

***THE STATUS OF THE ROMANIAN CONTEMPORARY PRINTED PRESS –
FUNDING, VALUES AND PROFESSIONALISM***

Lia Lucia Epure, Assist. Prof., PhD, "Vasile Goldiș" University of the West, Arad

Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to draw a general frame through which it could be disclosed and understood the status of the present Romanian printed press. The study unveils some structural dimensions through which the contemporary Romanian printed press not that it could be only understood but it also could build a coherent image about real functions of this actual printed press from Romania.

The main directions of the study are focused upon some different perspective. Firstly we analyze the economic situation of the contemporary Romanian printed press. This analysis is made from various perspectives with a special focus upon the financial sources and upon the economical sustainability of the Romanian contemporary printed press.

Secondly, a special analysis is developed upon the role and function which now is played by the actual Romanian printed press. This theoretical survey is divided by us into two different levels. The first one is taking into consideration the role of the contemporary Romanian central printed press and the second one is describing the function of this type of press at the local level. The issue of promoting general democratic and civic values it is also discussed in this section.

Thirdly, a special attention is dedicated to the level of professionalism from the actual Romanian printed press. This analysis is being developed by us through a conceptual frame which allows us to make some comparisons between what a journalist from the field of printed press should be and what he is actually is in the Romanian actual printed press.

Some general conclusions are finally disclosed, conclusions which allows us not only to make some minimal predictions about the future of Romanian printed press but also to indicate some possible ways to improve its economical and professional performances.

Keywords: Printed press, Professional journalism, Media funding.

Introduction This brief endeavor upon the status of contemporary Romanian printed press is focused on three core elements. First we talk about the economical sustainability of contemporary Romanian printed press. The second one is aiming to disclose the role of the printed press in general and to make a brief discussion about the function of this press at the local level in contemporary Romania. Finally, the last discussion will be about the level of professionalism involved present in today Romanian printed press.

The Economic Context of the Cotemporary Romanian Printed Press

Firstly, we have to consider the fact that the economic situation of the printed press it is, as an obvious thing, strongly linked with the general economic conditions of the society. But this is not enough in our view for a proper understanding of the economic status of the contemporary Romanian media. Of course, it would be easy to say that the economic crises had brought the Romanian contemporary printed press to its knees but this not that only would not be enough but would be even false. The economic crisis, which started at the end of the first decade of the 21th century, was only one of the factors which were responsible for the abrupt decline of the Romanian printed press. To our personal experience within the Romanian printed press after December 1989 the general and constant decline of this type of

press could not be properly understood only through some economic concepts. In what will follow we will try to explain and to summarize our point of view about this general topic.

In our opinion there are two distinct major causes which determined in time the decline of printed press in contemporary Romania²⁷. The first one is closely linked with the loss of audience. This was happened because of various reasons, economical, psychological, and sociological and so on. Maybe one of the most important was the appearance of the New Media within contemporary Romanian media system. This was, so to speak, coup de grace, which Romanian printed press, but also the international one, has received in the last period. Here, of course, we must add the fact that the vast majority of what was remain in Romanian from the printed press have today online versions of their printed appearances.

Another major cause in the decline of the Romanian contemporary printed press was the lack of financial resources from the area of printed advertising. The printed publicity had become more and more and expensive and this ultimately conducted to the present situation a one in which the printed advertising had become less competitive for economic agents. This is especially true in the case of *local* contemporary Romanian printed press.

The above described situation, combined with a series of other factors, created in the present a status of almost bankruptcy for the printed press from contemporary Romania²⁸. But besides these, many printed local publications from Romania are struggling today to survive. Of course, not all of them have success but at least those who survive are also getting some experience within online media environment.

In brief, almost the single source of revenue for the printed media, at least for the local one from contemporary Romania is now the advertising. But this amount of financial supply is far from being enough without considering that fact that in many times the payments are delayed.

The Role of the Printed Press – Its Goals and its Failures

We do not intend here to develop a general theoretical debate about the role of the printed press but to make a brief picture about this role regarding contemporary Romanian local printed press. In our view, the printed press from Romania, especially the local one, is almost dead. But, however, those local printed publications which now are struggle to survive are focused almost entirely upon a local topic. Maybe with a very small number of exceptions the local printed press, and this true even for the electronic media, had become indeed something local in the sense that the local communities did not have the power until now to produce media institutions with a national dimension. This is due not only to some economic factors but maybe with the incapacity of local communities to generate news in general able to capture a national interest. This is indeed a failure because it is unacceptable for an EU country to not have local printed press with a national audience. We think that this is important because it say something about the development scheme of an entire country: in contemporary Romania it seems that only the Bucharest has the capacity to generate news of

²⁷ The decline of the printed press is not a local phenomenon. By the contrary it could be seen at the global level. See Ivascu, D – „Declinul presei scrise in SUA” (“The Decline of the Printed Press in US”) in *radardemedia.ro*, July 2014.

²⁸ Balescu, Mihai – „Presa scrisa, de la tiraje de 1,5 milioane de exemplare la cvasi-faliment” (“The Printed Press – From 1,5 million copies to almost bankruptcy”) in *Manager.ro*, March 2012.

national interest on a daily basis. As longer the things will stay so the only general role of the local press, including the local printed press, will be to develop only and only local topics.

A distinct topic about the local Romanian contemporary printed press it should be on the values which this special type of press is promoting today in this country. Unfortunately and accordingly to our own professional experience there are only a limited number of cases in which Romanian contemporary local printed press are capable indeed to promote some general values, through what is published in this printed press, to the local public. We must face here a significantly negative situation: in general the contemporary Romanian printed local press is more focused on local scandals and on gossip style low level media than to a more responsible and professional way of doing local printed press.

Who is working in the Romanian Contemporary Printed Press?

This is a generous topic which could be always a topic in itself. However, if it is to be brief and direct on the topic we must say from the beginning that those which now are working in the printed press from Romania, the local but also and central one, are the products of a long time called in general “transition”. In the case of the press, the individuals which are working as journalist could be put into few very distinct categories with a relatively easy profile to disclose²⁹.

The first come from the communist period. They were entered in press without having any professional background comparable with the western general type of professional journalist.

The second category, generally speaking, is a product of “transition” and also did not have special professional training. Maybe just talent and enthusiasm.

However, both categories have tried to adapt to the new set of general conditions. Of course, in a significant proportion this effort had no positive results for them but there are in the present a minority which are making journalism, especially in the central Romania printed press with already a consistent positive professional experience in the field.

We are fully aware of the fact that for this topic the approaches could be different and extensive. But regardless of this in any study upon this topic, and we have to admit that until now there are not too consistent or numerous, these categories will be always present.

We add here another one, the category of those individuals which have studied journalism in an academic institution in Romania after 1989. In this case too there are not too many reasons to be optimistic. In many times these graduates are undertrained and need to be trained again at the workplace so to speak. For this situation are not responsible only the academic institutions but also the students themselves which come to those faculties with a very low level of general education and which are not successful in changing this along the period of studies. And you cannot make serious and professional journalism, in the printed press or not, without having a consistent general cultural not only a professional one.

Given all these elements about which we talked here in brief and generally speaking the contemporary local press from Romania does not have the potential to change for the better some key issues of mentality from the society. The set of “values” which it promotes

²⁹ Coman, M. - *Mass media in Romania post-comunista (Mass media in post-communist Romania)*, Iasi : Editura Polirom, pp. 146 – 149.

are nothing more but an imitation of the central press. And there also things are not staying good.

References:

Balescu, Mihai – „Presa scrisa, de la tiraje de 1,5 milioane de exemplare la cvasi-faliment” (“The Printed Press – From 1,5 million copies to almost bankruptcy”) in *Manager.ro*, March 2012

Coman, M. - *Mass media in Romania post-comunista (Mass media in post-communist Romania)*, Iasi : Editura Polirom

Ivascu, D – „Declinul presei scrise in SUA” (“The Decline of the Printed Press in US”) in *radardemedia.ro*, July 2014.