairy tales by the prince who eventually marries her. On its webpage especially created for the event, so that the participants

from the audience may post comments, photos and videos, Caitlin McKay says: *Best sign in the Mall crowd: Checkmate Kate - you've taken the king.*

The “wedding of the century” created a media monopolenon only on the day of the actual event, but also during the preceding days, when the news stories about the ceremony and the documentaries about the royal family replaced the usual programs of the television channels. As a matter of fact, the Romanian Public Television used the theme of the wedding to re-launch its own news channel. The promotional video of the royal wedding is complementary to the promotional of the news channel and is broadcast on the channels of the Romanian public service of television (TVR1, TVR2, TVR3, TVR Cultural, TVR International) and posted on YouTube and the social network facebook: *On Monday, April 25, TVR Info starts the marathon project “The Royal Wedding”. The only Romanian channel broadcasting the whole ceremony of the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, live from London.* According to the visual grammar, the TVR promotional video includes all the elements necessary to identify the event and the intention of the broadcast channel. The 20 minutes video has relevant pictures with Kate and William, the backdrop of Westminster Cathedral and Buckingham Palace, but also close ups and details of a woman’s hand touching the ribbon of a gala gown and a man’s hand butting the sleeves of the shirt. The teasing frames suggest the preparations of the TVR correspondents for the royal wedding and lead to the idea that there will be one man and one woman. In the interval 25-29 April 2011, TVR Info transmitted daily, between 7 and 8 p.m, special editions, entailing live studio debates and documentaries about the royal wedding. For the news editions of TVR1 and TVR2, correspondents Mihai Constantin și Ruxandra Gheorghe transmitted live from Buckingham Palace and Westminster Cathedral, while the producer of the team, Rodica Sutu, fed special reports and interviews with the royal guests and participants from the crowd. The British service of television included, on its news and general interest channels, as well as on their website *bbc.co.uk*, on everyday in the last weeks before the event, information about the guest list, wedding menu, rehearsals etc. On April 28th, BBC News 24 broadcast: *Amid the last minute preparations on Thursday, Prince William took time for an impromptu walkabout on The Mall, near Buckingham Palace, shaking hands and*

chatting. He spent the evening with the Prince of Wales, Duchess of Cornwall and Prince Harry.

The event was broadcast live by the BBC, ITV and Sky, using a procedure called "press pool", through which two or more media organizations share the same transmission (they jointly place cameras in pre-established position, according to the agreement with the organizers of the media event) and they feed live pictures and sound for the rest of the national and international media. The pictures establish the setting of the event, which bears symbolical significance for the British monarchy, and the commentaries provide additional information, interpreting the meaning for the audience in front of the television sets in their living rooms: *The house of kings, Westminster abbey, for a thousand of years the cradle of royal power, today the setting to royal wedding* (BBC News 24, 29.04.2011). The purpose of the event is underlined, visually, by relevant pictures and sound, such as the bells of Westminster Abbey, and from a narrative perspective, the message is interpreted in the reverential key the organizers established: *There are wild screams from the crowd as William and Harry emerge, resplendent in their military uniforms. The princes wave back with big smiles on their faces. William gives another wave to the crowds outside the abbey as the bells ring out in celebration. In the doorway, he takes off his white gloves and hat - and quickly smooths down his hair* (BBC News 24). The commentaries of the BBC correspondents keep the ceremonial tone specific to the media events from the coronation category. Peter Hunt, the BBC royal correspondent, tweets: *Good Morning from W Abbey. The stage is set for a personal commitment by 2 people - and a moment of renewal for the monarchy* The details of the royal protocol, as elements of tradition which symbolize the continuity of the British monarchy, are obviously broadcast by the BBC cameras, and interpreted by the royal correspondents: *The Queen and Prince Philip are now entering the abbey to a dramatic trumpet fanfare from the State Trumpeters of the Household Cavalry or The London Chamber Orchestra is playing Crown Imperial as the couple, holding hands, bow to the Queen.*

The *bbc.co.uk* website posted an interactive map of the route of the royal wedding, an initiating passage that Prince William has to undergo in order to become an adult, ready to become a sovereign when the time comes. The same route was taken, at the middle of the last century, by the grandmother of William, the current British Queen, when she wedded Prince Philip, in 1948, and 4 years later,

when she was crowned Queen. It's not only Prince William who has to undergo a ritual of passage, but also Catherine Middleton: she arrives at the Abbey in a car, escorted by her father, and, after the ceremony, leaves in the royal carriage, escorted by the royal guards, as Duchess of Cambridge. Back in 1982, like a modern Cinderella, Diana Spencer came escorted by the police officers at Saint Paul Cathedral and left under a new identity, under royal escort, as Princess of Wales (Katz, 1992).

4. The influence of new media

The marriage of Prince William with Catherine Middleton was the first royal wedding where the promotion and coverage was also performed by the new media, additionally to the television broadcast. What is interesting to observe is that not only the television service used the internet and social media to promote their message, but also the institutions traditional by definition, the royal house and the Westminster Abbey. All along the ceremony, Clarence House *twitted* exclusive information and promoted the content of the wedding website and their *Flickr* account, where exclusive photos were posted: *Prince William and Catherine Middleton have written their own prayer or Want to see the flowers up close? Visit our Flickr.* Westminster Abbey *twitted*: *Westminster Abbey has a 3D app of the inside of the Abbey, showing the route Catherine Middleton will take.*

According to the website of the promotion, PR and marketing multimedia company *News Broadcast Network*, the participants and the member of the audience generated over 90.000 Twittermessages, 200.000 status updates on *Facebook* and 145.000 blog posts. Blogger Sylvie Barak states on *kitguru.net*, a platform dedicated to the new technologies, that in 24 hours interval more than 10 million posts were registered on the social network *Facebook*, where people commented on the clothes of the participants or on the religious and military ceremony. More than 6 million worldwide audiences followed on their personal computers the live *streaming* generated by Associated Press, UK Press Association, CBS and Entertainment Tonight. *YouTube* posted recorded videos from the official website of the royal family, which became so busy that encountered distribution problems at the prime time of the ceremony transmission. On his blog, Patrick McCurdy comments that the main difference between the fairy tale wedding of William and his parents' is the changed media landscape,