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PROFESSIONAL PHOTOJOURNALISM IN THE AGE OF NEW MEDIA

RAREȘ BEURAN¹

ABSTRACT. The article focuses on the challenges that professional photojournalism is facing in the New Media age when the ability to provide news images is no longer restricted to professional photojournalists. Due to the rapid development of the digital technologies, professional photojournalists need to adapt to new forms of production and of distribution, along with new preferences of news consumption. The paper provides a general overview of professional photojournalism industry highlighting the changes due to the online medium. Furthermore, the study explores the difference between citizen photojournalists and professional ones, also referring to the employment of professional photojournalists and their professional standards. Finally, the paper investigates the experiences of local professional photojournalists that have been practicing photojournalism both in new media and in print media epoch.

Keywords: professional photojournalism practices, photojournalist, new media.

Introduction

Nowadays, in the digital era, almost everybody has the technical possibility to take pictures and disseminate them, for free. The current study has the objective of answering the question - what could or should professional photojournalists offer so that news-desks and media consumers would be willing to pay for? Professional photojournalism is being challenged not only by the cheap large-scale technology that allows nearly everyone to take photos and distribute them, but also by other immediate effects of the

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digital world – new forms of presenting the photos (sophisticated multimedia galleries instead of the traditional print media news photo or feature) which require knowledge in multimedia production, new ways of financing a photo project (such as the crowd-funding model) that require marketing skills and others. Certain issues have to be taken into consideration – Has the profession of a photojournalist become more insecure due to the digital age? Is freelancing in photojournalism a real competitor for professional photojournalism? Is copyright more challenged today? Are citizens photographers a challenge for the news industry? How should professional photojournalists adapt to the online medium in order to stay on the market and which is the biggest professional challenge in relation with the age of media?

Methods

In order to answer the research questions, in the beginning the paper presents a general theoretical background and some considerations regarding professional photojournalism. Further, in order to verify specific challenges from the photojournalism industry, we have also discussed these problems with four professional photojournalists who have practiced photojournalism both in “print and online epoch”.

General Considerations. Professional photojournalism and the news industry in the digital age. The challenge of citizen photos

Beginning with *The Illustrated London News* in 1842 and the first mechanically reproduced photograph in *The New York Daily Graphic* in 1880, photojournalism has been profoundly influenced by new technologies (Campbell, 2013). Technology has always played a key role in the advancement of photojournalism; it has affected the content, distribution and social function of photojournalism (Langton, 2008). Today, as the author of the *Photojournalism and Today's News: Creating Visual Reality* considers, „newspaper photographers and writers are being forced to adjust to new technology and new ways of telling stories with varying degrees of success and acceptance” (Langton, 2008).

first photo about the airplane accident in the Hudson river was the one that Janis Krums took and twitted using his iPhone. His twit – *There's a plane in the Hudson. I'm on the ferry going to pick up the people. Crazy* - was instantly spread around the world and picked up by numerous blogs and news websites within seconds (Beaumont, 2009).

The example confirms that, especially in crisis situations like accidents, citizen journalism and photographers may contribute with their news content and become important news communicators simply because they are the first that get to the scene. Photo source: <http://twitpic.com/135xa>, retrieved December, 4, 2015.

Today, the proliferation of online news and web blogs creates opportunities as well as potential problems. Some view the ability that virtually anyone can post information on the web as democratization of communication, while others view the web as an invitation for misinformation, banality and unethical practices (Langton, 2008).

Citizen photos, in comparison with professional ones, do not have the necessary information background. Citizen photojournalists may produce an image from an event, but without a story attached to it. Professional photojournalism is about also offering storytelling, considers Chicago Tribune photojournalist Alex Garcia on the Assignment Chicago photo blog which is one of the rare photo blogs by an individual photographer on a major U.S. news site (Garcia, 2013). Garcia believes that “citizen photojournalism is especially needed in other countries that suffer from a paucity of news from non-governmental sources” and he mentions Cuba as an example. When referring to the quality of a photo taken by an amateur or a professional



There's a plane in the Hudson. I'm on the ferry going to pick up the people. Crazy. 954,742 1864 days ago

photojournalist, Chicago Tribune's photojournalist explains that there can be a huge difference in what somebody cognitively experiences at a situation and what the picture communicates.

Professional photojournalists use specific research methods that allows them to put together details, link events or statements, provide the audience with the necessary background, so that the subject is clear. And these methods need skills and media competencies. Professional photojournalism needs to stick to the standards - when it comes to quality, sources, updated photo-technique and logistics, accuracy, objectiveness and correctitude. In time, this will make the difference between an amateur photo and a professional one - and, eventually, this could be the lifeboat for photojournalism as a profession. In the *Associated Press Guide to Photojournalism*, AP photographer and photo editor Brian Horton explains that "journalists are not artists - they should not be artists because artists have a point of view, while photojournalists are reporters who should report what happened in an objective manner; if the photo does not communicate anything, it might be great on someone's wall, but it has to tell a story" (Horton, 2001). In the same photojournalism guide, referring to the new digital era, Horton mentions that "photojournalists quickly switched to the new digital technology pushed by budget consideration and operational needs alike".

In order to produce a professional photo assignment it takes time and patience that an amateur photographer is unlikely to spend. When it comes to a good photo feature for example, there are photo reporters that dedicate weeks or even months for a single photo project - initially they spend time for the preparation (research on the topic and technical equipment) and after that they go on the field and get in contact with the „subject/s“ of the feature. There are special situations that require more attention and time, such as covering an ongoing event or a natural disaster where photojournalists must pay attention also to the follow-ups. Another special case is the one of photo-covering minority groups of any kind (ethnic, religious) that above all requires to get in contact with the community and then to spend time to get their trust and acceptance. It is our opinion that amateurs simply don't have the professional expertise and techniques to manage this type of assignment.

Professional photojournalism examined by scholars

The Neiman Journalism Lab, a project of the Nieman foundation established in 1938 at Harvard, publishes the quarterly magazine *Nieman Reports*, the nation's oldest magazine devoted to a critical examination of the practice of journalism. In the spring 2010 edition of *Nieman Reports* that was dedicated to visual journalism editors point out that newsroom budget cuts, multimedia possibilities and the digitalization, alongside with the later innovations in technology produced all the changes in (*Nieman Reports* www.nieman.harvard.edu/, 2015).

In an article on photojournalism in the new media economy, in the same edition, David Campbell believes that *the successful visual journalist in the new media economy is going to be someone who embraces the logic of the Web's ecology* and he mentions the main advantages multimedia provides for visual storytellers. Among them, we mention the possibility to produce more content, and the idea that multimedia *can overcome photojournalism's objectification of people by giving subjects their own voice*, according to Campbell. Finally, the author concludes that today photojournalists *are using the best digital technology has to offer to distribute their work as widely and as effectively as possible* (www.nieman.harvard.edu/, accessed 2015).

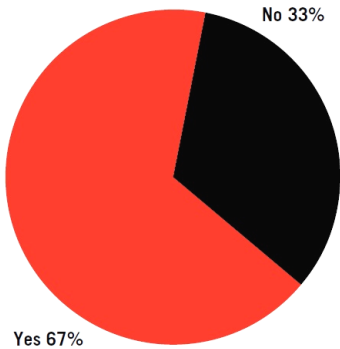
Essentially, in the Spring 2010 edition of *Nieman Reports*, editors conclude that we find ourselves in a new golden age for photojournalism and *the claim that photojournalism is dying is actually about the collapse of traditional systems of distribution and payment rather than the end of visual forms of information*. Therefore, the *Nieman Reports* edition on Visual Journalism concludes that to be visual and to have a significant presence on the Web requires multimedia storytelling – which means text, audio, photo and video all together.

Professional photojournalism practices in Europe

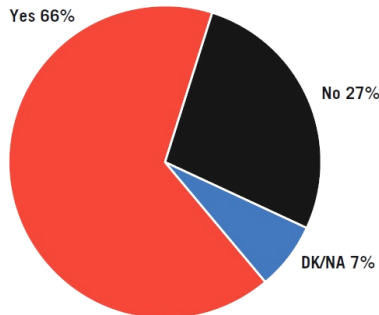
More and more often, media associations have conducted their own research on press industry in order to investigate aspects regarding new forms of production, distribution and consumption, new skills and editorial policies developed due to the rapid expansion of the digital technology. The challenges due to the online medium were expanded also by the economic crisis from recent years which had a significant negative impact upon media news industry around the world.

The European Federation of Journalists, for example, published the results of a project titled *Photojournalists: An Endangered Species in Europe?* that was established to examine the best practices and to improve the working conditions of European photojournalists, since the organization believes that *photojournalism has entered a critical phase of its relatively short history, and faces a range of economic, social and political challenges which affect the living standards and quality of employment of photojournalists, and has a harmful effect on professional standards, journalistic ethics* (McCairley, 2009).

3.1.3. Do photographers receive any remuneration when their work is being reused in different format (internet, archives, other media)?

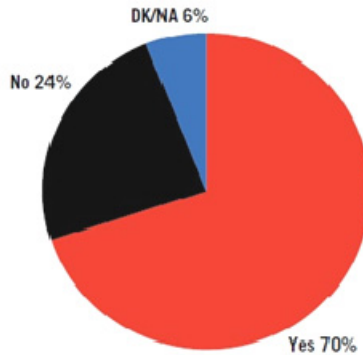


2.5 Do employers cover the costs of digital equipment (camera, laptop etc.)?



The 2009 project main goal was to define strategies to help photographers working in the media survive and defend the quality of their work, as stated in the introduction of the report. Along with the challenges imposed by

3.5.4 Do photojournalists in your country also exercise PR photography / commercial photography like business portraits, advertising photography, wedding and event photography?



the digital technologies, the report explains that photojournalists work under the pressure of increasing restrictions on photography and they must also

struggle to find ways to secure their copyrights within the online medium where users are spreading visual content without worrying about the author's rights. When asked about additional remuneration when their work is being reused in different formats on the internet, 33% of European photojournalists indicated that they are not paid for the reuse of their product, according

to the (McCairley, 2009). According to the indicated report, professional photographers started to exercise other type of photo activities most probably as a market need and as a supplementary financial opportunity – PR, advertising, event or wedding photography (McCairley, 2009).

Some of the main conclusions of the report on photojournalism industry in Europe refer to the problems such as the one of *multi-skilling* – it is considered that media unions should negotiate enhanced rates and further training for additional journalistic tasks (lately a photojournalist is also required to produce video content); *editorial budget-cuts* – caused by both the economic crisis and the user-generated photos (which is usually offered for free); or the problem of *education and training* – the need to establish a set of European standards of training and education for journalists. However, the report indicates that citizen journalists (understood as amateur photographers that send their photos to news desks) and *crowd sourcing* (defined as the situation when media desks invite the audiences to submit photos for commercial use) are threatening professional photojournalism. (Graphics source from the Report: *Photojournalists - An endangered species in Europe?*, European Federation of Journalists, Retrieved December 10, 2015, from <https://newmediagr.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/photojournalists.pdf>).

The changes of photojournalism in the multimedia epoch is the central focus of a recent research project conducted under the auspices of the World Press Photo Academy and directed by Dr David Campbell – *Visual Storytelling in the Age of Post-Industrialist Journalism* (Campbell, 2013). The project began from the premise that the global media economy is undergoing. However, one of the major challenges is to see how the production of quality content through these means (multimedia including sound, video and text) can be supported and expanded. How to pay for the new modes of storytelling in the new media economy remains the most challenging issue. Finally, as the cited author considers, *in the new media economy all media is multimedia, social media, and it is increasingly mobile* (Campbell, 2013).

Photojournalists on the Challenges of Professional Photojournalism in the Digital Age

In order to verify how photojournalists from the news industry consider and handle these challenges, we interviewed four local professionals in the field of photojournalism (in October, 2013). The interviewed professionals were:

1. Dan Bodea, a professional photojournalist that has approximately twenty years of professional experience, who has worked with numerous newspapers, magazines and news agencies;

2. Călin Ilea, a professional photographer with over ten years of experience that has worked with several national newspapers, magazines and photo news agencies;

3. Vakarcs Loránd, a professional photojournalist with fifteen years of activity that has worked with many newspapers, magazines and news agencies;

4. PhD Professor Dorel Găină, an expert in photography that is member of different national photography associations and the author of numerous personal or group photo exhibitions. The questions addressed are the following:

1. Which are the most important challenges for professional photojournalism in the digital era?
2. Is professional photojournalism challenged by citizen photographers who disseminate photos for free on different platforms (blogs, social networks)?
3. How should photojournalism, as a profession, adapt in order to stay financially sustainable on the media market?

When asked about the most important challenges for professional photojournalism in the digital era, Dan Bodea does not necessarily believe that digitization necessarily means trouble, but he considers that it is even easier now - you can take more pictures, and the challenge is to choose the best. Călin Ilea considers that the important challenge for professional photojournalism is to keep the focus and the quality level in a time when access to technology has become very affordable and cheap. Photojournalist Vakarcs Loránd believes that the first and most important challenge is that a photo gets to the readers/viewers in a very short time, and it can be seen by a large number of people across the globe. Speaking about photos, we must mention the universal language that can be understood by all consumers of media, regardless of what country they are. In the online medium, there is the possibility to organize photo galleries, multimedia stories and to be professionally present on social networks, which back in the „print era” was not possible. Finally, PhD professor Dorel Găină considers that due to the available technology, there are strong temptations to modify reality. He says that nowadays, society has no more respect for photojournalism as a

profession; politicians, for example, almost detest the honesty of a photo feature. Photojournalism as a profession is being threaten just like any other professional field that requires technological investments.

Regarding the impact of amateur photographers and the free dissemination of photos, professional photojournalists say that „professional photojournalism is not threatened in terms of picture quality, but some amateur photographers may be present to some events at the right time and then there is the problem of the advantage of sending and publishing a photo sooner” (Dan Bodea). Călin Ilea believes that „professional photojournalism is being destroyed by amateurs, but the essence can not be threatened because for the information and visual quality, it takes much more than to click a button”; while Vakarcz Loránd believes that there are some type of events (accidents, catastrophes etc) that may be covered only "in real time" - in this situation, an amateur that could be „the right man in the right place” becomes more valuable than a professional whow arrive to the scene too late to take a photo. This citizen journalism has a certain beneficial role in many situations. Professional photojournalists are threatened only in these situations where the reaction time is very important – it is crucial to get to the subject as soon as possible. Since the online medium, news editors do not value so much professional photojournalists and this could be easily seen in terms of quality, style of photos. In the online era quality is no longer the important attribute; but quantity is”. Finally, PhD professor Dorel Găină mentions that “citizen photographers do not pay attention to the general background and by doing so they can produce immoral acts, but on the other hand they push professional photographers to continuous training”.

Regarding the financial sustainability of photojournalism on the media market, professional photojournalist Vakarcz Loránd sees freelancing as a solution for assuring the financial sustainability on the media market. However, he consideres that this decision is up to the owners and to the editors-in-chief. In Romania freelancing is still in the early stage, and I hope that it will develop as a viable option for both sides included. As a freelancer, theoretically speaking, a photographer has more free time and mood for different topics and approaches, along with developing other personal projects. Professional photojournalist Călin Ilea believes that the response was not found by the managers of media institutions - since this is a problem of the media in general. Finally, professional photojournalism will be sustainable

thanks to its quality, training, information related to the event, and to the team work photo reporter-reporter (photo/visual information and text!) as concluded by PhD professor Dorel Găină.

Conclusion and Discussions

In the digital era, when everybody has the technical possibility to take photos and disseminate them, the important role of a photojournalist is *to explain*, not only *to inform!* The study analyzed aspects of the complex impact that the digital new technologies have upon photojournalism. The professional photojournalists interviewed within the article expressed their fears and hopes regarding the present and the future of their profession in a time when it takes only a click to take a photo and share it with the entire world! *Quality, training, expertise in "telling a news story" (not only presenting an image), linking the events, providing a general background and the team work photo reporter – reporter (photo/visual information and text!)* are considered to be the main attributes of a professional photojournalist, while *freelancing is mentioned as a possible solution for assuring financial sustainability*, according to professional photographers interviewed in our article. Future research could investigate into what formats the photojournalism genres will develop to best answer the changes regarding the process of production, distribution, consumption and financing media projects in this digital age.

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COMMUNITY AGGREGATION IN VIRTUAL WORLDS -CASE STUDY 2 STARWAKE-¹

ANDREI COSTINA²

ABSTRACT. The paper aims to study social aggregation in virtual spaces determined by digital communities where action is no longer action per se, but transforms into concept and thought, and the environment is created solely from the interaction between the individuals. Besides studying the communities in the informational society there is the need to delve for a better understanding of the virtual society phenomenon from the perspective of the individual as a part of the system. In this respect, there is a lot to explore on the offline social aspects of the online “addicted”.

Keywords: Social network analysis, communication, digital anthropology, graphs

I. Introduction

At first, there was shouting and acoustic signals, then cam smoke and other visual signals, communication between human beings became possible over larger distances, than couriers and early mail.

Then came the churches then came the schools

Then came the lawyers then came the rules

Then came the trains and the trucks with their load

And the dirty old track was the telegraph road (Knopfler, 1982)

And then came the Internet. Moreover, if until that point in time research models, that would be valid for years on end, could be used to research social interaction, the social dynamics picked up so much speed that scholars are literally unable to keep up the pace in adapting research methods

¹ Note: This is one of many studies on the same community, some fragments e.g. description of environment and whole world statistics may be repeated.

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to match the ongoing evolution of these phenomena. Of course, Usenet was a challenge in social networking studies, but not such a tough nut to crack, the Bulletin Board System allowed a new type of interaction between users that completely disregarded geographical location for the first time, Turoff's, Electronic Information Exchange System introduced the server-based concept, but still these were highly structured informational environments, approachable by most researchers. Many sociologists and anthropologists must have sighed at the demise of SixDegrees.com, the first social networking service that implemented many the features encompassed in the contemporary definition of such a system (for example indirect links between members). Years later, all these options would make the key to success for the most popular social networking services, but the time had not come for such leaps in introducing the computer in the personal life.

The "boom" of social networking services after 2004 has given a new meaning to digital anthropology and ethnography complicating matters in a significant way. Phenomena such as micro blogging made it possible for new communicational models to be used in online interaction, and the original ideas of linking information, the digital society has evolved to linking persons, and furthermore, creating along the boundaries of these digital communities entire virtual worlds. This paper will cover some ideas on how computer mediated communication has not only created virtual space(s) encompassing various virtual communities but has also gone beyond any classic definition of location and even identity and understanding these worlds requires an interdisciplinary approach, that should include not only sociology and anthropology, but also mathematics, software development, media studies and, why not, marketing.

II. Case Study 2 - Starwake

A. Description

Starwake is developed and maintained by the company OGN (Online Gaming Network), specialized on browser based, and text oriented games. Actually, Starwake is not the most popular product of the company, it is Dark Warriors, but Starwake has a more comprehensive player structure making it easier for data mining. A peculiar, yet not so uncommon strategy is designed for this particular type of game, in order to succeed in efficiently developing the character, the use must try to level up as slowly as possible, because as

the player gets stronger, the challenges and tasks become harder to fulfill. This is opposed to the regular RPG (Role-Play Game) theory in which the player has to become stronger as fast as possible. Since the game does not have an active graphical interface (as can be seen in the picture above) a pseudo-turn based system is implemented. This means that the persistent world “resets” on an hourly basis, allowing the user to perform a certain number of actions at no cost in the economy of the game.

The game in itself is within the Sci-fi genre and is small sized in terms of user pool. At the time this paper was written there were 42,248 registered users, which stands for a small community as compared to the very large ones that have been taken into consideration earlier. Gameplay is based more on interaction between player and long-term strategy and less on the structure of the game itself. It does not have a pre-defined story but the diverse forms of interaction between players shape the virtual universe.

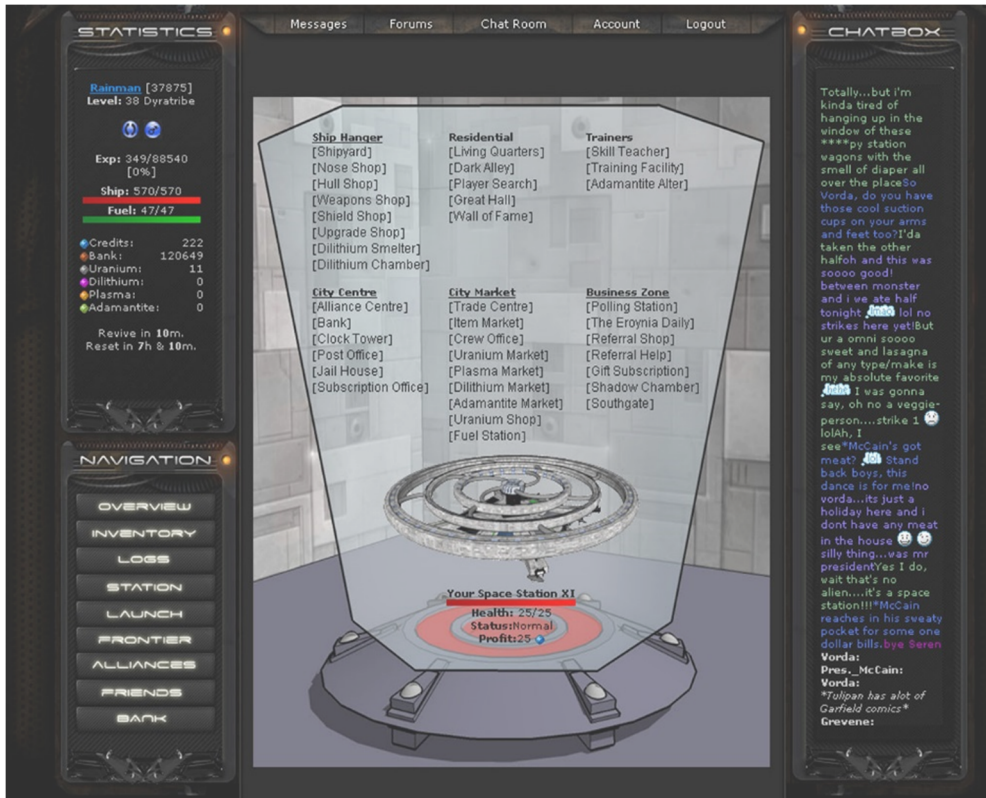
B. Gameplay

The game structure is turn-based, thus enhancing its main trait which is user interaction, not particular gaming skills. This means that any given user has a limited number of actions that can be performed in a certain period of time. Because of this it has an intricate system of alliances and rankings allowing the user to play various roles, be it in an alliance, or in the general social hierarchy of the game. Also as it is based on continuous communication between players, not only it has a forum, mailing lists and a chatroom, but the interface in itself is designed with a sidebar chat viewer on the right column, as can be seen below. The interface per se is efficient enough, but rather cluttered with information and not necessarily the most intuitive one. Taking on a website model, as opposed to the contemporary HUD (heads-up-display) the main screen is divided into three columns with a navigational menu on the left, contextual menu in the middle and chatroom on the right.

The chatroom is defined as a bar on a distant space station where pilots who roam the galaxy go to drink and have fun. In almost four years of direct observation, the bar has not changed its tradition, players take turns at being barkeeps, obviously serving drinks that are no more than colored words, talk to customers encourage them to play dice or cards, or anything that would promote interaction.

Communication, coordinated moves and reciprocity are the keywords in building a good strategy for this this game. Taking all this into consideration

one can state that it is more of a social networking service based on a game platform. In this respect, users can and must communicate via numerous channels in order to achieve the goals of the game and to progress efficiently.



Without the use of complex graphic interfaces, players must interact a lot in order to succeed in becoming better either as solo-player or as a group. Yet there is another particularity to this game, a certain parameter called spectra which allows other users to define the main characteristics of one's avatar. Although the social networking traits of the system are quite visible, a particular feature changes a bit the avatar building paradigm: user profiles are less customizable by the user itself, instead the other users can evaluate the player and "grade" it according to the actions performed. This means that a certain character will be perceived by others not by what the user wants to say and do, but actually by what the user does (e.g. being aggressive, helpful, insightful, etc.).

C. Methodology

In order to better understand virtual worlds, a new scientific approach is required, a sociology of the virtual. Ben Agger (2004) states that this type of sociology will more or less de-professionalize the sociologist as we commonly perceive it, transforming the statistician into practitioner thus shifting the focus from statistical analysis to the individual as an active member of the community. This particular approach would allow a more profound study of the impact the web has on society and culture, but also on the concepts of self and community, that are constantly redefining themselves in such a context.

Obviously, such a change does not mean marginalizing traditional quantitative and qualitative methods, but rather broadening the field of study to adjacent areas in order to provide adapted and in-depth analyses of contemporary social phenomena.

Agger's (2004) vision on a sociology of the virtual is comprised of three aspects: 1. The impact of the virtual on the self, society and culture – that are basically in a state of flux as communication speed increases, the importance of any kinds of borders and limitations decreases and the limits between the public and the private fade away; 2. The importance of individual discourse, the message sent by one individual, increasing visibly with the development of social media – an aspect supported by the importance of influencers in various types of social media and online audiences becoming an economic model; 3. A less standardized scientific approach on research – allowing the use of many tools and combined methodologies to research virtual space, with the downside of blurring the limits between the amateur and expert and the addition of a postmodern aspect to sciences in terms of movement from the boundaries towards the center.

As easy as it may seem to navigate virtual worlds, charting them from a sociological and anthropological point of view is by no means a trivial task. One of the main reasons is that classical research methods employed by sociology rarely work due to the very same state of flux in which the structure of virtual space is. Not only does the digital landscape change continuously but the very set of rules that define it.

Another issue is that the data sets used for statistical purposes are extremely large and hard to mine. Even though data mining techniques have progressed significantly by the time the huge data sets are processed, they are already outdated, and a continuous update is close to impossible, taking into consideration the amount of resources required to perform such a task.

There are no representative groups, because the individuals have no common background and in many cases, their background cannot be determined. All these together make a statistical approach valid only for trendsetting and general overview input, but nothing more.

In this particular case, the methodology used is taken from the broader field of social network analysis and consists of a few stages. The first one is to collect the raw data, in terms of scraping various datasets out of user profiles, friends, alliances and ranks in order to accurately map the network. Basically, the whole population has been mapped according to their profiles and declared friendships and allegiances using text scrapers.

III. Results

A. The Social Map of the Community

Normally, in any role-playing game, a user's profile content is mainly up to the user. Each fills in details that best characterize the avatar. In this case, each individual is defined by his/hers actions and the other members contribute to this endeavor awarding a certain trait to that character. In order for the players not to abuse this function, each individual can cast a vote maximum 6 times a day, at two hours intervals and never two consecutive ones for the same player. In this respect the spectra parameter looks a lot like Richard Bartle's typology of players, but with some differences. There are 6 different types of traits that define the player: Aggressive, Helpful, Funny, Insightful, Creative and Spammer.

Basically, these parameters allow the community, the other players to define one individual and is one of the hot topics on the game forum. In this respect we can safely state that it is the closest it gets to a form of social norm within this particular community, as it is a measure of what each player does and says perceived by others.

In a previous study, based on the same population the importance of these parameters was detailed. The main issue of this paper is, however somewhat different and it concerns the links that form between the individuals within this virtual society.

In order to better outline the community structure and the links within this virtual environment a whole population assessment was necessary. This was achieved by using the Helium Scraper software, produced by Juan Luis Soldi. The process resulted in 7620 individual profiles being extracted with 1644

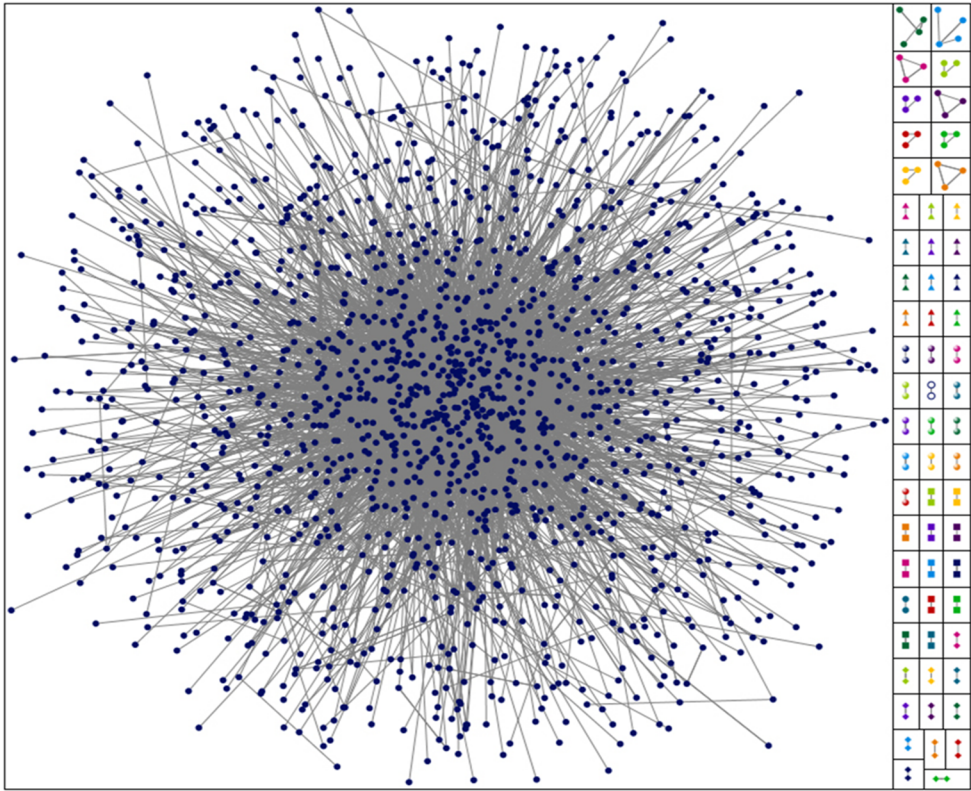
profiles having at least one friendship link with another member of the virtual world, a relative small number considering the nature of the game, or at least what the developers intended for.

One potential explanation is surprisingly, geographical. Because of different time zones, many members help each other but do not necessarily become friends for lack of direct contact given the time difference. Also, many participants consider the solo game as being more of a challenge so they take up this method.

Considering their numbers, which would have cluttered extensively the graphical representation severely, these solo players were excluded. The software used to create the social map is NodeXL, developed by Microsoft via The Social Media Research foundation, an add-on for the Microsoft Excel software from the Microsoft Office suite. This particular piece of software is capable of automatically generating a graphic representation of the social network that is non directional and is based on the Fruchterman -Reingold algorithm. The latter is a force directed algorithm which means it simulates a physical system where the edges are springs that act according to Hooke's law, exerting force on every participant, and the nodes are electrically charged particles acting accordingly to Coulomb's law. All these forces are simultaneously applied to the whole system until it reaches a state of equilibrium. To put it another way the graphical representation is the sum of all vectorial forces that affect the system with the final result being the equilibrium state (Fruchterman & Reingold, 1990).

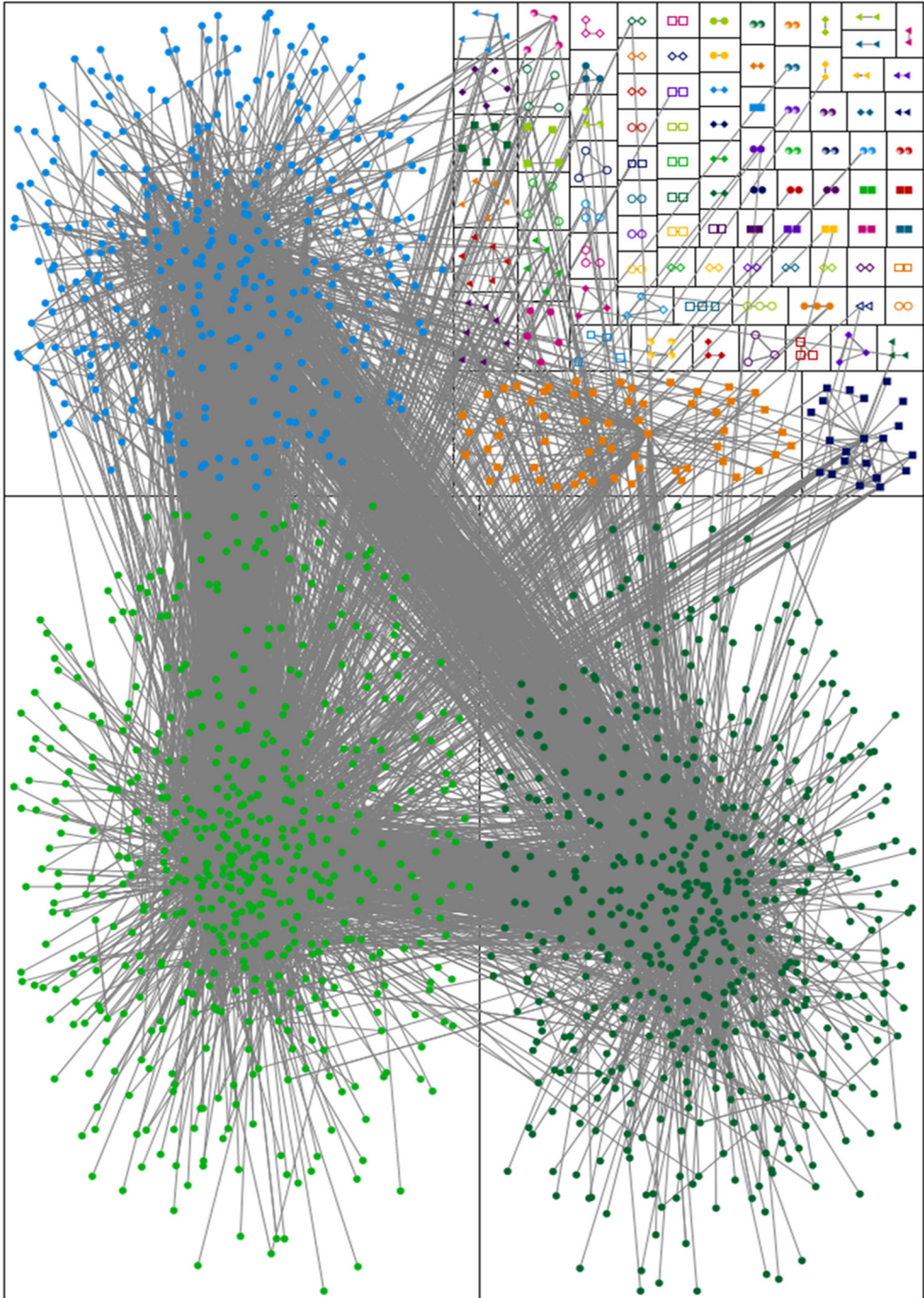
This is a non-clustered graphical representation of the Starwake community. As one can easily notice, it is a community with a rather dense and close-knit set of connections. The ones who do have friends, have a lot of common friends. However, there are some smaller groups represented on the right side of the graph. Actually there are 63 smaller groups and a massive 1512 member giant group. Obviously, this is a non-directional representation, with no other constraints or parameters taken into consideration.

This is one type of social network that is particularly dense, one that facilitates the exchange of ideas and information and at the same time attributing a strong sense of social identity to its members. Actually, this is one phenomenon that is visible in direct observation as well. Most of the members have a certain pride in being part of this social structure and the closer they are to the center in the network the more communicative and open they are, because they have a larger audience willing to listen to their opinions at any given time.



In order to further delve into the structural details of this social network, a new parameter will be added. It is quite common in social network analysis and it is called modularity. It defines how the bigger network is divided into smaller modules also called clusters. High modularity networks have numerous connections between the members of the same module, but few inter cluster connections (Fruchterman & Reingold, 1990). As a general parameter it excellently outlines the structure of vast social networks and it is often used when such research algorithms are conceived.

There are numerous algorithms that can clustered a network according to modularity. The most frequent two are Clauset-Newman-Moore (Clauset, Newman, Moore 2004) and Wakita-Tsurumi (Wakita & Tsurumi 2007). The first one provides a more general representation of the clusters using the increase in modularity as a criterion for group cohesion. The second one, somewhat newer, adds a system of data consolidation that allows a more balanced representation of the clusters. In this particular case the Wakita-Tsurumi algorithm is better suited for the graph.



Following the process of clustering this community according to its modularity there are 99 groups out of which the first 5 have 527, 491, 306, 60, respectively 21 members. The rest are organized in smaller clusters with a number of maximum 7 members that are closer to each other and 61 pairs.

Although the Starwake community is relatively united, when it comes to details its members are clearly divided into smaller groups or even isolated with closer, fewer friends. Given the structure of the system it is not an odd thing that is considering that more than two-thirds of the general population are loners. This would suggest that many have otherwise integrated into the narrative plot and would rather tackle the challenges alone or with fewer wingmen.

B. The Starwake universe in numbers

The research on this topic began in 2008, at the time 15322 players filled the ranks of Starwake pilots as active members. In January 2012, only 7620 were left as active members, though the total number of enrolled players had risen to 145626 from 37875 initially. Though a bit of a paradox, it shows that the general interest for browser based text only MMORPGs has dropped abruptly, in the sense that more people were willing to try it, but fewer and fewer were willing to actually play it in the long run.

The main reason for this phenomenon is the structure of the platform per se. Those who understand and are willing to make an effort to undertake the conventions of such a virtual world are interconnected and form a community with tight bonds. On the other hand the lazier ones detach from this nucleus and will soon leave this type of MMORPG.

Of course another visible problem is related to the technology of the platform in itself. It is of an old design and not yet fully compatible with mobile devices, nowadays a fatal flaw for any web development.

IV. Conclusions

Studying the interactions between digital worlds and physical society has already given birth to new sciences such as digital ethnography and digital anthropology. As technology develops at a galloping pace, the rhythm of human development is bound to grow exponentially in the timeline. Virtual

spaces and communities are a curious man made creation, we have easily found the means to create them, but yet lack the complete set of tools to understand them.

The Starwake virtual community is a type of a social system that is extremely relevant in the process of defining virtual worlds in a social perspective. The analysis of the data mined from the entire population of this community revealed a "tribe" centered on relationships formed after communicating in an electronic, computer mediated environment, often on more than one channel simultaneously. The study of this community taking into consideration the Spectra parameter revealed both informal leaders and a certain set of rules that aggregate into a form of a social norm of this group.

Another concluding statement is that browser based MMORPGs can be important social networking tool. Even though the more graphic intensive ones are more popular, the latter can be more effective. In theory, text interface is more efficient than graphics for community building because it allows the user to focus more on the interaction than on the surrounding environment.

The social dynamics of the game are similar to the fully immersive social interactive games even though it is combat based, and one may think that it is all about the action, but being a lot less graphical it is less distracting. The social hierarchy in the game allows diversity and domination on various levels giving the user numerous possibilities to evolve and integrate in that social structure that s/he chooses and believes to be more suitable.

As technology massively impacts everyday life social structures tend to undertake their own metamorphosis, virtual projections of real entities tend to be more and more complex and various forms of social media transform the way we relate to each other, and in some occurrences, as is the case of enhanced reality alter even the surrounding, tangible environment.

Virtual worlds and their study outline new forms of science in the social realm such as digital anthropology and ethnography, and their scientific rigourousity is increasing as exact sciences are combined with psychology, sociology and communication sciences. Moreover, this kind of study constitutes itself as a point of convergence between disciplines as we strive to understand more thoroughly this relationship between the individual and the virtual representation.

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MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE COLECTIV NIGHTCLUB FIRE. A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF APPLICABLE MEDIA LAW

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ABSTRACT. The Colectiv nightclub fire will probably remain in the collective memory of Romanians as one of the biggest recent tragedies. Media played an important role in informing and forming the opinion of the public in this regard. The following study reflects upon the applicable media legislation, aiming to pave the way for future empirical studies on how the Colectiv night fire has been reflected in the media. Provisions of the New Civil Code, Author's right law 8/1996 and Code for the regulation of the audiovisual content (Decision no. 220/2011) are analyzed in connection with the right to own public image of victims, deceased and their families.

Keywords: Colectiv nightclub fire, image of the deceased, image of the victim, right to privacy in grief

Introduction

To the date² 62 persons died and 184 were injured in the nightclub fire that occurred on the 30th of October 2015 in Bucharest, Romania. The grim count qualified the Colectiv nightclub fire as the worst incident of this sort in Romania's history. Pyrotechnics associated with the band's performance ignited the polyurethane acoustic foam of the supporting pillars and ceiling that eventually collapsed. The people (approximately 400 persons) rushed towards the only exit of the club, 80 cm wide. Most victims sustained internal injuries as well as severe burns, and were intoxicated with a mix of poisonous substances of the smoke of burning acoustic foam. An emergency intervention

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² Date of last revision - 23rd of November

of firefighters, police and medical crews happened later that evening, with unconscious victims resuscitated in a sealed perimeter, at the light of trucks and sometimes televisions cameras. Media shared the name of the twelve hospitals where victims were taken for treatment, as well as hand-written, unverified lists of victims' names, ages and addresses. During the following days reports and updates were shared from each hospital that admitted injured persons. The victims were identified for the public, with their love stories, successful careers, heroic last stand, broken dreams pouring through the open wounds of families and friends into the media.

The tragedy bared similarities with other nightclub fires such as the Station nightclub fire in Rhode Island, República Cromanon nightclub fire in Buenos Aires, the Wuwang Club fire in Shenzhen, China, the Lane Horse fire in Perm, Russia, and the Kiss nightclub fire in Santa Maria, Brazil. The criminal investigation is ongoing but, as in some of the previously mentioned cases, mass protests regarding corruption led to resignation of the Prime Minister Victor Ponta, together with his government, as well as the resignation of the mayor of the 4th Sector of Bucharest, where the club was operating without all the licenses, Cristian Popescu Piedone. Club's owners Alin Anastasescu, Paul Gancea, and Costin Mincu were charged with negligent homicide and negligent bodily harm and taken into custody. Subsequent investigation also led to the arrest of Cristian Nita (director), his wife and an employee of the company that provided the pyrotechnic effects. The heads of the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations Bucharest-Ilfov were suspended from office after proof of knowledge of the existence of the club and negligence to inspect surfaced in the online media due to investigative journalism work.

Romanian legal provisions regarding the memory of the deceased

1. The New Civil Code

1.1 The Provisions

The New Civil Code, entered into force on October 1st, 2011, contains specific provisions regarding the "respect which should be given to a human being" (Article 58) which includes right to dignity, own image, and right to a private life alongside with the right to physical and psychological integrity. The Code stipulates that the "identification attributes" of a person are the name, domicile, residence and marital status.

The personality rights are non-patrimonial rights, as life, dignity, honor and right to private life don't have a monetized equivalent, and are not transmissible, belonging strictly to each respective human being, and to their lawful successors in rights, in case of death.

According to articles 78 and 79 of the Code the deceased person should be granted with respect regarding his or her memory, as well as regarding the body. The memory of the deceased is protected under the same conditions as the image and reputation of a living person. Therefore, an analysis of the rights to memory of the deceased can be done only by thoroughly investigating the right to image and reputation, as conceived by the legislator in order to protect any other human being.

The right to dignity is stipulated in article 72, as the second paragraph explicitly forbids any infringement to the honor and reputation of a person, without the person's consent, or without respecting the limits of freedom of expression, as stipulated in the international treaties and conventions ratified by Romania.

The right to own image is recognized by the 73rd article of the Code, that provides that in the exercise of the right to own image, any person can explicitly forbid or stop the reproduction, in any manner, of the physical appearance and voice, and the usage of such reproductions, unless the intrusion respects the limits of freedom of expression, as stipulated by the conventions and international treaties ratified by Romania.

In the context of exercise of rights to own image and dignity of the deceased by his or her heirs, the right to a private life, stipulated under articles 71 and 74 of the New Civil Code has to be included. According to article 71, no person can be subjected to interference in its intimate, personal or family life, domicile, residence and correspondence, without consent. The same protection extends to manuscripts and other personal documents, as well as information regarding the private life. Article 74 enlists explicitly nine types of situations that could be considered infringements of the private life of a person. Among these, the recording of the voice and image of a person situated in a private space, without consent, broadcasting images of the interiors of a private space, without the consent of the person lawfully occupying it, broadcasting news, debates, investigations of reportages regarding the intimate, family or personal life, without consent, broadcasting images of a person following a treatment, including diagnostic problems, prognosis, treatment and autopsy result, without the persons' consent or, in case of

death, the consent of his or her successors and publishing correspondence, manuscripts and other personal documents, including data regarding the domicile, residence, phone numbers of a person or family members, without consent.

A presumption of consent operates, according to article 76, in the case in which the person makes available the information or the material to an entity known as operating in the field of informing the public.

As previously mentioned, the right to dignity, as well as the right to own image are not violated if the infringement is allowed under the international treaties and conventions regarding human rights that Romania has ratified. The exercise in good-faith of constitutional rights and freedoms, with respect to the international treatise cannot amount to an infringement of the rights to dignity, own image or private life.

1.2 Discussion on the applicability of the provisions to the Colectiv nightclub fire case during the evening and night of the events

For a clear theoretical approach, the discussion has been divided taking into consideration the type of media that broadcasted journalistic materials, into 2 parts, regarding online media and television.

The tragedy at Colectiv nightclub was announced by at the emergency hotline 112 at 10:32PM. Television crews arrived at the scene in less than 10 minutes³, but the police isolated a perimeter for the intervention after another hour⁴. First news in online media regarding the tragedy were published around 23:25 PM. On site, media had one hour to self-regulate and decide how to interpret and apply the provisions of the New Civil Code, alongside with other provisions regulating broadcast journalism that will be discussed further on in this article.

Online media reported through live-text. Updates of public official's declarations were reproduced in the majority of the cases. However, most problematic for the online media were both the photographs chosen to illustrate the articles, as well as a number of unverified information shared from other

³ V.M. (2015, November 1st) Cameraman aflat la clubul Colectiv: Adrian Despot era ars... a inceput sa urle la mine sa car oameni, HotNews.ro retrieved from <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-20547882-cameraman-aflat-clubul-colectiv-adrian-despot-era-ars-inceput-urle-mine-car-oameni.htm>, 21 nov 2015

⁴ Colectiv nightclub fire. (n.d.). in *Colectiv nightclub fire* retrieved on 22nd of nov 2015 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colectiv_nightclub_fire

online sources. Photos of the intervention itself were published, and among them, mixed, also photos of carbonized bodies of the victims. Can images of bodies burned beyond recognition fall under the provisions of the New Civil Code? Arguably not, since the physical appearance and voice that article 73 enlist under the right to own image are identification attributed. Who could exercise the right to own image and dignity on behalf of the deceased? Virtually, the heirs, but practically, taking into account the lack of identification, no one. Online media citing "Facebook.com" as a source, chose to "share" information already available to some categories of the public. Worth taking into consideration are the provisions of article 75 regarding the exceptions to what can represent an infringement of the right to privacy and human dignity. According to Romanian Constitution, article 11, the international treaties ratified by Romania are part of the internal body of laws of Romania. This includes the European Convention on Human Rights and its jurisprudence regarding article 8 (Right to respect for private and family life) and article 10 (Freedom of expression), jurisprudence that upheld to right of the public to receive accurate information on events of public interest, and protects also expressions of opinions that "might shock, offend or disturb"⁵. A possible argument for sharing the shocking photos is the necessity to accurately inform the public. To conclude this section, arguably, from the New Civil Code standpoint, the online publications that decided to thoroughly inform their public, including photos of carbonized bodies, were acting at "a limit of legality". Upon request from the families of the victims however, the publications might be obligated to remove visual content that enhances the traumatic experience. A similar reasoning applies to the case of recognizable victims that survived the tragedy and were either unconscious, at the moment the photos were taken, or under treatment or shock, case in which their consent cannot be presumed. The right to own image can be exercised either by them personally, or, in the sad event of their death, by their successors.

Television crews, among the first to arrive at the scene, pose similar problems. An ongoing emergency intervention is clearly not the moment to presume consent can be expressed, even tacitly. The impossibility to blur during a live-broadcast burdened the cameramen, as well as the producers, with the important decision of what to show the audience. Certainly the mobilization of firemen, nurses and doctors is both impressive and relevant, however the right of the victims not to be shown during resuscitation or treatment ought to be respected as part of the right to own image.

⁵ Handyside v. United Kingdom, 24 Eur. Ct. H.R. (ser. A) at 23 (1976)

1.3 Discussion on the applicability of the provisions to the Colectiv nightclub fire case on the following days. Right to own image and dignity of victims and their families

The provisions of the New Civil Code protect the personal image and right to privacy and human dignity in conjunction with the right to have a family life. As seen in other collective tragedies, the following days are used by the media in order to explore in-depth the personal stories and lives of victims and their families, in order to give them "a face" and the public a relatable dimension of their humanity. The public was therefore made part of the collective mourning process of persons with successful careers that ended abruptly⁶, star-crossed couples that death separated⁷, couples that died together⁸, couples that reunited in death days apart from one another⁹ and heroes¹⁰. The majority of these stories included identification details of the victims, alongside with a compelling picture, in most cases of unknown origin. Some of the stories are told by aggrieved parents, therefore, though their awareness of their right to refuse to discuss or share their grief with a large audience is debatable, a presumption of consent from their part operates regarding the information broadcasted, as well as the accompanying

⁶(2015, November 3rd) Monica Tanasoiu, directoarea firmei de publicitate moarta in incendiu, e plansa de toata lumea: "O fata cu un zambet luminos, cu un ras cristalin, cu o inima mare cat sa incapa toti cei dragi in ea!" in *wowbiz.ro*, retrieved from http://www.wowbiz.ro/monica-tanasoiu--directoarea-firmei-de-publicitate-moarta-in-incendiu-din-colectiv--plansa-de-toata--lumea--e2809co-fata-cu-un-zambet-luminos--cu-un-r_166022.html at 21st Nov 2015

⁷ (2015, November 1st), Cuplurile pe care moartea le-a despartit in tragedia de la Colectiv. "A intrat dupa el in club si nu s-a mai intors", *protv.ro*, retrieved from <http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/incendiu-in-colectiv/cuplurile-pe-care-moartea-le-a-despartit-in-tragedia-de-la-colectiv-a-intrat-dupa-el-in-club-si-nu-s-a-mai-intors.html> on 21st Nov 2015

⁸ (2015, November 2nd) Se pregateau de nunta, in sa au murit imbratisati, in clubul Colectiv. "El a protejat-o cu trupul lui", *protv.ro*, retrieved from <http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/incendiu-in-colectiv/se-pregateau-de-nunta-dar-au-murit-imbratisati-in-club-colectiv-el-a-incercat-s-o-protejeze-de-flacari.html> on 21st Nov 2015

⁹ (2015, November 7), S-au reîntâlnit în CER! Ionuț Popescu, iubitul Monicăi Tănăsioiu, a murit la Spitalul de Arși, *observator.tv*, retrieved from <http://observator.tv/social/sau-reintalnit-in-cer-ionut-popescu-iubitul-monica-tanasoiu-a-murit-la-spitalul-de-arsi-165897.html> on 21st of November.

¹⁰ (2015, November 2nd), Eroii de la Colectiv, Adrian Rugină și Claudiu Petre, decorați de Klaus Iohannis, *realitatea.net*, retrieved from http://www.realitatea.net/eroii-de-la-colectiv-adrian-rugina-i-claudiu-petre-decora-i-de-iohannis_1822515.html#ixzz3wMIQQKbk on 21st of November.

photographs or footage. It is not however the case when it comes to obituaries made public on social networks by work colleagues or friends, as family has the right to decide whether or not their loved ones will be identified in an everlasting (or until explicit opposition will revert it) portray made by external parties and shared by the media with their avid audiences.

Since the unknown origin of the personal photographs of the victim seems to be the norm, the following section of the paper will analyze the provisions of the law 8/1996 regarding author's rights, taking a particular interest in portray rights.

2. Portray rights are stipulated by the provisions of Law no. 8/1996

2.1 The legal provisions

Article 7, paragraph f) enlists among the works that can be the subjected to intellectual property regulations the photographic works. Unless otherwise stipulated, the photographic work of art belongs to its author. However, according to article 86 of law, the patrimonial rights that originate from the execution of works of photography of employees or on demand are presumed to belong to the employer for a period of 3 years or the person that commissioned the work, unless otherwise stipulated in the contract. The commissioned work can be used and reproduced by the person depicted in the portray, as well as by its heirs, without the consent of the author, but while respecting his moral right to be recognized as author, and therefore, if the original of the photo included the name of the photographer, the subsequent reproductions will have to preserve the name of the photographer as well.

According to the revised form of the law, under article 88, in order to use a work of art (photography or painting) that includes a portray, consent of the person depicted is necessary, in order to respect the provisions of the New Civil Code stipulated under articles 73, 74 and 79. Even after the death of the person depicted in the portray, the owner or the lawful possessor of the portray cannot use it or reproduce it without the consent of the heirs of the deceased, for twenty years following the death. Consent isn't required if, however, the person depicted is either a model, or was paid to model for the portray. According to article 90 of the law, the person represented in the portray can exercise the right to oppose any usage or modification of the portray that might infringe upon his or her honor and reputation.

2.2 *A discussion regarding the usage of photos of the victims of the Colectiv nightclub fire*

Upon examining the type of portraits of victims of the Colectiv nightclub fire publicized by the media, we identify them as being mainly facial shots and upper-body shots of individuals, comprising both candid portraits, as well as posed and formal portraits. The following discussion aims to theoretically “pave the way” to a research question regarding the usage of these portraits.

Firstly, we can assume that the formal portraits of employees or different band members were commissioned by their employer or by themselves, case in which the photographs belong to those that commissioned the work, respectively either the employers or the successors of the victims. Therefore, in order to use formal public portraits, the consent of the lawful owner of the photos is required.

Secondly, we assume that posed non-formal portraits were the work of family and friends of the persons, and were done with the depicted persons’ consent. According to the provisions of the law, the author and owner of work in these cases continues to be the photographer. Therefore a combination of consent of the original photographer and either person represented in the portrait or successor is needed in order to lawfully use the picture, as both moral and patrimonial rights continue to belong to the author of the photograph, with some moral rights retained by the “model” as well.

A valid question regards the situation in which these photographs have been extracted from social network sites. The mere fact that the portrait has been made public by the person represented in the portrait itself amounts or not to consent (even tacit) of re-use? The answer isn’t obvious, and, as usual for the majority of the questions regarding a legal issue, “it depends”. When it comes to Facebook, for instance, the possibilities of the account holder to modify the visibility and availability of the portrait to a variety of audiences, allow for the identification of the intent, if not the extent of the re-usage consent of the account holder. A portrait available only to friends, therefore a limited audience, is the equivalent of a private photo-album, and there is a reasonable expectancy of privacy related to it. A portrait used as a public-profile photo might be available to the general public, but is still subjected to terms of usage convened between the author of the photo and portrayed person.

As a result, subject to the exact conditions in which each portrait has been taken, the photos that were not made explicitly available to the media, by their lawful owners of moral or patrimonial rights, might be withdrawn from media at the request of interested parties. Compensation for moral or patrimonial damage incurred may be awarded in court (Halcu & Lisievici, 2015).

3. The Code for the regulation of the audiovisual content (Decision no. 220/2011)

3.1 The legal provisions

The provisions of the Code are aligned with the provisions of the Romanian Constitution, as well as with the provisions of the New Civil Code. Under the third title of the decision, article 30 explicitly stipulates the obligation of the broadcasting companies to respect the fundamental human rights and liberties, the right to a private life, honor and reputation, as well as the right to own image.

The same chapter defines, through article 31, the justifiable public interest as being related to “any problems, deeds of events that influence the society or a community”, “especially regarding the prevention or proof of a criminal act, the protection of public health or safety and signaling incompetence cases that affect the public”. However, according to the following article “not any interest of the public has to be satisfied”, though “the right to own image shouldn’t prevent finding out the truth regarding matters of justifiable public interest”. Interference in the private or family life is allowed only if there is a justifiable public interest and a direct link between the justifiable public interest and the private or family life. Article 34 regulates the right to own public image, stipulating the fact that any recordings of persons situated in a private space cannot be broadcasted unless a written consent is expressed in this regard, the only exception being a situation of justifiable public interest.

Alongside with this “basic” protection, article 41 addresses through specific provisions the situation in which a person is a victim or is deceased. Footage with victims cannot be broadcasted without their consent. Footage of deceased persons cannot be broadcasted without the consent of their families. Footage of trauma is strictly forbidden unless there is a humanitarian justification and an explicit consent of the family. The provisions are reiterated in article 44, regulating the situation in which the footage has official sources, with police or judiciary as main examples.

The same chapter regulates, under article 45, the right to respect or privacy in grief. A specific emphasis is given to the situation of accidents, natural disasters or acts of extreme violence, with a clear recommendation for respect for human dignity to be shown. Information and image of persons under treatment and their health condition is allowed only with their consent or the one of their families, with the exception, however of justifiable public interest.

3.2 *The applicability of the provisions to the Colectiv nightclub fire case*

As previously mentioned, television crews were among the first to arrive at the scene, together with firefighters and, in some cases, even prior to the ambulances and the police. The legal provisions stipulate clearly that footage of victims cannot be shown without their consent, and footage of deceased persons cannot be broadcasted without the consent of their families. Questions of whether a tacit consent can be presumed if victims are aware of the presence of cameras and do not explicitly express their refusal to be filmed should remain unanswered, or should be answered in courts.

There are, however, a series of clear answers provided by law to questions related to the right to image of the deceased and the right to privacy in grief of their loved ones. The days following the nightclub fire and its intensive media coverage, the Audiovisual Council received over 100 complaints related to the manner in which broadcast media chose to present the event. Only 3 television stations were sanctioned: DIGI24 with a fine for broadcasting in a distorted manner the testimony of a witness accusing the firefighters for being unprepared with enough oxygen and RomaniaTV and Kanal D for not respecting the right to intimacy of aggrieved families. The same council transmitted, at the special request of two aggrieved families, the recommendation not to broadcast the funerals of the victims. The recommendation was taken however lightly, as even the religious television station Trinitas TV broadcasted the funerals¹¹.

Conclusions

Although there are a series of clear legal provisions regarding the right to human dignity and own image, as well as regarding the right to dignity of victims and right to intimacy in grief of families, it is our assumption that few media institutions actually respected these rights. Future research should focus on the legality of the representation of the victims and their aggrieved families, with a particular emphasis on the respect shown to their right to public image and intimacy. The problem of explicit or tacit consent is of significance and it is our opinion that focus groups of semi-structured interviews

¹¹ Bunea (2015), Postul Patriarhiei - Trinitas, pe masa CNA după ce a difuzat imagini de la înmormântarea unor tineri de la Colectiv, *paginademedia.ro*, retrieved from <http://www.paginademedia.ro/2015/12/postul-trinitas-in-vizorul-cna-dupa-ce-a-difuzat-imagini-de-la-inmormantarea-unor-tineri-de-la-colectiv> November 22nd 2015

with journalists are the best research methods to be used in this study, although it might be jeopardized by the problem of biased, desirable answers. Another important problem to be tackled is that of representation of white collar crime related to the incident, as well as the respect shown to the provisions related to presumption of innocence.

In the light of previous incidents regarding the right to intimacy in grief in suicide cases, or of victims of other disasters, the analysis of the media representation approach in this particular case is an important test of media maturity as well as of public maturity, and its results could motivate both future legislation and future litigation.

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BETWEEN SCIENCE POPULARIZATION AND MOTIVATIONAL INFOTAINMENT: VISUAL PRODUCTION, DISCURSIVE PATTERNS AND VIEWER PERCEPTION OF TED TALKS VIDEOS

RADU MEZA¹, CONSTANTIN TROFIN²

ABSTRACT. This research tries to explore the popular TED talk video format by analysing the technical aspects of the visual production and discursive patterns in the verbal content in relation to the most popular ratings applied by the users. Our analysis shows how the visual production format uses direction and editing to convey information and emotion. The results also point towards an increasing trend favouring inspiring emotional human interest stories of personal experience, besides the informative academic treatment of science, technology or design.

Key words: visual production, discursive patterns, online videos, infotainment, science communication, computational linguistics

I. Introduction

TED started in 1984 from Saul Wurman's premise of a powerful convergence among three fields: technology, entertainment and design. Although not very successful in the beginning, the TED conference became an invitation-only annual event bringing together high-profile speakers and influential audience members from many fields. In 2001, TED was acquired by media entrepreneur Chris Anderson's non-profit and, after also starting the TEDGlobal series of international events, in 2006 the TED Talks audio and video podcasts were released free online to considerable and immediate

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success. According to ted.com, “by 2009, the number of TED Talk views had grown to 100 million views, making Internet heroes out of speakers like Jill Bolte Taylor and Sir Ken Robinson” (-, 2015) and in 2012, TED Talks had recorded its one billionth view. More than thirty years after its inception, TED has become a viral video phenomenon inspiring people world-wide, captivating more and more people’s attention with new videos, spin-off associated events and educational projects such as TED-ED.

TED Talks videos are generally video recordings of presentations or performances at live, public TED events. In 2015 the TED Talks website includes over 2000 videos, most of which have transcripts, ratings and numbers of views and shares associated.

The online success of TED talks videos is attributed by Chris Anderson to an appetite for ideas communicated in an inspirational way – which was not a “top-down plan”, but rather a “bottom-up phenomenon”, transforming the event from “an elitist talking shop to an ideas platform” (Cadwalladr, 2010).

However, this phenomenon also has its critics who think TED Talks lead to the oversimplification of science and turn science communication into popular infotainment, or as one critic puts it: “middlebrow megachurch infotainment” (Bratton, 2013). The same author claims “the key rhetorical device for TED talks is a combination of epiphany and personal testimony (an epiphimony if you like) through which the speaker shares a personal journey of insight and realisation, its triumphs and tribulations” (Bratton, 2013).

Taking this into consideration, it becomes interesting to investigate the format of TED Talks videos from the perspective of video production, but also observe discursive practices in relation to viewer perception as recorded by the ratings on the ted.com website.

II. Researching TED Talks

The amount of online attention received by TED Talks has captured the interest of researchers in many different fields in the last few years. Some academics discuss on the use of such content for education (Romanelli, Cain & McNamara, 2014; Rubenstein, 2012) while others focus on science popularisation through TED Talks online videos or use the transcripts to drive computational linguistics or machine learning projects (Rousseau, Deléglise & Esteve, 2012) – as the site provides good quality audio-video recordings with time-stamped transcripts for almost all videos.

A recent in-depth graduate-level investigation of TED talks within the theoretical framework of Genre Theory (Theunissen, 2014) looks at visual communication in the TED Talks by comparing them to the genre of the academic conference presentation. While the two may look similar, the conference presentation addresses a live audience of peers involved in similar scientific work, while TED Talks are closer to science popularization and address live audiences of lay people. Furthermore, the research into the visual aids used in the presentations clearly differentiates TED Talks from conference presentations. While the most important aspect of visuals in conference presentations is convincing the peer audience, TED talks use visuals “to explain the findings, to exemplify or to make the audience laugh” (Theunissen, 2014).

In recent years, two scholars – Sugimoto and Thelwall – have looked at TED talks extensively from the perspective of science communication characteristics, impact and also viewer community interaction (Sugimoto, Thelwall & Larivière, 2013; Sugimoto & Thelwall, 2013; Tsou, Thelwall, Mongeon & Sugimoto, 2014). They concluded that TED talks impact the public sphere primarily, rather than the academic community and that science and technology videos presented by academics are more successful than those presented by non-academics. While this popularizes science and many TED Talks videos seem to be included in syllabi for higher education, it does not contribute significantly to promoting the scientist’s research within the academic community in terms of number of citations. Research into the audience’s reactions to presenter characteristics and platform (YouTube or the TED website) shows that viewers discuss the presenter on YouTube, while on the website they engage with the content of the presentation. Also, looking at negative and positive reactions in comments, the researchers have concluded that female presenters stir more emotion (both positive and negative) (Tsou et al., 2014). Further research on word use according to TED speaker classes (gender and background) is becoming fertile ground for researchers in communication sciences and natural language processing and knowledge mining (Tsou, Demarest & Sugimoto, 2015).

In studying TED Talks videos, our approach will draw from previous research using natural language processing and computational linguistics methodology over a dataset comprising all the video transcripts uploaded to the TED website until July 2015. However, we will be also combining this computational analysis approach with an in-depth qualitative analysis of the visual production techniques of the TED Talks video format.

III. Research design and method

In the context of the global phenomenon's increasing online popularity over the past decade, our research tries to identify, describe and assess the visual production format, discursive patterns of successful videos and viewer perception. We will try to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the visual production characteristics of the TED Talks video format?

RQ2: What are the characteristics and ratings of the most popular videos?

RQ3: What discursive patterns and topics are associated with popular videos/ratings?

a. Method

This research combines large-scale computational analysis approaches, including natural language processing and automated qualitative discourse analysis of all the video transcripts on the TED Talks website, with in-depth qualitative content analysis of the visual aspect of a sample of the most successful videos to answer the research questions.

i. Data collection

The data used in this research were collected from the TED Talks website in July 2015 using the Helium Scraper software. For each of the over 2000 videos found on the website, we collected the following variables:

- presentation title
- speaker name
- speaker occupation
- event
- year
- viewer rating
- duration
- total number of shares
- full text transcript

The viewer ratings are selected by viewers from a fixed taxonomy that comprises 14 mostly positive terms:

Table 1. TED Talks ratings taxonomy

Beautiful	Longwinded
OK	Informative
Persuasive	Fascinating
Inspiring	Unconvincing
Funny	Obnoxious
Ingenious	Confusing
Courageous	Jaw-Dropping

However, the main video web page only displays the top two user ratings for each video and the detailed scores can be accessed in a pop-up detail window. For this reason, the user rating variable will mostly the ratings highlighted in Table 1.

ii. Analysis methods

Data preparation and clean-up was done using MS Excel and the ASAP Utilities add-in: conversion of durations in seconds, computation of number of words in transcripts and average speaking speed, exclusion of special characters and time-codes from transcripts.

Main analysis was done using two free software applications: Tableau Public 9 and KH Coder. We used Tableau Public to produce visualisations describing the dataset and KH Coder was used to analyse the content of the transcript in relation to the other variables using part-of-speech tagging and word co-occurrence analysis.

IV. Analysis

a. Visual construction of TED Talks videos

TED talks are about “Ideas worth spreading”. Then, what is the relevance of the visual approach of the video presentation, as TED is about ideas and personal experience and not really about visuals? What does it take to make TED talks a thrilling experience for the audiences watching the presentation on their computer screens?

i. The challenges of directing and editing a TED video presentation

TED talks are a one man shows. A show in which a respected personality is actually spreading ideas worth taking into consideration. More than that, this show happens on a stage, in a fully controlled environment. Surprises are out of the question: Speakers do their job on a stage, their movements are limited by the stage itself, the lights on that stage, as it would be a nonsense for a speaker to wander in the dark, not only for the sake of the video shooting, but also of the presentation itself. Wireless microphones require the speaker to move within a designated area, in order to avoid annoying interferences. The public is there to attend the presentation willingly, so no surprises are to be expected from that part either.

Given the context, one could hardly imagine a situation more convenient for the video director. There is a very limited number of visual marks: The speaker himself and the screen on which graphics are to be shown and videos are to be played. So, from a strictly contextual point of view, a single camera on a wide shot taken from the back of the hall would do the job – as in the case of most recorded conference presentations. But the TED Talks videos are more than just recording of presentations as they try to convey a similar experience to that of being there.

ii. Producing a TED Video Presentation

The video production of an event like TED must be taken seriously if it is to reach its aim. Audiences watching a presentation must get “brought in” to such a level that they would actually get a sense of being there and being fully absorbed by the presentation, in order to get a feeling similar to the ones actually attending that presentation.

This is not a trivial task for visual directors. They must make the viewer see and understand the information that’s being delivered by the speaker, but also “feel” what’s to be like to watch the presentation from the crowd.

The elements the director must pay attention to are the speaker himself, the video signal destined for the projection screen or video-wall, the relationship between the speaker and the screen, the relationship between the speaker and the public, and the reactions of the public itself. This task calls for a professional approach of visuals and audio. The directors must imagine a set-up of cameras that allows them to follow the presentation in

an interesting, dynamic and fluent way. They must decide on the number of cameras, staging and blocking, supplementary lighting (if possible) and also on sound pick-up.

iii. Visuals

The director's task is to produce a powerful video presentation of the speech. In the end, the presentation must be fluent, easy to watch and understand and to attract the viewer. In order to achieve this goal, the presentation must have good quality pictures, a wise selection of shots and a fair rhythm, attained by cleverly alternating varied shots. These should enable the director to get that rhythm in the edit. In order to achieve this, two types of visual sources are used: The cameras recording the action and the computer delivering graphics and videos. The number of cameras depends on several aspects: The type of presentation, its complexity, the dimension of the stage and hall, the number of available camera operators (if they are too few, some cameras must be blocked on fixed shots) and the skills of the camera operators, in terms of their ability to swiftly reframe shots, thus allowing one camera to deal with several types of shots. The director should be able to deliver all types of shots needed:

1. Shots of the speaker – extreme long shots to see the entire stage with the speaker and the video screen in the background, long shots to show movements on the stage, medium shots to show gestures, close-ups to see the facial expressions, understand the speaker's feelings and feel their energy. Sometimes even extreme close-ups can be used to achieve this.

2. The video signal from the computer should be recorded separately for later insertion in the edit.

3. Shots of the public should be taken into consideration, both group and individual shots, to illustrate the audience's reaction. Without these shots, the viewer will never get the feeling that he is actually participating to that presentation.

Combining all these shots in the edit would deliver a video presentation with a fair rhythm, always showing the important thing to be seen at any particular moment, guiding the viewer's attention just as it happens, like in the case of actually attending the live presentation.

iv. Lighting

In some cases, stages are lit according to video production demands, in others they are not, so the director must do the best he can within the constraints of the environment. Considering the great variety of TED events,

this is largely a matter of budget and sometimes depends on the technical level of the stage. Some stages have professional lighting equipment, some don't, case in which, if the budget allows, supplementary lights should be installed for the sake of the video presentation.

v. Sound

There are several aspects that need attention in terms of capturing and recording sound in the case of this type of presentation:

1. The most important aspect is the voice of the speaker. As speakers move freely on the stage and sometimes they have their hands busy showing things to the audience or even playing an instrument, they need a portable wireless microphone. The handheld microphone, although sometimes delivering a better sound quality, is not a good choice. It is uncomfortable for the speaker because it keeps one hand occupied at all times, but it is also a problem for sound recording, as its position constantly shifts, as the speaker moves his hands and head, delivering an ever fluctuating sound level. Depending on the nature of the presentation, the director has to decide whether to use a wireless lavalier microphone or a headset. The lavalier microphone is easier to mount, as it's placed on the speaker's clothing, keeping a constant distance from the mouth and leaving the speaker full freedom of movement. It should always be the first choice, unless there are sounds to be made during the presentation in the vicinity of the microphone, such as practical demonstrations which might produce noises that would hamper the good reception of the voice. The same happens when the speaker plays an instrument during presentation, as the lavalier capsule is an omnidirectional microphone. In these cases, the headset remains the only solution. Its capsule stays close to the mouth in the same position. It is very convenient as it does not hamper speaker's movements but it is quite uncomfortable to wear. It is uncomfortable to wear it around your neck and over the ears and it might distract the speaker. Often, because of the movements, the line becomes too short, causing it to be too tight and limiting the turn of the head to one side. So, whenever possible, producers should use a lavalier microphone.

2. The second sound signal comes from the computer, sound accompanying videos or slideshows.

3. And the third sound to be picked is the ambient sound. This is the sound of the hall, particularly the sound of the audience responding to the presentation by applause, laughter, sighs or any other human sounds.

4. In addition to these, if the presentation includes dialogue with the crowd or questions from the audience, a set of wireless handheld microphone should be at hand, along with the operators who takes them to the people speaking from the audience.

Best sound directing is being performed on the spot, as sound should be picked from the sound mixer of the show. In most cases this controls only the speaker and the computer, so the ambient sound should be recorded separately and added in the postproduction stage.

vi. Video Presentation of Al Gore's Speech on Climate Change

An example of a TED video presentation performed in average circumstances is Al Gore's speech on new thinking on the climate crisis, which took place in Monterrey CA.

The director had little to do about improving lighting, which was pretty bad, so they had to adapt to the situation. They used a classical scheme of staging and blocking, covering the whole event by three cameras. The numbering of cameras is the author's choice, numbering them from right to left, as they were positioned on the set.

Camera 1 was placed on the right side of the stage, delivering a slight high angle. This camera produced medium shots facing left (Fig.1), and facing right (Fig.2), but also wider shots of Mr. Gore pointing at the screen (Fig.3). In the final part of the presentation, the camera was moved from the tripod to shoot handheld low angle close-ups from the floor level (Fig.4).



Fig.1. Cam.1 medium shot left face



Fig.2. Cam.1 medium shot right face



Fig.3. Wide medium shot with screen fragment



Fig.4. Medium shot low angle handheld

Camera 2, positioned deeper into the hall and medium to the left was mainly responsible for taking extreme long shots of the speaker with the screen in the background, as seen in figures 5 and 6.



Fig.5. Cam 2 Extreme long shot from left (with screen in sight)

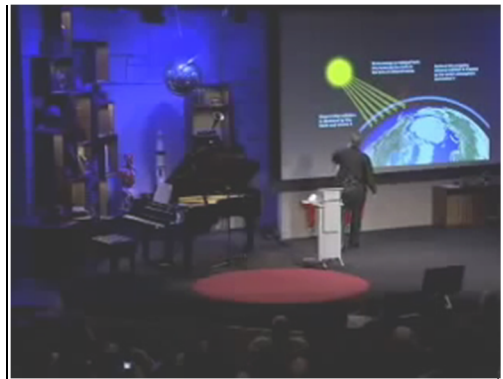


Fig.6. Cam 2 extreme long shot from left (with screen in sight)

Camera 3 was positioned to the left of the stage, at stage level and was responsible for close-ups of the speaker (Fig. 7 and 8) and wider shots (Fig.10) or going as wide as longshot in zoom-out motion (Fig.9) in order to set an alternative to extreme long shots from camera 2, for better dynamics of the presentation.



Fig.7. Close-up right face



Fig.8. Close-up left face



Fig.9. Long shot with screen in shot



Fig.10. Wider medium shot right face

Turning to the public, camera 3 was also responsible for picking the reactions of the public, in extreme long shots only (Fig.11). Unfortunately these shots suffer from very poor light.



Fig.11. Extreme long shot on public

The computer graphics were seen in the extreme long shots delivered by cameras 2 and 3, but for a better understanding, they were also presented full screen, picked up as an independent video source, as seen in fig. 12, 13 and 14.

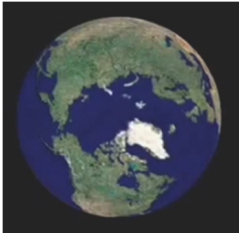


Fig.12. Slide 1

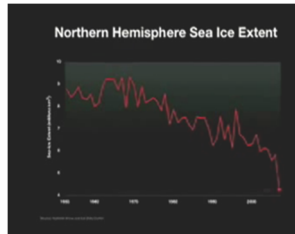


Fig.13. Slide 2

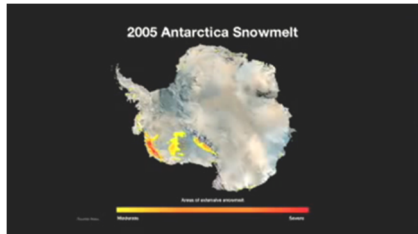


Fig.14. Slide 3

Vice-president Al Gore's TED Talks presentation became very popular after being distributed online. Looking at the technical aspects of the visual production of such videos, we may conclude that although the set-up for these events is not always optimal and varies considerably, there are several key aspects that contribute significantly to constructing the videos for online live broadcast and subsequent distribution and that make the format recognizable and also easily distinguishable from most recording of academic conference presentations or lectures. Most importantly, by also using medium shots, close-ups and full screen views of the slides from independent video sources, this kind of production is better able to convey emotion and information as well as providing the viewer with a similar experience of that of a member of the live audience.

b. Ratings, speakers and shares

Looking at the top ratings for the N=1570 videos for which we collected data about the year of the presentation in fig. 15, we will observe a clear dominance of videos rated *Inspiring*, *Informative* and *Fascinating*.

Furthermore, the graph in fig. 16 shows how the most used user ratings co-occur. On the left we have the first rating and on the right - the second rating. We notice that while *Inspiring* co-occurs in relatively similar proportions with all the other top ratings, *Informative* co-occurs mostly with *Fascinating*, *Inspiring* and *Persuasive*. This might signify that most users perceive an emotional value in watching TED Talks videos, while the informational value (although clearly present) is less important than the inspirational value and only applies to some videos. While most videos are perceived as being inspirational (as a first or second rating), only some as perceived as being informative.

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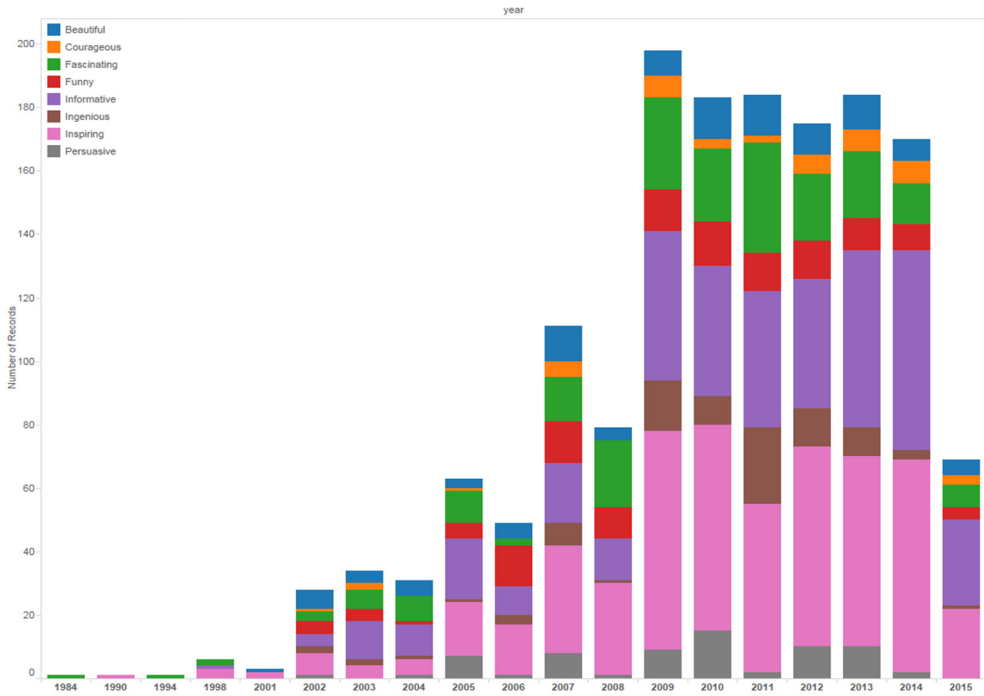


Fig. 15. Ratings per year

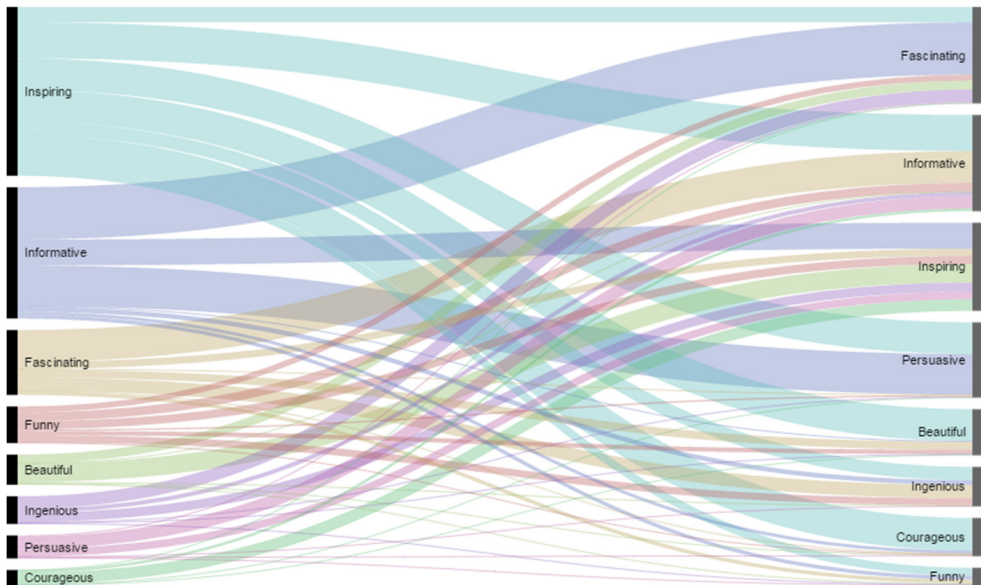


Fig. 16. Top two ratings co-occurrence

We also analysed the average speaking rate (measured in words per minute by using a word count on the transcript and the video duration). For all the video ratings categories the average speaking rate is around 150 wpm, except for the videos that have been rated Beautiful, where it is much lower as a result of this types of videos mostly being or including musical or dance performances.

It is interesting to look at the average speaking rates of the speakers who delivered some of the most successful TED Talks presentations (fig. 17). We notice that Sir Ken Robinson’s very successful four videos feature an average speaking rate below the general average.

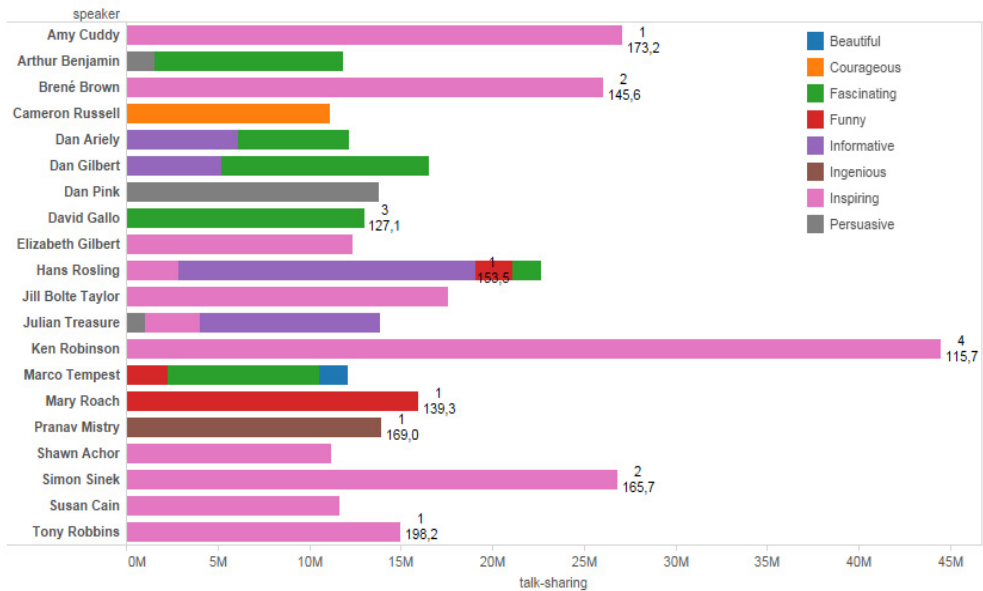


Fig. 17. Most shared/viewed speakers with speaking speed (wpm)

Further investigation into what viewers consider to be Inspirational, Informative, Fascinating and so on requires us to look into the verbal content of the presentation and analyse discursive practices.

c. Analysis of discursive patterns

Using KH Coder, we tagged the parts of speech in the transcripts of N=1912 videos using the integrated Stanford POS tagger and tried to detect patterns of speech associated with certain variables (ratings provided by

Figures 18 and 19 show how terms relating to science, technology and design are mostly found in transcripts of speeches with ratings such as *Ingenious* and *Fascinating*. The videos rated *Persuasive* seem to specifically contain terms relating to resources, economic and financial issues.

Figure 20 features the talk shares/views variable binned into 5 categories (over 10 million views, between 5 and 10 million views, between 1 and 5 million views, under 1 million views and no data). The most successful videos seem to have the common feature of containing expressions such as "I'm going to" or "I want to". The diagram suggests the most popular videos features theme such as family, childhood, humanity, improvement, money/resources and technology. The videos that are in the two categories under 5 million share lots of frequent term occurrences.

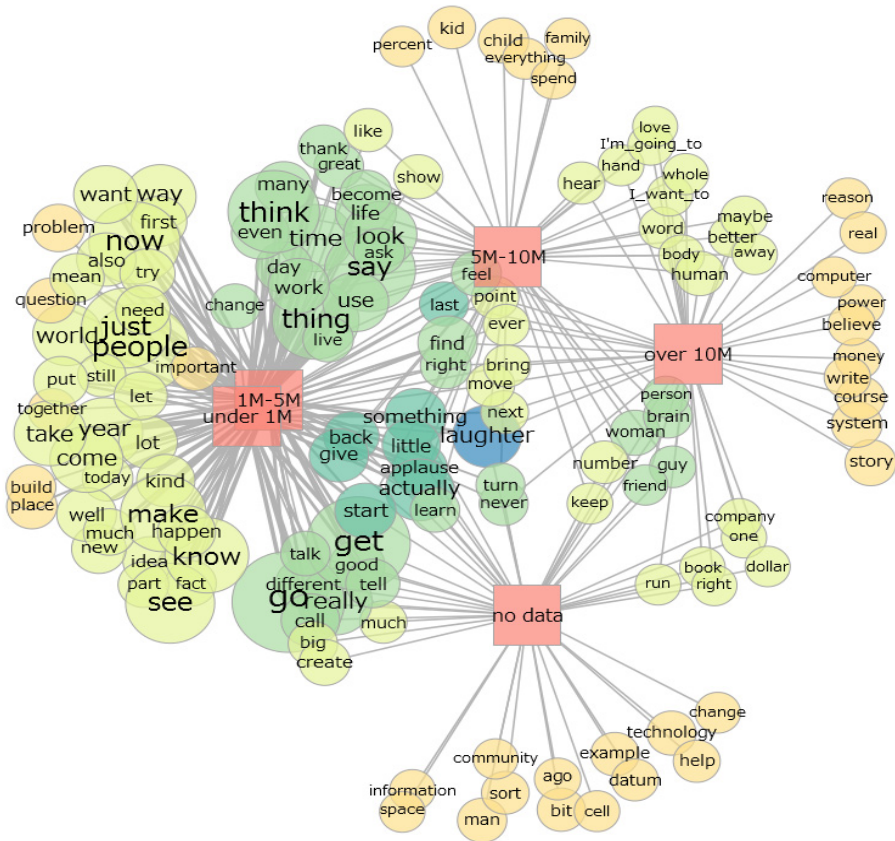


Fig. 20. Most frequent verbs, nouns, adverbs and adjectives in co-occurrence with number of shares/views categories

Figure 21 shows another co-occurrence diagram of most frequent terms in speech transcripts, this time binning the year variable into eight categories in order to observe the discursive specificities of TED Talks presentations with respect to certain time periods. The period of increasing success spanning from 2008 to the present appears quite homogeneous. The specific terms occurring only in the recent 2014-2015 period seem to feature verbs like “feel” and “believe” and nouns like “man”, “woman”, “family”, “friend” and “community”. These may be interpreted as a sign of an increasing trend towards sharing warm, emotional, human interest stories of personal experience.

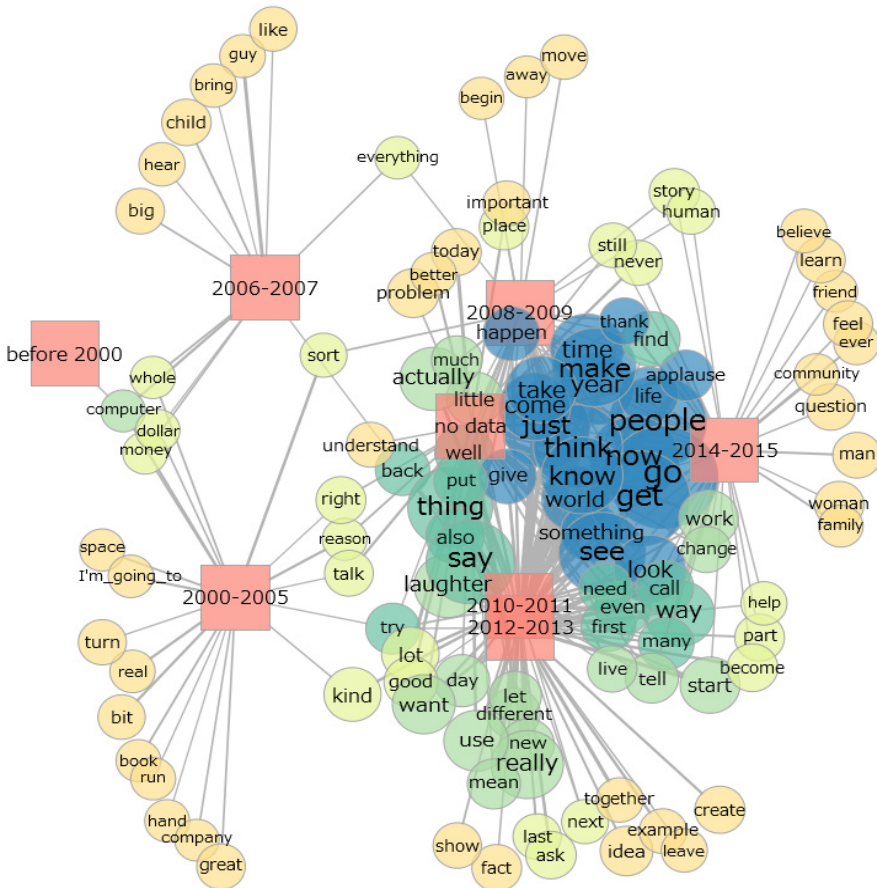


Fig. 21. Co-occurrence network of nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives with time periods

Analysing discursive patterns in TED Talks transcripts provides insight into the themes covered by the speakers and also their perception by the viewers. Common terms among popular videos show a trend towards inspirational, emotional human interest stories featuring family and childhood.

V. Findings and conclusions

This research has looked at visual production techniques and discursive patterns in order to pinpoint the specificities of TED Talks videos – a type of content that has become a viral sensation within the last decade, triggering a plethora of associated global events, producing more and more similar content. Although previous research compares TED Talks to the conference presentation genre, the analysis of the video production patterns shows that there is great emphasis on also the video being able to convey emotion, not only on its informational content. Also, as previous research suggests, TED Talks videos have an increasingly large audience of lay people, non-academics, both on site and especially online. Mainstream success and sharing may be related to the turn towards more stories of personal experience which emphasize the emotional, human interest aspect, a trend which is, as we have mentioned in the introduction, increasingly criticized by some.

By looking at how tags are applied by users on the TED website, we have tried to circumscribe what the viewers perceive as being *Inspiring*, *Informational*, *Fascinating* and so on. While the *Fascinating* and *Ingenious* ratings seem to be applied to presentations with more technical or scientific content, *Inspiring* and *Courageous* seem to be applied to emotional stories of personal experience. Talks which are *Persuasive*, *Fascinating* and *Inspiring* often feature a strong *Informative* rating as well – a rating which seems associated with an academic treatment of social issues.

Further research could use qualitative analysis methods to also investigate speech structures and nonverbal communication patterns in such videos and underpin the mechanisms that convey information and emotion both verbally and nonverbally.

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TAGGING BEHAVIOR IN TUTORIALS ON YOUTUBE: A CASE STUDY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT. This paper discusses the tagging techniques used by the owner of a popular YouTube channel that prides himself with creating tutorials in many domains. In the context of the rising self-help movement, it examines the relationships between these descriptive keywords, other fields that might help attract viewers, such as title or featured image, and the actual content of the videos. A corpus of over three hundred video materials was taken into consideration with this purpose. The study finds that when adding tags, the user visibly prefers certain parts of speech over others. Furthermore, tags, title and images are generally strongly correlated, but the content either lacks most of the terms mentioned in them or represents them by other means.

Keywords: YouTube, tag, tutorial

Introduction

According to the website's statistics, there are over a million YouTube users, coming from more than thirty countries that make money from their videos at the moment. Given these figures, there is no wonder why so many people struggle to make their content as visible as possible through various means. The same statistics show that approximately one hundred hours of video are uploaded on the platform every minute and millions of subscriptions happen daily.

However, it is extremely easy to get lost in that endless ocean of videos. As highlighted by Cha and his colleagues, popularity on YouTube is measured in views, and following a power law, the majority of users keep watching the same few popular videos (Cha et al., 2007, in Greenaway, Thelwall & Ding, 2009), making others obsolete.

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David Cullen observed that there are a few types of videos that attract more visitors, and in most of the cases their creators did not even put much effort in making them (Cullen, 2014). One of the categories that he identified as successful comprises how to's and tutorials. Cullen also mentioned that for such content to draw the attention it is enough to remain consistent with posting, use quality tags and titles, remarking that poor quality image is no longer an obstacle (Cullen, 2014). Nonetheless, he pointed out that many creators of such content may as well be charlatans, relying on the rise of the self-help culture. Whether they look for make-up tutorials, or try to find out how to cook their favorite dish, people tend to get informed from such videos, as they are in fact interested in doing as many things themselves, in order to save money and time. Consequently, following Cullen's idea, this study looks at the tagging behavior of a creator of tutorials that has managed to draw the attention of many.

Background

As Greenaway and his colleagues also noticed, tagging is a helpful tool for labeling online resources, whether they are web pages or images and videos (Greenaway, Thelwall & Ding, 2009). Therefore, a definition of the concept is necessary before going any further. According to Paul Anderson, "a tag is a keyword that is added to a digital object [...] to describe it" (Anderson, 2007, p. 9). Furthermore, an indispensable completion for this description comes from Marcel Danesi's "Dictionary of Media and Communications", which defines the term as a "piece of data that can be used to facilitate retrieval of text" (Danesi, 2009, p. 283). Therefore, the purpose of using tags is to create a relatively short description of the content that will facilitate the search process.

Before going any further, it is essential to mention that the tags allocated to the media texts on YouTube are not usually visible to the viewers². Consequently, they are in fact used for increasing findability³, as also shown in an analysis on tagging motivation performed by Marlow and other researchers (Marlow et al., 2006, in Greenaway, Thelwall & Ding, 2009).

² In 2012 YouTube disabled tags to the public, justifying that this decision would help improve search quality and would decrease the amount of algorithm abuses (Luo, 2012).

³ Findability refers to the ease with which information from a website can be found, both by using search engines or simply searching on the website (Jacob & Loehrlein, 2009).

Nevertheless, given that YouTube only allows the owners of the videos to add tags to them, they have complete control over how they choose to describe the content with the use of some keywords. This means that they are able to add any tag, although there might be no connection between it and the actual content of the media text it is associated with, hence the probability of leading people to unwanted results. An illustrative example in this sense would be the controversy created by the phenomenon called "The Reply Girls", who used a series of methods to increase their chances to get listed in the recommended section of popular videos at the time. One of the techniques they used was copying the tags of particular videos and adding them to their own content (Luo, 2012).

Another potential problem with tags was mentioned by Golder and Huberman, who claimed that the free from nature of these descriptors is a huge issue (Golder & Huberman, 2006, in Greenaway, Thelwall & Ding, 2009). As a pre-defined, controlled vocabulary is not present on YouTube, a multitude of different spellings, plural forms, dialects and foreign languages can be encountered and these can create confusion during the search processes.

Further on, in a study about the usefulness of tags conducted in 2009, Greenaway and his colleagues concluded that the tags added by YouTube users have the role of an extension of the title and description fields (Greenaway, Thelwall & Ding, 2009). The researchers also observed that tags are no longer used to categorize a video, users preferring to rely on the classification structure already offered by YouTube.

In the same study, the researchers worked with some categories for an easier classification of the tags. Originally established by Angus et. al in an analysis made in 2008 and used for a study on Flickr tags, they adapted the same classification for YouTube and presented it as it follows:

1. Generic relationship between tag and video content (e.g. a video of a cat contains the tags "cat" or "animal");
2. Specific relationship between tag and video content (e.g. a video of Grumpy Cat has tags such as "grumpy cat", not just "cat");
3. Tag only useful to a minority of users, specific individual or group (e.g. a video uploaded by Grumpy Cat's owner containing a tag with the individual's name);
4. Irrelevant / Non-Useful tags (e.g. "a", "cat", "ruined", "my", "Christmas", "tree", "this", "year").

The researchers also divided them into subcategories, for a deeper and more conclusive analysis to be possible. In addition, the examples given for each category were personalized for this paper only.

Halvey and Keane realized a study on YouTube and found that the more descriptive information is provided for a video, the more views it attracts, because text matching methods are used by search engines when seeking for such material (Halvey & Keane, 2007, in Greenaway, Thelwall & Ding, 2009). By the same token, as tags are in fact keywords, the number of visualizations a video has should, at least in theory, grow directly proportional to the number of tags introduced.

HowToBasic or how to become popular on YouTube with basic resources

HowToBasic is a three years old YouTube channel that can be easily described as popular in accordance with the number of views gathered by its videos and the speed at which this happens. Having reached over 4 million subscribers (more specifically, 4.269.511) and almost 6 hundred million channel views (more specifically, 571.838.202) since its release, a considerable amount of its videos attained millions of visualizations each.

Research Design

The purpose of the current study is to find out which are the types of tags used by the channel owner and how are they linked to the content and other aspects, that they help attract viewers at such speed and reach success so easy on the Internet. Without implying that the methods considered in this study are the only ones that lead to success on YouTube, three research questions have been guiding the analysis:

RQ1: What fields do the tips and tricks presented in the videos belong to most often?

RQ2: What types⁴ of tags are added to the videos most frequently?

RQ3: How much⁵ are the tags related to the titles, featured images and the actual content of the videos?

⁴ Types of tags refer to the types of parts of speech associated with the videos.

⁵ In order to quantify this relationship percentages are used.

Methodology

In order to find the answers to these research questions, the YouTube channel of the user HowToBasic was content analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. All the videos submitted since the channel was created, on December 8th 2011, and until December 14th 2014, were included in this research. A total amount of 362 materials, all added in the pre-defined YouTube category Howto & Style, for each of them a series of fields were extracted in order to be analyzed. The aspects taken into account for every piece are: title, number of views and tags.

Quantitative content analysis was performed first. After all the data was gathered and without being watched, the videos were classified into seven categories according to their titles. Thus, the materials posted on the channel offer tips and tricks in the following domains:

1. Cooking⁶: videos describing recipes for food and beverages;
2. Skills: videos referring to a variety of practical or artistic skills that one could gain after watching them;
3. Health & Beauty: videos presenting illness cures, personal hygiene or beauty tips;
4. Sex & Relationships: videos implying pieces of advice about how one should behave in relation with others, be them family or friends;
5. Home & Living: videos referring to tips and tricks that could be useful in any household;
6. Science & IT: videos containing instructions for the efficient usage of devices and applications that are very popular nowadays;
7. Conceptual Skills: videos illustrating actions that are more abstract and less realizable in their nature, but they are, however, intensely discussed.

Regarding the tags, they were seen with the help of a Google Chrome extension⁷, which also offered the possibility of obtaining other useful information that is not publicly displayed by YouTube by default, such as the number of Facebook comments, likes and shares, Tweets or Google+1's. After being extracted and gathered, their types and frequency were examined using text analysis software⁸.

⁶ Although cooking is also a skill, it was taken as a separate category due to the large numbers of videos referring to it.

⁷ The extension is called vidIQ basic.

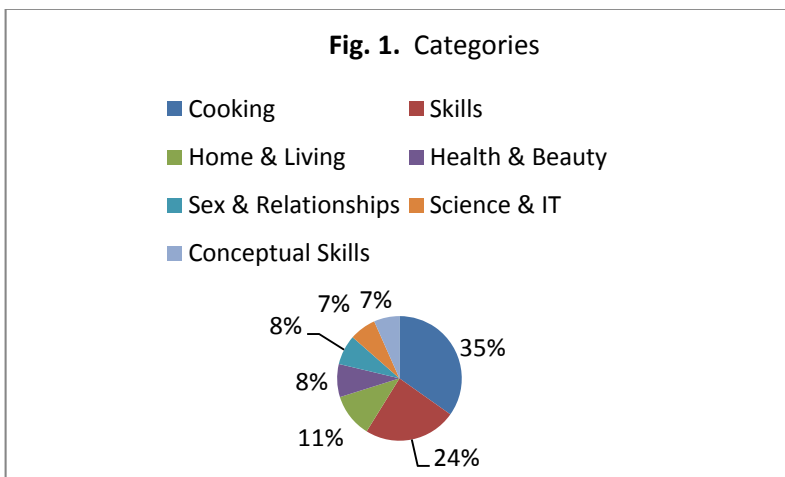
⁸ While analyzing the tags with the use of Tropes, the accuracy of the results indicating the frequency was double checked using http://www.writewords.org.uk/word_count.asp

Additionally, qualitative content analysis was performed on seven videos. To be more specific, the media texts comprised were the first videos, according to the number of visualizations, from each previously established category. The purpose of the qualitative study was to see if they actually contain something that is mentioned in the title, tags or appears in the featured photo. Inspired from Greenaway’s previously mentioned tag classification, ratings (in percentages) representing the closeness of the relationships between the aforementioned aspects were awarded to each of the seven videos. Starting with the assumption that the most viewed seven videos might not coincide with those selected for the study, the decision of selecting the sample this way might lead to even more thought-provoking results. The unit of the analysis was the video.

Quantitative findings

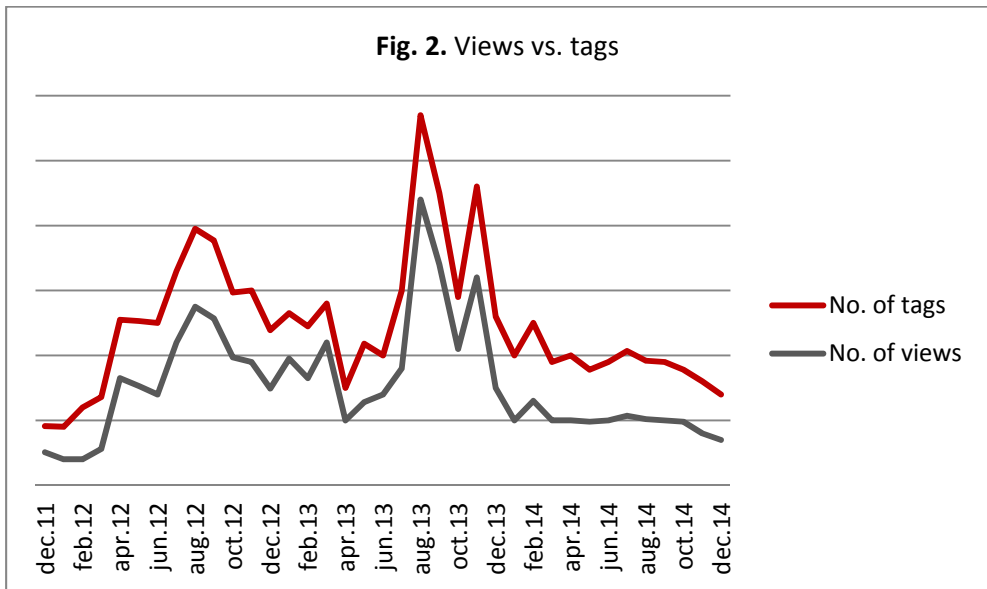
At first, quantitative content analysis was performed on the entire content of the channel, with the purpose of creating a foundation and of sketching some general directions to be followed in a more in depth further study.

The fact that the YouTube user has been very consistent with posting is more than obvious given that he uploaded, in average, a new video every three days in a period of three years. Regarding RQ1, the results of the data analysis show that the 362 videos fall into the previously established categories as is follows:

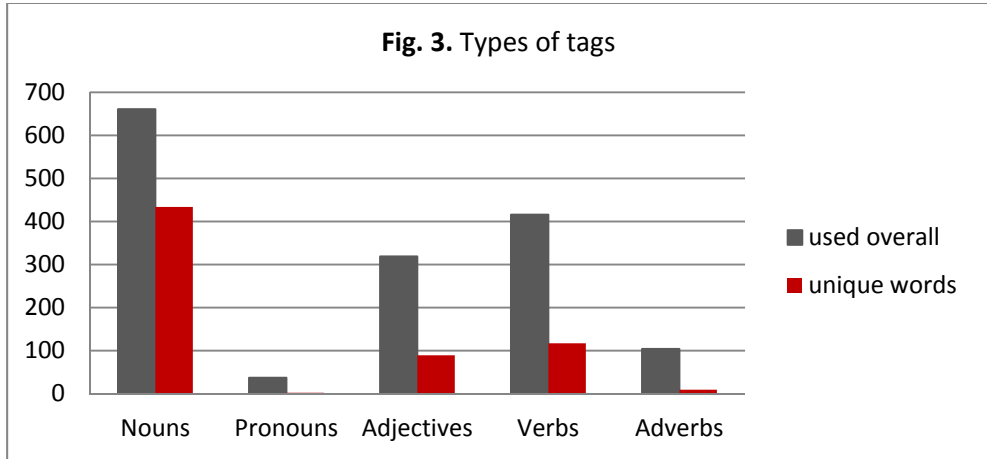


There are visible differences in the number of videos each category contains (Fig. 1). Most of the videos refer to cooking, more than a hundred being included in this category. The second one, Skills, is very close in terms of the number of videos it comprises, with eighty-seven pieces in it. Home & Living encompasses only forty-one materials, while Health & Beauty and Sex & Relationships have thirty-one and twenty-eight respectively. Twenty-five videos fall into Science & IT, followed by Conceptual Skills which is one video shorter.

Concerning the tags, it can be observed that when their number increases, the videos have more views as well (Fig. 2). This correlation shows that the tags indeed play a significant role in boosting up the number of visualizations, so the way in which they are used is relevant and the patterns followed might explain the author's success.



Therefore, as to RQ2, the most often used parts of speech are nouns, verbs and adjectives, but adverbs and pronouns were also encountered. However, the numbers are not proportional, and substantial differences between the numbers of times certain parts of speech were used can be observed (Fig. 3).



Although nouns are the most used, more than half of them only appear once and this can be explained by the fact that a considerable amount refer to dishes (e.g. “cheesecake”) and ingredients (e.g. “eggs”). The most often encountered noun is “recipe”, appearing a hundred and fifty-four times, while the other frequently met nouns are “method”, “technique” or “tutorial”. Some are names of popular brands (e.g. “McDonald’s”, “Subway”), but names of celebrities also appear (e.g. “Miley Cyrus”).

Moving on to the verbs, about 80% of them describe an action (e.g. “make”, “get”, “cook”). The most frequently used one falls into this category, more specifically “make”, being present a hundred and seven times. There are very few verbs that describe states of being that were associated with videos (e.g. “be” used in the tag “how to be homo”).

Regarding the adjectives, although they were not met as much as nouns or verbs overall, the ones that were used were also repeated quite frequently and there is equilibrium between the numbers of times they appeared. Possessive adjectives (e.g. “my”, “your”) were also encountered on an ordinary basis. Some of the most commonly met adjectives overall are “homemade”, “healthy”, and “funny”.

Similarly, although not many unique adverbs were used while tagging, their frequency was constant. All of them are adverbs of manner, (e.g. “fast”, “correctly”, “quickly”) therefore describing how to do something rather than when and where to do it (like adverbs of time and place would).

Concerning the pronouns met, this happened less often, only two such parts of speech appearing. Indefinite pronoun “someone” is the most predominant, followed by second person singular personal pronoun “you”.

Other parts of speech such as articles, prepositions or conjunctions were also encountered although rarely, but they were excluded from the analysis, as Greenaway and his colleagues described such tags as being irrelevant/ non-useful. By the same token, interrogative manner adverb “how” was excluded from the study as well, because by using it in connection with the preposition ‘to’, basically the owner tagged the videos with a part of the channel’s name and this happened in 90% of the cases.

The average number of tags⁹ used for a video is nine, the lowest number of tags being three, while the highest is twenty-one. Contradicting Halvey and Keane’s point, the video having the most tags is not also the most popular one.

Qualitative findings

While the quantitative analysis offered some solid explanations, the qualitative one has given the answers that were missing. Further on, the categories are presented in ascending order, in conformity with the number of videos they contain.

1. *Cooking*

This category’s most popular video is placed on the third position overall. Having reached over 9 million views, it is entitled “How To Make a Krabby Patty” and the image it features presents a burger with the same name, from the animated cartoon series Sponge Bob. In the video, while actually making an ordinary burger, the man throws around (and even in the toilet bowl) all sorts of non-related ingredients. He also adds other objects, such as tampons, a pregnancy test and Christmas decorations in a bowl and mixes them, first by hand and then with the help of a blender. Eventually, the mixture lands on the burger, along with a CD containing episodes of Sponge Bob.

The picture displayed is perfectly related to title and the tags (e.g. “krabby patty”, “recipe”). However, the content of the video somehow diverges from the topic. Although an actual burger is made, the other ingredients are totally random. Given that this type of burger was made known because of the cartoon series first, it can contain anything, even objects, as the channel owner seems to think. The aspects match in proportion of 80%.

⁹ The average was calculated with the help of
<http://www.usingenglish.com/resources/text-statistics.php>

2. Skills

The most viewed video in this category is also the second most viewed overall, having attained over 13 million visualizations. Entitled “How To Twerk Like Miley Cyrus”, the featured image shows the culminant moment of Miley’s 2013 VMA performance, alongside Robin Thicke. However, the video first presents a twerking Barbie doll, then a headless dead chicken with the singer’s picture replacing the top part of the body, “twerking” near a picture of Robin Thicke. An egg is randomly smashed in the end.

The featured image, the title and the tags (e.g. “twerking”, “Miley Cyrus”, “VMA”) are in concordance. In spite of that, the video is far from presenting a tutorial that would help its viewers gain dancing skills. The author is mocking the female singer, associating her with a chicken. In this case, 50% of the aspects match.

3. Home & Living

This category’s most popular video is not even in top 100 overall, but it has more than a million and a half views. Named “How To Turn on a TV”, its featured image contains such an electronic device. The short video tutorial depicts a man turning on a TV with the help of a remote control.

The title, the tags, the photo and even the action in the video are related to each other. Nonetheless, some of the attached keywords do not correspond with what is shown. The tags “without” and “touching” are just tricky, as the man touches the remote control with his hand. The aspects match in proportion of 90%.

4. Health & Beauty

Positioned eighth overall, the most visualized video in this category reached almost 7 million views. Entitled “How To Insert a Tampon”, the featured photo depicts the lower part of a woman’s body, while she’s holding a tampon in her hand. The action of the video is, however, located in the kitchen. The man, wearing rubber gloves, is stepping on eggs and inserting tampons into anything, from a can of coke to a baby doll or an apricot. Everything ends up in a garbage bin.

The picture, the title and the tags are in perfect harmony once again. Still, approximately half of the tags do not have a correspondent in the video (for instance, the tag “sex” is irrelevant). In this situation, 50% of the aspects match.

5. Sex & Relationships

Controversially, the most popular video of the channel belongs to this category, having reached almost 15 million views. Entitled “How To Have Sex”, the featured image depicts a man restraining a woman from making noise. In the video, presumably the owner of the channel is in the kitchen, walks towards a blow doll, smashes an egg and puts a condom on a sausage. The counter in the kitchen is decorated with candles and pink flower petals arranged in the shape of a heart, while the lights are turned off. In this romantic scenery, a fully dressed Barbie doll and her Ken are sitting on top of each other, occasionally changing positions. A banana or some plush toys appear instead of one of the partners from time to time. In the end, the man appears again, throwing everything in the sink.

The title, the image and the tags are linked. Even the video content, although taken to a completely differently level, is related to them. Although the video does not depict two people having sexual intercourse, 90% of the tags (e.g. “sex positions”) are represented in a way or another.

6. Science & IT

Fifth overall and first of this type, the video called “How To Install GTA V” gained over 8 million views. While the featured photo is actually a screen shot taken from the game, the video presents a laptop over which milk, oil, cheese and other ingredients are thrown. The electronic device is then smashed with a hammer and a printed picture from the game is placed instead of the broken monitor.

The featured image, the title and the tags are relevant, while the actual content has almost nothing in common with them. The only linked things are the printed picture from the game and the laptop, because you need a device of this type in order to install a video game. The aspects analyzed match in proportion of 20%.

7. Conceptual Skills

The most popular video depicting something that cannot be realized with the help of a tutorial has almost 5 million visualizations and scored eighteenth overall. Entitled “How To Arrest Justin Bieber”, its featured photo depicts the seemingly cuffed artist getting out of a fancy car. The beginning of the video shows a toy police car drifting (also accompanied by sound). Then the man appears with a toy gun and heads it towards a doll whose face is covered with a picture of the singer. He shoots at the doll repeatedly and then throws milk and smashes eggs on it.

This time, the picture, the tags (e.g. “justin bieber arrested footage”) and the title are connected to each other, but not so closely. The actual content does not make any sense. Nevertheless, the mere action of arresting the artist by following the steps in a tutorial is almost impossible to put into practice. In the case of this video, only about 10% of the aspects taken into account also match.

Therefore, going to RQ3, the title, featured images and tags of the media texts are generally closely related. Nonetheless, when it comes to establishing to what extent these aspects are also linked to the actual content, variations might occur. In conformity with the ratings awarded after analyzing each piece, there is a match of approximately 55% of the aspects overall.

Discussion

Whether the owner of the HowToBasic channel has a very well-developed tagging strategy or he just accidentally adds the perfect keywords, it is visible that these bring an enormous contribution in raising the number of visualizations, along with the appropriate titles and featured images. While all the videos are already submitted in the pre-defined YouTube category Howto & Style, the idea that they do belong there is strengthened by some of the tags most frequently associated with them, such as “method”, “technique”, “tips” or “tutorial”. The “how to” tag also serves well for this purpose, but for attracting people on the channel too, as it contains a part of its name.

As the categorization showed, the owner of the channel covers pretty much every field that might be of human interest in his materials, cooking being by far his specialty. Given the high numbers of visualizations, some conclusions regarding the behavior of the viewers can also be drawn, as they seem to be searching for methods of doing everything at home, easy and fast. For example, they want to know how to use and fix their electronic devices or to discover secret recipes and cook dishes like in restaurants, and of course, as healthy as possible. Despite the fact that many of these seem rather unrealistic, like presenting the secret recipe for coke or for a McDonald’s dish for instance, they are still not impossible to realize. For this reason, people keep searching for such methods, while proper tags and titles help solving the problem with finding them. It is not wrong to assume that people want to be healthy and make discoveries, but save resources at the same time, therefore providing useful methods in this sense can attract a lot of them. Once they have stumbled upon these materials, the next logical step would be to click play.

Having a channel that, at least in theory, presents tips and tricks in a variety of domains, adjectives and adverbs turned out to be the most useful tags the owner could use. These parts of speech were used as descriptors for the actions and the results supposedly presented in the videos. By the same token, another aspect that could be considered as a wise move is the use of the first and second person singular possessive adjectives “my” and “your” and the indefinite pronoun “someone”, because when searching, people might tend to write sentences like “to how wash your hair” or “how to give someone a foot massage”.

Moving further, the use of so many unique nouns could be beneficial in several ways. For instance, as most of them refer to dishes, by simply looking at the tags one could tell that the videos offer a variety of recipes. Consequently, when potential viewers will search for a certain recipe by typing the name of the dish, chances are that they find the videos on this channel with ease. The same goes with the verbs that were more frequently used while tagging, as they are quite diverse.

Furthermore, as this study showed, although the content has often nothing to do with the title or the image, or, most probably, with what the viewer is expecting to see if he or she encounters the channel for the first time, these techniques are still efficient since so many people access it. Moreover, the image quality and sound are low, and the resources used basically represent anything that can be found in a household, but these factors do not act as obstacles. Once the potential viewers start watching the content they will in fact discover that in most of the situations a man is mocking what he initially pledged to present.

Limitations and further research

The current study is limited in several ways, which gives opportunities for future work. First of all, it would be wrong to assume that these videos are only popular due to the very efficient tagging techniques and the close relationships between these keywords, the titles and featured images used and it was firmly mentioned earlier in this paper.

As seen with the help of the Google Chrome extension, these videos have also successfully spread on other websites, such as Facebook, Google+ or Twitter. For instance, as the possibility of gathering such data exists, a similar study, but with the focus on the relationship between the number of visualizations and the number of Facebook shares or tweets, can be made.

Secondly, as only seven videos were considered for the qualitative analysis, this might not be so conclusive and the results might differ in case a larger sample is chosen. Moreover, although the assumption was made in the beginning, the videos qualitatively analyzed were not the most popular overall. If the sample would have been selected according to the number of visualizations in general, the results might again not coincide.

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POLITICS AND TELEVISION IN ROMANIA

CONSTANTIN TROFIN¹

ABSTRACT. Despite the growing concentration of property, political interference and content trivialization, Romanians continue to show a high level of trust in television. Entering the political scene, television gradually put an end to the traditional model of political communication. Relying more and more on the visual impact, politicians became highly preoccupied by their televised image. Many decisions taken by politicians today are tributary to their foreseen reflection in media. Relationship between media and politics is therefore an important factor in comprehending the stakes of the evolution of contemporary democracies. The impact of television upon political players strongly depends on their own self-promoted image. As long as our perception of politicians relies heavily on television, it seems the latter is entitled to reshape the identity of major leaders but also of political parties which tend to develop a clear, easy to understand discourse. A significant number of politicians became TV stars, moving from one TV show to another. Some do not really seem to have any purpose other than being on TV as often as possible. In fact, taking a closer look at the Romanian press, one can often observe the political and economic interests behind the media agenda, far from the public interest. Most people questioned by EUMAP², including the president of the National Council of the Audio-Visual (C.N.A.), responded that televisions in Romania are mainly a tool used to gain influence. The analysis focuses on describing the relationship between politics and television, focusing on how information is being produced, sent and received, the influence of television on society, with special interest on major players.

Keywords: *Credibility, influence, editorial independence, media ownership, politics, political communication, public interest, ratings, talk-show, television.*

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² EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP) with Network Media Program TELEVI-ZIUNEA ÎN EUROPA-Reglementari, Politici si Independenta, http://www2.cji.ro/userfiles/file/documente/media_rom3.pdf / 16.05.2015

Introduction

During the communist era, the word “television” meant a couple of hours of daily propaganda, broadcasted by the state television, especially during the 1980’s. Romanian public used to identify the TV set with the very source of power. Ironically, the power of Ceausescu dwindled and then disappeared on TV as well. Television remained, to an even greater extent, the actor in the leading role. The Romanian Revolution was the first event of its kind broadcasted live, mainly for the benefit of those who grabbed power: they were considered legit because of the mere presence on the television screen. It was then, in the old communist tradition, when an ample operation of misinformation and manipulation started, operation that was to continue, under different forms, for many years. There was not a single important event of the 90’s without the implication of television: the violent confrontation in the winter and spring of 1990, mobilizations of the "working class" in support of the FSN (National Salvation Front), the miners’ actions in Bucharest, a.s.o. “In many cases, news programs turned into court sessions or cameras dashed into citizens’ lives” wrote Alexandru Călinescu³ in *Ziarul de Iași*, in 2007.

Ten years after the fall of communism, a third of the Romanian population still had access to only one TV channel, the public TV. Even though today most people have access to at least five different TV channels, the available options are not very diverse. In fact, there are only a handful of major players: Pro Tv, Antena 1, Kanal D and less and less significant, TVR1.

Two decades after the emergence of commercial TV in Romania, the first channels to appear on the market, Pro TV and Antena 1 are still in the lead. Amongst the first channels to be launched, only Tele7abc failed. The channel was launched in 1994 by a group of local entrepreneurs - Marcel Avram, Paul Opris, Mihai Cârciog - who invested about 20 million dollars in this venture, which proved highly successful during its early years. (Arachelian, Rad, 2004 p.177-185)

The emergence of private TV channels changed the Romanian TV landscape but made politics even more present in TV programmes, especially due to talk-shows. In fact, we have been witnessing for some time a hallucinating process: politics practically moved into the TV studios.

³ <http://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro/opinii/televiziune-si-politica~ni492u/> 22.06.2015

Methodology

The analysis focuses on describing the relationship between politics and television, concentrating on how information is being produced, delivered and received, the influence of television on society, with special interest on major players (journalists, politicians, business people and intellectuals) but also on the behaviour of the viewers, the general audience. This is not only about the influence of technology, about the influence of television on everyday life, about variations in ratings and public behaviour, but also about activating the criticism by constantly connecting these phenomena to their social relevance, systematically integrating the individual into the collective.

The paper will answer a set of questions that could offer a better understanding of the politics – television relationship: *How do politicians make use of television? How does television ownership influence independence? How did television change politics? Why economy creates political dependancy of television? How do politics affect editorial standards? Why the spectacle is more powerful than ideas on TV?*

Television As a Tool of Political Communication

Relations between politicians and their fellow citizens used to be consumed during campaigns, in big rallies or meetings which usually took place in schools or in interviews for the press.

Once television stepped in, the above mentioned traditional communication style gradually faded away. Relying more and more on the apparent impact of the image, politicians started paying special attention to their televised image.

Many of the decisions made by political leaders today are tributary to the manner in which they are to be presented by media. The relationship between mass-media and politics is therefore an important factor that explains the stakes of the evolution of contemporary democratic societies.

Political life worldwide has evolved significantly in the recent years, including in Romania. Some of these changes regard the evolution of political and economic institutions, frequently under the “threat” of the European Union bodies, or the recruitment of political staff. Other very important changes regard the so-called “mediatization of politics”, that is the intense and regular usage of the press by the political class.

The door to this had been opened by the first televised confrontation in history, the U.S. presidential debate of November 1960, between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon, a debate that changed the way public perceives candidates forever, frequently placing the image before the message.

The Influence of Television Upon Political Leaders

Mass media has changed the rules of traditional democratic play. Most recent research try to deliniate the effects of mediatization, in fact focusing on the dominant communication medium: Television. Its power to influence leaders can be expressed on three levels: image, work and recruitment.

As Remy Rieffel puts it in his book *Mass-Media Sociology* (Rieffel, 2008), the impact of television upon political decision makers greatly depends on the image they propose about themselves. In order to seduce the voters, this image must meet some criteria, coherence being the most important. Matching the posted image with the perception is imperative, for if the public sees a rupture in image, the politician would be abandoned and his credibility will suffer. Image management is therefore essential in mediatization of politics. A relevant case was the October 1985 debate between Laurent Fabius, French prime minister at the time, and Jacques Chirac, opposition leader.⁴ Presented by media as a duel at the top, the debate unveiled a Laurent Fabius more aggressive than usual and less relaxed than expected. On the contrary, Jacques Chirac looked in full control of the situation. The comments in the next day's media, were widely merciless and critical on the prime minister, a good indicator of the verdict effect triggered by journalists and opinion polls. The discrepancy between the usual image of Laurent Fabius, that of a calm and balanced person and the image shown on TV, became a serious setback for Fabius, which stayed with the French public for a long time.

Success and efficiency of a televised intervention depends on its relevance, that is its capability to issue a new message in new terms and on how pregnant it is, that is how well it handles announcements of the same nature: therefore it is imperative to avoid any abuse. Whilst the public perception of the politician is tributary to television, it seems that television is capable of reshaping the identity of great leaders, as well as of political parties which are interested in developing a clear, easy to understand speech.

⁴ Champagne, Patrick, *Le cercle politique. Usages sociaux des sondages et nouvel espace politique*, Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales, nr. 71-72, p. 71-97

The personal image of the candidate and the global image of the party, rather than adding reasonable arguments, have a decisive contribution to the public perception of politics, especially by the undecided voters. Attention should also be paid to the image constructed by satire, cartoon and irony shows, which have a special appeal to youngsters.

Mass-media and especially television also affect the everyday work of politicians. The question of time also suffered profound changes. "Political time" actually takes time, requiring analysis and deliberation in order to ease memorization of what specialists call "heavy policy" (acts that create continuity). "Mediatic time" is, on the contrary, a time of direct communication, actuality and swiftness. The presidential elections in the USA in November 2000 constitute a perfect illustration of the importance of the logic of concurrency and urgency. TV stations announced at first the victory of the Democratic candidate Al Gore, later on announcing the contrary, that the new president of the United States was George W. Bush, the Republican candidate. In the end, they admitted that the outcome of the elections was extremely unclear. Romanian TV channels did the same thing in 2009, when they announced the victory of Mircea Geoană or in 2014 when, according to the interests of the TV station owners, news channels only announced the results of the exit polls that suited their interests, and they kept doing this to the last moment. These contradictory announcements proved that TV channels had not taken the time to check the exit polls results, as they all tried to be the first to deliver the outcome of the elections. Under the pressure of urgency, politicians are often forced to deliver on the spot reactions to journalists' requests, to deliver information on several media channels on the same topic, to seek the mediatic effect or cliché, assuming the inherent risk of this type of practice: excessive oversimplifying due to personal involvement, ill-calculated dramatization, even superficiality and conformism. Adapting their speech to the norms of the respective media, they often fall for what Paul Virilio (1995) calls a "monstrative" logic (based on a momentary reflex), at the expense of the "demonstrative" logic.

Politicians' actions are actually more and more subjected to a constant surveillance by mass-media and the public. Universal suffrage definitely remains the main instrument of the legitimacy of politicians. They are nevertheless forced to make considerable efforts to explain their actions all year long, as they are called upon to respond to media whenever requested and obliged to answer all questions based on opinion polls results.

Finally, the change also regards the recruitment of political personnel, or staff. Traditionally, access to the highest positions within a political party requested the approval of key militants and the fulfillment of specific tasks of responsibility in order to get invested. Today, the capital mobilized to be designated include, besides the speaking skills proven in rallies and the power to persuade, also the visibility and mediatic performance. Legitimacy is gained due to a good mediatic prestation and a popularity often gained outside politics, such as in sports or business. Public opinion often works as selection criterion. Looking good on TV does not guarantee success in elections but it appears as an essential element of the mechanism which designates politicians. Some specialists in political sciences sometimes relativize the influence of mass media, emphasizing that the most visible politicians best match the actual structure of institutional and partisan power. Thus, television helps preserving the legitimacy of the capital previously acquired.

Even if it doesn't impose a thinking pattern, television proposes topics to think about, including characters – politicians in the given context – which must be taken into consideration, upon which we must conceive and express a point of view. The importance rendered by media to a certain political character consists in his visibility, which can be analyzed using two measurable indicators: live appearances and replayed statements on the one hand, and the time assigned to this character in news, regarding his statements or deeds.

Spectacle and Infotainment

Technological revolution led to perfecting the dissemination tools. These, along with the increasing influence of advertising, turned television into the media institution which sells entertainment for the lowest prices, as compared to theater, tourism, arts and sports. The spectacularization of information was determined by market pressure (the need for higher and higher ratings). In this respect, the very informative speech of the mass-media tends to transform into entertainment, generating a new species, *the infotainment*.

Spectacularization of information must preserve the apparent objectivity while capturing or even seducing the viewers. Thus, the focus would always be laid on the content of the speech, rather than on the situation which produced it, in order to build an impersonal speech. Objectivity presumes a credible factual report in which mediatic information must comply to a representation

that is common to both the media and the public, favouring the narrative and descriptive information at the expense of the rationally exposed explanatory information.

A pragmatic approach which treats the speech as a show staging, successfully adjusts to the specifics of mediatic speech. Following the same view, Coman (2003) defines *media events* as “those public events which get ample media coverage and which, because of mediatization, trigger processes of social mobilization and sometimes political action”.

Mediatic speech does not stand alone, it is fueled by the political and social speech. Therefore, *journalism* can be defined as an inter-relation between the three entities engaged in the mediatic speech: journalists, sources and audience. The mediatic product reflects the relation established between the journalist and his source and describes the deeds of the characters it refers to. This construction requires a mediatic scene. The mediatic speech is not independent, being in constant negotiation with the political and economic speeches on the one hand, and other media organisations, on the other hand.

Politics Is Being Done on TV

News programs show recorded parts of talk-shows, press conferences or statements delivered in front of TV cameras. In talk-shows there are fragments taken from other talk-shows or from TV news programs. Most TV shows produce a kind of opinion polls, asking for citizens' opinion on “what's hot today”, the results of these so-called polls having no relevance whatsoever. Borrowing a formula from the speech of the socialist candidate in the presidential elections in France, Ségolene Royal, we are dealing with a local version of “participatory democracy”, a way to give the people the illusion that they actually participate in the decision making process.

Emerging and staying on the political scene is no longer predominantly based on the ideas, but on the ability to create spectacle, controversy and ratings. The best example is the political rise of the owner of the Steaua Soccer Club, Gigi Becali (who later changed his name to George, in order to change his public image, a change which, nevertheless, failed). Media product by nature, Becali managed to impose the image of a politician, even though the party he had founded and chaired did not succeed to enter the European Parliament.

A rather awkward moment occurred on TVR, during the confrontation between president Traian Băsescu and the ex-prime-minister Călin Popescu Tăriceanu. The tone of the exchanged replicas (as the president intervened by telephone), the attitude of the prime-minister, the mimics of other participants to the debate, all contributed to a lame show which produced a disastrous public impression. "It's come to such a low level of political life, so that dirty laundry is being washed on live television" – concluded Alexandru Călinescu⁵.

Fully aware of the new context of policy as a television show, political actors play their parts knowing that any deviation from the patterns stated by television regarding any event, explicitly stated by producers or only hinted, would let that event be ignored by media and consequently lead to its futility as a tool to enhance awareness, trust and voting intention. As a consequence, the accent transcends from the political act to the media and shapes the political actor to fit the format imposed by television. The new public space of the media, in which visibility prevails, turns politicians into actors who comply to the rules of directing, which can no longer be ignored without the risk of marginalization. (Drăgan, Cismaru, 2008)

Besides their need for audience, mass-media and especially television, put up and impose the image of a ruptured type of reality, in the style of TV commercials, which forces politicians to adapt their speech so that their opinions and deeds could be communicated to larger audiences. In order to survive and prevail in this medium, politicians must plan their actions as they were events that could be reported by media, to give up long term projects that have an uncertain deadline or are difficult to get media coverage. They must also put aside or pay lesser importance to actions that cannot be discursively reported and pay heed to the fact that information is yielding to show, which simplifies the political reality to the extreme. (Drăgan, 2007). The political actor thus becomes an organizer of events.

The visible outcome of the transformation of the politician into an event organizer is the increase of the importance of delivering the information, turning the political act into a simple motivation.

A. Touraine (Drăgan, 2002) states that the reason for the increase of the importance of political communication is that politics no longer impose any criteria of integration in the whole of social experiences and that public life surpasses political action at all levels. In Touraine's opinion, opening the

⁵ <http://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro/opinii/televiziune-si-politica~ni492u/> / 11.04.2015

public space weakens the bond between public opinion and state management, thus reducing the traditional role of political parties at the expense of the movie-style "star system" (Schwartzberg, 1995).

The dominant position of television is not exclusively due to the political actor's need to reach larger audiences, but also to the increasing addiction of regular people to media and the information it delivers. The regular citizens depend more and more on media to get immediate and cheap information. They appeal to media because the alternative would be more expensive and time consuming, but poorer in both quality and complexity of information. The need to get access to decisions or actions which affect their everyday life, which they could not act upon – the public renders television with their trust, awarding it the role of the fourth power in the state, unaware of the danger as there is no counter power just as efficient. (Dobrescu, Bârgăoanu, 2002).

The absolute credibility of television comes from the overwhelming usage of pictures to construct the meaning. The traditional saying "I'll believe it when I see it", gets easily replaced by the commercial line "as seen on TV", ignoring the fact that news production produces reality rather than reporting it, by selecting elements and defining them as such. The fact that credibility partly transfers to the actors who enact the television show, determines an increase of the interest of politicians for television which result in directing their statements toward media, at the expense of the direct communication with the public.

Delivering the political information from the its producers – *political actors* – to its users – *the public* – makes the political act "an incomplete, symbolic one, because the public does not experience the actions, but the language expressing them." (Edelman, 1999) The individual gains access to only a manufactured image of the actual political reality, but very real through its outcome. Public access to the event is usually granted through TV news. Their role in decoding the political action is explained by John Hartley in *Understanding News* (Hartley, 1999) where he states that "news does not simply reflect the language, social or historic determinants, but it also processes them".

In the given context, in order to understand the mechanisms of Romanian political life, one must focus mainly on the meaning proposed to the public by mass-media and less on the objectives of politicians, because, as Ioan Dragan stressed, (Drăgan, 2007) "Television pretends to be a tool that

records and replays reality but in fact it is a tool that creates reality... it has a high capacity to generate appearances and simulations, to express an event according to conveniences and opportunities, and not only the access to a better visibility of the world, which might help capitalize knowledge and increase the efficiency of its application."

The Power of Television in Romania

Television still is the primary source of information for a large amount of the population, despite the allegations of superficiality in reporting major political events.

At first sight, the Romanian media landscape is a very rich one, with a large number of media channels, a healthy level of foreign investments, a strong legislation in compliance with the European Union's regulations, as well as the editorial independence, guaranteed by law. Judging by the number of media channels, pluralism should be ensured.

Access to information and free speech are guaranteed by Constitution and some specific laws. The Law of the Audio and Visual, the main law which regulates radio and television, states that "censorship of any kind on audio-visual communication is forbidden" and that "the editorial independence of broadcasters is recognized and guaranteed by the present law."

A closer look at the audio-visual environment shows broadcasters' weak independence and scarce credibility. In fact, if we look upon the Romanian press as a whole, often behind media agenda one can find political and economic interests rather than the public interest. Have televisions become an instrument to fulfill their owners' interests? Most respondents to the EUMAP⁶ questionnaire, including the president of CNA (The National Council for Audio and Visual) answered that television channels in Romania are being used mainly to gain influence. Editors enjoy their independence as long as they protect the interests of the owners and their associates, according to many of the questioned. Another particularity of contemporary Romanian television seems to be the trivialization and tabloidization of news, which are less and less oriented towards politics. Unfortunately, the race for the sensational produced victims, intensely mediatized themselves: On May 24 2004, two

⁶ EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP) in cooperation with Network Media Program TELEVIZIUNEA ÎN EUROPA-Reglementari, Politici si Independenta, http://www2.cji.ro/userfiles/file/documente/media_rom3.pdf / 16.05.2015

Romanian journalists lost their lives while reporting a traffic accident which occurred in Mihăilești, Buzău county. When the two journalists, Elena Popescu and Ionuț Barbu, had learnt about this accident, this was a simple traffic event with no casualties. Nevertheless, they moved to the scene of the accident, hoping to shoot an interesting story for their editors in Bucharest. Eventually, they turned the event into news with their own lives: The truck loaded with chemicals exploded, killing a number of people, including the two journalists.⁷ The two thus became “victims of the pressure which is put upon journalists for the purpose of producing the sensational at any costs”.

The Romanian Academic Society(SAR) commented: Lately, television news have become less political and more tabloid, with a taste for sensation, rape, murder and traffic accidents. Although editors claim that this procedure ensures high ratings, news are less and less popular, losing about 20 percent of the audience they had by the year 2000.⁸

Private-Owned Television Channels and Their Ownership

Fully aware of the importance of television in building a political career, many politicians became TV stations owners, especially on a local scale. Despite strict limitations on media concentration, the commercial television market in Romania became more and more polarized, with owners in dominant positions, or animated by political interests to be found behind TV stations' ownership. In Constanta for instance, former mayor Radu Mazare, former journalist, later member of Parliament remained for a long time one of the most influential local media owners although, formally, in 2004 he transferred the ownership of his media empire to his friend Sorin Strutinsky. In Bacau, former PSD mayor Dumitru Sechelariu bought the Alpha TV station and Radio Alpha in 2002. In Piatra-Neamt, a city of cca 100,000 inhabitants, two politicians tried to share the local TV stations. In March 2004, half of the companies that operated local radio or TV stations had direct connections with politicians.⁹ Facing a desperate shortage of resources, local TV stations accepted all sorts of compromises which, in the

⁷ C. Crisbasan, “Kitsch-ul mortal”, in *Ziarul Financiar – Ziarul de duminica*, /16.07.2004, p.8.

⁸ SAR, *Raport de analiza si prognoza – România în 2004*, Romanian Academic Society, Bucharest, Jan. 30 2004, p.10, available on-line at http://www.sar.org.ro/files_h/docs/publications_pr/final%20romana%20annual.pdf

⁹ P. Barbu si P. Obae, “Televiziunile locale se misca dupa telecomanda PSD, in *Capital*, March 18, 2004.

long run, affect their editorial independence. There are cases in which certain programs were eliminated at the direct request of local chiefs. In February 2004, Ioan Romeo Rosianu, editor-in-chief at the local Canal 7 TL+ in Baia Mare, found his program suspended along with his labour contract, following a series of investigations on mayor's Cristian Anghel public funds policy. Following Rosianu's removal, the TV station was awarded a substantial publicity contract by the Mayor's Office, says the EUMAP report¹⁰.

Alongside the two leading media companies, new media groups started concentrating around TV channels. Several regulations referring to fair reporting in television programs were issued, but balanced journalism is hard to be enacted in a hostile political and economic environment. The concentration of cross ownership is very hard to check.

On a local scale, the influence of media channels is rather weak (as people know each other quite well within small communities), the influence of big players is significant on a national scale, as audiences can be quite effectively deceived or manipulated.¹¹

Media policies in Romania suffer from a lack of consistency, says Virgil Nițulescu, former state secretary in the Ministry of Culture: "There is a lack of a coherent vision, and of a strategy of development of the audio-visual. Political influence has replaced any strategy, there is no public debate on the matter, yet".¹²

The Independence of the Audio-Visual

Political pressure on the audio-visual is significant. Many media specialists agree that media owners consider their television operations rather as instruments for promoting their own political or economic interests. TV stations' executives would rather remain silent about this but media experts and TV journalists have publicly denounced the growing pressure that's being put on mass-media.

¹⁰ Convention of media Organizations (COM), press release, Bucharest, Feb.18, 2005.

¹¹ Statement by Mona Musca at the launching of "Local Radio and Television – Monitoring Report", The Agency for Press Monitoring (AMP), August 25, 2004. At the time, Mona Musca was a member of Parliament, member in the Commission for Culture, Arts and Mass Media, Chamber of Deputies.

¹² Statement by Virgil Nițulescu in August 2004. Nițulescu worked as a media expert for the Commission for Culture, Arts and Mass Media, Chamber of Deputies. In 2005 he became a state secretary in the Ministry of Culture.

TV stations are in a desperate need for financial resources to produce more professional and more profound news programs. In the absence of these resources, they prefer to produce light entertainment, which is less expensive and attracts larger audiences. For TV stations this is also a way to elude news stories and controversies which may annoy the government or their satellites, which in turn, could cause serious problems to the respective stations. As a consequence, TV stations concentrate on cheap “stars” or the newly rich, regardless of their effort invested in the accumulation process. Therefore, the dominant model is the one of instantaneous gratification.¹³

Lack of financial resources for investigative journalism strongly reduces the independence of television stations. Financial weakness makes the audio-visual media vulnerable and easy to control by certain interest groups. For instance, huge debts or dependancy on state publicity increase media vulnerability even more.

The 2003 annual report of the National Council for Audio-Visual (CNA) shows that “monitoring of news programs reveals a worrying increase in the number of programs which exagerately yield to the sensational, senseless violence and pathologic cases, presented in ways that exceed by far the boundaries of decency and common sense.”¹⁴

Ten years later, in 2013, the National Council for Audio-Visual (CNA) issued a total of 101 fines, in total amount of 2.067.500 lei. România TV, Antena 1 and Antena 3 were the TV stations that were fined the heaviest, according to the 2013 annual report of the CNA.¹⁵

OTV television ranked fourth, having its broadcasting license revoked according to the audio-visual legislation, for failing to pay some older fines. Although the station got its license revoked on January 22 2013, the CNA continued sanctioning OTV for the period of time when the above mentioned TV station broadcasted political propaganda for the People’s Party - Dan Diaconescu (PPDD), issuing three fines in total amount of 160.000 RON.

A situation of sanctiones issued by the CNA between January and June of 2014 is presented in the following table:

¹³ I. Avadani, “Modele culturale”, in *Dilema veche*, 20, May 28 - June 3 2004, p.8. Ioana Avadani is the executive director of the Center for Independent Journalism in Bucharest.

¹⁴ CNA, Yearly Report 2003, cit., p.14.

¹⁵ <http://www.mediafax.ro/cultura-media/raport-cna-pe-2013-consiliul-a-aplicat-101-amenzi-romania-tv-si-antena-1-cele-mai-mari-sanctiuni-12476695> /11.10.2014

TV Channel	No. of sanctions	Subpoenas	Total fines (RON)
Antena 3	9 sanctions	1 subpoena	200.000
Antena 1	6 sanctions	2 subpoenas	170.000
B1 TV	9 sanctions	2 subpoenas	145.000
Pro TV	2 sanctiuni		120.000
Mynele TV	1 sanctiune		100.000
Romania TV	6 sanctions		75.000
Nasul TV	3 sanctions		70.000
TVR	2 sanctions	1 subpoena	70.000
Realitatea TV	5 sanctions	3 subpoenas	26.000
Prima TV	3 sanctions	1 subpoena	20.000

Data in the above table was collected by Paginademedias.ro, based on information posted on the site of the National Council for the Audio-Visual, cna.ro

There is still an important imbalance between the relatively low advertising budgets and the relatively large number of media companies in Romania. Many media channels resort to questionable practices in order to cover their expenses, such as threatening advertising suppliers with negative publicity, taking advertising from state-owned companies or accepting “sponsorships” from business tycoons who frequently have ties with political parties. Most owners do not necessarily follow financial profit, but use their media channels to influence authorities to get favours in return, and to attack their economic competitors or their political foes.

Many TV channels on the market today were launched with the aim of gaining political or economic influence. Only a handful can present a solid business plan. Journalists must frequently fight restrictions or censorship imposed by the management and their own small income. Low wages of journalists also contribute to the overall instability of the press and its lack of independence. As opposed to a handful of TV entertainment stars, who make up to 150,000 euros a year, a news reporter usually earns a yearly salary of 3,000 euros. More than that, a significant part of media employees do not have legal labour contracts as their bosses elude paying taxes or leave allowances. Although the Labour Code is protecting employees, it isn't of much help, as most people working in television stations do not have labour contracts, as they prefer signing contracts with their own firms, established especially for this purpose.

Editorial Standards

Political analysis programs, quality news and talkshows gradually disappeared from commercial television programs. They have been replaced by cheap comedy shows and low quality political programs. In the beginning, commercial stations appealed to these programs as a subtle way to avoid criticizing influential politicians and businessmen. During the period 2002-2004, both commercial and public stations deliberately avoided delicate political issues, especially items criticizing the ruling party and its leaders. News and investigative programs were replaced by entertainment programs, such as variety shows and light talk-shows. Because of the biased news regarding the ruling party and the general trivialization of TV programs, the interest of the public in political questions dropped dramatically. Staking on cheap entertainment, television got what it wanted: higher ratings and a low demand for quality television. Television stations justify their strategy affirming that rating is the only universal measurement in the television industry. More than that, due to the lack of resources, quality news and analysis programs, as well as journalistic investigations are unlikely to recover in the foreseeable future. Investigative programs are very much inexistent in Romanian televisions, with very few exceptions.

Conclusions

Media theoreticians agree on the fact that television is a combination of journalism and showbiz (Postman, 2006). In this case, a quality show, staged by visual journalists (producers, anchors, hosts, directors, photographers, even set designers, because they all creatively contribute to the journalistic act of delivering information) which are responsible professionals following a clear and attractive format, will generate an educated and mature opinion in the mind of informed, constient and responsible citizens.

Unfortunately the present paper proves that this is not happening in present day Romania. On the contrary, news television stations, which have almost entirely occupied the space of political debate, sin not only by following high profit through high ratings and by assuming the toxic role of an influence factor, but also by the lack of interest for a professional approach of the pictures, which should be of capital importance in television, because of the ignorant managers and producers with no visual education whatsoever.

In a society where both political system and business environment are deeply affected by endemic corruption, independent media can hardly survive and is forced to accept various forms of compromise in order to keep on functioning. None of the private TV stations (except for Antena 3) has not reported any profit, as they function on a market in which advertising income is low and the social and economic environment is rather unstable. Investors fear sudden changes in state policies. Legislative and regulatory systems, for instance, can be subjected to political influence at any time. All the above mentioned factors rise the general level of business venture.

Lack of ownership transparency can be dangerous. Firstly, because it can conceal political connexions or fishy business ties. Secondly because, without real ownership information, the level of ownership concentration cannot be traced, despite clear and strict regulations in this field.

Pressure from advertising income also has a negative effect on editorial independence. In addition to this, publicity from state companies and institutions bonds television channels to economic and political interests.

The stronger, more stable and healthier the economy, the more will companies in Romania be interested in objective news and investigative journalism. But a healthy economy is unthinkable without a strong, credible and sustained anti-corruption policy. Mass media should be the first stepping stone on the road to a solid democracy in Romania.

Television stations should intensify their efforts to prove themselves transparent and credible, if they are to answer the challenge of an objective and profound journalism on the television screen. Yet hard to achieve, this objective is the only way to make mass media the watch dog that a real democratic society needs.

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SOCIAL JOURNALISM: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT. The identification of frequency and of the way to approach social problems in media in the Republic of Moldova becomes important for determining the functions and the role of social journalism in contemporary media environment. Moreover, this offers research opportunities of the current potential of the print media that covers social issues and of its development trends, which allows the implementation of media practices, whose goal are to make the role of social journalism more efficient in the process of forming public perceptions about social problems and in the orientation of the social attention in relation to them.

The study of social journalism is especially important in the context of major social changes, when all the social attentions and the existing system of values in society are changing, or, exactly this type of journalistic product influences all individuals and social groups, as well as all the fields of their social activities. The research of social journalism is an up-to-date problem that is motivated by the fact that in the Republic of Moldova all the changes continue to be manifested in all the fields and at all the levels of our life.

Keywords: *social journalism, radio station, TV station, periodical publication, news portal, analysis.*

Social journalism is a multidimensional media phenomenon that provides, for different categories of public, information, explanations, opinions, analyses etc. regarding the events and phenomena that occur in everyday life; regarding the social norms and principles of the social individuals or social groups; regarding the whole system of social values existing in a society. It is an environment that determines the individuals to report on the surrounding reality, thereby ensuring their social integration. Moreover, social journalism

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is an activity that gives the possibility to highlight the ability of mass media to make the individuals have a common cause and to create social consensus through its media products. The links among the social individuals and those of social individuals with their own societies in which they live are generally based on the information and the knowledge that has been acquired from mass media. Similarly, their perceptions about the events, everyday problems of specific social groups and communities, to which they do not belong to or which they cannot directly observe are mainly shaped by social journalism that provides knowledge from and about the society.

The importance of social journalism lies in its power to approach problems of interest for the entire population, regardless of the affiliation to groups or social strata; and to distribute functional information, which is necessary for human activity as a social being. The functional nature of social journalism ensures citizens' co-participation in the decision-making process, their integration into social life, the promotion of social strategies, the improvement of the legislation in this particular field etc. The information flow in social journalism is a multiple process that involves several basic activities, including:

- the assessment of the potential informational amount;
- the selection of the event to be publicized;
- the production and distribution of the media product;
- the assimilation of the media product that changes knowledge and social behaviors;
- the supplementation of the potential informational amount with new events – feedback and actions that come from the public in accordance with social reality, due to the effects of media coverage.

Being selected by journalists, the new events go through the same path, as mentioned above, forming a continuous and uninterrupted flow of information. Being in permanent connection, these activities cycles form the information flow in social journalism.

The journalistic flow, that forms the information flow in social journalism, includes two types of products: informative and analytical materials on the social field – elements of a general interest media product and media products specialized in the social field. The research object of this study consists of social materials integrated into general interest media products that, compared with specialized products, have a far greater frequency and impact on the consumer of media products. However, because they exist in an extraordinarily

high number, we decided to research the products of three media institutions, representative for the four components of mass media system: television, radio, print press, news portals. Thus, in order to analyze the TV social product, we selected the information flow from the following TV channels: *Moldova 1*, *Jurnal TV* and *Publika TV*; in order to analyze the radio social product, we chose the information flow from the radio stations such as: *Radio Moldova*, *Radio Vocea Basarabiei* and *Radio Chişinău*; in order to analyze the social product from the print press, we selected these general interest newspapers: *Moldova Suverană*, *Jurnal de Chişinău* and *Timpul*; in order to analyze the social product placed in the flow by news portals, we selected: *Noi.md*, *IPN.md* and *Ziarulnational.md*.

The qualitative analysis was carried out using the following variables: the message of the journalistic material, the age that is being informed about, the characters' genders, and the environment in which the event occurred.

These 12 media institutions have been monitored between January 1st – June 30th 2015.

In six months, the media institutions mentioned above produced 15 719 journalistic materials in the social field, including:

- news – 10 548;
- interviews – 113;
- features – 4 463;
- analytical materials – 595.

TV channels broadcast 5 335 materials, including news – 3 302, interviews – 6, features – 2 047, analytical materials – 0.

Radio stations broadcast 3 848 materials, including news – 1 966, interviews – 0, features – 1 882, analytical materials – 0.

Newspapers published 1 667 articles: news – 918, interviews – 52, features – 329, analytical articles – 368.

The information flow of portals included 4 849 materials, from which: news – 4 362, interviews – 55, features – 205, analytical materials – 227.

The message of the journalistic material is the first variable according to which the messages of the materials can be divided symbolically in: materials that approach to social problems, those that are based on “news in brief” and materials that promote positive practices. The analysis showed that most journalistic materials tackle social problems. TV channels broadcast 3 702 social based materials, news portals – 2 609, radio stations – 1 980, newspapers – 625.

Talking about TV, the most materials of the three types mentioned above were broadcast by *Publika TV* – 1 886, followed by *Jurnal TV* with 1 008, and the third place is occupied by *Moldova 1* with 808 materials. We find that the largest number of materials that address social problems is at *Jurnal TV* – 77% out of the total, then *Publika TV* – 75% and, finally, *Moldova 1* – 53%.

Regarding radio stations, the primacy belongs to *Radio Moldova* with 778 materials, which represents 39,3%, followed by *Vocea Basarabiei* with 701, which is 35,4%, and, finally, *Radio Chişinău* with 501 materials, which is 25,3% out of the total of 1980 materials.

In print press, the situation is as follows: the most materials focused on social issues were published in *Timpul* newspaper – 241, then in *Moldova Suverană* – 200, and the fewest – 184 – in *Jurnal de Chişinău*. We note, however, that the largest percentage of materials that address to social problems out of the total of products goes to *Jurnal de Chişinău* newspaper with 44%, followed by *Timpul* with 38%, then *Moldova Suverană* with 33%.

The materials that focus on social problems placed on news portals are distributed as follows: *Ziarulnațional.md* – 1 068 social media products, *Noi.md* – 906, *IPN.md* – 635. We conclude that the percentage of materials that pay attention to social problems out of the total of products of *IPN.md* is 62%, out of the total of products of *Ziarulnațional.md* – 61%, and out of the total of products of *Noi.md* – 44%.

“The news in brief” materials occupy the second place, which fall within the so-called social entertainment category. Therefore, we got:

- in TV journalism, most of this type of materials were broadcast by *Moldova 1* – 462 materials, followed by *Publika TV* with 416 materials, and on the third place is *Jurnal TV* with 160 materials;
- in radio journalism, the primacy belongs to *Vocea Basarabiei* with 458 materials, followed by *Radio Chişinău* with 424 and, finally, *Radio Moldova* with 337 materials;
- in print press we have the following data: *Moldova Suverană* published 310 materials, *Timpul* – 299, and *Jurnal de Chişinău* – 139;
- in online journalism, the news portal *Noi.md* contains 861 materials, *Ziarulnațional.md* – 484, and *IPN.md* – 283 materials.

The fewest materials are those that publish and promote positive practices, they constitute 11% out of the total of analyzed TV products, 17% out of the total of analyzed radio products, 18% out of the total of analyzed print press products and 13% out of the total of analyzed portals products.

This demonstrates that our society is facing major problems that cannot be solved unless the entire society gets involved, and social journalism is one of the most effective tools to disseminate this type of information and socialize with the masses. At the same time, the small number of materials that promote positive practices, we believe, is caused not only by their absence, but also by journalists' huge interest in sensational events. We note that in this period of time only *Radio Moldova* broadcast more or less, events that promote positive practices, which constitute about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total content of the radio broadcast product. This research confirmed our idea, set out in previous chapters, which claims that social journalism is a priority, the journalism that focuses on social problems and the ways to solve them. It's important to mention that out of all 12 analyzed media institutions, only 2 – *Moldova 1* (TV channel) and *Radio Moldova* (radio station) ensured a satisfactory balance among materials that address social issues, materials that are called “news in brief” (entertainment) and materials that promote positive practices.

The age category about which is narrated has been another variable which allowed us to discover that most journalistic materials on social field refers to the adult population. Of the 5 355 of TV products, 3 245 are materials in which is being stated about the adult population, they represent 61% out of the analyses materials. Radio stations broadcast 2 207 materials about adult population which represents 57% out of the total. Newspapers published 1 121 materials, which constitute 67% out of the total of 1 667 materials, and news portals – 2 809, which represents 58% out of 4 849 materials.

Materials that do not refer to any age category are on the second position. Most of them consist of information that do not involve the human factor and fall into the category of useful and warning information.

We highlight the fact that children and pensioners rarely become the protagonists of the journalistic materials. The percentage of the materials that belong to this category is:

- in TV journalism – 9% and 3% of the second one;
- in radio journalism – 9% and 6 % of the second one;
- in print press – 8% and 2% of the second one;
- in online journalism – 6 % and 1% of the second one.

Usually, these categories of population are tangentially approached, in the context of events in which it is mainly spoken about adults. Materials, whose protagonists are children and pensioners, in most cases, report about unusual situations: rapes, homicides, suicides, murders, robberies, burglaries

committed by them, physical and sexual abuse etc. The local mass media almost totally lacks positive materials about under agers and pensioners, except the materials made on June 1st – International Children’s Day, and also materials that retold about various positive practices implemented by certain people of the third age.

Next variable is *characters’ gender*. In all types of media: radio, TV, print press, news portals, the largest category proved to be the materials that do not refer to the protagonists’ gender. Neutral media coverage is used most often either for events without direct human involvement, or when media coverage has an informative-general purpose: either when protagonists’ gender has no value for the story of the event, or they are representatives of various professions, occupations, religions, national and sexual minorities etc. Therefore, out of 5 355 TV products, 2 285 do not refer to the protagonists’ gender which represents 43% of the analysed materials.

Radio stations broadcast 1 435 materials, which represents 37% out of the total. Newspapers published 744 materials that constitute 45% out of the total of 1 667 materials, and news portals – 1 914, which is 40% out of 4 849 materials.

If in TV journalism, online and print press, on the second place there are the materials that tell about men, on the third place – materials that tell about both men and women, and the fewest materials are about women or the ones that talk about their problems, in radio journalism the second place is occupied by materials involving both women and men, third place – materials that focus on men as their protagonists, and the fewest materials are about women.

This analysis reveals that out of the total of products, the materials involving men constitute:

- on TV channels – 32 %;
- on radio stations – 23 %;
- in print press – 25 %;
- in online – 36 %.

Whereas, materials involving women constitute:

- on TV channels – 7 %;
- on radio stations – 7 %;
- in print press – 9 %;
- in online – 8 %.

This striking discrepancy between the percentage of materials involving men and the one involving women shows that gender equality is not a professional value yet in local mass media. The situation is far from being a good one not only quantitatively but especially in terms of quality, since men are presented, first of all, as active citizens, professionals, experts or promoters of positive practices, while women are mainly the protagonists of the materials with a negative message, that retell about cases of domestic and sexual violence, robberies, burglaries, child abandonment, murders etc. Therefore, women as active social actors are disadvantaged in local media products, as well as the problems they face.

Although there are very few, the materials with a positive message tell about educational system or in which women appear as mothers, housewives. Thus, the contemporary woman in local journalism appears to be either a mother, a teacher, a victim of abuse, or a criminal. We note the fact that women's marginalization in mass media is not so much the result of journalists' attitude towards this category, but the consequence of the social marginalization phenomenon of women in the Moldovan society.

The accurate evaluation of the potential informational amount in order to find out the most current and important events, the selection and systematization of the collected factual material based on its social value and the interest and expectations of the society are activities that ensure a qualitative media coverage of social problems. Although they have a short-term horizon, these activities give meaning to the act of creation and allow media discourse to get adjusted to the magnitude of the problem.

The last variable is *the environment in which the event occurred*. The analysis of the TV product on social field has proved the fact that most materials broadcast both by *Publika TV* and *Moldova 1* do not refer to the environment in which the event occurred or protagonists' living environment. These TV channels broadcast 1 022 (*Publika TV*) and 800 (*Moldova 1*) materials. From a quantitative perspective, materials about urban events are on the second place, 818 were broadcast on *Publika TV*, and 447 on *Moldova 1*. Materials that focus on rural events are on the third place: *Publika TV* with 673, and *Moldova 1* with 289 materials. According to this variable, we ascertain:

- the total product of *Publika TV* includes: 41% of materials that do not refer to the living environment, 32% retell about urban areas, and 27% about rural areas;

- the total product of *Moldova 1* includes: 52% materials that do not refer to the living environment, 29% retell about urban areas, and 19% about rural areas.

The situation is different at *Jurnal TV*. Most materials that have been broadcast by this TV channel for six months focus on events that occurred in urban areas – 868, then in rural areas – 270, and, finally, the materials that do not make any reference to the living environment – 168. We ascertain that the total product of *Jurnal TV* includes 66% of materials that focus on events occurred in urban areas, 21% rural areas, and 13% of materials that do not refer to the living environment.

This difference can be explained by the area of media coverage and of the territory that is covered by these TV channels. Therefore, *Jurnal TV* is a local TV channel and it mainly focuses on urban reality, especially the one in Chisinau, whereas *Publika TV* and *Moldova 1*, that have national coverage, broadcast diverse materials from all over the country. It is important to say that most materials that do not refer to protagonists' residence environment or the environment in which the event took place contain information that concerns the whole country or they are materials that talk about national social problems and fall into the category of useful and warning information. Most analytical materials do not focus on environment, but on the analyzed tendency, phenomenon or problem.

The analysis of the radio product highlighted the fact that most events that have been broadcast are those that occurred in urban areas – 1 474 materials, with an insignificant difference of 90 materials it is followed by materials that do not locate the problem and do not refer to protagonists' residence environment. Materials that focus on events that took place in rural areas are on the third place, with 990 materials.

Radio Chişinău and *Vocea Basarabiei* mostly broadcast in this period of time materials that do not refer to the living environment – 489 (Radio Chisinau) and 520 (Vocea Basarabiei) materials. Materials that reflected the urban reality are on the second place – 476 (Radio Chisinau) and 450 (Vocea Basarabiei), and on the third place there are materials referring to rural areas – 111 (Radio Chisinau) and 357 (Vocea Basarabiei).

The situation is different at *Radio Moldova*. Most materials that have been broadcast for six months by this radio station contain events that occurred in urban areas – 548, materials that retell about rural areas are only with 26 less, which means 522 materials, and 375 materials do not refer to the living

environment. The research has proved that Radio Moldova is the only media institution that tackles equally both urban and rural realities, and the correlation among these three types of materials is balanced and successful.

In print press, the situation is as follows: in *Timpul* and *Jurnal de Chişinău newspapers*, in quantitative terms, the primacy belongs to materials that do not refer to the environment in which the event occurred or to protagonists' living environment – 339 out of 632 materials (*Timpul*) and 189 out of 420 (*Jurnal de Chisinau*). In *Moldova Suverană* newspaper, the primacy belongs to materials about events that took place in urban areas – 290 out of 615. The second and third place, in *Timpul* and *Jurnal de Chişinău newspapers*, are occupied by materials that focus on the events that occurred in urban areas and those in rural areas. In *Moldova Suverană*, materials that do not refer to the environment in which the event took place or protagonists' living environment are on the second place, but on the third, there are the materials that focus on rural areas.

The products published on news portals are distributed as follows: most materials do not refer to the environment in which the event took place or protagonists' living environment. There are 1 111 materials out of 1 744 on *Ziarulnațional.md*, whereas *IPN.md* and *Noi.md* gave priority to events that occurred in urban areas. Therefore, *IPN.md* published 696 materials out of 1 030, and *Noi.md* – 1 310 out of 2 075. On the second place, on *Ziarulnațional.md*, there are materials about urban reality, but on *IPN.md* and *Noi.md* – materials that do not refer to the living environment. The third place goes to materials that focus on rural areas, the same as in other mass media elements mentioned above.

We conclude:

- materials that reflect the urban reality in TV journalism constitute 40% out of the total; in radio journalism – 38%; in print press – 36%, and in online journalism – 50%;
- materials that reflect the rural reality represent in TV journalism 23% out of the total, in radio journalism – 26%, in print press – 17%, and in online journalism – 8%.

These data demonstrate that mass media focuses its attention, primarily, on the urban reality, especially on the one in Chisinau and this is because, first, the intensity of producing social events is higher in the capital than it is in any other city/ town, district or village in the Republic of Moldova. Secondly, most of the central institutions are in Chisinau, which are responsible for

social policies, as well as the institutions empowered to manage or solve social problems, these are the institutions which mass media often calls to get official information. Thirdly, most of the national media institutions are in Chisinau, therefore the media coverage of the events in this environment is quicker and has a lower cost of production.

Social journalism, since it gets involved in social life and has a huge influence on human consciousness and behavior, earns an increasingly big territory of being distinguished because it is a strong promoter of ideas and can quickly integrate a large number of people, can create a certain mood in the community, can form attitudes and public opinions, can make the social individuals organize and carry out their social activities. Therefore, social journalism research, in order to identify the problems it faces at the moment, to determine solutions to these problems and to make it more efficient, becomes a priority in contemporary communication sciences.

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