"WHO WRITES FOR WHOM?"
BLOG WRITING – AS MIRROR OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT. The study attempts to create a picture about the advantages and disadvantages of blog writing and the importance of the education about online journalism, including blogs – personal sites mainly in high-schools and colleagues. During the last few years online journalism has developed, the digital era flourished so the educational system begins to introduce in the school curriculum the *Mass-Media* subject and its history. What more, begins to introduce in teaching methods social media issues. The paper states how social media, focusing on blog writing, influences youth life's.

Keywords: blog writing, online journalism, innovation, youth, education, advantages and disadvantages of blog writing

"The offence of visual in daily life in the last decades brought to the attention of media products consumers the need of being aware of the conventions by which the significances of visual images can be understood and created. (...) The role of cultural context and aesthetic paradigm in which the visual contents are produced and broadcast has become more and more important. [...] The knowledge and understanding of composition and stylistic principles, of production and broadcasting practices contribute to deciphering of significances and aesthetic qualities of visual texts. For this reason, the visual competence can be considered a means for highlighting the capacity of appreciating the artistic and as antidote against the attempts at manipulation of consumers of visual production: television, advertising, visual journalism and other forms of information and entertainment by images." [1]

(Elena Abrudan, *Visual competence*)

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[1] Elena, Abrudan, *Competenţa vizuală*, Rubrica Civilizaţia imaginii, Tribuna nr.204, 1-15 March, page 25, 2011

With the development of technology blogs have started to appear in Romania. Thus, a new trend of "blog writing" started and became a fashion. It seemed a liberation and a simple method not censored by anyone, which showed an easy path for debates and virtual communication with the world.

The etymology of the word blog, by explanatory dictionary, has origin in informatics, which means: "abbreviation of *Web Log*. Blog is a webpage which serves to the publication on Internet of specific data of a restrained field. Most of the times, blog expresses the style of its author. The blog is an online journal, a webpage frequently updated with information displayed in reversed chronological order, which contains links to interesting pages on Internet".[2] It can contain different columns: news, culture, reviews, psychology, religion, entertainment, politics, IT, sport, tourism, education, culinary information, fashion, sociology, medicine, archaeology, architecture and so on.

The Blog entered the houses of people as soon as most of families purchased a computer and connected to the Internet. Blog is a method which serves for information, obtaining opinions, without requiring a financial investment, while the newspaper has to be bought from the newspaper kiosk or bookshop. Even if libraries offer these newspapers for free, the travel to precincts and holding of library permits seems to be an effort for some persons. The blog is handy, in everyone's houses, by an easy method, without making any other effort, just surfing the internet. The Blog offer now many advantages: text, image, photographs, opinions, and video. By the style of each blog the content of information has already been outlined. The blog communicates by visual images and audio images.

By visual images we create worlds, develop national effigies, but also models of conduct, which model the knowledge and national conscience. A mirroring implies the faithful reflection of existential elements, but also implies an anticipation of the future image. Mirror implies the tangible concrete element and the person who looks through a mirror is also the sender, but also the receiver. But the most important this is the purpose of action: why does anyone look in a mirror? The answer is quasi-expectable, but much deeper than it seems to be: to know, to form a true opinion, for

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[2] http://www.dex.ro/blog accessed on 21.12.2016

a prompt feedback. The visual image, since the beginnings, has assimilated this role of being a mirror. We can mention the written press or the television images, in which the mirroring is just as powerful.

Ioan Drăgan, the author of the volume *Comunicarea, paradigme şi teorii (Communication, paradigms and theories)* states that *"Since the 1950s the functionalist perspective offers a theoretical-methodological frame for studying the relation between the use of media as evasion means and certain social-psychological features of receivers."* Media answers *"a real compensatory need, contributes to restoration of security and psychological balance of the individual, helps the common man to release oneself of various repressions. All these represent* **compensatory satisfactions** (J. Cazeneuve). *Thus, mass media fulfils an exceptional role in today's world: it fills the existing gap by multiplication of the needs of contemporary man and his limited possibilities to fulfil them in reality."*[3]

The visual image is what defines us on national and international level as our micro- or macro-cosmic universe. If we were to delimit the two worlds, which interweave involuntarily, we could offer the following examples: we take a photograph for our family. What we wear, how we make our hair and how we behave is strictly the mirror of our family. But, if these photos were mediatized, it would go out in the wide world; the mirror built for us would be a mirror for the others. The conduct of a family will start to influence someone else by illustration of own image. This particular image becomes public. The visual image reflects typologies and social identities on local, national and last but not least international level.

Do blogs affect our thinking to such extent as the articles from online or printed newspapers or do they have another impact? We asked this question to many persons, and the conclusion is that blog writing is regarded as a personal journal, does not have such high impact as the published articles. The necessary question *why* finds its answer as follows: journalism, actually journalists bear a deeper responsibility than the blog writers by the nature of their job.

The awareness of media and the responsibility it has on youth is a problem which must be treated seriously as a major education; therefore the Ministry of Education and Research implemented the project which

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[3] Ioan, Drăgan, *Comunicarea – paradigme şi teorii*, Capitol III. „Utilizarea Mass Media ca mijloc de evaziune (Escapism)", pag. 96, respectiv pag. 99, vol. II, Editura Rao, 2007.

contains the introduction of optional courses about Media. "Curriculum at school decision is approved by order of minister no. 4730/ 22.09.2004. The curriculum area is presented under the aegis of *Man and society* which is taught an hour a week. The subject is called *Competence in mass-media*, and an integrated component of the project is called *Integrated mass media system for high school– MEDIASIS* – carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research by the Press Monitoring Agency *Academia Caţavencu*".[4] This subject wants to develop the following values and skills: freedom of opinions, freedom of expression, critical spirit, positive relation with the others, optimal and creative valorisation of own potential and last but not least, the confidence in oneself and in the others. The content units contain a history of media: *Mass media at the beginning of XXIth century*, portrait of consumer: *Consumer of messages transmitted by mass media*, message: *Message transmitted through mass media*, *Manipulation by mass-media*, commercials: *Advertising*, society: *Minorities in mass-media*, role and identity: *Journalist and his role in society*.

It must be highlighted that the understanding of the educational system is a key factor. The reason for selection of students and teachers in the next case study is because they are the pure mirror of the future and present.

The case study entitled *Mirror of development of contemporary media – theories and ideas* is an investigation, conducted in two theoretical high schools of Cluj-Napoca, in National College George Coşbuc and in Theoretical High School Apáczai Csere János. The interviewed subjects were 12th grade students we filmed by a camera. In National College George Coşbuc we asked questions related to the use of traditional media and digital media to four male students and in Theoretical High School Apáczai Csere János we spoke on this subject with four female students. From their confessions it resulted that they use more digital media, are familiar with the latest media sites and sites from abroad, for example they mentioned www.spiegel.de. At the end of interviews we outlined ideas on this issue by the statement of the following teachers: Adriana Mirela Bătinaş, class master of 12th grade from National College George

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[4] http://www.isjcta.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Competenta-in-massmedia-cds-liceu.pdf, accesat la data de 23.12.2016

Coşbuc, Loredana Caia, blogger, mother and Romanian Language and Literature teacher, Lecturer Vlad Mureşan Ph.D., and last but not least Assistant Researcher Victor Constantin Măruţoiu, Ph.D., president of Vox Napocensis literary circle, from Student's House of Culture (Casa de Cultură a Studenţilor) from Cluj-Napoca. The video was viewed in the XVth National Journalism Symposium, on the subject *Independence of media and freedom of expression,* organized by the Journalism Department of the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences of „Babeş-Bolyai" University Cluj-Napoca, during the period 14-15 October 2016.

The students were asked why they considered blog writing important. The answers were honest, not censored by life experiences. I quote some of them: *"We have to communicate with the world and this is the easiest method", "We need to feel that our opinion about different subjects matters," "We need to know that someone is listening to us," "Our thinking in this method is not censored."*

It goes without saying that these answers generated a natural question in this case: *"Who writes for whom?"* The answer was clear: *"Everyone for everybody."* A simple answer which seems to be indeed true concerning the appearance of new types of media: digital and social media. In case of social media, which is practically transmitted by digital media, everyone can demonstrate the calling of journalist or playing a role of a journalist.

Practically blog writing is the nucleus where the social media of today began. This trend starts to branch off to such extent that journalism tends to be symbolically a kind of life tree. But can this field become an "Axis mundi"? Eventually blogs just like journals mirror the identity of the world. But the question must be asked as follows: *"How, and in what way can they mirror this identity*?"

First of all, I started to analyse the motivation of students whose article we may read in newspapers in a few years. Their motivation says a lot about their state of mind. But the message transmitted remains to be noticed. In Blog writing the message is priceless, must be analysed. What does the world send to the world? The youth answered this question: *"Everything".*

Many would say that it is necessary for the world to receive gross, unpolished, uncensored messages, but is it always useful? Does really each blog get only to the target group? How can we assimilate so much information and by what rule do we filter it? Where is the middle path between professional journalism and social journalism?

Lecturer Vlad Mureşan, Ph.D. tried to offer us a middle pathway by which the blending of the new media with the traditional media would significantly improve contemporary mass media: "*The knowledge is based on elaboration and differentiation, distinctions, categorizations, so knowledge is treelike, we cannot minimize it to the essentials of information. The equation must be balanced; otherwise we win in one part and lose in another part.*"

"*The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum...*" – the great linguist Noam Chomsky offers us a theory.[5]

From ideological point of view, the social networks have broken the moulds. Certain theories about journalism want the return of new structures to origins or the adjustment of the new structures to classical ones. We can propose the solution of this quasi-return to origins or the implementation of classical methods in modern media by the following steps: revival of fundamental values in contemporaneity, which concerns the journalistic behaviour. Then would follow the stage of profound undertaking of everything that public defence of human values, of the word, of national welfare and international welfare means. In contemporary society there is a stringent need of mirroring the human contemporary values and the thinking level of society. This does not assume an introduction of norms or utopic canons, but the regulation of existing values.

Blog writing, even if it is free for everyone, not censored, yet certain minor moral regulations are required such as: improvement of media texts, critical spirit to own article, sensitisation of oneself to the theme, profound thinking and last but not least, the responsibilization of so-called contemporary journalists. To what purpose do the revival and perfection of blogs serve? Blog itself started to give the outline of *social media.* It is a connection between professional journalism and hobby journalism. They offer the texts displayed on social platforms a narrative discourse and a "quasi-decent" analysis. Blog writing has become a symbiosis between the professional press and the voice of the world.

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[5] Noam Chomsky, The Common Good (Textul original:"*The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum...*"), pag. 43, Odonian Press,1998.
Site: Third world traveler:
http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Chomsky/Common_Good_Chomsky.html,
Chomsky.info: https://chomsky.info/commongood01/ accesate la data de 20.12.2016

Case study

Research Design

I intended to search the youth, mainly the students' habits concerning blog writing and collecting information from virtual platforms. It is really important to observe how do they use online platforms, how do they collect information and from where. Besides informative sites there are the blogs, from which students need to be prepared in order to choose correctly. They have to distinguish between honest and false news and articles, because blogs are more for creating opinion then for inform about the ultimate news.

The most suitable method for this research can be the content analysis and quantitative analysis.

Starting from this claim, that virtual life interacts massively with the real life, mostly of teenagers, who likes much more to read a blog, however they do read newspaper articles or scientific magazines as well. I made a short survey wanting just to discover students' general habits which concerns their blog consumerism. I draw a picture which presents the following statements:

The statistics of the responders

Total responders: 46
Men: 26
Women: 20
The average age: 23.7 years

Synthesis of results:

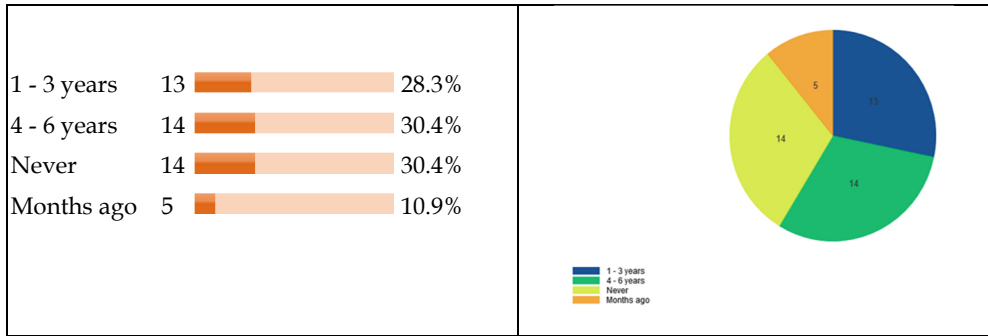*1. Did you ever create a blog?*

Yes 22 47.8%
No 24 52.2%

2. If the answer is affirmative, please describe what kind of blog you have.
The answers are the followings: literature blog, cultural blog, travel blog, scientific blog about chemistry, entertainment blog, a journey kind blog, life-style philosophy blog, vlog, sport blog.
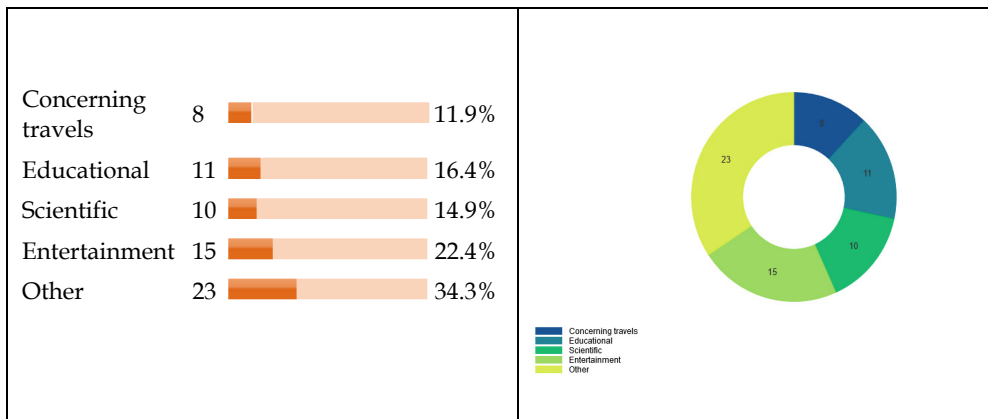
3. What inspired you to start your blog?
The answers are the followings: teachers, poetry and literature, life, traveling, documentary movie, chemistry, entertainment, love, life-style philosophy.

4. *Since when do you follow blogs?*

1 - 3 years	13	28.3%
4 - 6 years	14	30.4%
Never	14	30.4%
Months ago	5	10.9%

5. *What kind of blogs do you read?*

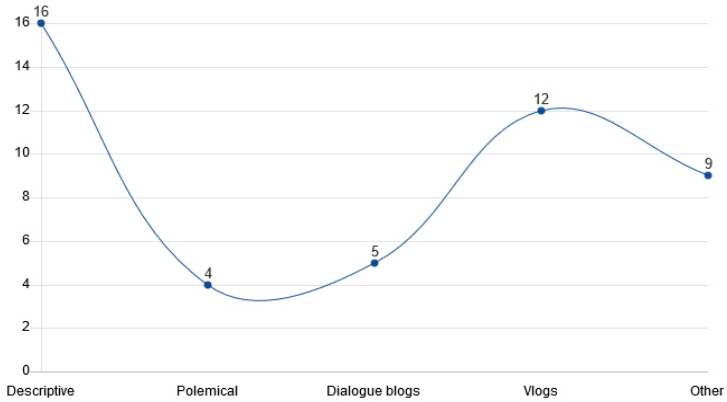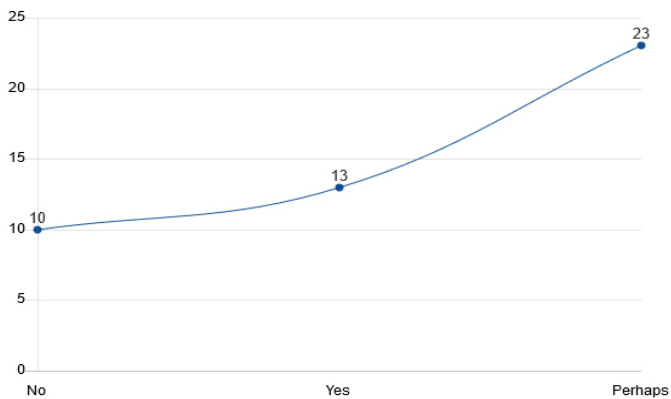|		
Concerning travels	8	11.9%
Educational	11	16.4%
Scientific	10	14.9%
Entertainment	15	22.4%
Other	23	34.3%

6. *If you chose 'other', please specify!*
The answers are the followings: religion, technology, culinary, personal development.
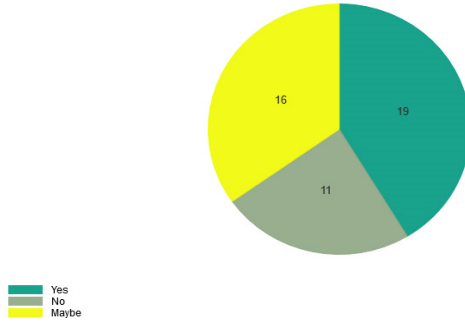
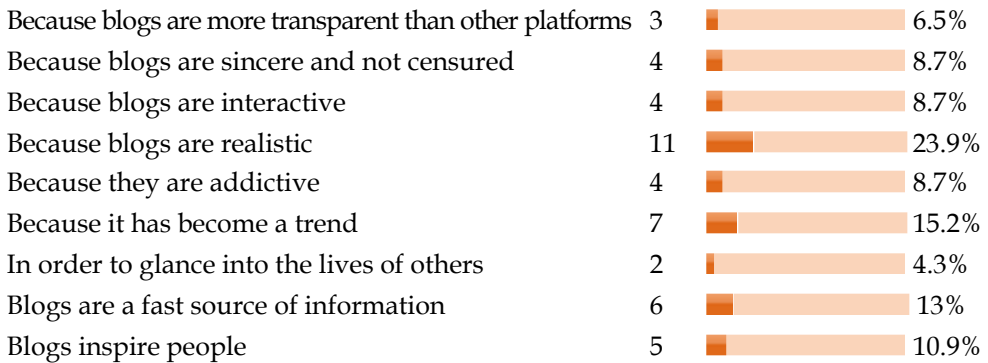7. *Which of the following types of blogs are you interested in the most?*

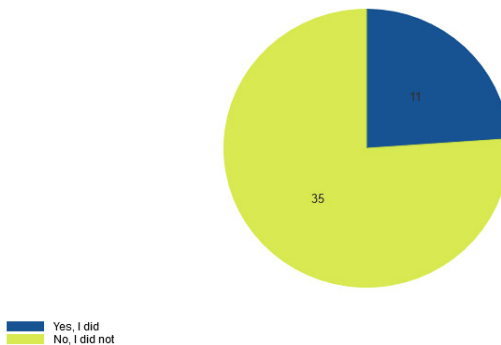8. *Do you think blogs have a future?*

9. *Do blogs have influence/impact on your life?*

Yes — 19
No — 11
Maybe — 16

10. *Why do you think people read blogs?*

Because blogs are more transparent than other platforms	3	6.5%
Because blogs are sincere and not censured	4	8.7%
Because blogs are interactive	4	8.7%
Because blogs are realistic	11	23.9%
Because they are addictive	4	8.7%
Because it has become a trend	7	15.2%
In order to glance into the lives of others	2	4.3%
Blogs are a fast source of information	6	13%
Blogs inspire people	5	10.9%

11. *Did you ever use blogs for educational purposes?*

Yes, I did — 11
No, I did not — 35

12. If you didn't have a blog until now and if you would like to create one, what kind of blog would you make?
The answers are the followings: cultural, educational, blogs about movies and movie analysis, artistic, health care.

Mainly half of respondents do have a blog and the other half do not. The difference consist only in 5%, those who do not have blog are 5% in majority. They have literature blog, cultural blog, travel blog, scientific blog about chemistry, entertainment blogs, journey kind blog, life-style philosophy blog, vlog, and last but not least sport blogs. Students were inspired to create a blog by teachers, poetry and literature, by different events in their life's, by their traveling as tourists or exchange students, by wanting to analyse documentary movies, by focusing on different specializations like chemistry or other sciences or by different types of philosophies. Students follow blogs as the result shows in this case at the equality those who are blogging between 4 -6 years and those who are not following blogs (30.4%). Between 1 -3 years are 28.3% and those who had begun to follow blogs just a few month ago are 10.9%. As the 5th graphic shows students read mostly entertainment blogs (22.4%), less educational ones (16.4%), a few of them read scientific blogs (14.9%), and the least do read traveling blogs (11.9%) but most of them are, who didn't choose from the types which I offered them as an example, but choose other types of blogs, like religion, technology, culinary and personal development (34.3%). They are interested mostly in descriptive blogs (34.8%), than about vlogs (26.1%), less are interested of dialogue blogs (10.9%) and just a few are interested of polemical blogs (8.7%) and last but not least 19.6% declared that are interested in other types of blogs. About the future of the blogs 50% declared that blogs might have future, 28.3% said a definitive "yes" and 21.7% declared a definitive "no" to this question. The 9th graphic is actually the most important from all of the graphics, showing the influence and impact of blogs on youth life's. 41.3% of the students affirmed that blogs do have influence on their life's and approximately half of them (23.9%) states that blogs do not have influence on their life's; but there were also students who cannot decide firmly if they were or were not influenced by blogs (34.8%). Graphic nr.10 shows students' opinions about blogs. They mostly believe that people read blogs because of realistic reasons (23.9%). Than 15.2%

think that the reason why people read blogs are just for following the trend. 13% of students from this research have the conviction that blogs are a fast source of information and 10.9% affirmed that blogs are a good source of inspiration. In this graphic we have three equal positions with 8.7% where students declare that blogs are addictive, interactive and sincere. 6.5% of students think that people read blogs because they are more transparent than other platforms and last but not least just 4.3% believe that people read blogs for glancing in other people's lives'. Another important issue is the educational purpose: 23.9% of the students actually use blogs for educational reasons and 76.1% did not use for educational purposes. The blog results can be seen in the following site as well: http://www.isondaje.ro/surveys/results/510295155/.

After the quantitative research I axed the thesis in a qualitative one as well. In order to provide in-depth insight, the research needed a video material, in order to show opinions and statements about the subject. I made a 7 minutes movie, in order to portrait students', teachers' and parents' opinion about the new media, high lightening the blog writing. In the following lines there is the movie script:

The reflection of the development of the contemporary media – theories and ideas –

Assist. Researcher **Victor Constantin Măruţoiu** PhD., cultural referent at Student's House of Culture, from Cluj-Napoca	"Nowadays the development of the mass-media has spawned not only a multitude of possibilities but of trials as well both for adults and for children. In the mass-media, we must first have self-awareness and when we become opinion-formers, we must be aware of others as well. Because those who become opinion-formers themselves should be aware of what they filter and what they transmit. When there is a dialog between society and the mass-media, there is also a human evolutionary stepping stone."
Mihai Albu, student, 12th grade, National College ̋George Coşbuc", Cluj-Napoca	"I use the computer and the internet exclusively when it comes to reading and articles, and I can easily state from experience that it is by far the best way to find, select and to get informed about any subject or topic. If I were to write an article, it would definitely be about the education system of Romania. At the humanities classes that focus mainly on languages and other humanistic topics and optional mass-media course should be available."

Victor Curean, student, 12th grade, National College "George Coşbuc", Cluj-Napoca	"For local news, I use Cluj News (Ştiri de Cluj) and for international news, I tend to look at CNN and Spiegel.de. And for political soap operas I use the Romanian Television. I would like to be the type of journalist who relays international stories objectively yet still annexing his personal opinion to it. This is why I appreciate the YouTube videos of Philip De Franco, for example, who treats international stories, local stories and gossip objectively while adding his opinion as well. Thus, you can establish a connection with the viewers, the readers and so on."
Adriana Mirela Bătinaş, teacher, National College "George Coşbuc", Cluj-Napoca	"The mass-media is mainly in direct correlation with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences – specifically with the linguistic intelligence. They are learning to become good orators. They also focus on everyday life, social abilities and on the role of the mass-media in the academic life. So, broadly, I would stay that it has a positive impact on them, the future graduates, and future students. (…) My colleague still teaches those courses (Mass-Media) at the Romanian section."
Palocsai Johanna, 12th grade, "Apáczai Csere János" Theoretical High school, Cluj-Napoca	"I write articles for the school's newspaper and I like it very much. We write about activities pertaining to the school."
Manesszes Kinga, student, 12th grade, "Apáczai Csere János" Theoretical High school, Cluj-Napoca	"I would like to be a journalist who always speaks the truth and would even be correct."
Loredana Caia, Romanian blogger, mother and Romanian Language and Literature teacher, Cluj-Napoca	"**This is why I think that a blog is a direct reflection of the one who has it: this is who I am – I cannot be someone else.** *The little angel* (*Îngerica*) was the first article for it was the first chapter of a book that I have written a few years ago – Mother's Journal. That's where the idea for *The Little Angel* comes from. In the end everyone knows what they want and if they don't they should follow their hearts – to be who they truly are."
Marc Damian, student, 12th grade, National College "George Coşbuc", Cluj-Napoca	"I like to see shorter articles that present ideas that do not allow the writer to bend you to either side, you know? I really like Reuters, for example, where when a story surfaces them swiftly add an article. I appreciate it very much that they do not include uncertain pieces of information. I's like to write scientific articles about any new discovery… of course I would have to do a great deal of research on the subject, but I strongly believe that this is something that I would like to do…if I could. Reuter is my main source of news."
Iacob Casian, student, 12th grade, National College "George Coşbuc", Cluj-Napoca	"I've recently started reading articles on a single web site – media VICE. It appears most interesting to me. I have started a blog a year ago. I write about trips that I make in my spare time but not only that. Yet, generally, I focus on trips."

Lecturer **Vlad Mureşan** Ph.D Faculty of European Studies Department of International Relations and American Studies, Cluj-Napoca	"It is very difficult for me to present the direction in which it is heading. I hope that it will revert from Facebook to blogs rather then it migrating from Facebook to Twitter, the most concentrated and fragmented reaction to… you cannot say anything essential, you can post an aphorism… Science is the opposite of aphorisms… aphorism is trying to capture and express only the minimal essence of information, while science tends to elaborate, distinguish and categorise. Knowledge is arborescent. In short, every revolution comes with its advantages and disadvantages; and somehow we must take them both and balance the equation otherwise we may succeed with certain aspects and fail with others. This is the evaluation, mostly."

Conclusion

We can conclude that blog writing completes the written press and online press, gives colour to mass media, offers a multitude of information, and offers the necessary time for information, documentation, transmits feelings, emotions, and states of mind. Blog writing is actually like an unpublished book, but does not remain "in the drawer". But probably the most important thing is its sentimental value.

Blog writing becomes a method which offers a rich analysis by the media diversity, which starts already to establish a certain territory in the new digital social media. It is important to reflect the opinions of youth, the future generation to be able to identify the future of the blog. I quote a student who wanted to be anonymous in this analysis: "*Blog writer is like the physician without stethoscope: he knows or assumes that a problem exists, but cannot prove it without the essential tool. Yet, I believe that blogs give a colour, complete the written press and online press. Blogs are the unauthorized voice of the media.*"

With the appearance and development of blogs, new analyses and studies, new texts, essay writings, specialized books have started to appear. It is a natural evolution which we, the new consumers of the media have to understand, which cooperates to the advancement of new technologies.

"Web 2.0 offers the possibility to become journalist, to write and post your own content online for an extremely multiple and heterogeneous audience. The passage from Web 1.0, which was a single-direction web, in which only those

who had technical knowledge could open a website, Web 2.0, democratizes the information: now anyone can open an account on an online platform, without technical knowledge, anyone can produce and publish information. Unknown persons become personalities of public space in a very short time, by online exposure. The first result of this change is the blogs, which operate like individual platforms of opinion expression and turned their owners, bloggers into public persons with substantial incomes. The second result is that anyone can practise journalism: to produce and publish credible information for a qualitatively and quantitatively significant audience".[6]

(Horea Mihai Bădău, *Manual de jurnalism online*)

The development of these means of communication concerns not only the experts in media and journalists, but also the contemporary society who shifts its focus from classical, traditional press to the new press which already entered our vocabulary as *New Media*.

"The development of communication means created thus what we can describe as «mediated historicity»: our perception on the past and our perception on the ways in which the past influences us today have become more and more dependent on a tank in permanent expansion of mediated symbolical forms."[7]

(I. Maxim Danciu, *Mass-Media – Modernitate, Postmodernitate, Globalizare*)

However we can point out a very important aspect from the video: in present the mass-media curriculum is taught by teachers, who have other major subjects, for example geography or history or philosophy, etc. I consider that a subject, a curriculum such important as mass-media should be thought only just by professionals, who have a university diploma, which proofs their knowledge in the subject. It is indeed essential to accomplish this educational require, in fact the education of mass-media which includes social media as well has to start from here.

If we make a universal image of what new media, especially blog writing means in the area of students we can observe that this is a mirroring of their identity. They show us their beliefs, their thoughts, their voice.

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[6] Horea Mihai, Bădău, *Manual de jurnalism online - Cum să produci şi să distribui conţinut de success în online* – Chapter I. „Introduction", pag. 9, Editura Tritonic, 2015.

[7] I. Maxim Danciu, *Mass-Media – Modernitate, Postmodernitate, Globalizare*, Chapter I, "Mass-Media System in Modern and Postmodern society", pag. 9, Editura Tribuna, 2005.

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