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Tell me your zodiac sign, I tell you who you are – Horoscopes in teen magazines. The portrayal of horoscopes in German and American teenage girl’s magazines

Roberta Iolanda COJOCARU¹

ABSTRACT. Even though it is common knowledge that astrology is not based on scientific evidence, a lot of people seem to care about it. For example, they read their horoscope on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. One way to get easy access to horoscopes is through media such as magazines. Depending on which magazines you are reading these astrological predictions may vary. Previous studies suggest that these differences can be explained either by different target groups, which have different socio-demographic backgrounds, or by different cultural background depending on a specific geographical region. Thus, not only media in general but also specific media outlets account for creating a certain reality. Focusing on young women’s magazine – which influence the development of teenage girls who read them – this study aims to find out how horoscopes are presented in the German *Bravo-Girl* and in the American *Teen Vogue*. A textual analyse was conducted on 24 horoscopes – one for each zodiac sign and each magazine. The findings suggest that romantic relationship, friendship, feelings and self-development were the most prevalent topics, whereas money was not mentioned at all. This could be explained by the varying importance of these topic for teenagers, mostly still living at home. Unexpectedly, technology

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and family do not play a big role even though they are part of teenager's everyday life. Nevertheless, there could not be found any differences between the two magazines since Germany and the USA are both considered Western cultures with similar cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: horoscope, astrology, zodiac sign, magazine, teenagers, cultural differences, media reality

Introduction

Star, planets and the impact of their constellation according to your birth month – astrology has struck the human interest for a long time. Most of us have read at least her or his horoscope – whether it was for fun or because you really believe in them. Horoscopes are nothing new in today's society. They have already played an important role in the ancient astronomy (Liparová, 2022). And their popularity can still be observed nowadays: Many people read their horoscopes even though it does not have any scientific support (Allum, 2011). Researchers found a relationship between personal life crisis and belief in astrology (Lillqvist & Lindeman, 1998).

The most common way to access your horoscope is through media such as magazines. As Campion (2008) shows horoscopes can not only be found in women's magazine but also in magazines for young teenage girls. Since the audience of such magazines – girls in their teenage years – are at an important stage of their life where they search for their own identity, we should keep in mind that those magazines can have a big impact on the development of teenage girls who read them (Carpenter, 1998; Davalos et al., 2007).

Horoscopes have already been researched. Previous studies have shown that the content of the media reflects some cultural beliefs and habits. Tandoc and Ferrucci (2014) found that the content of a horoscope in a specific magazine depends on the target group of that magazine. Comparing German and Czech magazines, Liparová (2022) as well as Alfrahová (2005) show that the analysed horoscopes differ on a linguistic as well as on a

formal level. Finally, researchers found that the content of the American platform *TikTok* and the Chinese platform *Douyin* (which can be considered *TikTok's* Chinese twin since they function similarly) is different for each platform (Sun et al., 2020).

Therefore, this study analyses how horoscopes are portrayed in teenage girls' magazines. Furthermore, it aims to find out if the horoscopes differ depending on the cultural background. Thus, two magazines from two different countries were chosen. A weekly horoscope from the American *Teen Vogue* and a daily horoscope from the German *Bravo-Girl* were analysed since they have a very similar target group when it comes to demographic characteristics. The examination employs a textual analysis like the study conducted by Tandoc and Ferrucci (2014). In total, 24 horoscopes were analysed on the following categories: *romantic relationships, friendships, money, technology, feelings & self-development*.

First, this study reviews existing literature about astrology, young women's magazines, and cultural differences in media. Then the research questions and the research design are presented. After describing the findings, they will be discussed. At the end limitations of this study are shown and topics for further research are suggested.

Literature Review

1.1 Astrology

Just like the scientific discipline called astronomy, astrology deals with the sky, the sun, the planets, the stars and its constellations. The only difference is astrology is not considered a scientific discipline, and its assumptions are not scientifically proven. Nevertheless, astrology has struck people's interest already 10.000 years ago, which can be observed on cave paintings.

Even nowadays people are still interested in astrology. Andersson et al. (2022), for example, found out that the higher a person's narcissism is the higher the belief in astrology. They also showed the higher the level of

intelligence is the lower the belief in astrology is. “However, the people who read horoscopes are more likely to believe in their accuracy, so it is important to analyse what messages are embedded in these horoscopes they are reading. [...] To read a horoscope, people must determine their astrological sign. Based on the day they were born, people fall under one of the 12 zodiac signs. For instance, those born between January 20 and February 18 are under the sign of Aquarius” (Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2014, p.35).

Parallel with the growth of mass media, astrology’s popularity started to increase with the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century (Pınarbaşı, 2021). “The horoscope column is a familiar part of most modern newspapers and has been so for half a century. [...] Every single magazine aimed at women and teenage girls in the UK carries a horoscope column”, states Champion (2008, p. 239). That column is made up by 12 paragraphs so that each zodiac sign has its own text that consist of prediction and general advice. It is written in such a way that the reader can find significance in it. It is not scientific and, if we want to understand its appeal and cultural context, then its claims are neither true nor false” (Champion, 2008, p. 245). Nevertheless, mass media publishes horoscopes and takes advantage of the human need for hope and fear (Pınarbaşı, 2021).

1.2 *Young women’s magazines*

It is commonly known that during your teenage years you are trying to find where you belong. One way of achieving this is by the consumption of certain media. Especially magazines that are made for teenagers try to give them some orientation by talking about topics like friendship, relationships, sexuality and the newest trends. As Carpenter (1998) and Davalos et al. (2007) showed, young women’s magazines influence the development of teenage girls who read them. The reason for that is that they are in an important stage of finding their own identity (Firminger, 2006). Two examples for those type of magazines are the German *Bravo-Girl* and the American *Teen Vogue*.

1.2.1 *Bravo-Girl*

Bravo-Girl is a teenage girl magazine that is part of the *Bravo-Group* and appeared 1988 for the first time. Since then, it was first published every two weeks and later only once a month. Its main target group are girls and young woman at the age between 14 and 19 years. The content of this magazine focuses on topics like love, relationships, beauty, fashion and boys (Gille, 2014).

In 2023, after a publishing period of 35 years, the publisher *Bauer Media Group* decided to not publish this magazine anymore (t-online,2023). Nevertheless, *Bravo-Girl* is still accessible online.

1.2.2 *Teen Vogue*

Teen Vogue is a fashion and entertainment magazine for teenage girls that is owned by *Conde Nast Publications*. It was published in 2003 for the first time and appears every month. The median age of their readers is around 22 years and has a slightly older target audience than *Bravo-Girl* (Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2014). Just like *Bravo-Girl*, *Teen Vogue* is also accessible online.

1.3 *Cultural differences in media*

1.3.1 *Horoscopes for different target groups*

Previous studies have analysed cultural differences between media outlets and how this affects the presentation of horoscopes. Tandoc and Ferrucci (2014), for example, examined the horoscopes of the magazines *Glamour*, *Essence* and *Teen Vogue*, which have different target groups (white woman, black women and teenage girls accordingly). Comparing these three magazines, the horoscopes tend to differ since the target groups differ in their life circumstances, their cultural background as well as in their socialization. The findings show that in *Teen Vogue*, teenage girls are encouraged to be assertive because they are stereotyped as adventurous and risk-takers. When it comes to money, *Glamour* and *Teen Vogue* associate spending money with happiness while readers of *Essence* were reminded to

save money and be careful about it, which corresponds to the “stereotypical Black woman faced with financial constraints” (Tandoc & Ferrucci, p.29, 2014).

1.3.2 *Content differences in different cultures*

Furthermore, Liparová (2022) as well as Alfrahová (2005) compared horoscopes from German and Czech magazines and found differences on a linguistic and formal level. By comparing the German *Vogue* magazine with the Czech *Vogue* magazine as well as the German *Bravo* magazine with the Czech *Bravo* magazine Liparová (2022) was able to show that the differences mentioned before are conditioned by the different countries – not mainly by different target groups.

Another study, conducted by Sun et al. (2020), analysed the content of short-form videos on *TikTok* and *Douyin* and was able to show that the content of those two platforms show cultural differences. Even though these two social media platforms function in a similar way they target different groups. Videos from the American platform *TikTok*, for example, show more individual events, outdoor activities or interactions with friends and family. In contrast to that, videos on the Chinese platform *Douyin* show a simple and more static lifestyle, relaxing activities and family activities. These differences could be explained by the different styles of living and cultural differences between the USA and China.

Research questions

As the mentioned studies show, astrology and especially horoscopes play a crucial role in today’s media. A lot of women’s magazines contain such predictions about the future – also magazines like *Bravo-Girl* or *Teen Vogue*, whose main target group are teenage girls.

Many studies have shown that specific characteristics like a high level of narcissism makes a person more likely to read a horoscope (Andersson et al., 2022), that young women’s magazines influence the development of teenage girls who read them (Carpenter, 1998; Davalos et al., 2007) and that

cultural and linguistic differences have an impact on the media content (Alfrahová, 2005; Liparová, 2022; Sun et al., 2020; Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2014). Therefore, this study aims to investigate on the following questions:

RQ1: How are horoscopes presented in teenage girls' magazines?

RQ2: To what extend do the horoscopes in teenage girls' magazine from different cultural backgrounds differ from each other?

Methodology

Like Tandoc and Ferrucci (2014) this study uses a textual analysis to examine the differences in horoscopes between the German magazine *Bravo-Girl* and the American magazine *Teen Vogue*. To understand if there are any cultural differences visible, the object of investigation will be on the one hand the daily horoscope in *Bravo-Girl* from the 24th of March 2023 and the weekly horoscope form in *Teen Vogue* from the 12th of June 2023. For both magazines all twelve horoscopes are accessed online on their website (the horoscopes can be found in the appendix). The horoscopes of *Bravo-Girl* were translated into English for this study. The horoscopes of the two magazines were compared in the following five categories: *romantic relationships, friendships, money, technology, feelings & self-development*.

Results

Both magazines start with a little introduction before they each tell the horoscope of each of the twelve zodiac signs. The texts for a zodiac sign are longer in *Teen Vogue* than in *Bravo-Girl*. That can be explained by the fact that *Teen Vogue* offers the reader a weekly horoscope, whereas for *Bravo-Girl* it is a daily horoscope.

What is noticeable is that each of the 24 horoscopes only talk about one specific topic at a time, for example having to deal with problems with your crush (*Teen Vogue*, Aquarius), being stuck in an argument between two

friends (*Teen Vogue*, Cancer), staying loyal to your own principles (*Bravo-Girl*, Aquarius) or not taking any risks (*Bravo-Girl*, Capricorn).

Nevertheless, sometimes one horoscope deals with more than one of the following categories: *romantic relationships, friendships, money, technology, feelings & self-development*. In the following part these categories will be analyzed.

1.3.3 *Romantic relationships*

In *Teen Vogue* romantic relationships are mentioned for the horoscopes of Aquarius, Aries and Scorpio. All of them speak either about a problem in the relationship or advice the reader to end it: "It may be time to set yourself free from the situationship" (*Teen Vogue*, Aries).

In *Bravo-Girl* romantic relationships are only mentioned for Taurus and Libra. In contrary to *Teen Vogue*, the advice given here is filled with hope: "'Things are going particularly well in love" (*Bravo-Girl*, Libra) or "It could be worthwhile to rekindle the spark with an ex-partner" (*Bravo-Girl*, Taurus).

1.3.4 *Friendship*

Friends in *Teen Vogue* are either described as a reliable person or as a competitive relationship: "It is always important to tell your friend how you feel" (*Teen Vogue*, Libra) or "You're feeling somewhat competitive with your BFF" (*Teen Vogue*, Capricorn).

In *Bravo-Girl* the friendship is seen as something valuable and even something worth protecting: "You'll realize with each conversation how great you complement each other, and that this friendship is good for you" (*Bravo-Girl*, Gemini) and "Don't project mistakes onto your friends" (*Bravo-Girl*, Aries).

1.3.5 *Money*

Neither *Teen Vogue* nor *Bravo-Girl* mention money in any of the horoscopes.

1.3.6 Technology

Technology is only mentioned in *Teen Vogue*: "... disconnect form your phone" (*Teen Vogue*, Aquarius).

1.3.7 Feelings & self-development

Most of the horoscopes deal with feelings and topics connected to self-development and self-empowerment. *Teen Vogue* encourages its readers with the following sentences: "Believe in your visions" (*Teen Vogue*, Pisces). "It's not worth your energy to be a mediator to people who don't want one" (*Teen Vogue*, Cancer). "Speaking inspiring words to yourself every morning and night" (*Teen Vogue*, Leo). "The ups and downs you have dealt with are helping you define your character" (*Teen Vogue*, Virgo). "Lean into your passions and heart's desires", suggest the Sagittarius horoscope of *Teen Vogue* while also recommending journaling.

In *Bravo-Girl* you can read sentences like: "Make sure YOU are happy" (*Bravo-Girl*, Leo). "Today you are a problem solver" (*Bravo- Gril*, Scorpio). "You feel exhausted and need some time for yourself" (*Bravo-Girl*, Sagittarius). "You should always be loyal to yourself, and not go against your principles because of others" (*Bravo-Girl*, Aquarius). "Speak out what is on your heart" (*Bravo-Girl*, Pisces). Moreover, it is noticeable that most of the horoscopes are connected to topics like self-development, self-empowerment, and acceptance of your own feelings.

Discussion

In general, the horoscopes in *Teen Vogue* and *Bravo-Girl* are similar. Unlike other horoscopes neither of them was longer than one paragraph, ore in some cases even just one sentence (e.g. *Bravo-Girl*, Taurus). Because of the short length the horoscopes are not parted into different topics but rather only cover one topic at a time.

The content of the horoscopes did not really differ depending on the two magazines. In both magazines the horoscopes covered topics from the analysed categories like romantic relationship, friendship and especially

feelings & self-development. This can be explained by the fact that these are topics in which teenage girls are interested the most since it affects their everyday life. And since teenage girls are the main target group for both magazines it was not unexpected to find these topics in the horoscopes. Nevertheless, it is surprising that *Bravo-Girl* suggests giving your ex-partner a second chance in the Taurus horoscope. Especially after a break-up teenagers might feel even more insecure and are looking for advice how to handle such situations. Because they can get easily influenced by horoscopes such non-reflected advice should be seen critically.

Technology was only mentioned in in *Teen Vogue's* horoscope for Aquarius by advising to "disconnect form your phone", which is surprising because you would expect that technology and social media play a big role in teenagers' life nowadays. Another interesting fact is, that money was not mentioned in any horoscope as it is usually done in other magazines (cf. Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2014). One explanation for that could be that most of the people in their teenage years still live with their parents and even get financial support by their family. Speaking about family, none of the analysed horoscopes talks about the relationship to the family - only about romantic relationships and friendships. As previously listed, teenagers spent a big amount of their time at their parent's home and are usually depended on them. That is why it is surprising that none of the horoscopes mentioned parents, siblings, or other relatives.

Other than previous studies, this one could not find any major differences between the horoscopes in the two magazines. This could be explained by the fact that Germany as well as the USA are still pretty similar since they are both consider Western countries. This might not be the case if African or Asian magazines are compared.

Conclusion

Using a textual analysis this study examined horoscopes in teenage girls' magazines. The first research question aimed to find out how the horoscopes were presented. The findings suggest that romantic relationship,

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friendship, feelings and self-development are recurring topics. However, money, technology and family do not play a big role. Especially for the last two topics it is curious since they are part of teenage girl's everyday life. Money might not seem that important yet, since they teenagers usually rely on their parents' money. The second research question asked to what extend the horoscopes of the two magazines differ from each other since they were published in different countries. This study could not find any major differences that could be explained with cultural differences. This may be the case because Germany as well as the USA are both considered Western countries and might therefore not differ that much regarding their culture.

Of course, there are certain limitations that should be considered. For example, *Teen Vogue* published a weekly horoscope and *Bravo-Girl* a daily horoscope. First, because of that the horoscopes differed in their length. Second, the horoscope of *Bravo-Girl* was not the most recent since this magazine is not being published anymore. Furthermore, only the horoscopes of a specific date or time of period was analysed for each magazine, which does not give a complete overview about how horoscopes are being portrayed in that magazine.

In the future this study should be repeated in a bigger context since horoscopes have a big impact on how teenager perceive the world (cf. Carpenter, 1998; Davalos et al., 2007; Firminger, 2006). It is important to know which advice are given to young people who can be influenced so easily. After this study has given a first insight to the content of horoscopes, further research should also focus on the audience. For example, it would be interesting to know, how teenage girls perceive horoscopes and if they believe in them or if they question them at all - especially when it comes to toxic behavior like in the *Bravo-Girl's* horoscope for Taurus.

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The future of the audience in post-television. The case of the italian talk-show Propaganda Live!

Corrado MAGNONI¹

ABSTRACT. We live in a very difficult and confusing time of using various media. To undergo this constant process of change is above all the television that seeks a way to reposition itself and adapt to the new type of audience. Our goal is to bring order and shape the future of traditional media. According to Jenkins² we will try to better define what is meant by cross-media, trans-media and omnimediality. Many authors give different definitions, but we are sure that we can arrive at a new means of spreading news that is more valid than the previous ones from a qualitative point of view. The objectives of the research is to contribute to forming a new type of text that is both multimedia and interactive. A story inserted in a context that demonstrates how unidirectional communication is no longer possible and where the world of media is increasingly called upon to greater involvement of the end user. The aim is to compete with the latter, which is already partly happening, in an orderly process of cross-media use. The idea that the interaction between television and social media can improve the audience for both is based on a profound change in the way people consume content. Today, watching TV is no longer a passive and solitary experience as it used to be.

Keywords: social, television, talk show, audience, internet.

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² H. Jenkins, Cultura Convergente, Apogeo, Milano 2007



Introduction

Imagine a live TV program, like a music competition or a talk show. While the viewer is watching the show, they can simultaneously participate in discussions on X, answer polls on Instagram, or comment on behind-the-scenes videos on Facebook. These activities aren't just distractions; they amplify the TV experience, making the viewer feel like an active part of the event. They're not just watching; they're participating in and influencing the conversation around the program. This type of engagement has a dual effect. On the one hand, it increases attention to the TV program: comments on social media can encourage those who aren't watching the live broadcast to tune in, intrigued by the reactions and discussions. On the other hand, social media benefits from a continuous flow of fresh and stimulating content, which keeps users active and interested. It's as if social media becomes a sort of "second screen" that enriches the main TV experience. This synergy between TV and social media not only improves the audience, but also changes its nature. We are moving from an individual consumption to a participatory and community one, creating a virtuous cycle in which television programs fuel conversations on social media and, in turn, these conversations attract new viewers to TV. Furthermore, this phenomenon offers broadcasters and brands the opportunity to better monetize their audience, creating interactive advertising campaigns that exploit both channels in a coordinated way. In essence, the integration between television and social media does not simply increase audience numbers, but transforms the audience experience itself, making it more dynamic, shared and influential.

Social TV

Phenomenon of the Social TV³ born from the convergence between social media and television, or a process defined by technological transformations. It is the progressive rapprochement and hybridization between telecommunication and network technologies, computer-computational technologies and the content

³ <https://blog.quix.it/social-media-storia-e-evoluzione>

dimension of “traditional” media. To talk about social media it is first of all necessary and proper to make a distinction between this phenomenon and that of Social Networks given that for years the two terms have been used with the same meaning, as synonyms despite the different shades of meaning. When we refer to the term “social media” we are referring to software or applications created with the main objective of sharing audiovisual content such as images, videos, texts and audio files between different users of the web. These types of social media can be defined as real means of communication different from traditional media such as radio, newspaper or television, where the main difference is that these new software allow real interpersonal relationships through users and therefore no longer unilateral communications. We can also distinguish them into different categories based on the type of content they spread; there are blogs, micro blogs, social network sites, collaborative projects, virtual worlds, games and much more. When we talk about social networks instead we refer to a network of people or, a social community, united by the same interests, it is in fact a term born many years ago and it was also used to refer to cultural and sports groups and associations. It is interesting to see how this concept has transformed in the last century from a purely physical idea to something of virtual⁴.

The increasingly intense presence of social networks in everyday life requires careful reflection on the role they play in various sectors of society: in the economy, in politics, in social life. It is possible to formulate some “theses” on social networks with the desire to analyze their most innovative characteristics and their predictable evolution such as their dual value, informative but also communicative. This last characteristic, born especially in the last decade of the twentieth century, has benefited documentary makers and computer scientists having a strong impact not only on large institutions but also on libraries and information services. We are therefore in a historical period in which, on the one hand, the transformation and evolution of the internet to become a vehicle for information content and on the other, the new technologies that are appearing on the global market give rise to a heated debate. On the one hand, those who think that the internet is

⁴ <https://blog.quix.it/social-media-storia-e-evoluzione>

a truly innovative support for communication and on the other, those who believe that its rapid development and transformation would have been useful to transform it into a development tool for information services, institutions and libraries. Especially in the latter, the internet seems to be able to offer so much support and so many spaces to the user to the point of making him autonomous, thus limiting or even canceling in some cases the figure of the specialist and this put them on alert. In this regard, several debates arose whose main limits were on the one hand the simplification of professional figures linked to the library sector through the network and on the other a defensive attitude on the part of third parties. We can therefore speak, in reference to social TV, of a new possibility of interaction between different users through social networks sharing and commenting on television content. We are faced with a new way of enjoying the television medium that draws its foundation from the use of social networks, which allow viewers and users to share their opinions on the program they are watching with millions of other social users through likes, comments, images, whether they are in front of the television or not. The fact that television has become the subject of discussion on social media was inevitable, the virtual population has now reached enormous dimensions, becoming almost as numerous as the entire number of television viewers. The television experience has in fact been enhanced in recent years, both in terms of content and in terms of the size of the current audience and resources. It is interesting to note that, when a viewer of a program decides to publish a personal opinion through social networks, this content passes from television to the web, overcoming temporal and spatial limits linked to the contingent broadcast of the TV program. The contents that are published on social networks by users who are active in relation to a particular program are contents that are destined to continue over time, through sharing, reworking, likes and comments; these contents will continue to travel around the web and reach an increasingly wider audience, even those not directly interested in the program in question.

We can therefore speak of an audience that from passive becomes active and co-author of television content. As the American scholar Jenkins has underlined, it is a mistake to consider this process of convergence only

as a technological transformation, but rather, we should see it as a socio-cultural transformation that has allowed a redefinition of the balance of power and greater interactivity on the part of an audience that since the origins of television has always been passive⁵.

Already in March 2010, a research conducted by Nielsen reported that Facebook and Google were the sites with the most interactions during the television viewing of major events of national interest and international⁶. In January 2011, Yahoo! decided to publish the results and data of a study conducted to analyze the user base of smartphones while watching a tv show⁷. The survey sample consisted of a group of Americans between the ages of 13 and 64, for a total of 8,384 people; the results show that more than half of the sample considered uses the Internet, approximately 86% uses their smartphone while watching a TV program, and only 25% says they use their phone to search for information on the TV program they are watching. As you can imagine, this already huge phenomenon is even more accentuated during major events; an example of this is the 2012 NFL final, which was followed by approximately 111 million viewers, setting a huge record in terms of views. Another piece of data that emerges from the analysis of interaction factors with the NFL final, and which allows us to understand the enormous user base of this phenomenon, is the number of tweets per second, especially in the final minutes and immediately after the game; the number is around 10,245 tweets per second. The data collected by Nielsen in 2017 confirm the enormous dimensions of this phenomenon; in the first four months of the year, approximately 5.1 million people commented on social networks such as Facebook or X every month, while 2,500 contents were broadcast by 34 television channels monitored by the consultancy firm; through 350,000 users per day who comment on social networks their opinions and ideas regarding the programs followed on television. However, it

⁵ H. Jenkins, *Cultura Convergente*, Apogeo, Milano 2007, pp 10 - 20

⁶ <https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/04/nielsen-social-media-report-2012-final.pdf>

⁷ <https://advanced-television.com/2011/02/07/research-yahoo-study-reveals-tv%E2%80%99s-future-is-online>

must be kept in mind that these analyses refer only to a small portion of online users, namely those who actively participate in life on social networks. It could therefore also be estimated that around 10 - 15 million users are registered on social networks who are therefore exposed to this activity but not directly active. The number of interactions on social networks exceeds 87 million, reaching a growth of 23% compared to the period before that analyzed⁸. The data collected by Nielsen also offer us valuable information to understand which television programs receive the most interactions; we note that 50% of the interactions concern sporting events, therefore events that are generally broadcast live and not recorded, 30% concern programs such as talent shows or reality shows, with interactions of approximately 38% that occur in the days before or immediately after the broadcast. Finally, Nielsen's analyses offer us interesting insights regarding the demographic aspect of the most active viewers on social networks; from the graph below we see for example that Facebook is a social network that attracts a majority of men mainly interested in sports, while in general we can realize that 70% of users who interact with television programs through social networks are under 44 years⁹¹⁰¹¹. Now we might ask ourselves whether these interactions by viewers are damaging the television market or not. MIT researcher Wang answers these questions by underlining how the birth of this phenomenon is generating synergies between different media (television and social media) that will bring great advantage to the entire system. The television medium and the digital world are not opposed, they are just used for different purposes: television is effective for building the brand, in building the essence and core values of the brand itself thanks to which it creates notoriety and recognizability. The digital world is instead important in brand extension, because it allows the creation of buzz and diffusion on different platforms, increasing the points of contact with the consumer. Precisely for this reason, to increase the

⁸ <https://www.statista.com/chart/16738/second-screen-usage-while-watching-tv/>

⁹ <https://www.adcgroup.it/adv-express/big-data/nielsen/nielsen-la-social-tv-coinvolge-32-milioni-di-italiani-og-ni-mese.html> (ultima visualizzazione 19 maggio 2021)

¹⁰ <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2017/tops-of-2017-television-and-social-media/>

¹¹ <https://www.nielsen.com/it/it/>

notoriety of a brand, it is necessary to use both media and therefore pass through both television and the digital world. Exploiting only one of the two media would entail enormous risks: the difficulty of building a brand with its values if only the digital world is exploited and therefore the risk of not being able to create a stable relationship with consumers, the risk of damaging the ability of brands to remain in the minds of consumers if one decides to focus only on the digital medium¹². Speaking of the Italian panorama, 40% of those interviewed by a group of researchers say they watch a TV program only to be able to read the comments related to the program on social media. This allows us to note how the success and diffusion of social TV lies in the fact that the public now plays a highly active role, we are no longer talking about a TV-centric television experience but rather, a user-centric experience, in fact the public, feeling involved and stimulated, returns to watch television with greater attention than before. This new phenomenon of interaction with television can be a factor of great strategic importance for producers and advertisers, in fact in addition to great advantages in terms of reach and the level of the public, there is also a great advantage in terms of the quality of the relationship with the audience. The conversation and interactions on social networks generated around TV programs allow producers to obtain a huge amount of data to analyze the tastes of the audience and therefore to modify their programs and produce more targeted content, thus achieving greater harmony with the public¹³.

Audience and its experience

As mentioned, social TV has been able, in recent years, to radically change the viewer's function in relation to television programs and to transform him from a mere passive viewer to a viewer-actor who interacts, not only with the programs broadcast on television, but also with other users on the web. Precisely for this reason we could define social TV not only as a

¹² Wang J., 2015. TV, Digital, and Social: A Debate. *Media Industries Journal*, 1.3, p. 60-66

¹³ Dumenco, Simon. "Believe the Hype? Four Things Social TV Can Actually Do," *Advertising Age*, April 13, 2012

technological phenomenon, but as a real social experience, which unites and puts in contact not only the viewer with the television program, but also the viewer with other users interested in the same programs, a phenomenon therefore that refers not so much to the content, but more to the experience and relationships established between web users. This particular and interesting type of experience will be destined to change, evolve and improve over time, thanks to social networks, services that are offered by the Internet, generally accessible for free via the World Wide Web or specific smartphone applications, whose main purpose is to facilitate and speed up social relationships by allowing communication and sharing of digital content through simple and fast sentences, links, music, images or videos. In fact, they have allowed anyone to rise to the status of commentator on events, characters and facts brought to the fore by newspapers, radio and TV. What until ten years ago was relegated to the newspaper or TV news, today thanks to social networks such as Facebook, X and Instagram can be shared from any place and at any time and break down space temporary barriers¹⁴. Thanks to social media, people are closer to friends and relatives and can communicate with them in real time, a completely new possibility for the television medium. Many programs or reality shows such as *Amici*, *L'isola dei famosi* and *Il Grande Fratello* have made the most of the potential of Social TV, focusing on innovation, creativity and interactivity. Many television programs have decided to increase interactivity with the public even more and become even more engaging by showing, in overlay during the live broadcast, the funniest or most original tweets posted by viewers or by publishing, always live, images and videos of what is happening in the program so as to involve viewers not only in the dynamics of the program itself but also in the thoughts and points of view of other users and viewers. Another innovative element of television enjoyment, allowed thanks to social media, is what allows the viewer, after the end of the program itself, to continue the experience through discussion groups, comments or exchanges of opinions between fans and users on the web so as to continue the interest in the programs over time. It is not unusual for a television

¹⁴ Castells Manuel, *La nascita della società in rete*, sl, Ube Paperback, 2014, pp 10 - 40

program to decide to entrust its fans with the management of its contents. Montpetit states that the practice of television viewing is increasingly resembling that of Internet consumption, moving from the consumption of objects to the consumption of services¹⁵. Social TV in particular, thanks to this new social experience, allows viewers to enjoy the television medium in a completely new way, a modality that combines the entertainment experience of the traditional television viewer with the interactive experience of the web. The same scholar, however, with the help of Murru, noted that the idea of an increasingly active and participatory viewer was often traced back to the paradigm of participatory culture, while social television could be more correctly interpreted as an international phenomenon, which extends both horizontally and vertically. This new type of experience, which sees citizens and the public as protagonists, also has direct effects on the programs themselves, in fact the users' contents are a precious resource capable of enriching the spaces of many columns of tv¹⁶.

Social TV and postmodern criticism

The idea of postmodernity appears in the second half of the twentieth century, associated not only with the mass media, but with the disbelief in the ideals of progress, reason and history. Zigmunt Bauman warns about the absence of a clear break or a sequence without any unequivocal break between modernity and the postmodern period. The scholar states that postmodernity is the age of community, desire, research, invention and imagination of community¹⁷. In the postmodern world there are no spaces outside of the media. Even television, which has always been a medium with considerable influence on society, suffers from the action of digital media.

¹⁵ Montpetit, M.J (2009), *Your content, your networks, your devices: Social networks meet your TV experience*, *ACM Computers in entertainment*, vol.7 n.3, article 34

¹⁶ Fausto Colombo, *Social TV. Produzione, esperienza e valore nell'era digitale*, sl, Egea, 2015, pp 1- 38

¹⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Il disagio della post modernità*, sl, Laterza, 2018, pp 1 - 20

Nelson Hoineff¹⁸ believes that this is a time of reinvention, thanks to the possibilities created by digitalization that puts an end to the idea that television is synonymous with massification and, in this context, the public perceives that generalist TV is only a medium option, not necessarily its form. The relationship between producers and recipients becomes an increasingly complex intertwining, in which the population tends to position itself more and more actively in the communication process, it is what Henry Jenkins calls participatory culture, in which there is no longer complete passivity towards the media; roles are reconfigured in participants who interact at all times, based on a new set of rules that are not yet fully understood. Such a concept is not primarily technological, but cultural¹⁹. Jenkins's proposal highlights changes in the field of content production, circulation and consumption, emphasizing both the roles of recipients and producers. These changes are occurring on both sides, at a time when media companies are intensifying the flow of different distribution channels, with the aim of increasing revenues and expanding markets. These new behaviors have given rise to a series of phenomena, including the habit of watching TV and accessing the Internet at the same time. The interaction existing between viewers who, at the same time as a program is presented on television, comment on social networks about something that has just been shown, is considered a social TV action; it is an interaction, as well as a socialization, of information related to a certain television content for users of the same social network where the posts are made. Social TV allows a shared experience, experimenting with situations of social uses of television. Experiments have revealed that people are more engaged through contact with a virtual audience. The experience of social TV has led Montpetit, Klym e Blain²⁰ to relate this phenomenon to the beginnings of television. For the authors there is a rediscovery of the act of watching TV as a shared moment, referring to decades in which the medium was still quite expensive and, therefore, there was only one in each residence. In this scenario, there is the

¹⁸ Hoineff, Nelson (1996): *A nova televisão: desmassificação e o impasse das grandes redes*

¹⁹ H. Jenkins, *Cultura Convergente, Apogeo*, Milano 2007, pp 10 - 20

²⁰ M.J. Montpetit, N. Klym, and E. Blain, "The Future of Mobile TV," 2009

empowerment of the public that begins to help in the formatting of their own multimedia environment; however, for this to actually happen, it is necessary for content creators to develop multiple access points to media texts, so that they become propagable and are reconfigured in different groups and nuclei of conversation²¹.

Reasons and consequences of the phenomenon

Among the reasons that can lead people to share on social media an experience that, until a few years ago, was considered individual, we find - as stated Olimpia Calì²² the need for sharing and participation and therefore the need to feel less alone. This need for company, which most people feel while watching television programs, could derive not only from the need to share good and bad experiences and feelings, starting from the idea that sharing something good means expanding it, while sharing something negative halves it, but also from the need and curiosity to hear the point of view of others regarding a program, a film or a TV series. This curiosity in seeing what people, both socially and culturally close and far from us, think about a program has aroused in us certain emotions and feelings that push us to share our thoughts on the internet generally followed by specific hashtags that have the main objective of attracting people interested in the same program and therefore starting a sharing of ideas and points of view. This idea of sharing with others, one's own points of view, ideas and thoughts regarding television materials, emerges not only from the research and study of Calì, but also from other studies such as that of Han e Lee²³, whose main objective is to analyze not only the reasons that push the public to use social media during the television experience, but also the forms and platforms of instant messaging used. The main motivations identified by the

²¹ Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*.

²² Calì O. *Social TV: physically alone, virtually connected. New perspectives in studying audience 2.0.*, 2016, XII Congresso Espanol De Sociologia. Gijón, Asturias

²³ Han E. Lee S. Motivations for the complementary use of text-based media during linear TV viewing: An exploratory study. *Computers in human Behavior*, 32, 2014, p. 235-243.

two authors are the following: the communication of one's impressions, the search and sharing of information, the feeling of shared vision, curiosity about the opinions of others, recommendations on programs. These five elements have been collected and identified by scholars through a research in which it emerges that the communication of one's impressions is the strongest and most frequent motivation, immediately followed by a motivation of sharing and research, motivations of visual sensations and curiosity about the ideas and thoughts of others and finally motivations related to recommendations. The results that emerged from this research are subsequently broken down according to the type of program, distinguishing five different genres based on the Nielsen classification: entertainment, drama, news, sports and current affairs. The reasons for this breakdown are to investigate the motivations for sharing in relation to the type of program and therefore not only on the basis of the subjectivity of each individual. In fact, thanks to this classification, we can note that motivations related to the communication of one's impressions are present in all typologies except news, while motivations driven by the desire to seek and share information are predominantly relevant in entertainment programs. When we talk about and analyze sports and entertainment programs, we note that the main motivation is that of sharing, unlike entertainment programs, which is mainly related to the desire to recommend programs. Another noteworthy study is that of scholars Chen e Lin del 2016²⁴ whose main objective, also in this case, was to analyze the reasons that lead to sharing thoughts and ideas on social media during television viewing. From this study it emerges that there are mainly two factors involved, on the one hand we can talk about social companionship, or the so-called "social companionship" which also in this case derives from an innate need for company and belonging that pushes the public to use social networks with the main objective of feeling part of a larger community. On the other hand, the need for entertainment and the need for information combine to create the so-called "infotainment".

²⁴ Chen K., Lin J., Understanding the Effect of Social Television on TV Branding: A Uses and Gratifications Perspective. *Annual conference of the Chinese Communication Society*. Taiwan, May 2016.

THE FUTURE OF THE AUDIENCE IN POST-TELEVISION.
THE CASE OF THE ITALIAN TALK-SHOW PROPAGANDA LIVE!

The case study: Propaganda Live!

Propaganda Live, a Friday night talk show is an example of this type of interaction, its host Diego Bianchi draws the attention of the public and encourages them to comment on X by reading the contents of the tweet²⁵.



The influence of social media, with a particular focus on X, runs throughout the programme, but reaches its peak in the “social top ten” – a selection of the best content found online. In this segment, posts and tweets are commented on, often used as a starting point to broaden the studio debate or to link to pre-recorded material. The medium audience²⁶ of the thirty-six episodes is 996 thousand viewers, of which about one hundred thousand are guests who followed Propaganda Live at friends' houses, it is therefore a community program, convivial, that coagulates tribes of listeners ready to

²⁵ Barra, Luca, e Fabio Guarnaccia, a cura di. *SuperTele. Come guardare la televisione*. Roma: minimum fax, 2021

²⁶ HuffPost. "È 'Propaganda Live' il Programma Cult della Stagione TV." *Huffington Post Italia*, 19 giugno 2019. https://www.huffingtonpost.it/cultura/2019/06/19/news/e_propaganda_live_il_programma_cult_della_stagione_tv-5308255/

comment on what happens both at home and on social media. Contrary to what happens for all information programs, the focus of "Propaganda Live" is not on the over 65s, but on 45-54 year olds, with 7% share. The Millennials and Generation Z are growing the most. The authors have built a program that combines the useful and the enjoyable, offering an ironic and attentive hold on the current social and political situation. "Propaganda Live" dedicates a part of the broadcast to posts on social media and it shows, 89% of those who follow it have an Internet station at home.

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Media portrayal of USA female journalists as victims of sexual harassment and discrimination

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ABSTRACT. This paper brings forward the media portrayal of women-journalists, focusing on the gender inequalities in mass-media that put in jeopardy the safety of female journalists when performing their jobs. Within the purpose of investigating the issue of discrimination against female journalists, the analysis included the cases that mass-media drew attention upon regarding the inequalities and abuses in the newsrooms, and also the correctness from an ethical point of view of reporting these materials by the press. These aspects emphasize if the representation in national mass-media of these cases is achieved in an impartial manner by all media institutions involved in the process, and if the reporting of these cases included ethical violations.

Keywords: female journalists, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, ethical norms

1. Introduction

US journalists have a multitude of ethical and deontological codes to guide their journalistic work, both at the national and editorial level. Such provisions are found in the ethical and deontological codes drawn up by

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certain societies that encompass professional journalists. One such society is the Society of Professional Journalists, founded in 1909, which provides a revised code of ethics in 2014 to guide them in exercising their profession in the media field. Regarding the composition of the Society, it is made up of approximately 7,000 members at the national level, including print, online and broadcast journalists, journalism educators and students interested in a career in journalism. The Ethics Committee is made up of the Chair of the Ethics Committee and 9 of its members. Its role is to encourage the use of the Society's Code of Ethics and to resolve public issues. It also analyses national trends and conducts case studies on work carried out in difficult conditions.

Within the Society of Professional Journalists we can observe a guide that includes several resources on sexual harassment in the workplace, especially in newsrooms. The President of the Society of Professional Journalists proposes a set of rules that journalists should follow to contribute to a better atmosphere in newsrooms. According to these recommended rules, journalists should demand that the newsrooms where they work have a sexual harassment policy. Also, they should insist that this policy be read by every employee and that they assume this by signing it. The same recommendations encourage the human resources department or the management of the newsroom to organize an annual training for all employees on sexual harassment. And last but not least, there should be a support team, not part of the editorial board, where victims can report cases of sexual harassment. This team should report these cases further, so that such behavior can be stopped.

The provisions of the Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics are embedded in a guide that aims to ensure that the information disseminated to the public is "accurate, fair and complete". It states that journalists should act with integrity, both when gathering information and when providing it to the public. The code then presents articles that journalists should strictly adhere to. The first part, entitled "Seek the truth and report it", encompasses the responsibilities that the journalist has towards the public: to verify information before publication, to use original and credible sources, to provide context, to correct information and always keep it up to date, to

identify sources accurately, to avoid stereotypes, not to distort facts or context, as well as visual information, and last but not least, not to plagiarize, always attributing the information taken.

The code of ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists specifies the relationship of the journalist with the sources, mentioning the promises made to them, which should not always be respected, as well as respecting the reasons for the anonymity of a source, if their identification puts them in danger or may attract retaliation or punishment. In terms of fairness, a journalist must also offer the right to reply to the accused or criticized. When it comes to how journalists gather information, it is recommended in this code that they only resort to undercover methods as a last resort, and only if the information collected is of public interest. A journalist who wants to comply with ethical norms must not be intimidated by the status of people in power, but also give victims a voice and the chance to tell their story. The use of stereotypes in reporting facts should be avoided. The right to exchange opinions of the people involved must be provided, regardless of whether the journalist agrees with these opinions or not.

The next section of the code titled "Minimizing Harm" contains a series of provisions on what ethical journalism entails, emphasizing the importance of respecting third parties of a journalist: colleagues, sources, people they write about and the public. Thus, the journalist must find a balance between the public's need to find out information and the possible discomfort or harm that it could cause to the person about whom the material is written. Compassion is needed towards people who may be affected by the publication of press materials, when it comes to victims of sexual assault, minors, vulnerable people (who do not have the necessary experience or cannot give their consent), as well as in the case of cultural differences. A private person has more rights in the control he has over personal information than a public person. Thus, the journalist must take into account the effect produced by the exposure of information about a public person on a private person. Another provision in this section brings to the attention of the journalist the right of a suspect to a fair trial and the right of the public to be informed, as well as the consequences of publishing the suspect's identity before a verdict by a legal entity. The journalist must

also consider the implications of publishing long-term articles, which require him to constantly supplement the information published. The third section of the code, titled "Act independently", emphasizes the journalist's relationship of fairness towards his audience. Thus, a journalist who wants to have an ethically correct attitude will avoid conflicts of interest, refuse gifts, favors, special treatment and political involvement that could affect his integrity, impartiality and even credibility. Special attention must also be paid to sources that provide information in exchange for money or favors. Donors, advertisers, or any other external factors that could influence the story should not be given special treatment. When journalists report advertising, they should be marked as such. In the section "Be Responsible and Transparent," journalists who want to comply with ethical norms will take responsibility for their work and explain their decisions to the public. They should also provide explanations to the audience to clarify the decisions and processes through which they produced their stories. Journalists are encouraged to engage in dialogue with the public about journalistic practices, coverage, and content. When making mistakes, a journalist should own up to the fact that he or she has made a mistake, acknowledge it, and correct it immediately. He or she should explain the corrections he or she has made and the clarifications to the public. The journalist should also respond promptly to questions about the accuracy, clarity, and fairness of his or her stories. When a journalist observes unethical behavior within the newsroom, they must report it. Journalists must behave in the same way they expect others to behave toward them.

2. Representation of female journalist victims of discrimination in the media. Empirical research

This paper aims to investigate the extent to which national ethical provisions regarding the representation of victims in the media are respected, how the portrait of the victim and the aggressor is composed when both are media professionals, as well as the respect for ethical norms regarding the representation of accused persons in national press materials.

2.1. Research questions:

- To what extent do editorial offices respect the norms of journalistic ethics regarding gender representation?
- To what extent do editorial offices respect the norms of journalistic ethics regarding the representation of victims of discrimination and sexual harassment?
- To what extent do editorial offices respect the norms of journalistic ethics regarding the representation of persons accused of discrimination or sexual harassment?
- How are victims portrayed in the analyzed media products?
- How are aggressors portrayed in the analyzed media products?

2.2. Research method

The method chosen to study this topic is the qualitative content analysis, focus on researching differences in gender representation among female journalists in different newsrooms. We chose qualitative content analysis in order to identify articles in which ethical writing norms were violated in journalistic materials and to observe how these cases were represented in the media.

2.3. Sampling

In order to carry out the analysis on press articles, using a targeted sampling on materials that presented the problems of discrimination against women journalists. Thus, articles that met the imposed criteria were selected, namely those that presented the initial investigation, the responses from the accused newsrooms and the finality of the case.

2.4. Research tools

The research tools used in the paper will be the analysis grid, which will divide the information into elements to be analyzed, and the questionnaires. The analysis grid is used as a means of quantifying the information, to divide the information with the help of exact values in

various areas of interest. This tool enables us to obtain an overview of the elements that repeat, but also of the elements that show changes, thus providing an accurate perspective on the information received.

The articles analyzed are divided into three distinct groups: the investigations, the editorial responses to the investigations and the presentation of the final cases.

In order to perform the analysis in the United States on press articles, we included 12 provisions of the ethical code of the Society of Professional Journalists, which we transformed into indicators. These indicators provided for the journalists' compliance with measures by which the materials produced are in accordance with the ethical provisions of the code. The edited journalistic articles were passed through the filter provided by the indicators. The SPJ code of ethics was chosen as a basis for developing the indicators because multiple media institutions included in the analysis do not fully present editorial codes of ethics, examples including Fox News, The Variety, The New Yorker or ABC.

2.5. Sources used for data collection and the selection of articles from the USA to be analyzed

The newsrooms included initially in this study are the major news organizations in the United States, such as: The New York Times, Fox News, CNN, CBS News, NBC News, ABC News, The Washington Post, The New Yorker and The Variety. These newsrooms were selected based on their popularity, number of employees and trusted afforded by the American public. Another reason for the selected the newsrooms was in order to expose the incidence of workplace discrimination cases within the newsrooms and to draw a parallel between the percentage of women in these institutions who are in leadership positions, compared to that of men, as well as the salary differences between them. Journalists included in this study will be journalists who have experienced some form of discrimination or threat, either within the media institutions or from outside.

The sample of articles and cases was selected, given the context of the #MeToo movement, since the beginning of this movement in the United States. It includes articles that have involved discriminated against or

MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF USA FEMALE JOURNALISTS
AS VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

harassed female journalists, thus analyzing whether their representation in the press has respected the ethical norms of writing a journalistic text and the message that was suggested by these articles.

In order to analyze the data on discrimination against female journalists in the media a comparison will be performed between the manner in which the cases of the victims are presented, namely female journalists who have suffered discrimination at work or have been harassed in any way by male persons, and the representation of their aggressors. Following the preliminary analysis of the articles on the chosen topic, we found that those targeting discrimination and harassment of female journalists are most often found in articles written about their aggressors. Also, these discriminations and aggressions are those in the editorial offices where they work, and their aggressor is usually a superior. We selected for analysis 5 representative cases of sexual harassment by journalists or media directors towards the women they had under their control, including female journalists, interns or simply employees of the editorial office who wanted to have a career in journalism. To carry out this analysis, we selected articles that have as a source the newsrooms that made the information public through investigations, articles that described the victim or the aggressor (if these were not included in the initial investigation), articles that responded to these accusations and that were produced by the accused newsroom, as well as the finality of the case presented in media materials from the same newsrooms. With the aid of qualitative content analysis we will observe whether the newsrooms that presented the cases respected the imposed ethical norms, such as protecting the anonymity of the victim and the aggressor, using reliable sources to report the facts, specifying the non-compliance with ethical norms within the newsroom or the opportunity for exchanges of opinions and offering both parties the right to comment. Supplementary we chose to include in the analysis investigations carried out by editorial offices other than the ones targeted, as well as articles written by the accused editorial office to observe whether there is a response from it and whether it complies with ethical norms at the time of writing the article. Thus, the women who suffered harassment or abuse are either journalists, or wanted to pursue a career in journalism or had another status within the media enterprise.

2.6 Cases analyzed and presentation of results

2.6.1 The Roger Ailes- Fox News case

One of the most famous cases involves Roger Ailes, the chairman and founder of Fox News, who was accused of harassing female colleagues and women who wanted a career in journalism over several years. Although the women journalists were also part of the Fox News team, they were overshadowed by the prominence of the bully in the newsroom.

Two investigations by The New York Times, one on July 6, 2016, and the other on August 22, 2016, aimed to present the facts, the victims and the perpetrator in an objective manner, following all ethical rules of journalistic writing. Each article presents two cases of a lawsuit: one from former anchor Gretchen Carlson and another from former moderator Andrea Tantaros. In both investigations, the right of defense and the right of the accused is offered, as well as an exchange of views at article level from all parties involved. The New York Times exposes violations at the Fox News newsroom, ensuring that the information is complete and verified. Regarding Fox News' July 6, 2016, article about the accused by Fox News, there is favoritism by the author towards the accused, using words such as "sickening lawsuit" when describing the prosecution on behalf of the victims. There is a constant return to mentioning favorable things that one of the women has done in the past about the accused, but present accusations are avoided and positive actions on his part are always mentioned. It is noticeable that the journalist resorts to a common stereotype of the powerful and influential man and the woman who is not grateful for his efforts and help. There is also no mention of any breach of ethical standards at Fox News, with the journalist's biased tone towards the aggressor and favoring his image. Fox News' response to the allegations made by The New York Times investigation comes on July 21, 2016 with an article outlining the firing of the accused. The article offers no comment from Roger Ailes, only from representatives of 21st Century Fox, the parent of Fox News. Victims' opinions or the exchange of those involved are not included in the article, only certain statements supporting the accused. There are also no other sources included in the article that add veracity, and

the journalist's praise of the defendant contributes to the subjectivity of the material. Although these issues are violated, 21st Century Fox representatives mention improving the newsroom's work environment so that employees feel they are respected and protected.

Finally, two articles in The New York Times conclude the cases of the two victims, Gretchen Carlson and Andrea Tantaros. Carlson's case concludes with her settling with 21st Century Fox to compensate her for her treatment at Fox News. In contrast, Andrea Tantaros fails to win in court, resulting in a win for Fox News. Both articles follow all the rules of ethical journalistic writing, providing arguments and statements that reinforce the credibility of the article.

Ethical analysis of articles. Presentation of the analysis results

The Roger Ailes case kicked off a number of accusations from women to senior journalists and media executives. The article published by The New York Times on July 6, 2016, titled "Gretchen Carlson of Fox News Files Harassment Suit Against Roger Ailes"³, brought to the surface the practices he engaged in against his female employees. The article details the lawsuit Gretchen Carlson filed against Roger Ailes and her statements about sexual advances from her superior, who had managed to create a "boy's club" in the newsroom, as the victim describes it.

In terms of how the article was written, the information in the article is taken from direct sources, from statements by the parties involved. The journalist explains to his readers the context in which these allegations arose, detailing information about the characters in the article. The material contains the comments, statements and responses of all the parties involved, without any power influence of any of them over the author. There is mention of sources who have confirmed such behavior in the newsroom, stating that they too have had similar experiences. This statement came from Ms. Carlson's lawyer to the journalist. The journalist makes the public aware

³ Michael M. Grynbaum and John Koblin, "Gretchen Carlson of Fox News Files Harassment Suit Against Roger Ailes," *The New York Times*, July 6, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/07/business/media/gretchen-carlson-fox-news-roger-ailes-sexual-harassment-lawsuit.html>.

of the existence of such ethical breaches in the newsroom. In **describing the victim**, the journalist uses the phrases “prominent female anchor” and “a longtime Fox employee”. The assailant, on the other hand, is described as “the chairman of Fox News”, “perhaps the most powerful man in television news”, “a towering figure in media”, “a fierce public relations warrior who can be ruthless with enemies”. It is easy to see the discrepancy that the journalist creates in reporting the facts to emphasize the power differences between the two.

The article published by The New York Times on August 22, 2016, titled “Andrea Tantaros of Fox News Claims Retaliation for Sex Harassment Complaints”⁴, brings information that complements the first investigation by The New York Times. A new victim of Roger Ailes is introduced to the public, bringing serious allegations against the Fox News founder and ethical violations within the newsroom. The work environment is described as intimidating, indecent and misogynistic for women in the newsroom, and accusations are also leveled at other men in the newsroom, such as Bill O'Reilly. The information provided by the journalist is taken from a reliable source, Andrea Tantaros' lawsuit against Fox News. It contextualizes the information with reference to Gretchen Carlson's lawsuit. The journalist gives a right of reply to all parties involved in the lawsuit, but some of them refuse to comment on the subject. The objectivity of the journalist is visible as he does not allow himself to be influenced by any of the parties, reporting the statements as they are found in the trial and the responses that the accused give or the refusal to comment on such statements. This article comes as a complement to the original investigation, bringing other allegations against Fox News into focus. Ethical violations at the newsroom are exposed through the victim's statements. The journalist chooses to describe the assailant at the end of the article as “the network's founding chairman and guiding force for two decades”, while the women he refers to are described as “former Fox News host” or “former anchor”. This way of

⁴ Jim Dwyer, "Andrea Tantaros of Fox News Claims Retaliation for Sex Harassment Complaints," *The New York Times*, August 23, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/23/business/media/andrea-tantaros-of-fox-news-claims-retaliation-for-harassment-complaints.html>.

referring to the characters involved shows the difference in status between them, as well as a stereotype of the influential and powerful man in relation to the women under him.

Fox News conducts an article on July 6, 2016 that comes as a defendant's statement against the allegations from Gretchen Carlson. The article is titled "Ailes denies allegations in Gretchen Carlson harassment suit as Fox News launches investigation"⁵ and features Ailes' response to the sexual harassment allegations, as well as 21st Century Fox's response to the lawsuit filed by Gretchen Carlson. The article attacks the allegations made against Ailes in an attempt to improve his image and presents the company's "total confidence" in him. The article emphasizes several times the effort Roger Ailes is said to have made to help Gretchen Carlson advance her career as a journalist, including by offering her own show. Reference is also made to Carlson thanking Ailes in her book, describing him as "the most approachable boss I've ever worked for". Carlson is accused on several occasions of filing a lawsuit against Ailes on the grounds that his contract was not renewed.

The analysis of the material showed that the journalist violated several ethical rules. However, he provided the public with information that had been checked in advance and taken from the trial. He also referenced Gretchen Carlson's lawsuit against Roger Ailes and provided statements from all parties involved to give context to the information. However, it can be seen that the author tried to favor the perpetrator by the way he related the information about the perpetrator as opposed to the way he referred to the victim. Carlson's lawsuit characterizes him as "disgusting" and when referring to the victim's statements, he uses the verb "alleged" and in the case of Ailes, "said". The opinions presented come from both sides, both what Carlson states in his trial and Ailes' response to the charges. The author insists on some of her past statements that put Ailes in a favorable light to disprove Carlson's claims at trial. Thus, the stereotype of a powerful,

⁵ Howard Kurtz, "Ailes Denies Allegations in Gretchen Carlson Harassment Suit as Fox News Launches Investigation," *Fox News*, July 6, 2016, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/ailes-denies-allegations-in-gretchen-carlson-harassment-suit-as-fox-news-launches-investigation>.

influential man who helped create the career of the woman who accuses him is portrayed, and she is not grateful for his efforts in the rise of her career. Also not outlined and exposed are the transgressions that took place at the newsroom level, with the author claiming that there is no evidence to corroborate Carlson's claims. In describing the two, the author refers to them mostly by their first names, but refers to Carlson as "the former host" and to Ailes as "Fox News Chairman Roger Ailes", which is meant to denote the difference in status and power between the two.

Fox News responds on July 21, 2016 with an article titled "Roger Ailes resigns as Fox News chairman, Rupert Murdoch assumes acting role"⁶, which details Roger Ailes' resignation following sexual harassment allegations and 21st Century Fox executive chairman Rupert Murdoch assuming his duties. Mr. Murdoch admired Mr. Ailes' achievements, without mentioning why he had to resign. Murdoch's sons, who also hold important positions in the company, acknowledge Ailes' contributions, noting the importance of a respectful and trusting work environment. The article mentions the actions that led to Ailes' resignation, mentioning Gretchen Carlson's allegations, but noting that she sued him over non-renewal of his contract.

After ethically analyzing the article, we found that the journalist violated some provisions of the Code of Ethics. In terms of the provisions that the journalist complied with, the journalist provided verified information from the sources' statements and provided the readers with context by referring to the case reported in The New York Times. The article also includes a statement of the need for a safer work environment and the need for respect within it. In shimb, the author does not provide comments from the accused, Roger Ailes, on the resignation, but only the reactions of the 21st Century Fox CEOs to the incident. Neither are the opinions of any of the victims offered, which means that there was no exchange of opinions

⁶ Howard Kurtz, "Roger Ailes Resigns as Fox News Chairman, Rupert Murdoch Assumes Acting Role," *Fox News*, July 21, 2016, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/roger-ailes-resigns-as-fox-news-chairman-rupert-murdoch-assumes-acting-role>.
<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/roger-ailes-resigns-as-fox-news-chairman-rupert-murdoch-assumes-acting-role>.

in the article. The reporting of the facts is subjective, with the journalist including only praise for the accused, such as Murdoch's statement "Roger's remarkable contributions to our company", but not mentioning any of his victims. It referred to him as "female Fox employee" and to him as "chairman of Fox News, Fox Business and Fox television stations". Such descriptions are intended to emphasize how much more important the perpetrator was to the company than the victims.

Two articles written by The New York Times bring finality to the case, both regarding Gretchen Carlson and Andrea Tantaros. The article concerning Gretchen Carlson, published on September 6, 2016 under the headline "Fox Settles With Gretchen Carlson Over Roger Ailes Sex Harassment Claims"⁷ presents the final details surrounding the case between her and 21st Century Fox. However, after a \$20 million dollar loss in their lawsuit with Carlson, they suffered another loss after one of their Fox News hosts, Greta Van Susteren, left the newsroom. The article also describes the tensions in the newsroom, the cases Fox had settled with two other victims, the evidence Carlson had against Roger Ailes, and the number of women who made allegations against Ailes.

The article complied with ethical writing rules, the author of the material presents previously verified information, provides context to the material by referencing the original case, provides the right to comment to the accused parties, is not influenced by the status of the accused, includes other sources in the material, and presents exchanges of all those involved in the story. However, when it comes to the description of the victim and the perpetrator, i.e. a woman and a man, it uses the phrase "former anchor, Gretchen Carlson" to describe her, while he is described as "the network's powerful chairman, Roger Ailes". There is a difference in the way a woman who is in an inferior position to a man is reported and how this influential man is described.

⁷ Michael M. Grynbaum and John Koblin, "Fox Settles With Gretchen Carlson Over Roger Ailes Sex Harassment Claims," *The New York Times*, September 6, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/07/business/media/fox-news-roger-ailes-gretchen-carlson-sexual-harassment-lawsuit-settlement.html>.

The May 18, 2018, article, "Lawsuit Brought by Ex-Fox News Host Andrea Tantaros Is Dismissed"⁸ returns after nearly two years with conclusions on the Andrea Tantaros case. The lawsuits against Fox News and Roger Ailes on behalf of Tantaros did not come with a win on her side. The victim couldn't offer enough concrete evidence to convince the court, with Fox News coming out the winner in the case. Also, one allegation that came to support the victim's indictment was that she published a book without the editors' consent.

The article showed no ethical writing violations, and the journalist complied with all the relevant provisions. The information in the material has been contextualized, the inside information has been vetted through the trial and the case being reported, the defendant has had the opportunity to present his comments and opinions, statements by an authoritative person, in this case a judge, are included to reinforce the veracity of the information, the journalist is in no way intimidated by the status of the defendant, and even clarifications are made about ethical violations at the newsroom level. In describing the victim, the journalist uses the phrases "former on-air host" or "former co-host of "The Five", and in introducing the defendant, he describes him as "Fox News's founding chairman". Here too, the same stereotype can be observed, which points to the importance of the profession of the two men, with the man always in the position of hierarchical superiority.

2.6.2 *The Mark Halperin Case - ABC News and NBC News*

Another case is that of Mark Halperin, a journalist and anchor who was working in the NBC News newsroom at the time of the allegations, appearing on MSNBC's "Morning Joe". He was the political director of the ABC News newsroom, and the allegations are directed at the time he was employed there. After the revelations, Halperin was fired by NBC News. CNN exposed his sexual assault of several of his female colleagues in the newsroom.

⁸ Michael M. Grynbaum, "Lawsuit Brought by Ex-Fox News Host Andrea Tantaros Is Dismissed," *The New York Times*, May 19, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/18/business/media/fox-news-andrea-tantaros-lawsuit.html>.

Given the five articles targeting Mark Halperin, the most objective reporting is found in CNN's investigations. ABC News does not seek the opinion of its former employee, who is accused of harassing women in the newsroom, but only takes his statements from a social media platform. It also does not raise concerns about breaches of the newsroom's ethical rules or take steps to prevent such violations in the future. The NBC News newsroom also does not make a statement about the newsroom's ethical rules and the steps it will take in the future to prevent harassment of women. In terms of protecting the victims, all the articles maintain their anonymity on the grounds that women fear professional repercussions. Instead, the identity of the perpetrator is made public because he is a public person. CNN articles put more emphasis on the victims, even in the headlines they are mentioned first and then the perpetrator. In contrast, ABC News and NBC News only present the name of the perpetrator in the headlines, without mentioning the victims. The latest NBC News article that brings up Mark Halperin from August 2019, brings a new round of rebukes to the accused, but the article does not present the accused's opinion on the subject and the charges. No exchange of opinions is presented, only the accusations of some of the victims against Halperin, without Halperin providing a response to them.

Ethical analysis of articles. Presentation of the analysis results

CNN's October 26, 2017 article, "Five women accuse journalist and 'Game Change' co-author Mark Halperin of sexual harassment"⁹, come to accuse Mark Halperin of sexual harassment while he was an ABC News employee. Five women have claimed that he behaved inappropriately towards them while they were employed by ABC News, and other sources confirm their claims. The article also announces his departure from his role as an NBC News analyst and from his frequent appearances on "Morning

⁹ "Five women accuse journalist and "Game Change" co-author Mark Halperin of sexual harassment," *CNN*, date accessed June 10, 2021, <https://money.cnn.com/2017/10/25/media/mark-halperin-sexual-harassment-allegations/index.html>.
<https://money.cnn.com/2017/10/25/media/mark-halperin-sexual-harassment-allegations/index.html>.

Joe". Statements from victims, who choose to remain anonymous, give disturbing details about his behavior between 1990 and 2000.

The manner in which the CNN journalist wrote the article does not appear to violate any ethical rules of journalistic writing. It gives context to the information, specifying the role of the accused in the media, the period when the harassment took place and the newsroom he was working for at the time. Victims remain anonymous on the grounds that they fear professional or social repercussions. His identity is made public because it is a matter of public interest. In his account, the journalist is not intimidated by the status of the perpetrator in the media and gives all those involved the right to express their opinion. The article is complemented by subsequent statements from the newsrooms concerned and makes known the ethical violations at ABC News. However, the journalist resorts to the use of stereotypes that are common in articles of this kind. He chooses to describe the victims as "a former ABC News employee" or "The second woman, another former ABC News employee", while he portrays the perpetrator as "Veteran journalist Mark Halperin" and "one of the preeminent political journalists", "political director at ABC News". This shows the importance of the defendant's journalistic duties in comparison to the women who were mere employees.

A second accusation comes the very next day, on October 27, 2017, when four more women come forward to accuse Mark Halperin of harassment, with CNN running an article titled "Four more women accuse Mark Halperin of harassment, bringing total to at least a dozen"¹⁰. The material comes with details of Halperin sexually patronizing female ABC News employees or sexually blackmailing women under his employ. One of the women who gave statements anonymously in the previous article is now making her identity public. The story provides the accused's full statement and also presents ABC News' reaction to the violations. The journalist takes the information in the article from reliable sources, from the statements of

¹⁰ Oliver Darcy, "Four more women accuse Mark Halperin of harassment, bringing total to at least a dozen," *CNNMoney*, October 27, 2017, <https://money.cnn.com/2017/10/27/media/mark-halperin-new-accusations/index.html>.

the victims and the assailant, giving readers context to the original investigation. The anonymity of the women is preserved, motivated by the professional and social repercussions they may suffer as a result of revealing their identity. The violation of these ethical rules at ABC News is condemned in a statement issued by ABC News urging that people who felt their rights had been violated should come forward to report this for further action. In presenting the two sides, the journalist chooses to stereotype the victims, describing them as “the women were young and had little power” in contrast to the perpetrator who was “in a position of significant authority at ABC News”. This emphasizes the power imbalance between women and men in important positions.

The ABC News response comes on October 28, 2017 in an article titled “Political analyst Mark Halperin 'profoundly sorry' amid new sexual harassment allegations”¹¹. Here clarifications are made about the allegations made against him by some ABC News female employees, as well as his statement that came via a Twitter post, where he admits the wrong he did to his female colleagues. Also included is ABC News' statement that it was not aware of any such behavior by the former employee. A CNN correspondent specifies in tweets that Halperin's actions were “a known secret” and supports the victims, specifying that the only one to blame for the sexual misconduct is the man who initiated it. The information provided in the article is verified information taken from CNN's investigation and other statements are taken from the Twitter accounts of the sources. The material refers to the investigation that publicized the case, and the women in the article are anonymized. All views on the subject, from all sides, are presented, as well as outside sources supporting the claims of the assaulted women. There is no mention of any breach of ethical standards in the newsroom or of improved working conditions for ABC News employees. In describing the victims, the journalist uses phrases such as “The women, who were all in their 20s at the time”, “a former ABC News researcher”, while the

¹¹ "Political Analyst Mark Halperin "Profoundly Sorry" amid New Sexual Harassment Allegations," *ABC News*, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/political-analyst-mark-halperin-profoundly-amid-sexual-harassment/story?id=50757425>.

assailant is portrayed as “Political analyst Mark Halperin is seeing career fallout”, “political contributor at the network”, and his status is referred to as “his high position at ABC News”. These descriptions indicate a portrayal of men as superior to women, both professionally and socially.

The newsroom of NBC News, where Mark Halperin was employed at the time the sexual harassment allegations were revealed, publishes an article on October 26, 2017 responding to the CNN investigation, headlined “NBC News Analyst Mark Halperin Accused of Sexual Harassment”¹². The material begins with an apology from him for his behavior and an official statement from him is inserted. MSNBC states in a statement within the article that Mark Halperin will not return to work for NBC News. At the end, all of Halperin's assignments during his career at NBC are listed, as well as the bestselling books he co-authored. The manner in which the journalist chose to write the article complies with some of the ethical guidelines, but some of them are violated. As for those that are respected, the journalist checked the information included in the story, taking statements from sources both from other publications and from his own sources. He provided readers with details that referred to the investigation that uncovered the case and included the assailant's statements in the article, noting that Halperin was sought for comment. In the NBC News piece, the victims' statements are not included, only a mention of what they suffered. There is no indication of any breach of ethical rules or mention of a thorough investigation or measures to prevent such incidents. Gender stereotyping is visible in the article when it comes to the words characterizing the victims and the perpetrator. For the victims, the journalist chooses to call them “five anonymous women, four of them former ABC News employees”, while the perpetrator is described as “a senior political analyst and frequent contributor for NBC News and MSNBC”, “when he was a top political journalist at ABC News” or “Halperin, who worked for NBC News, MSNBC, Bloomberg Politics and Time magazine”, always mentioning his position.

¹² Alex Johnson, "NBC News Political Analyst Mark Halperin Accused of Sexual Harassment," *NBC News*, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/nbc-news-analyst-mark-halperin-accused-sexual-harassment-n814491>.

Such portrayal denotes his importance in the NBC News newsroom and a reaffirmation of his status.

Finally, NBC News writes an article on August 19, 2019, "Mark Halperin's new book faces widespread criticism"¹³, which outlines the hostility with which the publication of a new book by Halperin is being met. Gretchen Carlson says the possible book launch would be "a slap in the face to all women". CNN political commentator Karen Finney also described Halperin as "a predator" and condemned Regan Arts for agreeing to publish his book. Rebecca Katz, a political strategist, published a Twitter post in which she declared that "you can defeat Trump and not support Mark Halperin's career rehabilitation". NBC notes that he will not publish his book through NBC News or MSNBC. The article describes the reputation of the Regan Arts publication, which in the past has accepted controversial books for publication.

The author of the article includes verified information within the material and references the 2017 sexual harassment allegations. However, the accused is not asked for comment on the reluctance to publish the book, which does not provide an exchange of views within the material. Mention is given to the assaults suffered by the victims and statements from women who support them. There is repeated mention of Halperin's ethical violations. The article comes as an update on Mark Halperin's situation and what is the media reaction to his return to the public arena. It emphasizes the position he has occupied in the past by describing him as "the "Game Change" co-author and political commentator" and "then-ABC News political reporter Halperin". The women are portrayed as inexperienced victims in a situation of professional dependency on the perpetrator, with descriptions such as "she was a 21-year-old job seeker".

¹³ "Mark Halperin's New Book Faces Widespread Criticism," *NBC News*, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/all/mark-halperin-s-new-book-faces-widespread-criticism-n1043801>.

2.6.3 *The Charlie Rose Case - CBS News and PBS*

Charlie Rose is a journalist and former host of the Public Broadcasting Service's (PBS) "Charlie Rose," as well as co-host of "CBS This Morning" and correspondent for CBS News' "60 Minutes." He has been accused by several women who have worked or wanted to work with him of sexually harassing him. The Washington Post has conducted two investigations targeting Charlie Rose and the women he sexually assaulted. These investigations included women who did not want to be identified because of the repercussions, but women who worked with him at CBS News who revealed their identities when they came forward.

Ethical analysis of articles. Presentation of the analysis results

The Washington Post publishes a major investigation on November 20, 2017 called "Eight women say Charlie Rose sexually harassed them - with nudity, groping and lewd calls"¹⁴, in which he is accused by several women of sexual harassment. The allegations include women between the ages of 21 and 35 at the time of the allegations, who disclosed his inappropriate behavior from 1990 to 2011. The victims' statements were verified through their friends, colleagues and family, to whom they had confessed their experiences in the past. Five of the women gave their statements on condition of anonymity for fear of Rose's status in the media and the possible repercussions. Reah Bravo, who was an intern and then associate producer on Rose's PBS show, says of sexual advances from Charlie in various circumstances. Another victim, Kyle Godfray-Ryan, describes several instances in which Rose would appear naked in front of her at one of his residences, as well as situations in which he would call her to confess his sexual fantasies. Megan Creydt, who worked as Rose's show coordinator

¹⁴ Irin Carmon and Amy Brittain, "Eight Women Say Charlie Rose Sexually Harassed Them - with Nudity, Groping and Lewd Calls," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/eight-women-say-charlie-rose-sexually-harassed-them--with-nudity-groping-and-lewd-calls/2017/11/20/9b168de8-caec-11e7-8321-481fd63f174d_story.html. https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/eight-women-say-charlie-rose-sexually-harassed-them--with-nudity-groping-and-lewd-calls/2017/11/20/9b168de8-caec-11e7-8321-481fd63f174d_story.html.

between 2005 and 2006, described him touching her leg while she was in the car with him. In addition to these eight women, it is reported that The Washington Post spoke with more than 20 women, six of whom said they believed they had been sexually assaulted, eight of whom confessed that they were uncomfortable with Rose's behavior toward women employed in the newsroom, and 10 of whom did not notice anything of concern. The Washington Post's journalist produced a story that did not violate any ethical rules of journalistic writing. He ensured that the information included in the story was reliable, checking the victims' testimonies with the people to whom they confessed and including many sources to back up the statements. It explains the context in which the violations took place, the years in which they took place and who the victims of the perpetrator are, as well as their status in the media. He is given the right to comment and his statement is included within the material. The sources' decisions on their anonymity in the article are respected, justifying the decision as being based on fear of the professional repercussions they might suffer. The opportunity is provided for an exchange of views among all those involved in the indictment and exposes the violations that occurred at the CBS News and PBS newsrooms. No stereotyping is used in the descriptions of the victims, only mentioning their ages as "young women" and "young assistants and producers". Tow is referred to by name only.

A second investigation published by The Washington Post on May 3, 2018, "Charlie Rose's misconduct was widespread at CBS and three managers were warned, investigation finds"¹⁵, adds to the chain of allegations against Charlie Rose, as well as the fact that the newsroom's management team was informed of his actions. In addition to the allegations in the first investigation a few months ago, 27 women have confessed to sexual assaults by Charlie Rose, 14 of whom were CBS News employees and

¹⁵ "Charlie Rose's Misconduct Was Widespread at CBS and Three Managers Were Warned, Investigation Finds," *Washington Post*, accessed June 10, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/charlie-roses-misconduct-was-widespread-at-cbs-and-three-managers-were-warned-investigation-finds/2018/05/02/80613d24-3228-11e8-94fa-32d48460b955_story.html. https://www.washingtonpost.com/charlie-roses-misconduct-was-widespread-at-cbs-and-three-managers-were-warned-investigation-finds/2018/05/02/80613d24-3228-11e8-94fa-32d48460b955_story.html.

13 of whom worked with Charlie in other circumstances. The time frame of the allegations also increases, with the earliest allegations dating back to 1986 and the most recent allegations from 2017. The information in the investigation was gathered through interviews over a five-month period with 107 former and current employees and dozens of others who worked with Rose on other television programs. Many of the statements were given on condition of anonymity, but all were corroborated through confirmations with people to whom the actions were confessed. This indicates that the journalist carried out a thorough check of the information before publication to ensure the authenticity of the depositions. The reference to the 2017 investigation where the violations produced by Rose's behavior were first revealed is also specified.

Although offered the right to comment, Charlie Rose would only state that "Your story is unfair and untrue." To The Washington Post. The journalist has respected the decisions of sources as to the anonymity under which to make their statements public, with reasons given for their fear of identification. The act of journalism is not influenced by Charlie Rose's status in the media, as he is increasingly releasing statements from victims through his investigations. The transgressions that were taking place in the newsrooms of CBS News and PBS are thoroughly exposed, including the fact that their managers were warned three times about Rose's behavior, but took no action. There is no stereotyping in the description of those involved in the confrontation, with the accused being referred to by his first name and the women by the words "woman/women".

In September 2018, CBS News announced that Charlie Rose had filed a motion against three of the women accusing him in a story titled "Charlie Rose files motion to dismiss sexual harassment lawsuit, says women are 'exploiting the #MeToo Movement'"¹⁶. It is disclosed that Rose has filed a motion seeking to dismiss the accusations leveled against him by three

¹⁶ "Charlie Rose Files Motion to Dismiss Sexual Harassment Lawsuit, Says Women Are 'Exploiting the #MeToo Movement'", *CBS News*, date accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/charlie-rose-files-motion-to-dismiss-sexual-harassment-lawsuit/>. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/charlie-rose-files-motion-to-dismiss-sexual-harassment-lawsuit/>.

women who worked at CBS News and his PBS show and who have filed a lawsuit against him. He claims that the women are “exploiting the #MeToo movement” and that they are not providing conclusive evidence, only evidence from some of the other teevees present in the article published by The Washington Post. CBS is filing a motion to show that one of the victims suing Rose was not working at CBS at the time of the assaults, but for his show. Based on the way the article is written, the journalist complies with all ethical requirements and does not refer in specific terms to either party. It is specified that CBS News has hired two firms of employees to look into allegations of sexual harassment in the newsroom. The article includes statements from the victims and the accused parties, as well as providing an exchange on the lawsuits filed and the motions seeking to quash them. The sources of the information come from the trials and statements of the people involved, and the article mentions the investigation that uncovered the irregularities.

A first response from the CBS News newsroom comes on November 21, 2017, with an article titled “CBS News fires Charlie Rose after sexual misconduct allegations”¹⁷ which is a reaction from CBS to The Washington Post's first investigation. The article reports on Rose's firing following allegations leveled against him by several female CBS and PBS employees. Immediately following the revelations, Charlie Rose was suspended, his PBS show was canceled, and CBS terminated all dealings with him, according to the article. The journalist complied with the ethical requirements of verifying information prior to publication by presenting information from sources' statements. Also mentioned is the claim that Charlie Rose's dismissal follows the revelations of The Washington Post investigation. The material does not include Rose's response to the allegations and the consequences they have had on his career, nor does it include any exchange of views between the people involved. CBS News President David Rhodes elaborates on the violations at the newsroom and the intolerance of such behavior toward its

¹⁷ "CBS News Fires Charlie Rose after Sexual Misconduct Allegations," accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/charlie-rose-fired-cbs-news-sexual-misconduct-allegations/>.

employees. The journalist uses certain descriptions to describe the women he refers to: “eight women, all of whom worked or wanted to work for his PBS program”, “three new accusers”, “women who work at CBS News”. It describes the accused as ““CBS This Morning” co-host Charlie Rose” and refers to his accomplishments as “Charlie's important journalistic contribution to our news division”.

CBS News publishes its response to the second round of allegations against Charlie Rose on May 3, 2018 in an article titled “Report: CBS was warned about Charlie Rose sexual misconduct”¹⁸. It covers the other allegations coming from women against Rose, as well as statements coming from CBS News President David Rhodes about needed improvements to the newsroom environment. The statements and reports in the CBS News material are either from direct sources or from sources that have been fact-checked. Reference is also made to The Washington Post investigation to contextualize the information. The journalist includes a statement made by Rose about the new allegations coming against him, but the exchange is almost non-existent, with only victim statements and measures for improvement coming through a statement from the president of CBS News. The words describing the victim are “two dozen additional women” or “then a 22-year-old news clerk”, and the words describing the assailant: “former “CBS This Morning” anchor Charlie Rose” and “when he was a fill-in anchor on “CBS Morning News””. These descriptions are not gender stereotypical.

The latest article featuring Charlie Rose is published on April 2, 2019 by CBS News and is headlined “Women suing Charlie Rose make new claims of sexual harassment”¹⁹. New allegations against Charlie Rose come from the three women who are suing him who are making new allegations against Rose in response to his motion to quash them. The article follows journalistic standards and includes statements from all those involved,

¹⁸ "Report: CBS Was Warned about Charlie Rose Sexual Misconduct," *CBS News*, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cbs-warned-about-charlie-rose-sexual-misconduct-washington-post-report/>.

¹⁹ "Women Suing Charlie Rose Make New Claims of Sexual Harassment," *CBS News*, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/women-suing-charlie-rose-make-new-claims-of-sexual-harassment/>.

contextualizes the information by referencing the article that mentioned Rose's retaliation against the three women suing him. The information is updated, keeping readers up to date with information about the lawsuit that is still ongoing. It refers to the victims only by "woman/ women" or by their names: "The women, who were all hired to work for CBS News or for Rose's PBS show when they were in their early 20s", "the third woman in the lawsuit". The perpetrator is referred to by 'former CBS News anchor' and by name.

In light of The Washington Post's two investigations into Charlie Rose's sexual harassment of female CBS News employees, both journalists and future journalists, we noted that The Washington Post has followed the ethical standards for writing a public interest story that exposes a journalist's abuse of power over his or her female colleagues or employees. The investigation gives both the victims and the abuser the right of reply. In the second investigation by The Washington Post, the victims' statements are recounted in detail, and the material is dedicated to them and the events they were put through by their employer. As for CBS News and its response to the investigation, we noted that CBS News does not offer a right of reply to the accused, but does offer statements about improving ethical standards going forward. Statements from the victims and the assailant are missing from the article, which reports comments from the CBS News director and the author of the investigation from The Washington Post. The accused's response comes in an article by CBS News a few months later that follows the rules of ethical writing, objectively clarifying his statements through his attorney, even some unpopular opinions. Statements made by victims against him are also included. In an article presenting the partial results of the case, which is still ongoing, the latest statements by the victims and the accused on the state of the trial are presented. In its writing, all ethical rules are observed and no preference is given to one of the parties.

2.6.4 The Matt Lauer- NBC News case

Another high-profile case is that of Matt Lauer who has been accused of sexual harassment by several women who have come forward to testify about his behavior towards female colleagues in the NBC News newsroom.

Lauer was fired after a detailed report described how a female newsroom employee was sexually harassed by him at the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

The Variety's November 29, 2017 investigation of Matt Lauer features three victims who experienced sexual harassment from him in the workplace. Also in The Variety's newsroom the following day, a piece is published with the accused's response, which acknowledges the seriousness of his actions, but only includes his statement, with no statements from the victims. There is also no exchange of views and no other sources are included in the report. NBC News also published a response the next day, but it did not include the defendant's opinion, only the statement of the newsroom spokesperson about the victims' allegations. The accused was not given a chance to defend himself, only the victims' and the spokesperson's opinions were present. One can see a similarity between the reaction of NBC News and CBS News when the main anchor is accused of an assault, they do not give the anchor a chance to defend himself. In the first instance, the victims wished to remain anonymous because of fears over the professional repercussions they could face. However, in 2019, the identity of one of the victims is revealed and is included in Ronan Farrow's book- "Catch and Kill". The Variety received exclusive access to his book, which was not yet published, and based on it, did an article about Matt Lauer being accused of rape by Brook Nevil, one of the anonymous victims. In this article, published in October 2019, The Variety respected journalistic ethics, including the opinions of all parties or the accused's right to defense. Context is provided by reference to the original 2017 investigation. In response, the next day, an article is published, also in The Variety, outlining Lauer's position on the allegations, but without including other sources in the account. The victim's allegations and the defendant's response to them, which denies what happened, are presented. In May 2020, the same newsroom returns to the story and publishes a final update on the situation between Matt Lauer and Ronan Farrow, which continues to be tense. It describes the accusations on both sides, as well as a response from the victim about a possible exaggeration of the facts reported in the book. Ethical rules on the protection of sources are respected in all the articles analyzed that dealt with the case, and the identity of the assailant is revealed because the public interest prevails, as he is a public figure with influence over those who were following him.

Ethical analysis of articles. Presentation of the analysis results

On November 29, 2017, The Variety published an investigation under the headline "Matt Lauer Accused of Sexual Harassment by Multiple Women (EXCLUSIVE)"²⁰ exposing NBC News "Today" co-host Matt Lauer's inappropriate behavior towards female colleagues. The two-month investigation gathered statements from dozens of people who either work or have worked at NBC News. The article features the testimony of three women who claim to be Lauer's victims, their confessions cross-checked with friends or coworkers to whom they confessed. The women have chosen to remain anonymous, fearing the professional repercussions they could face if they went public. Matt Lauer had already been fired from NBC News days before, after another female colleague filed a complaint accusing him of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct beginning with the 2014 Sochi Olympics and continuing for several months. Several statements from NBC employees confirm Lauer's obsession with women and their bodies, the comments he made to female coworkers both verbally and through texts, and the consensual relationships he had with certain female employees, even though he was married. Even though several women complained to NBC about his behavior, no action was taken, given his status on the "Today" show, which was No. 1 in the US ratings. Both NBC and Lauer declined to comment. The statements point to a hostile and intimidating environment in the newsroom, where women say they were afraid to refuse Lauer's advances for fear of destroying their careers, while the management team protected Lauer.

As for the manner in which this article was written, it can be seen that the provisions of the code of ethics were largely respected. At the beginning of the article, the journalist explains how he gathered the information, the sources he interviewed and their relevance to the story. Details are given about the background to the story, who the accused person is, the newsroom involved and the sources' statements. The journalist presents the opinions

²⁰ "Matt Lauer Accused of Sexual Harassment by Multiple Women," *Variety*, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://variety.com/2017/biz/news/matt-lauer-accused-sexual-harassment-multiple-women-1202625959/>.

and complaints of female colleagues to the co-host of the “Today” show, as well as testimonies from sources confirming what they say, but also providing additional details to these statements. Both Matt Lauer and NBC News are offered the right to comment, but both Matt Lauer and NBC News refuse to provide a response. In order to protect their professional careers, the sources choose to remain anonymous in this investigation, a decision the author respects. The breach of NBC's newsroom ethics toward its employees is noted. As for disclosing the identity of the assailant, he is a public person and the public interest is paramount in this case, given the seriousness of the allegations. To describe the victims, the journalist uses expressions such as “young woman”, “female employee”, “female producers” or “women employed by NBC”. To describe the assailant, he uses the expressions “co-host of NBC's Today”, “crown jewel of the network's news division” and “America's squeaky-clean dad”. In this way, the differences between the women, who are described merely as employees of NBC, and the reputation of the abuser are clearly highlighted, which is also reflected in the journalist's description of him. Once again, it proves that men with high status in the media will overshadow their own victims, even in the material that indicts them.

Matt Lauer's reaction comes the very next day, on November 30, 2017, where in an article titled “Matt Lauer Responds to Harassment Claims: 'There Is Enough Truth in These Stories'”²¹, he admits his guilt towards the victims. The article apologizes to the women he has hurt through his behavior, admitting that his actions have hurt the people around him. The statement was released by his publicist on NBC News' Today program. The article mentions other names in the entertainment industry who have been accused of sexual harassment, such as Harvey Weinstein and Charlie Rose. Details are given about the “Today” show, who replaced Lauer, what the show's ratings are, its importance to American morning shows and the fact that it tops the ratings in that section. The material contains information from

²¹ Brian Steinberg and Brian Steinberg, "Matt Lauer Responds to Harassment Claims: 'There Is Enough Truth in These Stories,'" *Variety*, November 30, 2017, <https://variety.com/2017/tv/news/matt-lauer-statement-today-sexual-harassment-1202626847/>.

Lauer's statement published by NBC News and reminds readers about the investigation that publicized the case. The defendant's apology and confession are present in the article, but victim statements are not included, nor is there an exchange of views in the text. Nor are there any other sources giving statements about the accused's actions. The journalist still respects the anonymity of the sources and by publishing the material renews the information he is providing to the public. A clarification is provided on the abuses at the newsroom level perpetrated by Matt Lauer. In describing the victims, the journalist uses only the words "woman/ women", without any status. The accused is described as "former 'Today' anchor" and "the latest prominent person to fall", ascribing to him a newsroom status and media prominence.

The article by NBC News on November 29, 2017, "NBC News fires Matt Lauer after sexual misconduct review"²² comes in response to the allegations against Matt Lauer. Statements from victims in the investigation by *The Variety* as well as *The New York Times* are stated, presenting Lauer's firing after the newsroom received a detailed complaint against him. The president of NBC News is raising his concerns in a statement and advocates prioritizing a safe work environment that respects the newsroom's values. Lauer's statement acknowledging his wrongdoing towards his colleagues is also given. Details from *The Variety's* investigation are included, as well as a producer's allegations against Lauer and what the victims said. The management team denies receiving complaints from female employees after the initial investigation accused them of ignoring such reports from victims. The lawyer for one of the victims says the allegations his client made against Lauer were discussed in a meeting with the company's HR team just a few days ago. The rest of the article includes regrets about Lauer's departure from some of his colleagues, as well as a description of his journalistic career.

²² "NBC News Fires Matt Lauer after Sexual Misconduct Review," *NBC News*, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/sexual-misconduct/nbc-news-fires-today-anchor-matt-lauer-after-sexual-misconduct-n824831>.

Given the manner in which the article was written, there are certain aspects that violate the rules of journalistic writing. These include the absence of a full statement by the accused, with the article including only his apology to the victims. There is no exchange of views between the two sides, no victim statements are presented, only a conclusion by the victims on the accusations against Lauer, and Lauer was not given the opportunity to comment. Apart from these aspects, the journalist complied with the other provisions, such as keeping the anonymity of the victims, providing a context for the public to understand the relevance of the text and verifying the information. Also included is a caveat to the NBC News president's failure to comply with ethical rules. However, several words of praise are used in the description of the accused as well as descriptions that favor him in the eyes of the public. The women who are his victims are not described in the same way, the journalist using only simple references to them such as "female colleague", "unidentified former employee" or "unidentified woman". With these descriptions, the aim is that the public does not attach importance to the victims, does not identify with them and does not want to create a personality. Instead, the defendant is given attributes such as "a familiar face in morning news", "longtime colleague", "the married father of three", "a marque name with the network", "one of the highest-paid anchors in the industry". This is intended to emphasize the importance and greatness of this personality in the media industry, to create the impression that he is irreplaceable.

Another article indicting Matt Lauer is published on October 8, 2019 by *The Variety* and is titled "Ronan Farrow Book Alleges Matt Lauer Raped NBC News Colleague"²³. In the article, one of the victims, Brooke Nevils, who in the original investigation was mentioned as the one who made the complaint against Lauer that centered around the events of the 2014 Sochi Olympics, comes forward to confess to the actions that cost Lauer his career.

²³ Kate Aurthur Setoodeh Ramin, Kate Aurthur, and Ramin Setoodeh, "Ronan Farrow Book Alleges Matt Lauer Raped NBC News Colleague," *Variety*, October 9, 2019, <https://variety.com/2019/tv/news/matt-lauer-rape-nbc-ronan-farrow-book-catch-kill-1203364485/>. <https://variety.com/2019/tv/news/matt-lauer-rape-nbc-ronan-farrow-book-catch-kill-1203364485/>.

MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF USA FEMALE JOURNALISTS
AS VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

In the book by investigative journalist Ronan Farrow, which was provided exclusively to *The Variety*, Nevils details how Lauer coerced her into having sex with him by taking advantage of her inebriated state and ignoring her refusals. Lauer's lawyer, in an open letter to *The Variety*, denies the allegations against his client, saying that Lauer admitted to having an extramarital but consensual relationship with Brooke Nevils, but that it could not be categorized as rape. Nevils admits that even after the Sochi incident she continued to have sex-based encounters with Lauer, but says they were "Totally a transaction. They were not a relationship." She also says that the atmosphere in the newsroom after learning of the incident was uncomfortable, given that she had to sit in the same room with friends close to Lauer who knew about the situation. She received cash compensation, the book reports.

In order to write this article, the journalist was careful to include information that is fact-checked, so the details from Ronan Farrow's book targeting Matt Lauer have been published in this piece. Reference is made to the 2017 investigation that exposed Lauer's actions in the NBC News newsroom and the intimidating atmosphere for women employees. The author of the journalistic material provides the statements that the victim made against Lauer in Farrow's book, as well as the defendant's response to what was said against him. The journalist does not allow the status held by the assailant to interfere with the victim's account of the facts that the victim, who waives her anonymity, details about him. All parties involved have the opportunity to provide their comments in the material, including the victim, the assailant and the NBC News staff. Mention is made of the violations at the NBC newsroom and the actions it allowed to happen. Within the text, the author makes a single reference to the victim as a "former NBC News employee" to provide the audience with details about his identity. No expression is used to refer to the perpetrator, only by his first name.

After these allegations were made public in the previous article, *The Variety* also provides Matt Lauer's response the very next day, on October 9, 2019, in an article titled "Matt Lauer Denies 'False and Salacious' Rape

Allegation, Says Affair Was 'Consensual'"²⁴ . In it, Lauer denies the allegations against him that come from Brooke Nevils, a former NBC News colleague of his. He claims that the affair he had with Nevils was consensual and spanned several months in 2014. The article includes his full statement that what Nevils said in Ronan Farrow's book is not true, as well as other allegations coming his way, and notes that his silence up to that point was a mistake, but was meant to not hurt his family further.

In writing the article, the author followed the journalistic rules of ethical writing. He included background information by referring to the previous article accusing him through Ronan Farrow's book. Also, the information included in the article is taken directly from the statements of the accused, which gives it veracity. His comments are included in full, with his entire letter inserted within the article so as not to omit or misinterpret certain aspects. An earlier statement by the victim regarding the allegations is also present to give an exchange of views of the two parties. As for other sources supporting Matt Lauer's allegations, they are not present in the material. The text makes no further mention of ethical breaches at the newsroom level, only the exchange of statements from the two parties involved. In describing them, the author refers to the defendant only by his first name, while he refers to the victim as a "former NBC News co-worker" to show what their professional relationship was.

The NBC News editorial board's response to the rape allegations against Matt Lauer comes in an article published on October 9, 2019, titled "Matt Lauer accused of raping NBC colleague, Ronan Farrow book alleges"²⁵ and outlines the allegations made by The Variety article against him. The article reports the allegations coming from Brooke Nevils against Matt Lauer, who claims that he raped her years ago in Sochi. The president of NBC News

²⁴ Maane Khatchaturian, "Matt Lauer Denies 'False and Salacious' Rape Allegation, Says Affair Was 'Consensual,'" *Variety*, October 9, 2019, <https://variety.com/2019/tv/news/matt-lauer-rape-denial-letter-1203364695/>. <https://variety.com/2019/tv/news/matt-lauer-rape-denial-letter-1203364695/>.

²⁵ Phil Helsel, "Matt Lauer Accused of Raping NBC Colleague at Olympics, Book Alleges," *NBC News*, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/matt-lauer-accused-raping-nbc-colleague-ronan-farrow-book-alleges-n1064096>.

denies that the newsroom management team knew of such allegations. Lauer's statement is also offered denying Nevils' claims. She offers a statement to NBC News and says she is not afraid of him. Comments are then offered from both sides on the facts of the matter.

For the purposes of writing this article, the journalist complies with all ethical journalistic writing but uses stereotypes in describing the two parties. He describes Nevils as a "female colleague", "the woman", although she was a journalist, this is not specified, and "former NBC News employee Brooke Nevils". Instead, Matt Lauer is described as "The long-running face of NBC's "Today" show" or "the anchor", in his case there is mention of the position he held.

The latest article mentioning the allegations against Matt Lauer is published on May 19, 2020, titled "Matt Lauer Denies Rape Allegation (Again), Rips Into Ronan Farrow's Reporting in Scathing Op-Ed"²⁶ and is published by *Variety*. Here Matt Lauer once again denies the allegations leveled against him via Ronan Farrow's book and claims that after checking the details in the book, he can prove that Nevil's allegations are false. Lauer claims that his former colleague's accusatory actions are meant to promote Farrow's book. Inside the article are several opinions from the parties involved, such as statements from journalist Ronan Farrow that contradict Lauer's claims, as well as from a spokesperson for the publication that released Farrow's book. The article complies with all the ethical provisions considered. It also provides context, verified information, exchanges of views by all those involved, clarifications of ethical breaches in newsrooms, and does not portray the people involved in a stereotypical way. It portrays the victim as 'Brooke Nevils, the former NBC employee', but also portrays the perpetrator in the same way, as 'the former "Today" show host'.

²⁶ Elizabeth Wagmeister, "Matt Lauer Denies Rape Allegation (Again), Rips Into Ronan Farrow's Reporting in Scathing Op-Ed," *Variety*, May 19, 2020, <https://variety.com/2020/tv/news/matt-lauer-ronan-farrow-opinion-piece-reporting-rape-allegation-1234611225/>. <https://variety.com/2020/tv/news/matt-lauer-ronan-farrow-opinion-piece-reporting-rape-allegation-1234611225/>.

3. Conclusions

Cases of sexual assault in the media began to surface in July 2016, a few months before the Harvey Weinstein case became public and the #MeToo movement that followed. After analyzing the previously mentioned articles written by some of the most important editorial offices in the American press, we found that there was a pattern in all cases of assault: the defendant was a man with an important position in the media, who took advantage of his position to intimidate women who were subordinate to him, and the victims were put in a situation where they were afraid to report the abuse because they risked losing their jobs. In the investigations that brought the abuse cases to light, the victims confessed only under the protection of anonymity, fearing social and professional repercussions. In many cases, reporting sexual harassment to the human resources team did not attract any sanction on the aggressor, the case being buried or silenced by offering a sum of money to the victim. A common aspect in investigations is that they include the victims' statements, and in some cases also the statements from the aggressor, not just their response to the accusations. We also found that some of the victims did not want to be identified, their status within the editorial staff not being disclosed in order to protect their identity and not suffer professional consequences.

As for the statements coming from the aggressors, these are most often included in articles from the editorial staff that are accused, if they are not found in the initial investigations. These articles present violations in terms of the journalist's objectivity, as he either does not include the statements of the women who make the accusations, or offers a stereotypical image of the aggressor and the victim by using terms that put the woman in an inferior position compared to the man.

The responses from the editorial offices that were accused are either subjective towards the aggressor, or do not include the opinions of the aggressor and the victims at all. Often these articles try to no longer associate themselves with the accused, presenting apologies and measures that he will take in the future through an editorial chairman. The conclusions of the cases do not present such a large number of violations at the level of ethical

provisions, although some of them no longer include the statements of the accused. Most of the cases were finalized after the accused offered the victims a sum of money to compensate for the abuses suffered, but some of the cases did not have a finality and are still ongoing.

All these investigations have demonstrated that the ethical norms within the accused editorial offices are violated at the highest levels, and the observance of these ethical norms when writing articles targeting them leaves much to be desired. In the case of all articles that violated the ethical norms for writing journalistic materials, it was observed that they had a subjective attitude towards the accused, who was employed by them, and the victims were not as important as him: their statements were not included in the articles, their comments were not presented and not all the points of view of the parties involved were presented. Only in a few of the cases of violation of ethical norms was the targeted editorial office specified that measures would be put in place to train the editorial staff against such behavior at work. Respect for the anonymity of sources was met in all cases, as was the disclosure of the identity of the aggressor, the reason being that he was a public figure.

Considering all these aspects, it can be concluded that female journalists suffer the most abuse and harassment from their superiors, the challenges posed by this profession coming from within the editorial offices where they work. After the #MeToo movement gained momentum, more and more female journalists began to confess the incidents they experienced many years ago, but hid them, considering that they were the source of the problem or for fear of social and professional repercussions. With the statement of a female journalist against her aggressor, more and more women were encouraged to declare the abuse they suffered. A chain reaction was created that fueled the need for confession by thousands of women who felt that it was time to do them justice. The press was the one that helped them report their incidents, but it was also guilty of these violations. The ethical norms at the editorial level are overlooked and do not constitute a benchmark when it comes to reporting abuses. Also, some editorial offices do not respect the ethical code even when reporting in their own articles what happened. The advantage that men with an important status have

within the editorial offices is also reflected in the way the articles are written. Thus, many of these articles portray them as heroes, not as aggressors. All these arguments come to support the fact that gender equality is a distant promise and that the fight for it still has a long way to go before it is won. The surest way to support this fight is to confess abuses, regardless of their level, by removing those who commit them from power and preventing the suffering of future victims.

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National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) in the Romanian Online News Media. Media Representations and Political Discourse of the Key Actors

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ABSTRACT. The Romanian media coverage of the NRRP builds on the political discourse of the public actors who mainly used the NRRP debate either to gain visibility, or to campaign. Emotions, conflict and negativity news values are dominant, and the analysis and contextualization usually lack from the news stories. The present study is a content based approach, which aims to identify who are the most prominent actors involved in the debate about the Romanian National Recovery and Resilience Plan, how these public figures are inter-connected in the media discourse and which are the main features of their discourse, and what topics associated to the six pillars of the Recovery and Resilience Facility are mentioned most frequently in the public discourse of the key public actors.

Keywords: recovery and resilience plan, media representations, political discourse

Introduction

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is a tool provided by the European Commission, aimed to support reforms and investments undertaken by Member States. The aim of the loans and grants is “to mitigate the economic

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and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions.” (European Commission, 2020) The National Recovery and Resilience Plan has a different logic than the structural and investments European funds, because it provides budgetary support to implement systemic and structural reforms and investments in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

The Romanian Ministry of Investment and European Projects (MIEP) started the elaboration of NRRP in October-November 2020. On November 26, 2020 an initial form of the document was released for public consultation. The intervention areas of the NRRP match the six pillars defined by the RRF regulation (P1 - Transition to a green economy; P2 - Digital transformation; P3 - Intelligent, sustainable and inclusive economic growth; P4 - Social and territorial cohesion; P5 - Institutional health and resilience; P6 - Children, youth, education and competence.)

Starting from November 2020, Romanian online news media covered the NRRP issue, showing a particular interest for the Plan at the end of May 2021, when NRRP was sent to Brussels and the firsts feed-backs from the European institutions started to come. The rejection on June 4th, 2021 of the irrigations strategy project triggered vivid reactions of the political actors, reflected in a higher interest of the media for the subject, due to its controversial news value. The present analysis covers a time frame from November 1, 2020 to June 15, 2021 and due to the ongoing developments and debates, a future analysis is needed for a more comprehensive overview of the developments in media coverage of the NRRP issue.

The present study is a content based approach, which aims to identify who are the most prominent actors involved in the debate about the Romanian National Recovery and Resilience Plan, how these public figures are inter-connected in the media discourse and which are the main features of their discourse, and which topics are associated to the six pillars of the Recovery and Resilience Facility are mentioned most frequently in the public discourse of the main public actors.

Media coverage of the European affairs

Media attention to EU affairs is cyclical, with a tendency to vanish from the public agenda shortly after major events, such as European integration, European elections (de Vreese, 2001, p.285)

During the past decades, two major media frames have been shown to dominate representations of the relationship between the country and the European Union: a so-called messianic one, characteristic of the period of the country's accession, with European institutions expected to solve major domestic issues like poverty; and the marginal or peripheral position of the country, sometimes coupled with representations of EU institutions as punitive, for example in the case of the refusal to accept Romania as a member of the Schengen area (Bârgăoanu, 2011).

EU institutions and actors "are in strong competition with national governments that are not willing to relinquish their predominant role in EU communication" (Pfetsch and Heft, 2015, p.41).

Research into representations of the European Union in the Romanian public sphere has previously showed that when issues of concerns arise, as was the case of the 2008 economic crisis, collective actors are generally held responsible, and, apart from the political class and member states, European institutions are seen as accountable (Bârgăoanu and Durach, 2013, p.12).

Public discourse of the politicians and the media coverage

The logic of the storytelling used by the media puts a particular emphasis on the actors of the events that are being covered, because the reader understands and resonates better to stories lived and reported by real people - whether they are celebrities or not. Thus, a rather abstract topic - a strategic plan - needs to be associated with actors in order to make it easy to understand and appealing for the audience.

On the other hand, the public actors - politicians and members of the government seize every opportunity to campaign and to present the current affairs through the lens of the party's ideology.

The relationship between politicians and the mass media is a two way street: media needs politicians as sources and subjects of the news stories, and politicians need media to build their public image, their notoriety and to campaign.

As long as public perception of political figures is shaped by the media, the media has the power to reshape the identity of political leaders, as well as the identity of political parties, which are interested in delivering a clear, intelligible discourse.

Mass media communication has changed the traditional rules of democracy. The impact of the media on politicians greatly depends on the image they propose for themselves. In order to convince the public, this image has to meet some criteria, of which consistency is the most relevant. Correlation between the image that is displayed and the image that is publicly perceived is imperative. Should the public observe a rift between the two, they would abandon the respective politician, who would suffer a loss in credibility. Therefore, image appears as an essential element of political life mediation (Rieffel, 2008).

Due to the pressure imposed by the media cycle, *time* has undergone profound changes. While political time needs a certain duration for analysis and debate which generate continuity, mediatic time, on the contrary, is one of live, direct speech, one that is subjected to the ephemeral and swiftness. Subjected to the pressure of urgency, politicians are often forced to react on the spot to journalists' requests, seeking the mediatic effect or cliché, risking over simplifying, ill-calculated dramatizing in a superficial and conformist framework. Adapting their discourse to the norms of the media, politicians fall for the momentary reflex, or the "monstrative" logic, as Paul Virillo (1995) defined it, at the expense of the "demonstrative" logic.

In the public sphere, there is a discrepancy between the legitimacy by election and the legitimacy by media exposure and political marketing (Cotteret, 1991). Thus, the number of politicians expressing opinions in the media shrink to a few dozens, while MPs, mayors or other politicians who are out of the media spotlight end up completely ignored by the public. The current research confirms that only a limited number of public figures could be associated with voices addressing the NRRP topic.

The marketing model brought numerous behavioural changes in political communication and in the way politicians relate to media. As a consequence, nowadays politicians make use of persuasion techniques which can be expressed by four terms (Rieffel, 2008 p.15): personalization of actions; teatralization of behaviour; using new rhetoric; interpretation of [polling] data. Theatralization goes hand in hand with personalization. Politicians play roles following a precise script and scenography. They are constantly delivering a show while their “social facade” is being scientifically designed (Goffman, 2007 pp.238-239). Media training has become an indispensable part of politics. Political rhetoric has seen great changes as well. Politicians calibrate their speech according to the demands of the media, using plain, simple language, easy to understand. This media-imposed simplification is detrimental to detailed reasoning and solid argument (Rieffel, 2008).

The mediatic rhetoric of politicians is one of emotion and live communication, rather than analysis and reasoning. „Relation is more important than content and enunciation exceeds the announcement” (Debray,1993, p.127) Therefore, mediatic rhetoric is the aesthetic of seduction (Coulomb-Gully, 2004).

Personalizing actions at the expense of ideas, staging and theatralizing of all actions, the rhetoric of simplification based on emotions lead to the conclusion that politics is being redefined by the standards of mediation.

Mediated anger as a political emotion

Since the beginnings of the modern daily press, editors and journalists have understood that news is better reaching the audience when told as stories. Therefore news analysis should also focus on storytelling techniques - the way in which media reports create coherence and meaning while existing “within a cultural lexicon of understandable themes” (Bird & Dardenne, 2009, p.207).

A particular ingredient of the in journalistic narratives is emotionality. Emotionally engaging narratives are constantly produced because they facilitate audience engagement and understanding (Peters, 2011, p.297).

Mediated discussion of the matters that affect all people is shaped by emotional appeals and language and thus the citizens are motivated to participate in political life because of their affective engagement with politics – because they *care*.

More specifically, *anger* is considered a political emotion (Lyman, 1981) that can raise aggression and violence. Mediated anger is distinctive, due to the fact that it is performative - based on the performance of actors in the public sphere - and discursively constructed through the narratives of journalists - it represents the journalist's interpretation of behavior of actors with reference to the emotion of anger (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020, pp.92-94).

As Romanian media outlets are the primary bodies that cover the European and national public affairs, one might have expected a balanced, analytical approach towards a topic of the highest national interest, such as NRRP. Public communication, as reflected by the media, generated a lot of confusion and misleading, due to biased information, heavily marked by populism and political interest, as a result of media polarisation. Under these circumstances, the NRRP media coverage showed once again a deeply divided political class, the discourse being rather subjected to the aims of a constant political campaign. Conflict, confrontation and mutual allegations represented the main ingredients of NRRP related communication.

The current analysis is structured around four research questions: 1) *who are the most prominent actors (public figures) in the media coverage of the Romanian National Recovery and Resilience Plan*; 2) *how these public figures are brought together in the media discourse*; 3) *how politicians address their opponents in their discourse* and 4) *which topics belonging to the six pillars of the Recovery and Resilience Facility are mentioned most frequently in the public discourse of the main actors?*

Methodology

We aim to answer the research questions by employing a content-oriented approach, based on a sample of articles published in three large online Romanian news outlets: *adevarul.ro*, *digi24.ro* and *antena3.ro*. All

three are among the largest such outlets, and all are online portals of media organizations with offline content as well: Adevărul is a print newspaper, while Digi24 and Antena3 are news television channels. All the articles containing the key term - PNRR (Romanian abbreviation for NRRP) were collected using automated web scraping of the news sites with Chrome scraper. The resulting sample, used for the current analysis, consists of a total of 616 articles: adevarul.ro (n=246 articles), Digi24.ro (n=190 articles) and antena3.ro (n=180 articles), ranging from November 2020 to June 15, 2021.

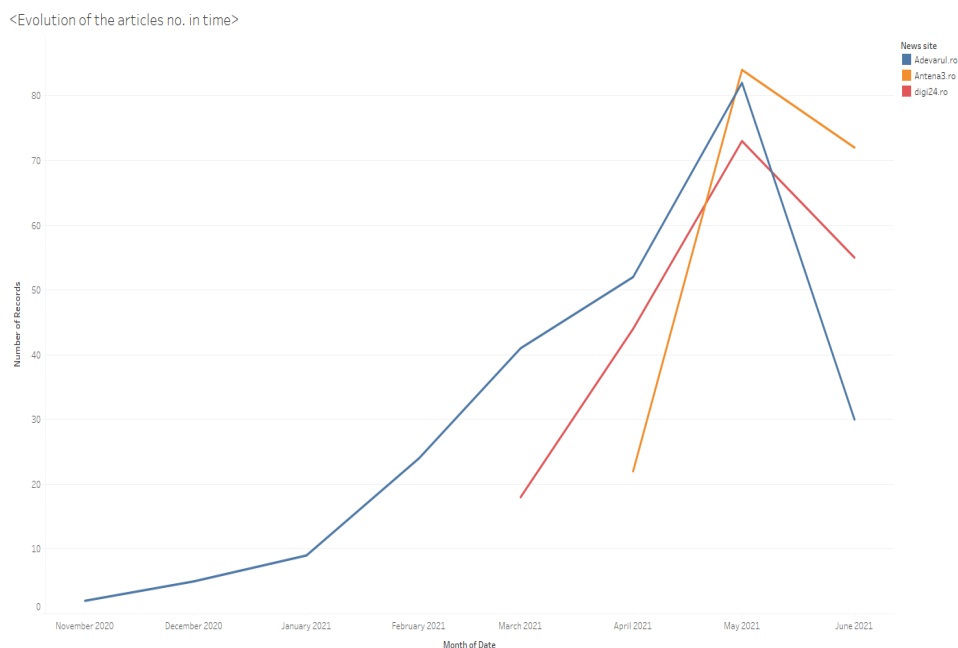


Figure 1: Media coverage of NRRP from November, 2020 to June, 2021

The present study uses mixed methods, in order to provide both an overview of the media coverage of NRRP and a sample of specific discursive forms and structures. Firstly, a semi-automated quantitative content analysis was conducted using MaxQDA software: all the articles were coded to measure *the frequency of the main actors in the sample* (33 public figures - politicians,

members of the government, the President, Romanian EU officials) and to measure *the prominence of the issues related to the six pillars* of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (green economy; digital transformation; sustainability; social and territorial cohesion; health; children, youth, education.)

A co-occurrence analysis was performed to identify the pairs and the clusters of political actors mentioned together in the same article most frequently. Further, a cross tabulation between the main actors and the topics being covered in the media discourse showed how specific issues are associated with specific actors. The preliminary results showed a rather limited number of NRRP topics (e.g. *irrigations, pensions, roads and highways*) mentioned by the public actors.

Based on the initial findings of the quantitative content analysis, the discourse analysis focuses on how specific actors were portrayed, whether the political discourse aimed at the technical aspects of the NRRP or it was rather targeted at specific political competitors and their actions and statements. The discursive samples point out how the negative emotions became part of the media narrative.

Findings and discussion

(1) Key actors

Media narratives tend to put a particular emphasis on the actors of the events that are being covered, because the reader understands easier and resonates better with stories lived by real people - whether they are celebrities or not. Thus, the NRRP, a rather abstract topic, is constantly associated with actors in order to make it understandable and appealing for the audience.

On the other hand, the political discourse of the public actors - politicians and members of the government - seize every opportunity to campaign and to present the current affairs through the lens of the party's ideology.

There is a slight difference between the three news sites in terms of the top ten most frequently mentioned actors. Nevertheless, the lists of the first six key actors are similar for the three media outlets: the most prominent actors are the Prime Minister Florin Cîțu (1019 mentions in 292 articles) and the Minister of Investment and European Projects Cristian Ghinea (994 mentions in 255 articles), followed by the leader of the opposition party - the Social Democrat Party (PSD), Marcel Ciolacu (683 mentions in 158 articles) and the leader of the National Liberal Party (PNL) / the President of the Chamber of Deputies - Ludovic Orban (345 mentions in 107 articles), the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis (285 mentions in 110 articles) and the Deputy Prime minister Dan Barna from USR - Union Save Romania (217 mentions in 95 articles).

The editorial policies and/or political/ideological leans of the media outlets influence the amount of media coverage of some specific actors, and the comparison shows that minister Cristian Ghinea received less coverage in Antena3.ro news stories, in spite of the central role played in the negotiations and submission of the NRRP. Liberal Ludovic Orban, President Klaus Iohannis and Union Save Romania (USR) leader Dan Barna were mentioned by antena3.ro fewer times, in comparison with digi24.ro and adevarul.ro

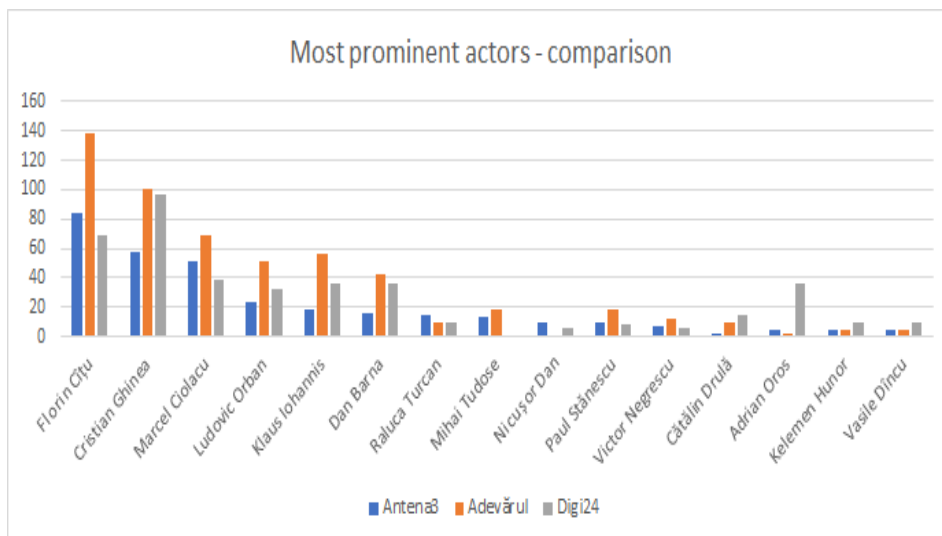


Figure 2: Comparison of the most prominent actors (no. of articles)

(2) Who's talking about whom?

More than 30 public figures were identified in the sample, but some of the public figures were mentioned only rarely in the texts. Therefore, for an in-depth understanding of the situations in which these actors are mentioned together, a co-occurrence map was created, applying a threshold of at least ten mentions per actor ($T \geq 10$).

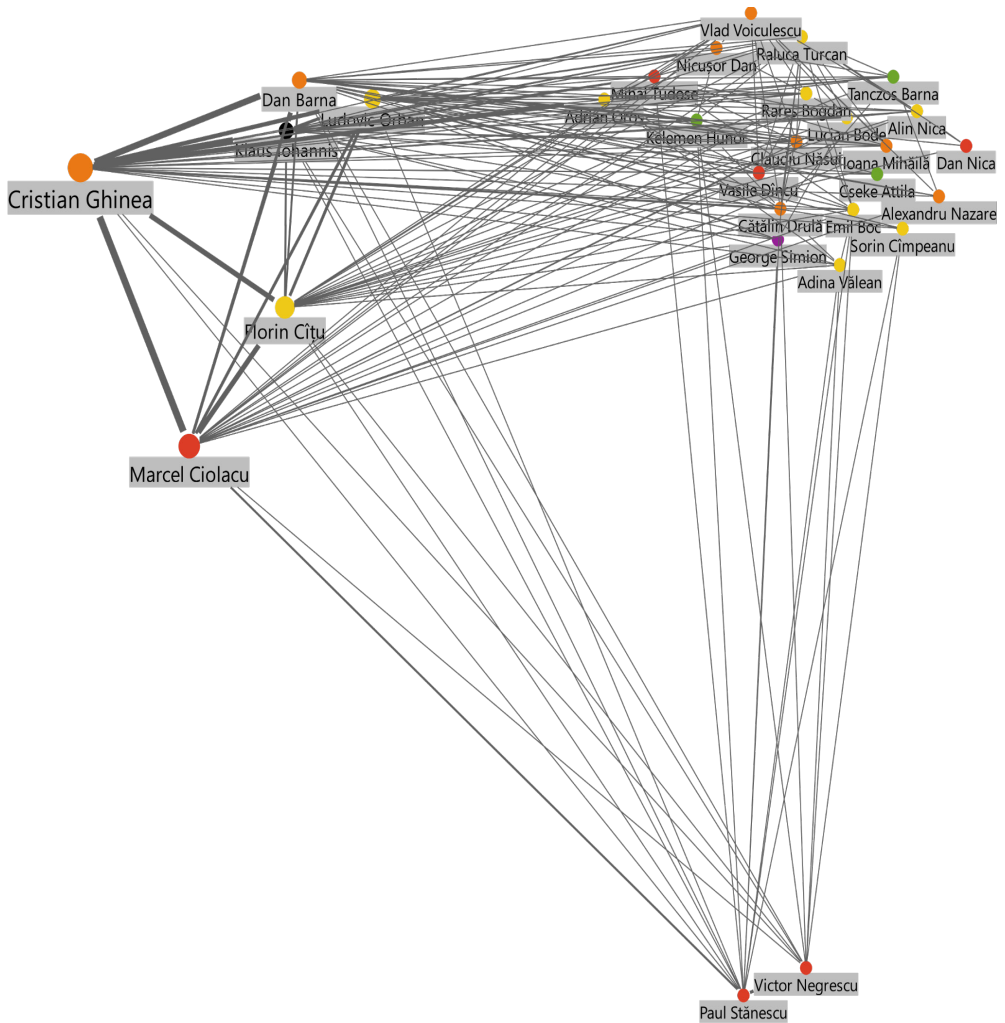


Figure 3: Co-occurrences of the actors ($T \geq 10$)

The network diagram presents a distinctive cluster of the six public figures frequently mentioned in the media, either based on their public office or mentioned by other actors : Florin Cîțu, Cristian Ghinea, Marcel Ciolacu, Ludovic Orban, Klaus Iohannis, Dan Barna. PM Florin Cîțu, minister Cristian Ghinea and Deputy PM Dan Barna were the official voices of the Romanian government, communicating about the resilience and reconstruction plan during the public consultation, the elaboration and the submission of the document, and the censor motion.

(3) Discursive patterns

The discourse analysis highlighted words semantically associated with verbal aggression (*insult, shaming*), conflict (*crisis, resignation, chaos, political war, treason*), power and success (*failure, lack of vision, vain promises, helplessness, lack of transparency*) as well as traits of character and other individual or collective features of the opponents (*arrogant, stupid, incompetent, liar, infatuated, organized in gangs, coalition of losers*). The word *Romanians* returned to the discourse, just like in the electoral campaign, suggesting that politicians using it are dedicated to the people they belong to. This is a general feature of the NRPP communication, as well as the use of strong words, suggesting the fierce struggle they fight for the wellbeing of the nation. Here are some relevant examples [with authors' emphasis added - *in italics*].

A particular role is played by Marcel Ciolacu, the leader of the opposition party - the Social Democrat Party (PSD). He is the most prominent actor who does not play an active role in the process of elaborating and publicly communicating the NRRP, but he seizes each opportunity to attack the PM or the ministers of the governmental coalition or to respond back to their allegations.

Marcel Ciolacu responded to prime-minister Cîțu's remarks : "This vaccine saves and protects us from COVID, but it has no effect on *arrogance, incompetence and stupidity*." Ciolacu claims that instead of wasting time replying PSD's critique on Facebook, the prime minister should rather concentrate on absorbing the 227 million Euros and putting his ministers to

work. "Things are definitely not looking well, prices are rising. The *living standard has dramatically dropped in Romania. Romanians' priorities are others than arrogance.*" (Gorgorin, I., *Cum răspunde Marcel Ciolacu la insulta premierului Cîțu: "Acest vaccin ne scapă și ne ferește de COVID. El nu ne vindecă, nici de aroganță, nici de incompetență, nici de prostie!"* Antena3, May 20,2021). Earlier in April, social democrat leaders adopted a tough language, declaring : "No matter how hard might be Iohannis trying to *hide the truth*, one thing is for sure: The Cîțu government *lamentably failed* managing European money because of their *incompetence and infatuation!* The *lack of vision* and reforms but most of all the money distribution decided on political grounds, led to the third rejection of the NRRP by the European Commission." (Dinu, L., *PSD: Oricât ar încerca Iohannis să mintă, acesta este motivul care a dus pentru a treia oară la respingerea PNRR de către CE*, Antena 3, April 26, 2021). On May 13, Marcel Ciolacu said that he had personally spoken to the Vice President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans, who agreed with PSD's standpoint that the NRPP is "far from being complete", and the European Commission forced prime-minister Cîțu to present the NRPP before the Parliament. "Cîțu must *stop lying* and start working hard. The government cannot hide the *failure* of the Brussels visit." Ciolacu said that he spoke to Timmermans about the solutions proposed by the social-democrats to resolve the *crisis*, without going into any details. (Marina, G., *Marcel Ciolacu: Comisia Europeană a dat dreptate PSD*, Digi24, May 13 2021).

Marcel Ciolacu responded violently to Cristian Ghinea-s challenge, who proposed Marcel Ciolacu to resign [*"Ciolacu, let's discuss with your resignation on the table!*], had the NRRP been approved. Otherwise, he would do the same. Mr. Ghinea accused the PSD of re-issuing fake news about NRPP being rejected by the European Commission.(Dinu, L., *Cristian Ghinea: "Ciolacu, hai să discutăm cu demisia pe masă! Te ține?"* Antena3, June 11 2021). Marcel Ciolacu responded : "Ghinea did not convince anyone with his wits but instead bewildered everybody with his *stupidity.*" Marcel Ciolacu went on, wondering why Mr. Ghinea is still a member of the cabinet, adding:" Cristian, weren't you ashamed to boldly *lie* on TV that everything was OK, knowing about the European Commission's *devastating remarks*?! Cristian,

YOU are a *disaster* ! ZERO! GO HOME!!! (Dinu, L., Marcel Ciolacu, *răspuns dur pentru Ghinea: "Ce demisii ceri tu, Cristian? TU ești un dezastru! ZERO!"* Antena3, June 11 2021).

In a press release PSD explained that the NRRP is a *national* plan to which all must *contribute* if we expect a good outcome. "Ghinea has only one option to climb out the hole he got himself into: bring the NRRP *before the Parliament* or *resign*". "Before making any requests from PSD, Mr. Ghinea and all of his "parteners" in the Coalition should *kneel* on the stairs of Kiseleff palace and *beg forgiveness* for their *arrogance* and *stupidity*. You *refused political consensus, public dialogue* and the involvement of *social actors* – business owners, trade unions, civil society. You refused to bring this plan before the Parliament." "The NRRP is not a plan for Ghinea and his Coalition of *losers*". (News.ro, PSD: Ghinea și partenerii din Coaliție să își ceară scuze în genunchi pentru aroganță și prostie. Adevarul, April 26, 2021). Responding to PSD, which demanded the government to give up the "arrogant and self sufficient" attitude on NRRP and invite all political parties to contribute, Ionuț Moșteanu, leader of USR PLUS deputies, said that that the Government is the sole entity which can complete the NRRP, as members of Parliament are not entitled to negotiate with the European Commission. "465 people in the Parliament cannot negotiate with the European Commision, that why we have a Government invested by the Parliament, therefore it has the confidence of the majority." (Ghiorghie A., Lider USR PLUS, replică pentru PSD: „Nu putem negocia 465 de parlamentari cu Comisia Europeană. Pentru asta avem un Executiv". Adevarul, April 27, 2021).

Marcel Ciolacu, interviewed on Antena 3, declared that „The Commission literally *pulverized* the NRRP." He claimed that the funds are being directed towards "their *political consultancy companies*." He talked about some documents proving that the NRRP has been created by *foreign companies*. "I presume the members of the Commision dropped their pens when they read these follies. Where is Iohannis's Educated Romania? It is smashed, it's a *shame*." (Țaga, M., Marcel Ciolacu: Pur și simplu Comisia a pulverizat PNRR. Cred că le-a sărit pixul din mână când au citit aceste gogomăanii. Adevarul, June 11, 2021).

Other voices of the Social Democrat Party followed the same argument:

Paul Stănescu, PSD Secretary General, declared that the NRRP cannot be sent to Brussels *without the consultation of the PSD*. He claims that his party has won the parliamentary elections and has the most MPs and local elected officials. Stănescu also said that after President Iohannis asked mayors to get involved in the vaccination campaign, PSD local elected officials got the message that in the *absence of a dialogue with PSD*, “we will start a great political war.” (Dinu, M., *Paul Stănescu, amenințări pentru Guvern și Iohannis: Vom declanșa un mare război politic*, Adevarul, May 19, 2021).

On April 27, Adrian Ionuț Gâdea (PSD), president of Teleorman County Council, warned that Teleorman villages would fail to connect to natural gas grids because the ruling coalition decided to finance grid extension by NRRP funding, contrary to the European Commission directives: “Instead of finding serious solutions for the Romanians in the rural areas, the liberals have chosen to offer *vain promises*”. (Adam, G., *Lider PSD: PNL lasă fără gaze satele din Teleorman*, Antena3, April 27 2021).

There’s no plan, suggests Mihai Tudose, MEP, on his Facebook page: “after *Orban and his gang last year bragged*” about the billions of euros flowing from the EU, there’s been silence on this topic ever since the elections. The government has to hastily *redo the NRRP*, as it was ill-designed. “Brussels is far away but the loot is near and it has to feed many hungry mouths...”, concluded Tudose, criticizing the government for being *so late*. “There is a guide issued by the European Commission. If you follow it, you can’t go wrong. Well, they could go wrong.” (Eremia, R., *Mihai Tudose, ironii la adresa Guvernului: Uite banii, nu e planul! Ciolanul e aproape și trebuie împărțit la multe guri flămânde*. Adevarul, January 19, 2021).

Victor Negrescu, MEP, accused the government for “trying to fool us with a *makeshift NRRP*. From its shape to proposed targets, the entire NRRP is copy-pasted from the *projects already in process* in different ministries, the Romanian MEP said. People in the government failed to understand that the NRRP cannot be the “Easter Rabbit” of the ruling parties which satisfies *electoral targets* but instead, it must be a vision to put Romania back on track. Later on, Mr. Negrescu explained that this *over-bureaucratized plan*, which cannot be implemented in due time because of its funding problems, such as its

value of 41.1 billion euros, as Romania is entitled to 29.2 billion euros. (News.ro, *Victor Negrescu: Guvernul încearcă ne păcălească cu un Plan Național de Redresare și Reziliență făcut pe picior*, Adevarul, March 19, 2021). One month later, the same MEP, Victor Negrescu said that the new NRRP was *not accepted* by the European Commission, because it is a plan that is “*politicized*”, finances being distributed on *political grounds*, instead of representing a national plan for Romania. “For instance, funding for irrigation has disappeared. Funding for the economic sector is inexistent. *There isn't sufficient transparency* regarding funding the local authorities and the civil society. And the list of problems continues.” (Ghiorghe, A., *Victor Negrescu, despre PNRR: „Nu a primit acceptul Comisiei Europene. Este un plan politizat, cu finanțări distribuite pe criterii politice”*, Adevarul, April 22, 2021).

The few opinion pieces on NRRP are not necessarily examining the NRRP, but the inability of the Romanian government to produce a approvable and reliable project for the European bodies.

“The news of the day about Romania’s *helplessness*: The European Commission *disagrees* with the project proposed by the government of Romania as part of the NRRP, regarding the access to natural gas grids of hundreds of villages, as announced by the PNL president Ludovic Orban. This is the *second large project rejected* by the Commission, after the one regarding the reconstruction of the irrigation system. In fact, one should decide between *helplessness, ignorance, and administrative chaos*. We surely need the money, even *their money* eventually, but we do not want, by all means, to get used to take it (for the country, as one would say during the campaign) *under their conditions, following their priorities and plans?*” (Unteanu, C., *De ce urâm fondurile europene?* Digi24, April 26, 2021). In the article entitled “PNL leaders, *dissatisfied* by the way the NRRP is being managed by USR-PLUS ministers”, the author claims that manyer party leaders asked prime-minister Cițu to “*take political control over NRRP*”, as USR-PLUS ministers failed to prepare and negotiate this plan with Brussels, the way liberals had wanted. (Eremia, R., *Surse: Liderii PNL, nemulțumiți de modul cum este gestionat PNRR de către miniștrii USR-PLUS. Ce i-au cerut premierului*. Adevarul, May 10, 2021).

As AUR voted *against* the NRRP, George Simion, AUR deputy, declared that „on behalf of a *sovereign Romania*”, all AUR MPs will vote against the NRRP, because “*common Romanians* would not benefit from this program.”

“Today, we are going to say no to a *damaging* policy which would throw us into an abyss, so I’m asking you, MP’s from both the power and the opposition, if you don’t want to see the *IMF* visiting us again, do not vote this program, on behalf of common Romanians who will not benefit from pompous programs called “digitalization” or “just transition.” (Ghiorghe A., *George Simion, la prezentarea PNRR în Parlament: Spunem „nu” acestui plan, în numele românilor.*, Adevarul, May 26, 2021).

Following European Commission's observations on the NRRP, senator Claudiu Târziu, co-president of AUR (Alliance for the Union of Romanians), accused the government of “*treason*” and requested the immediate *dismissal* of the entire government for being “the sole responsible for the development of the NRRP”. He said that minister Cristian Ghinea must *be dismissed* even before the dismissal of a government which bears the responsibility for the “*shameful rejection* for the third time of the NRRP, which *compromises* Romania in the European Union.” He accuses the government of things like “*incompetence*”, “*irresponsibility*”, “*crass lack of expertise*” and, first of all, “the lack of an authentic *Romanian vision* in a *European context*”. “Such an enormous failure is unacceptable. I demand president Iohannis to admit his share of guilt for what seems to be HIS GOVERNMENT’S biggest failure.” (News.ro., *Claudiu Târziu cere demisia Guvernului: „Respingerea rușinoasă, a treia oară, a PNRR compromite România în UE”*, Adevarul, June 11, 2021).

The lexical analysis of the public actors suggests that one of the words that describe the communication on NRRP and the subsequent media coverage is *conflict*, frequently going from an aggressive discourse to insults, from both the governmental coalition representatives and the opposition leaders.

(4) Topic coverage in the media

Each of the six pillars of the NRRP was operationalized into several dimensions, reflected in the use of several keywords: (1) transition to a green economy (*green*); P2 - Digital transformation (*digitization, certificate, electronic ID.*); P3 - Intelligent, sustainable and inclusive economic growth; P4 - Social and territorial cohesion (*transportation [highway, express road, road], region, metropolitan, UAT, county, irrigation, pensions*); (5) Institutional health and resilience (*hospital, doctor, health, Covid19, vaccination, epidemy*);

(6) Children, youth, education and competence (*school, college, university, pupil, student, professor, education*)

	Cristian Ghinea	Raluca Turcan	Florin Cîțu	Lucian Bode	Adrian Oros	Vlad Voiculescu	Adina Vălean	Kelemen Hunor	Dan Barna	Alexandru Nazare	George Simion
irigații	57	4	4	0	24	0	0	0	13	0	0
drumuri	48	1	4	0	10	0	0	0	5	0	0
pensii	42	179	57	80	4	15	6	18	6	1	10
investiții	39	8	15	0	11	8	0	5	2	2	2
școli	34	4	8	0	9	4	0	0	0	0	0
transport	26	0	5	0	3	3	17	1	5	0	0
economic	19	9	6	3	5	1	10	1	0	11	0
reforme	16	38	19	19	0	5	21	1	1	1	3
sănătate	15	3	6	0	1	44	1	1	1	0	0
digitalizare	13	20	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	2
educație	11	1	3	0	4	0	0	1	3	0	0
medic	11	7	3	0	1	15	0	0	0	0	0
organizare teritorială	8	2	3	0	12	7	0	0	6	0	0
verde	8	1	2	0	17	0	2	0	6	0	0
sustenabilitate	1	4	10	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
electronic	1	13	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 4: Cross-tabulation: Key actors and key themes

The most frequently mentioned topic was by far the pensions, which is one of the favorite campaign topics of the PSD. In a Facebook post cited by Digi24, Marcel Ciolacu accused Cîțu of *promising* the European Commission to *abolish* early retirement and *increase* the retirement age. This approach brings back the favourite topic that appeals to PSD traditional voters. „Although no one had asked them to, the Cîțu government informed Brussels about their intention to *quit* enforcing the law regarding a *raise* in pensions, to abolish early retirement and *increase* the retirement age.” Ciolacu wrote on facebook. He claims that „PSD is categorically *opposing* these intentions” by „all legal means”. (R.,K., *Ciolacu îl acuză pe Cîțu că s-ar fi angajat în fața CE că va desființa pensia anticipată și va crește vechimea necesară pensionării*. Digi24, May 21 2021).

In the opinion article entitled “Orban *lies* to our face. He considers us *stupid* and *easy to manipulate*” the author suggests that Ludovic Orban is *deliberately lying* to the people. Among manyer issues, the one that stands out – pensions. “On EC’s request, Romania is required to withdraw the Law No 127/2019 and not increase pensions. In Orban’s opinion, these are not EC’s

requests. *What are they, then?*" (Vlaston, S., *Orban ne minte în față. Ne consideră proști și ușor de manipulat. Adevarul*, May 27, 2021).

The President of the PSD National Council, Vasile Dîncu declared on June 15 2021 that private interests were found within the annexes of the NRRP. He specifically addresses the pensions issue, stating that a reform of the pensions system is necessary but it has to be correlated with a national development plan. "We will present an alternative plan, created within the Department of Labour and Social Protection of PSD, we will contribute with ideas of what is to be done in order to comply to economic efficiency, a better management of the pension fund and also non-discrimination and social cohesion." (Adam, G., *Vasile Dîncu acuză interese private în PNRR: "Acest lucru vine din faptul că s-a refuzat să se facă transparent"*, Antena3, June 5 2021).

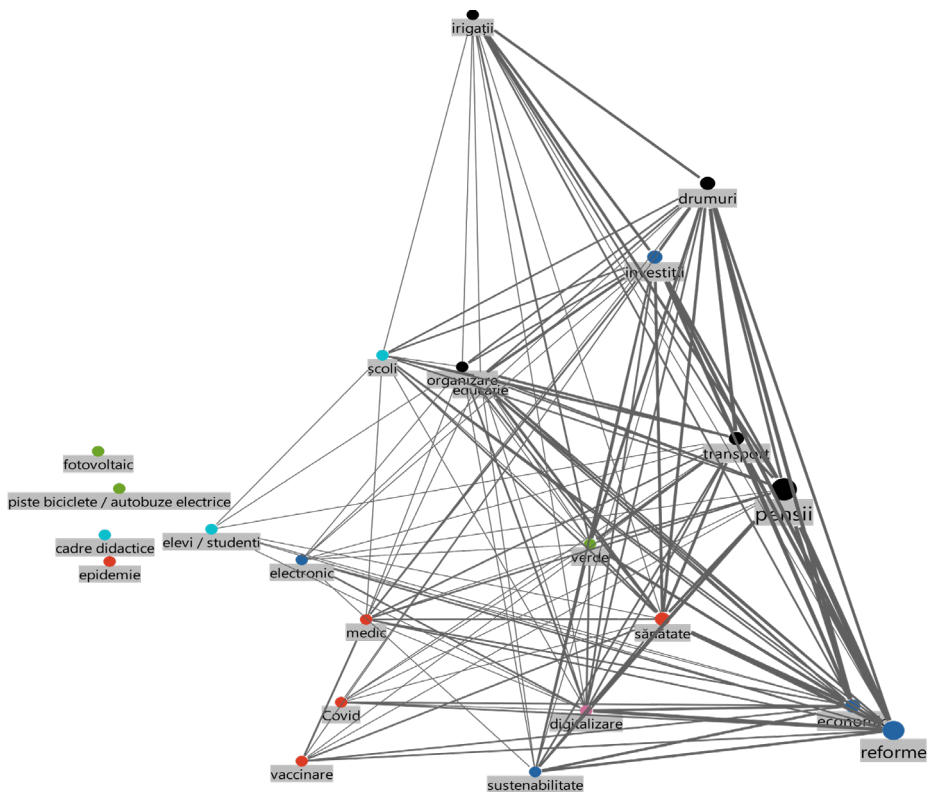


Figure 5: Network map of the most prominent topics of the NRRP debate

Another major topic of the NRRP debate and subject of controversy was the *irrigations* chapter. The minister of agriculture, Adrian Oros, declared for Digi24 that despite the *observations* of the European Commission regarding the planned irrigation funding included in the NRRP, Romania will *continue* sustaining this project. Vice-prime minister Dan Barna explained that the European Commission *requested changes* in the NRRP, considering that irrigations do not constitute a *reform* helping “*resilience after COVID.*” “We will continue presenting technical aspects before the Commission.” “If things support *climate* objectives(...) we have answers to all the observations issued by the Commission.” Agriculture minister Adrian Oros explained for Digi24: “We really wrote projects which comply to Commission’s requests and we’ll continue sustaining our case” (Pavaluca, L., *Adrian Oros: România își susține în continuare proiectul cu irigațiile, sunt convins că o să obținem cele 2,5 miliarde de euro din PNRR*, Digi24, April 22 2021).

Alfred Simonis, leader of PSD deputies, accused minister Cristian Ghinea that he disconnected his phone to watch the movie Terminator exactly when the European Commission was sending their *observations* regarding the NRRP. “But you are not Arnold Schwarzenegger, you are rather Benny Hill”, said Alfred Simonis. Mr. Simonis then used this opportunity to attack Mr. Ghinea for sending an “*absurd*” plan to Brussels, a plan which will continue deepening *discrepancies* between regions. “You sent a plan (...) conceived by companies directly interested in their own projects, you dedicated hundreds of millions to bike trails in villages without sewing systems, training programs worth hundreds of thousands of euros, billions for consultancy for your companies.(...) And for all these, you cut from the poor people and agriculture, you freeze pensions and salaries.” “In your opinion, *retirement* should come with the *death certificate* and you say it with a smile on your face.” (Cojan, L., *Simonis, ironic la adresa lui Ghinea: Nu sunteți Arnold Schwarzenegger, ci mai degrabă Benny Hill*, Digi24, June 14 2021).

Marcel Ciolacu attacked the Agriculture minister for failing the NRRP agriculture sector, especially the irrigations, in a press conference in Craiova. “We left for Brussels to negotiate seven billion, Ghinea and Oros got there with 3.8 billion and they came back with zero euros for Romanian agriculture.” Ciolacu suggested that Adrian Oros should leave.” You can’t go

to Brussels with Ceausescu's plans and do agriculture today as they did it in the sixties(..) I repeat, Poland included irrigation funding in their NRRP, Bulgaria, Hungary, did the same, not to mention Spain and Portugal, which are already in the lead. (*Ciolacu: Am plecat la negocieri pentru 7 miliarde, au ajuns domnii Ghinea și Oros la 3,8 și s-au întors cu 0 euro pentru agricultură*, Digi24, June 12 2021)

Conclusions

The Romanian media coverage of the NRRP builds mainly on the political discourse of the public actors who used the NRRP debate to gain visibility or to campaign. The use of negative emotions and the lexic of conflict are dominant, and the analysis and contextualization usually lack from the news stories.

As Romanian mass media represents a primary mechanism that conveys information about European affairs to the general public, one might have expected a balanced, analytical approach towards a topic of the highest national interest. Furthermore, there is little (if any) coverage of the Romanian NRRP in the international media, which, by all means, could only be accessed by the higher educated. Instead, public communication about the NRRP, as reflected by the media, generated a lot of confusion and misleading, due to biased information, heavily marked by populism and political interest, as a result of media polarisation. The causes for this polarisation are diverse but they mostly originate in media ownership, which is more or less transparent. This is an ongoing problem of Romanian media, which proves once again the limitations of a media system which lacks a strong, independent sector.

Under these circumstances, the NRRP media coverage showed a rather emotional approach of a technical, strategic plan, due to the fact that the discourse proposed by a divided political class was subjected to the aims of an everlasting political campaign. Conflict, confrontation and mutual accusations represented the main ingredients of communication.

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